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Virpi Koskela

**TAPPING EXPERIENCES OF PRESENCE TO  
CONNECT PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONAL  
CREATIVITY**

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Virpi Koskela

## **TAPPING EXPERIENCES OF PRESENCE TO CONNECT PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVITY**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to be presented with due permission for public examination and criticism in the Auditorium of the Kalevi Aho, Musiikkiopisto, Lahti, Finland on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, 2018, at noon.

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# Abstract

**Virpi Koskela**

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The qualitative research presented in this dissertation focuses on individual experiences of presence (EPs) and their potential connections to organizational creativity. The overarching question is: How are EPs experienced at the individual level, and can EPs contribute to organizational creativity, particularly to an organization's capacity for more authentic leadership? The aim of the dissertation is to investigate whether EPs could serve as a key factor in changing existing organizational thinking and behavioral patterns that may be growing obsolete in the current organizational climate.

The data included in the qualitative sub-studies making up the dissertation consists of personal depictions of EPs, interviews, and other material collected through workshops conducted in Finland as well as through international collaborative research. Much of the research is practice-based, with data produced and collected using methods grounded in contemplation and the applied arts. Findings based on phenomenological and reflective analysis of the data suggest that EPs had a positive impact on participants' ability to be more aware of their connections to themselves, to each other, and to nature, skills that play an important role in organizational creativity.

Two main contributions result from the research. Firstly, it highlights the link between EPs and "inner" and "outer" nature-connectedness, in other words awareness of what is happening inside and outside one's self. Secondly, it provides an opportunity to view EPs as a critical factor in organizational creativity. The conclusions and recommendations indicate that EPs should be taken seriously when seeking new perspectives on organizational creativity and authentic leadership.

**Keywords:** presence, experience-based, organizational creativity, sustainability, nature-connectedness, leadership



## Acknowledgements

I have traveled a long, winding road since 2010, when I started working at LUT Lahti, first as project coordinator, then as project researcher and postgraduate. My relationship with the university has been like any other intimate relationship – with crises, a divorce, and renewed affection. Here I present the offspring of this eight-year relationship.

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Virpi Koskela  
August 2018  
Tampere, Finland

*For all those inspiring people  
who have courage to stay  
in the present moment*





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Abstract

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## List of publications

This dissertation is based on the following papers. The publishers have granted the right to include the papers in this dissertation.

- I. Goldman Schuyler, K., Skjei, S., Sanzgiri, J., and Koskela, V. (2017). “Moments of waking up”: A doorway to mindfulness and presence. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, Vol. 26(1), 86–100.

Author’s contribution: Fourth author and participant in a two-year collaborative international action-research project. The author and co-authors wrote the empirical and theoretical sections, analyzed the data, and identified the phenomenological themes together.

- II. Koskela, V. (2017). Experiences of presence as inner shift towards a more holistic approach of innovation. *Journal of Innovation Management*, Vol 5(2), pp. 26-55.

Author’s contribution: The author is the sole author.

- III. Koskela, V., Oikarinen, T., and Melkas, H. (2015). Creating social innovation: Approaches to community development in a social enterprise. In: Kostilainen, H., & Pättiniemi, P., eds., *FINSERN - The Many Faces of Social Enterprise (Yhteiskunnallisen yritystoiminnan monet kasvot)*, pp. 45-61. Helsinki: Diakoniammattikorkeakoulu.

Author’s contribution: First author. The author planned the “common space of sharing” model and put it into practice in workshops that investigated community development by collecting business ideas for social enterprises. The author wrote a major portion of the theoretical background and developed the methods used in the workshops. The author and co-authors wrote the introduction, the results, and the conclusions together.

- IV. Koskela, V., Parjanen, S., Frantsi, T., and Harmaakorpi, V. (submitted). Presence, creative self-efficacy, and communication – the main key-actors of creativity in today’s business context. *Business Creativity and the Creative Economy*. Submitted for publication 2018.

Author’s contribution: First author. The author’s primary contribution was developing the main structure of the article and organizing the three elements of the proposed creativity framework through intentional focusing and opening. The author and co-authors wrote the other sections of the article together.

- V. Koskela, V., and Goldman Schuyler, K. (2016). Experiences of Presence as a Key Factor towards Sustainability Leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 9(4), 54-59.

Author's contribution: First author. The author and co-author developed the idea of sustainability indicators and analyzed the data together. The author wrote most of the theoretical section, including the results and the discussion. The author and co-author wrote the concluding thoughts together.

# 1 Introduction

*The question is, how to be fully present to my world... present enough to enjoy it and be useful? While at the same time knowing that life species, we, the human species, are progressively destroying this world....---...We have to take a giant step in our consciousness.* (Joanna Macy, in a lecture at the National Bioneers Conference 2013)

## 1.1 Impetus for the research

We are living at a watershed moment in human destiny due to climate change, overpopulation, ecological crises, persistent human poverty, an increasingly unstable globalizing economy (Brown and Garver, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013), and knowledge-based capitalism (Klein, 2014; Scharmer, 2010; Scharmer, 2014). Today's crises are not only ecological or economic crises; they are also crises of consciousness (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer, 2014). The key to any shift in these current crises is our thinking. We need new ways of thinking creatively in the midst of the wicked problems we are currently facing to co-create a world that is a good home for all its inhabitants (Goldman Schuyler, Baugher, and Jironet, 2016).

Unrestrained economic growth and anthropocentrism are two of the main causes that have carried us into deep ethical, emotional, and spiritual waters. There is a pressing need for more comprehensive solutions to understanding the complexity of sustainability issues (Eaton, Hughes, and MacGregor, 2017). The key message of the pioneers of new organizational creativity cited in this dissertation is that we must make a paradigm shift in our individual consciousness if we want to survive as species (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flower, 2005; Scharmer 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). This shift entails a revolution in thinking and values (Klein, 2014) that will not take place at the system level until it has taken place at and through the individual level, opening individuals up to a broader viewpoint (Senge et al., 2005).

An essential role of creative collaboration in organizational, global and systemic change is played by changes in individual thinking (Senge et al., 2005; Scharmer, 2009): in order to effect sustainable change, we have to make a conscious leap from *ego-system awareness* to *eco-system awareness* (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Klein, 2014; Macy and Brown, 2014; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Senge, Scharmer, and Winslow, 2013). This urgent need for systemic change is introduced in detail in Scharmer's Theory U (Scharmer, 2009), which is also one of the theories underpinning this dissertation. Old ideologies of power and the hierarchies of the mechanistic approach no longer work in today's complex global operating environment (Hämäläinen, 2016; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2010). The main creative tool for this shift is *awareness*, the individual ability to be in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Macy and Brown, 2014; Scharmer 2009, 2010, and 2014; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al., 2005).

## 1.2 Researching individual experiences

In the context of this dissertation, the phenomenon of EP is related to studies of tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge has been one of the most-addressed concepts in the field of knowledge management in recent decades, and it is often used to refer to practical experience- or practice-based knowledge, such as skills, know-how, and professional intuition (Virtanen, 2009). Creativity and innovations usually require some measure of tacit knowledge (Koivunen, 1997; Melkas, Uotila and Kallio, 2010; Polanyi, 1959; Nonaka, Toyama and Konno, 2000), but little emphasis or interest has been placed on experience-based knowledge or individual human experiences in traditional Western studies (Varto, 2012). Nevertheless, approaches that emphasize the integral nature of organizational climate and culture to behavior within organizations (McLean, 2005) have recently increased, and it is acknowledged that human relationships are a huge multidimensional net of reflections of individual experiences. It is more than arguable that the focus of organizational innovation could be shifted more towards interrelationships, interactions, and dynamics between actor and environment (ibid.) – in other words, towards an organization’s tacit, experience-based knowledge.

Contemporary culture favors indirect knowledge, in which information is selected, packaged, and presented to recipients by others, usually by experts. Secondhand experience has become so dominant that experience gained through bodily senses has become endangered. Human aspects are ignored, as managers and executive and business school programs focus on knowledge and techniques as means of achieving goals more efficiently (Eaton, Davies, Williams and MacGregor, 2012). Huge amounts of information stream through the internet and other digital systems on a daily basis, and in the meantime we are losing our ability to experience the world directly. (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006.)

Within a phenomenological framework, individual experience that is difficult to express in words, is a typical example of tacit knowledge (Tsoukas, 2011). Polanyi’s notion of the hidden truth of “we can know more than we can tell” (2009: p. 4), the tacit dimension of knowledge, is deeply rooted, for example, in experience-based organizational actions, routines, commitment, ideals, and values, but also in human emotions, bodily experiences, and interaction (Smith, 2003). Koivunen (1997) has described this kind of knowledge as expertise that includes all the genetic, physical, intuitive, mythical, archetypical, and experience-based knowledge human beings possess. Intuition, which is described as both individual inner insight and understanding the whole and its parts, reflects experience-based tacit knowledge (Raami, 2015).

Presence, “*waking up*” moments, mindfulness, a contemplative state of mind, and moments of consciousness (awareness) – there are many names for the phenomenon of being conscious, aware, and/or mindful. The main character of this dissertation, experience of presence (EP), is an individual phenomenon, and as with other forms of experience-based tacit knowledge, it is difficult to formulate (Koivunen, 1997; Polanyi, 1966/2009; Virtanen, 2009) and challenging to research, particularly without practice-

based experience. It is the practice- and experience-based nature of this dissertation that suggests the use of phenomenology and participatory methods from the applied arts – both of which lend themselves to exploring individual experiences through praxis – as research methodologies.

In phenomenology, when you are aware of your own existence, you are in a conscious state of being (Rauhala, 1992). Human consciousness is always interconnected with something; it cannot exist without connections, because it is the tool for reaching out into the world and a bridge between the past and the future (Bergson, 1975). Individual, mental, and spiritual development may only happen in private, real-time now moments. In today's world, there is a need for self-education in how to experience now moments. (Rauhala, 1992.) For example, sufficient research has not been conducted on a worker's personal capacity to be present in a specific moment. A phenomenological approach offers a suitable way of processing, learning about, and opening up to the phenomenon of tacit human knowledge (Van Manen, 2016). Heidegger (1998) notes that if we already know that the essence of being itself brings human thinking to an impasse, we may say that we know something essential about being. This dissertation is an attempt to approach the subject of presence phenomenologically.

In this dissertation, the role of individual EPs reveals itself through narratives, notes taken during or immediately after practice, observations made by workshop participants (employees from various organizations), and the phenomenon of presence itself.

### **1.3 Research subject and objective**

The subject of this dissertation is nature or essence of presence in a Finnish context; the aim is identifying connections between this presence and creativity, specifically between individual EPs and organizational creativity. The primary methods used to investigate the nature of presence and its possible connections to creativity have been developed through praxis, relying on participants' descriptions of EPs, practice-based workshops, and tools from the applied arts.

The objective of this dissertation is to investigate experiences of presence (EPs) as potential stimuli for developing creativity within organizations. The sub-studies demonstrate through praxis (i.e., participatory workshops and individual descriptions) how people experience presence and in what ways those experiences could support collective creative processes within organizations. All three levels of organizational creativity – individual, group, and organizational – are addressed in the present research process.

In the context of this dissertation, organizational creativity means new holistic, comprehensive, and sustainable approaches to innovation and leadership that assume factors like the ability to communicate openly and co-create in order to solve collective problems (Harmaakorpi, 2006; Kallio, 2012). Organizational creativity also includes recognizing the collective values that are largely responsible for the sustainability



challenges faced in today's world (Eaton, Hughes and Mac Gregor, 2017). New approaches to organizational creativity are introduced in greater detail in Chapter 2, Background literature.

This study will explore and suggest how individual *experiences of presence* (EPs) could serve as a key factor in a paradigm shift towards more holistic and sustainable ways of thinking about organizational creativity. In organizational development literature, *presencing* means the cultivation of a social field that allows people to connect with deeper sources of knowing, being, creativity, and self (Goldman Schuyler, Baugher, and Jironet, 2016; Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013).

For centuries, people have tried to develop practices that bring them into the present moment and provide them with the ability to be more aware, in order to experience the fullness of life and access ideas for solving challenging problems. Unfortunately, these possible connections between presence and creativity have received little attention in the field of organizational creativity. Furthermore, it appears not much research on the phenomenon or concept of presence exists in the field of organizational studies or creativity, either. The research objective can be crystallized in one core question: Is there a connection between individual experiences of presence and organizational creativity? The primary scientific contribution of this study is describing these potential connections between EPs and organizational creativity.

#### 1.4 Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is divided into two parts: Part I and Part II. Part I consists of six introductory chapters. Chapter 1, Introduction, presents the background for the research, a description of researching individual experience, the research subject and objective, and structure of the dissertation. Chapter 2, Background, deals with key concepts and approaches described in the background literature. Chapter 3, Research methodology and design, describes the methodology, methods, and process used to collect the data for the dissertation. Chapter 4 presents the key results. Chapter 5, Discussion, introduces the perspectives on presence discovered through the research as well as the connections between presence and both individual and organizational creativity. Research limitations and assessment and suggestions for future research are also included here. Chapter 6, Conclusion, summarizes the findings and reflections and offers ideas for possible future research. Part II consists of five articles: Study 1, Study 2, Study 3, Study 4, and Study 5. The key results and conclusions of this dissertation are based on the findings of and interaction/processes between those five articles.

## 2 Research background: from egocentrism to ecocentrism

The background literature introduced in this chapter emphasizes the significance of individual experiences and personal awareness in organizational creativity. The literature includes new methodological perspectives on thinking about, investigating, developing, and innovating both individual and communal creativity in organizations and as leaders.

The literature offers many approaches to organizational creativity, but this dissertation primarily focuses on the more holistic and sustainable approaches in which individual human beings are seen as active parts of the existing system (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Scharmer, 2009; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006). More sustainable organizational creativity will emerge in infrastructures if we, as users or citizens, change our ego-system awareness to eco-system awareness (Senge et al., 2008; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006). This shift requires a conscious state of mind that can also be viewed as the seed of the creative process that generates ideas and innovation (Goldman Schuyler, 2016). This state of mind is a commonality shared by change-makers, those who choose not to travel well-worn paths, but place themselves at the edges of the unknown when connecting to their deep sources of knowing (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013).

In this dissertation, organizational creativity refers not only to the capacity to develop new ideas and innovations, make scientific discoveries, or develop intelligent ways of working (Borghini, 2005); it also focuses on factors such as communication culture, sustainability in its larger meaning, and more aware and authentic styles of leadership. Those interested in facilitating organizational creativity ought to take a wide range of considerations into account (Kallio, 2015), and the goal of this dissertation is to demonstrate whether the ability to be present is one of those considerations. The sub-study findings indicate similarities, for instance, between the creativity approaches of Australian aboriginals (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006), Bopp and Bopp's sustainability model (2011), which also has its roots in the sustainable approaches of North American aboriginal peoples specifically, and Scharmer's (2009) Theory U. Before introducing these concepts, however, it is worthwhile reviewing the styles of thinking and behavior that have led us to the interrelated unsustainable patterns of production and consumption (Baugher, Osika, and Robert, 2016).

Firstly, the current need for organizational creativity is examined in Section 2.1. Section 2.2 introduces old approaches and worldviews that have grown obsolete, leading us to the point of needing a shift.

Sections 2.3 and 2.4 describe sustainable and new holistic approaches respectively, which contain integral arguments for organizational creativity – for example through ancient knowledge gleaned from aboriginal wisdom, various levels of individual awareness in organizational environments, and the leadership skills important in the proposed paradigm shift.

Lastly, Section 2.5 introduces the main character and subject of this dissertation: presence and its various elements, which form the nucleus of the paradigm shift. Without personal EPs, we cannot change our typical structures of thinking, feeling, and functioning.

## 2.1 Organizational creativity needs new approaches

If we want to bring greater creativity to solving the wicked problems we face as organizations and, indeed, as society as a whole, we must recognize that human flourishing is not a mechanical process; it is an organic one (Robinson, 2010). *Wicked problems* refer to that class of social problems encompassing multiple systems, where the proposed “solutions” often turn out to be worse than the symptoms, because they are confusing, complex, unique, and difficult to formulate, and considered a symptom of another problem (Churchman, 1967; Rittel and Webber, 1973).

A purely technocentric view of innovation is less sustainable now than ever, when we need new choices, strategies, ideas, and products that help with challenges we face as society as a whole (Klein, 2014; Scharmer, 2009; Senge et al., 2005; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006). Our current egocentric worldview based on industrialism, mechanistic thinking, and economic profit no longer works, either (Senge, Smith, Kruschwitz, Laur and Shley, 2008).

The concept of organizational creativity typically refers to the creation of, for example, a useful, valuable new product, idea, or service by individuals collaborating in a complex social system (Woodman, Sayer and Griffin, 1993). As a phenomenon, it is potentially linked to all human activity that takes place at the individual or group levels within organizations and delivers unique, beneficial solutions (Kallio, 2015). Organizational creativity can be approached through three distinct levels: the individual level, the group level, and the organizational level (ibid). In organizational creativity, the collective ideas and insights of members of organizations are important, but most creativity research has generally focused on the individual level alone (Parjanen, 2012).

According to Borghini (2005), from a sense-making perspective, organizational creativity may be seen as a common and situated process of cognition. Organizational creativity is usually studied in big, hyper-creative organizations (Kallio, 2015) where innovation is a defining feature. And yet innovation does not necessarily coincide with organizational creativity (Borghini, 2005). Some researchers note that innovation and the innovation economy have become overemphasized mantras in Western companies, pushing them to the darker (wicked) side of innovation in our competitive system: “innovate or die” (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006).

There are various approaches to viewing the multifaceted phenomenon of organizational creativity, which emerges as a sustainable synthesis of several points of view and demands the ability to fit together a variety of perspectives, languages, and challenges. Organizations are both sites of continuously changing human action and the patterned unfolding of human action (Chia and Tsoukas, 2002). Collective creativity in

organizations relies on communication breakthroughs as a vehicle for innovation; it is a dialogue between individuals who share something, like a mutual goal (Sonnenburg, 2004; Sundholm, Artman and Ramberg, 2004), or what people care about and want to create together, through a range of conversations of complexity, with a shared intention (Hulme, Cracknell, and Owens, 2009).

According to Sveiby and Skuthorpe (2006), the darker side of innovation or the discovery of breakthroughs may be the environmental and societal consequences of using new products. These results are not usually given much weight by corporations or governments, which have tended to ignore the negative sides of innovation (ibid.). There is a need for a new “eco-based” communicative culture and framework for economic thought to replace the existing “ego-based” approach. This urgent need puts our shared reality, with all its challenges, at the center of our conscious attention (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al., 2008). Communities with heart and consciousness are the cornerstone of sustainably constructed societies (Eaton et al., 2012).

The developers of new models of organizational creativity argue that we are living in an unsustainable state of ego-system awareness based on the mechanistic approach introduced in the following section.

## 2.2 Mechanistic approach

Western technological thinking has developed from dominant Judeo-Christian belief traditions where nature is seen as a benefit of humanity (Singer, 1993). Such dualistic thinking implies an ontology where human beings are the most valuable living creatures on earth, commanding nature like God himself (Klemola, 2004). In the anthropocentric approach,

...man and the totality of being has been so decisively shaped by the hubris which the early modern-era thinkers felt and which found form in the positivist idealization of science. It has even stuck to our clothes, and will not be effaced by just marveling at it. (Varto, 2009: p. 122)

An anthropocentric attitude was the beginning of the idea of technology, where *techné* is taken as independent territory in the main idea, where man and nature are viewed as separate. Man exists above nature and needs to rule over everything, because man’s knowledge of nature is universal. Nature endlessly provides material for man’s needs (Varto, 2009). Nowadays, when environmental destruction and loss of biodiversity run rampant across our planet, humankind’s relationship with nature is characterized by a lack of respect among humankind for the rights of all living beings (Klein, 2014). Our system mines our minds at the same time as we mine the soil (Robinson, 2007). According to Heidegger, we as humans do not have any special status in nature, and when we destroy our environment, we destroy ourselves (Varto, 2003).

Our current system operates on the assumption that the earth's environment is a subset of the economy, a planet of benefits that belongs to us. Technological thinking leads us to believe that only path to individual and societal success lies in economic growth, even if the predominant ways of acting in the global economy are ecologically, socially, and economically unsustainable (Eaton et al., 2012; Klein, 2014; Jakonen and Silvasti, 2015). Many business leaders continue to subscribe to the notion that the purpose of the global economy is to enhance human well-being through constantly sustained economic growth. (Brown and Garver, 2009; Klein, 2014). For example, the commonly used terms "efficient" and "efficiency" suggest an entity that works like a machine or computer, rather than a living presence with a heart. Workers have been increasingly driven like machines since 1885, when Thoreau described how the laboring man has no time to be anything but depreciated in the market – without leisure time or relationships with other people or nature. Western management traditions tend to uphold a view of companies as machines for "processing information" (Takeuchi, 2006). When organizations work like machines, their activity is predictable and their potential for creativity decreases. This contrasts with an organic organization that reacts and adapts to changes, with an inherently high potential of creativity (Kallio, 2015).

Typical to the mechanistic approach is a life cycle of programmed or planned obsolescence that aspires to relocate everything that is unsuitable or "no longer useful" away. Also typical of capitalist thinking models based on a mechanistic worldview is not being able to see possibilities beyond it (Klein, 2014; Senge et al., 2008). This type of thinking transfers to other spheres of life, and so the capitalist-industrial worldview also exists in our states of mind and views (Senge et al., 2008) where non-useful, non-productive, or inadequate relationships without obvious benefit are easily treated like waste, or seen as garbage or other harm. *Homo economicus* is programmed to consume and be productive (Klein, 2014). Its roots in European Christianity, the mechanistic approach continues to thrive and be propagated in practice through the present capitalist system (Varto, 2009).

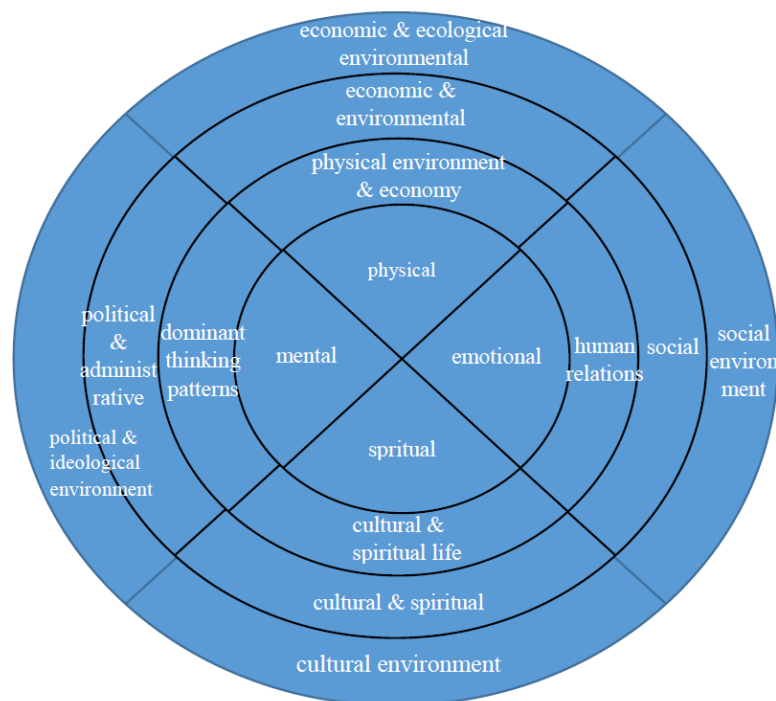
Nevertheless, other approaches have emerged to counter the mechanistic approach. This dissertation taps those new approaches and sustainable models for thinking about innovation and organizational creativity that reflect and highlight the importance of being present. Such sustainable and more holistic approaches are introduced in Sections 2.3 and 2.4, respectively.

### 2.3 Sustainable approaches

We do not only need to "think globally and act locally"; we also need to "think locally and act globally," because local actions have global impacts and global actions have local impacts. This is the nucleus of sustainable approaches. There are various complex interconnected global reasons for learning to cope with social and ecological challenges through sustainability thinking. The concept of sustainability has been adapted from sustainable development and ecological sustainability to such areas as community,

organizational cultural, personal, and social sustainability (Eaton et al., 2012). Varto (2009) proposes we take arguments other than economic or technical arguments equally seriously as we take economic and technological arguments. We should particularly consider those philosophical, ethical, and moral arguments that prove economic or technical arguments unsustainable (ibid.). This section introduces one such sustainable approach developed by Bopp and Bopp (2011) based on aboriginal worldviews.

Communities or organizations have various sectors of well-being: material, social, communal, and spiritual (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2016; Scharmer, 2010; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). One way of perceiving these sectors is illustrated in Figure 1, which has been developed from the American Indigenous Medicine Wheel (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, and Lane, 1989; Bopp and Bopp, 2011). According to Bopp and Bopp (2011), a sustainable community is a basic human need that can be developed through four equal aspects of human life: the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual. These aspects, which expand from the individual level to the family level, from the family level to the community level, and from the community level to global level, are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Aspects of a sustainable community (Bopp and Bopp, 2011)**

In Figure 1, the individual human being is at the center of the circle of her own understanding. The position in the center is ideal when all four sectors – mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual – around the individual are balanced and equal, when no aspect of life dominates the others. The next level out from the center is the level of the family or clan, where the four main aspects to balance are physical environment & economy (material sector), human relations (social sector), cultural & spiritual life (spiritual sector), and dominant thinking patterns (mental sector). We must make sure that none grows too important, because all are needed equally. The next level requiring equilibrium is the level of the community, which involves such aspects as economic & environmental, social, political & administrative, and cultural & spiritual. The last level and outermost ring is the wider world, meaning such equal environments as the economic & ecological environment, social environment, cultural environment, and political & ideological environment. The meaning of Figure 1 is to clarify the necessary aspects in human life requiring balance if we want to achieve true sustainable development in every dimension of organizational living (Bopp and Bopp, 2011).

As implied by the model above, the most important level of sustainability – and the basis of more sustainable leadership – is individual awareness (Eaton et al., 2012) and learning to prepare us for the future in a more sustainable way (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). We must transform the whole system, including social structures, the economy, and capitalism (Eisler, 2016; Klein, 2014) through individual self-awareness. In order to do so, we need to use specific tools and ways of thinking that can help us sense that incremental sustainability crises are interconnected, symptoms of a larger global system that is out of balance, and that this imbalance is the result of a way of thinking whose time has passed (Senge et al., 2008).

Real progress can occur by developing and holding (open) space for a non-hierarchical conversation between the various levels mentioned above and through transforming capitalism, institutions, leadership, and the self (Senge, Scharmer and Winslow, 2013). According to McLean (2005), organizations that support open interaction between their workers are more likely to generate innovations, whereas organizations that encourage control suffer from diminished creativity. People who look at leadership and transformation from a consciousness point of view that differs from the past allow a different future to emerge (Goldman Schuyler et al., 2016; Senge et al., 2013). For example, addressing climate change will require a broad range of innovations not in just technologies, but also in organizations and societies, behaviors, and relationships with each other and the environment. This is one arena in which we can learn a lot from aboriginal cultures (Klein, 2014). In the next sections, an eco-centric, aboriginal approach and a Taoist worldview are introduced as models of a more aware and creative way of living.

### 2.3.1 **Aboriginal worldview**

Whereas contemporary Western society has exploited natural resources as commodities to be traded, many aboriginal societies have traditionally had a strong connection with

nature (Klein, 2014). In aboriginal ways of life, all living creatures are respected as equal, and certain rituals and ceremonies are performed to maintain a sacred and conscious connection between them and the earth (Snyder, 2010; Tedlock and Tedlock, 1992). In aboriginal mythologies, the past, the present and the future are usually equal parts of a single unity (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Varto and Veenkivi, 1997). For example, in the Australian aboriginal way of life, the role of the human community was to maintain the created world by keeping everybody and everything alive, including animals, vegetation, knowledge, even ancestors up in the Milky Way. People had to continue to tell stories and perform dances or else the earth would die (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006).

Several researchers have suggested that the indigenous episteme of balance and cultures of “give-back” may be the worldview we should “re-member” and “re-connect” to (Bopp et al., 1989; Kaila, 2008; Klein, 2014; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006). Increasingly, there is a longing for a new kind of holistic leadership grounded in wider perspectives, such as common global values and ecological responsibility for all beings living on our planet (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Fuda, 2013; Jakonen and Silvasti, 2015; Klein, 2014; Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al., 2005; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Valkeapää, 2011). For example, Berry (1999) emphasizes a holistic and “intimate relationship with the earth” as a key answer to our global challenges on many levels.

How can we rediscover this intimate relationship? Wilderness experiences – entering the landscape rather than viewing it – can, for example, induce self-awareness, feelings of wonder and humility, increased appreciation for others, and a feeling of renewal and vigor (Frumkin, 2001). Nature amplifies time and inspires our creativity in all its dimensions (Snyder, 2010). In many cases, nature seems to be a substitute for the supportive environment that is essential element of creative thinking (Sternberg, 2006). According to latest neuroscience, the relaxed state of mind nature induces can serve as the birthplace of inspirations and new perspectives (Leppänen and Pajunen, 2017).

### 2.3.2 Taoist worldview

There are many examples in literature and philosophy of people who live in connection with nature and simplicity. For example, Buddhist wisdom, Taoism, yoga philosophy, the traditional teachings and poetry of Native Americans (Berry, 1999), and the writings of such Western poets such as Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau are full of examples of experiences of awareness and creative insights that have taken place in nature (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). The roots of Taoism lie in an ancient Siberian shamanism that was strongly connected with respect for and understanding of nature (Palmer, 1998). Tao (also known as Dao or the Way) is the cosmic womb; it is the dynamic and ultimate birthplace of everything (Laozi, 2001; Padilla, 2015). The crucial synthesis of all cosmic connections that make life possible in the universe can be found in “the way of the Tao” – Tao is present everywhere (Padilla, 2015). From another perspective, Tao can be seen as virtue, a holistic way of life. According to the ancient teachings of Laozi (2001), the problem of humanity is that we lose our connectedness with Tao, with a holistic way of life, when we grow up. We forget our authentic nature and become rootless. Despite this tragedy,



which has an influence on all aspects of human life, we have the possibility to return to Tao if we once more undertake to embrace the idea of the authentic self (Laozi, 2001).

In Taoist philosophy, the opposite but complementary energies of the feminine Yin and the masculine Yang are the main forces we constantly identify through our senses and bodies. It is possible to access this sensitivity more consciously through, for example, a tradition of contemplation that involves practice of the mind, the body, the body-mind, and mudras (Padilla, 2015).

Tao is a mysterious order, the mystery of all mysteries, and does not surrender to simple explication. We can follow it spontaneously by listening to ourselves, to our hearts, without over-analyzing. Living the Tao is living from moment to moment by accepting and knowing that everything is unknowing (Hytönen, 1998; Laozi, 2001).

One way back to the Tao is a reunion with it as ‘re-membering’. One way of it is to live a simple life without too much ownership and be an authentic, frank, spontaneous, child-like human again. This is the Taoist attitude of *wu wei*, which means the “action of non-action” or “action without doing” (Laozi, 2001: p. 19). *Wu wei* is foreign concept to the dominant tradition of Western thought, because “the survival mechanisms of the human organism itself lead us to experience non-action as in opposition to our continued well-being” (Levine, 2015: p. 22). An attitude of *wu wei* resembles the phenomenon of presence or a contemplative attitude, both of which are covered in Section 2.5, following.

## 2.4 New holistic approaches

Breaking our daily routines by seeing things from more than one perspective (Parjanen, 2012) and by trusting our senses may open us up to the world around us (Thorsted, 2008; Scharmer, 2009), but this requires courage and safe surroundings (Frantsi, Pässilä and Parjanen, 2008; Parjanen, 2012). Creativity also contains aspects of collaboration and service without competition – of cooperation and symbioses (Dominquez, 2012). In the literature, relatively little attention has been devoted to connection and interaction between members of teams or organizations, even though there is evidence that interpersonal relations can facilitate internalization of motivation in the workplace and positive results (Gagne and Deci, 2005). For example, dialogue is a way of creating profound levels of shared meaning in a group so that creativity can emerge in practice (Palus and Drath, 2001). During dialogue, novel knowing is constructed in a common socio-cultural context through the interpretation of information and the construction of a common socio-cultural ground (Mahy, 2012; Pässilä, Oikarinen and Harmaakorpi, 2010). It is much more complex process than simply managing information (ibid.).

Many factors prevent us from engaging in dialogue. According to the new holistic approaches of Scharmer (2009) and Scharmer and Kaufer (2013), there are three major divides requiring spanning through new points of view: 1. the ecological divide that separates us from the environment, 2. the social divide that separates us from one another,

and 3. the spiritual divide that separates us from our inner self. New points of view are the key to social innovation, an intentional focus on changing something about what people do alone or together for the better (Franz, Hochgerner and Howaldt, 2012). Social innovation and its development have a double-faced nature: they involve social problems as well as shifting our way of thinking about said problems (Lawrence et al., 2012). Social innovation is characterized by many interpretations, including new ways of collaborating that take advantage of current practice, shifted ways of thinking, and technologies. As a way of seeking new, alternative solutions to social problems, it is a process of social interaction (Hudson, 2008) that is closely associated with interorganizational and intersectoral collaboration (Lawrence, Phillips and Tracey, 2012). In order to effectively innovate solutions to the wicked problems besetting our society and organizations, it is necessary to build bridges spanning the aforementioned ecological, social, and spiritual divides, and to look at the health of organizations, communities, and societies from a more holistic point of view (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Goldman Schuyler et al., 2016; Klein, 2014; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). One such bridge is Scharmer's (2009) theory U, which is introduced briefly in Section 2.4.1 and again in Study 1.

#### 2.4.1 Theory U

Theory U is one of the newest change theories attempting to penetrate all levels of our organized world. It was developed by a number of change theorists working with the complexity of global, institutional, organizational, and individual systems. Theory U assumes that change at the micro-, meso-, macro- and mundolevels (see Table 1) can only take place through looking differently, reflecting others, and seeing the bigger picture. It offers an alternative to analysis, action, and problem solving based on linear, mechanistic thinking, which is often focused on avoiding risk.

The model challenges institutions and people to see differently and to induce change by starting from leading ourselves (Scharmer 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Goldman Schuyler et al., 2016). This means shifting our attention at every level of social behavior in individual, group, institution and global systems, as described in Table 1, the Matrix of Social Evolution.

According to Scharmer and Kaufer (2013), the next revolution in creative organizations will require a multipoint strategy dealing with the four levels appearing in the columns in Table 1. At the micro level, this means shifting from downloading habits of thought to generative, open presence. At the meso level, it means shifting from downloading conversations to collective creativity. At the macro level, it means organizing institutions not as hierarchical silos but as eco-creative fields interconnecting the eco-system as a living whole. And at the mundo level, it means coordinating global systems from hierarchies to awareness-based collective action (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013).

According to Scharmer (2009), most organizations and institutions still function at the levels of habitual (1.0) and ego-system awareness (2.0) typical of a mechanistic approach (see Table 1). The ideal structures of attention are levels 3.0. and 4.0, or stakeholder and

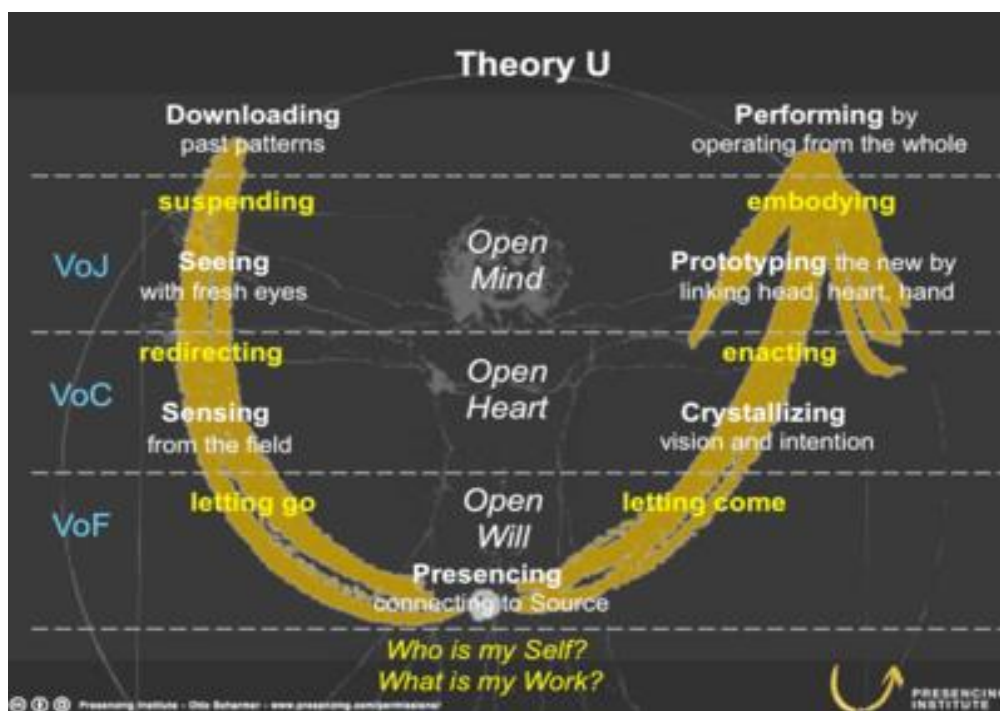
eco-system awareness. The structure of attention as it applies to listening is described in greater detail in Study 2.

**Table 1: The Matrix of Social Evolution: structures of attention at the micro, meso, macro, and mundo levels (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013: p. 148)**

<b>Field: Structure of Attention</b>	<b>Micro: <i>Attending</i> (Individual)</b>	<b>Meso: <i>Conversing</i> (Group)</b>	<b>Macro: <i>Organizing</i> (Institution)</b>	<b>Mundo: <i>Coordinating</i> (Global)</b>
<b>1.0: habitual awareness</b>	Listening 1: downloading habits of thought	Downloading: speaking from conforming	Centralized control: organizing around hierarchy	Hierarchy: commanding
<i>Suspending</i> <b>2.0: ego- system awareness</b>	Listening 2: factual, open- minded	Debate: speaking from differentiating	Divisionalized: organizing around differentiation	Market: competing
<i>Redirecting</i> <b>3.0: stakeholder awareness</b>	Listening 3: empathetic, open-hearted	Dialogue: speaking from inquiring others/self	Distributed/ networked: organizing around interest groups	Negotiated dialogue: cooperating
<i>Letting Go</i> <b>4.0: eco- system awareness</b>	Listening 4: generative, open presence	Collective creativity: speaking from what is moving through	Eco-system: organizing around what emerges	Awareness- based collective action: co- creating

According to Theory U (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013), if we want to be more creative and learn from the emerging future, we have to activate a deeper learning cycle than those we rely on when learning from the past by downloading the same defunct patterns over and over (Figure 2). First, we have to open our minds, setting aside habitual behaviors and thoughts to see with fresh eyes. Second, we have to open our heart to

sensing from the field. Third, we have to open our will by letting go. The bottom of the “U” is the space of *presencing*, an instantaneous act and the ability to be present in the moment. It is a moment of “quieting” that allows us to let go of our old selves and connect with another state of being, a space that helps us become who we are and do what we want to do through the act of self-awareness. Entering a state of presence allows us to operate from co-creative flow. Letting go allows us to let come, to crystallize our vision and intention into prototyping the new, and to perform by operating from the whole (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). One of the main theoretical frames of this dissertation, Theory U is introduced in Study 2.



**Figure 2: Theory U (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013: p. 22)**

In his more holistic organizational approach to leadership innovation and creativity, Scharmer (2015) emphasizes that the cultivation of and shifts in consciousness are key factors in the multi-level shifts in perspective needed for systems to evolve. Large-scale organizational development requires the kind of creativity no single person is capable of harnessing alone, but a group of people can do it together when working toward the same intention (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Hulme et al, 2009; Senge et al., 2013). Such development also requires new, more authentic and aware leadership, as described in the next section.

#### 2.4.2 Authentic leadership

The definition of leadership within organizations can be identified as “the role of individuals within a group to act in a seemingly beneficial manner to the group” (Bishop, 2013: p. 1). Leadership is a complex dynamic between individuals, their values, a particular situation, and the circumstances involved (ibid.). According to Virtaharju (2016), we should understand the context of leadership as a sociomaterial construction, where beliefs provide meaning for the action we witness and/or take part in. One of the most important leadership qualities is the ability to recognize the potential of the space between encounters for establishing a connection with another person (Yaron, 1993).

In the literature, the relatively new concept of *authentic leadership* means such intertwined qualities as positive organizational behavior, ethical leadership, and transformational leadership (Baron, 2016). Klenke (2007) emphasizes that authentic leadership focuses on the role of the self through three identity lenses: self-identity, leader identity, and spiritual identity. An authentic leader has self-awareness; she may know her strengths, weaknesses, beliefs, and emotions, as well as their impact on others (Baron, 2016). Values, morals, and ethics play important roles in authentic leadership. If somebody wants to be an authentic leader, she must be true to herself “as if relates to the collective good of others and be ethically accountable” (Bishop, 2013: p. 7).

Rogers (1961) indicates that in authentic connection with others, it does not help to act as though you were something you are not; you are more effective when you can listen and accept others as they are. He has found it to be of enormous value if we can permit ourselves to understand others, as it makes for a much more rewarding encounter. For him, the experience (in this case the experience of meeting another) is the highest authority, the basis of authority, because it always can be checked in new ways and its frequent errors can be open to repeated correction. The more you are open to the realities in you and in the other person, the less you have to “fix things” (Rogers, 1961). Chia (2014) calls this kind of “anti-heroic” ability, which is necessary in strategic organizational change, as an attitude of “letting happen.”

According to Cunliffe (2009), phenomenological understanding who we are relates to leadership through responsibility and authenticity. Authenticity is about understanding, being responsible, and being true to ourselves in relation to the pressures and influences around us. This is how it is linked to phenomenology – through our own individual experiences. Being an authentic leader involves responding to challenges, thinking critically, seeing situations in new ways, dealing with uncertainty, learning from experience, knowing yourself, and being passionate about what you do (Cunliffe, 2009).

Additionally, authenticity can lead to increased profits and sustainable growth through self-awareness, self-development, and leading through values, passion, and purpose with your heart and head by being yourself (Goffee and Jones, 2005; Kruse, 2013). “Presencing” (see e.g. Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013) is a type of awareness skill that can only be learned by doing, through personal experience; it is one

of the most important things to learn for leaders, who have to take charge, make decisions, and be responsive to others (Taylor, 2005).

Good leadership exhibits many qualities that reflect aspects of the leader's inner world. For example, authenticity is a quality that cannot be pretended or manipulated. It is a matter of focusing, implanting, attuning, and intuition (Goffee and Jones, 2005). According to Scharmer and Kaufer (2010), as they are confronted with emerging complexities, today's leaders will be more effective if they develop the skills to sense emerging futures – like an artist standing in front of a blank canvas. As with the artist, there are three different possible perspectives to focus on: first, we may focus on the thing that results from the creative process – for the artist, the finished painting. Second, we may focus on the process, or what artist is doing as he paints. Or, thirdly, we may observe the moment before we begin working, when the artist stands in front of the blank canvas. Looking at the final product, the process, or the present moment of a blank canvas can serve as a metaphor for the work of leaders. Looking at how leaders work or the processes they use has been the most common perspective in management and leadership research over the past 20 years. What would happen if we shifted our attention to that moment when the leader is about to act (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2010)? This shift to the present moment, to the state of presence, could lead us to more authentic – and more aware – leadership.

But what does it mean to be in present moment? In the leadership literature referred to in this dissertation, *the Now* is seen as a potential (and literal) moment for major change, the key to the paradigm shift we have been waiting for (Goldman-Schuyler, 2016; Klein, 2014; Macy, 2013; Senge et al., 2013). Some basic features of the phenomenon of presence as described in the literature are introduced in Section 2.5 and Studies 1, 2, and 5.

## 2.5 Presence

According to Padilla (2015), “the hunter of the future” creates presence by forgetting the past and simply concentrating on the present moment through beforehand perception as called *pre-sensing*, or through opening her senses. Many philosophical, cultural, and religious traditions teach that life balance, or happiness, is found by living peacefully in the present moment (Burkeman, 2009; Klemola, 2013; Tolle, 1999). The capacity to be present has been practiced for thousands of years in Eastern traditions through various forms of meditation, contemplation, yoga, and so on, where the goal of the practice has always been the same: resisting a wandering mind (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Klemola, 2013). In this particular context, presence means both the experience one can acquire through body awareness as well as a flexible state of mind, or mindfulness, in which one is actively engaged in the present, noticing and accepting new things (Kabat-Zinn, 1994 and 2011; Langer, 2000; Tolle, 1999).

The phenomenologist Martin Heidegger argues the essence of human thinking has similarities to meditation or contemplation when we endeavor to let reality enter our

minds, as opposed to actively conquering it. He calls this ability as *Gelassenheit*, which is not representing or self-determining thinking, but thinking that contemplates the truth of being. Such contemplative thinking means having more radical insights into the essence of what a human being is and who we really are (Dalle Pezze, 2006; Varto, 2003). For Heidegger, questions of being, essence of self, and world are all questions of time (Heidegger, 2000). According to the philosophy of Bergson (1975), consciousness is the attentive bridge that spans the past and the future (ibid.). The body and consciousness are linked together through memory (time), perception, and imagination. The human body is an instrument that is not to be divided into matter and spirit (or mind), because it is characterized by wholeness (Freiberger, 2007).

The ability to be present, or the ability to practice presence, are parts of this contemplative tradition, and presence is a commonly used term in various descriptions of it. Contemplation is described in the *English Oxford Living Dictionaries* as “the action of looking thoughtfully at something for a long time,” which can be seen in four different ways: 1.) Deep reflective thought; 2.) The state of being considered or planned; 3.) Religious meditation; or 4.) A form of Christian prayer/meditation in which a person seeks to pass beyond mental images and concepts to a direct experience of the divine. In the context of this dissertation, contemplation is primarily understood as meaning this first definition, “deep reflective thought”, when we become more aware of our inner thoughts and behaviors (or our subconscious, Klemola, 2013). This makes it possible to shift the inner place from where we currently operate to one operating on a state of *presencing* (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). Therefore, in this context, contemplation refers to a method or certain attitude of being present that makes it possible to recognize our blind spots (our typical, repeated ways of understanding and communicating), as introduced in the following sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 below.

### 2.5.1 Contemplation

A contemplative attitude or state of contemplation is a space that escapes all description and transforms the self into a “temple of the body” through listening to the words of silence with all of your senses (Padilla, 2015). In a contemplative state of mind, you do not struggle against the present situation, but quietly observe what is happening in it. This is similar to the Taoist worldview introduced in Section 2.3.2.

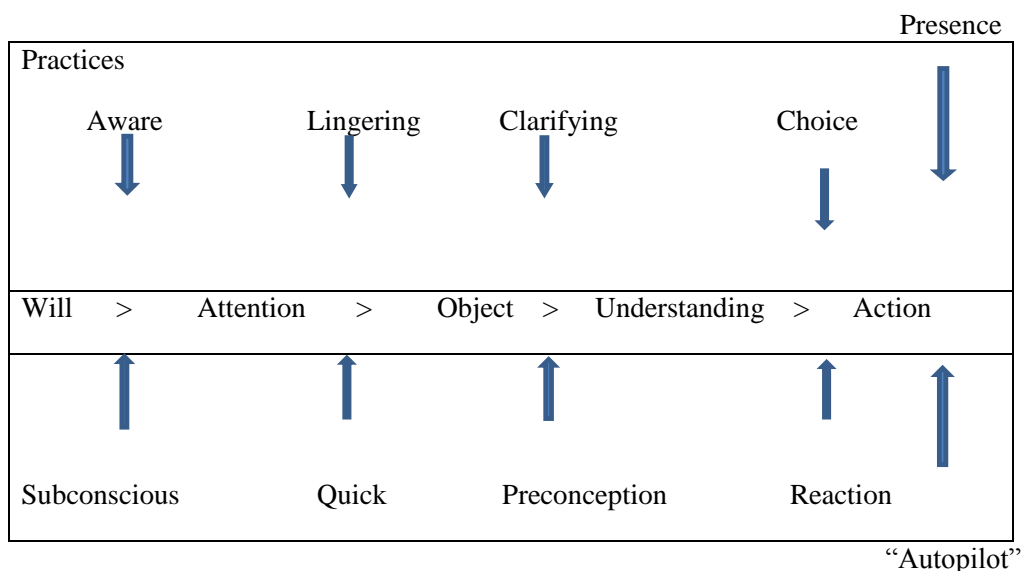
A good example of a contemplative attitude is the use of the *mudra*, an expressive hand gesture appearing in some traditions of dance, theatre, qigong, and karate as an attitude of serving or opening up to the practice of moving your body. The *mudra* is considered a step towards wisdom in understanding the complete human body, by expressing something to the other indicating identification with it (Varto, 2009).

Meditation, “a way away from ignorance,” as described in Buddhism, is when you focus your mind and body completely on the present moment. It means strictly observing of your inner and outer surroundings without knowing better, routines, or preconceptions.

You just are who you are, and the things inside and outside of yourself are what they are. The contemplative mind accepts everything as it is (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Padilla, 2015).

Contemplation is often linked to poetic or even sacred experiences of nature. Both scientific and fictional literature are rife with examples of those who start to consciously contemplate the beauty of nature, finding reserves of strength that endure as long as life lasts (Leppänen and Pajunen, 2017; Louv, 2009; Louv, 2011).

The Finnish phenomenologist Timo Klemola (2013) highlights how practicing mindfulness (or maybe some other form of meditation or contemplation) as a method affords us the possibility to become aware of the content of our mind. Klemola's descriptions of both the process used in practicing the mind and the difference between the aware and the subconscious mind are depicted in Figure 3 (Klemola, 2013).



**Figure 3: The difference between presence and autopilot by Klemola (2013: p. 25)**

In practicing the mind, you learn to slow or even stop your processes of thinking, become aware, and choose your action. The dynamic process of authentic observation is described in Figure 3 as advancing through “will”, “attention”, “object”, “understanding”, and finally, “action” between the blue arrows of “presence” and “autopilot.” The untrained subconscious mind (the lower half of Figure 3) is not aware of authentic observation – or the operation of the mind – and acts on autopilot, which works quickly through preconceptions and one’s usual reactions, the way it is used to acting. The aware or conscious mind (the upper half of Figure 3) sees reality as it is, lingers, receives insights, and makes necessary choices here and now – by being present and “turning off” the autopilot. If we succeed in being present in the moment, we succeed in being aware of the choices we are making here and now in the present situation (Klemola, 2013). This is



also the most important impact of *presencing*, which is the main element of the Theory U – and a social space of collective creation (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

Many human ways of behaving, reflecting, and projecting are unconscious, meaning we are not aware of them. These autopilot activities fall into our *blind spot*, which we need to acknowledge if we really want to change our relationship within the world and find new perspectives on creativity. The benefits of recognizing your blind spot are addressed in the following section.

### 2.5.2 Recognizing the blind spot

Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) have described the blind spot as the quality of the inner place from which we usually operate in “the Now.” If we want to transform how our society responds to wicked challenges, we need to understand the deeper source of our individual thoughts and actions (see Figure 4), which tend to fall outside the range of our daily observations and awareness. Ultimately the success of our actions as change-makers is dependent on the inner place from which we operate (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013).

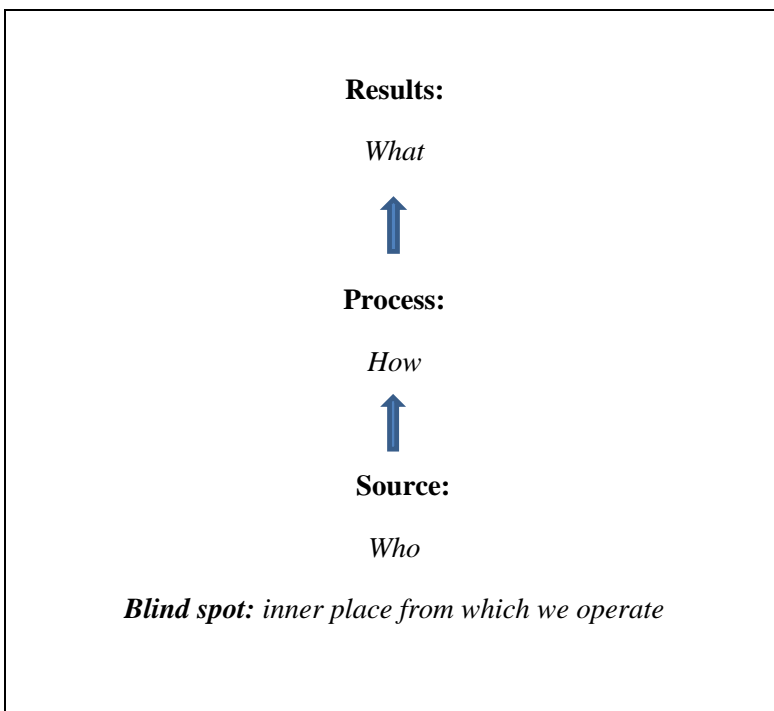


Figure 4: The blind spot of leadership (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013: p. 19)

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We will not be able to transform the behavior of systems until we transform the quality of our actions within those systems, which implies the main thing to do is to transform ourselves (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013).

According to Damasio (2000), the feeling of presence is the feeling of transformation at that moment when we understand something new. Research supports the outlook that leaders benefit from being present in the moment, self-aware, and present to the people they lead (Goldman Schuyler et al., 2016; Good et al., 2016; Gunnlaugson, Baron and Cayer, 2014; Weick and Putnam, 2006). For example, in Kaeufer's (Kaufer's), Scharmer's, and their colleagues' intervention experience in German health care (2003), improved, non-hierarchical interactions between patient and physician were the driver from shifting away from the old system. Their main goal was to help the system see itself, to collectively "pre-sense" how those involved in health care had jointly created a system that failed to meet desired aims. The practice-based researcher-developers hoped this process would deepen commitment to change and build a bridge of listening and acting that could create innovation. They focused on what the doctors in the field considered the weakest link in a broken system, their relationships with patients:

We reminded them, "You are the system," and asked, "Why do you enact a system, or properties of a system, that nobody wants?" During the silence that followed, we could sense people's perception shifting. Their belief that the system is something external and imposed gave way to a new realization – that patient-physician interactions drive the behavior of the system. This was a turning point. (Kaeufer et al., 2003: p. 6)

### **3 Research methodology and design**

This qualitative, multidisciplinary, practice-based dissertation investigates the connections between the phenomenon of experience of presence (EP) and organizational creativity. Secondary research goals are examining and articulating whether there are connections between EPs and a more sustainable approach to innovation and authentic leadership, both of which have been demonstrated to be linked to organizational creativity. The complex, qualitative nature of this primarily practice-based dissertation compelled the researcher to use and develop different research methodologies and designs. There are limitations to every research methodology, so it was reasonable to use a mixed approach in this context. The researcher dealt with possible epistemological inconsistencies among the applied theories and methodologies through trial and error, employing a variety of concrete testing tools and hermeneutic approaches. She tried to represent the phenomenon clearly through existing practice-based and theoretical knowledge that embodies the entirety of the field of such qualitative research.

The primary methodology used in this heavily practice-based dissertation is hermeneutic phenomenology, but some sub-studies (Study 1 and Study 4) rely on action research or a

mixture of these two methodologies. Study 5 also makes use of phenomenography, which according to Marton (1986) is a phenomenological method and a useful tool for discovering the differences between understanding and categorizing certain phenomena.

The methods of sub-study data collection, which are introduced in Section 3.2.2, Data collection, included free-form narratives, interviews, communal workshops, and art- and contemplation-based tools. These last-mentioned participatory methods were used in workshops developed jointly by the participants and the researcher (who was also naturally involved throughout the research process as a facilitator). This practice-based workshop process resulted in the formation of a working method called Innopresence, described in greater detail in Section 3.2.5. The data was examined using phenomenological thematic analysis, which is described in Section 3.3, Thematic data analyses.

Individual EPs are primarily described in Study 1, Study 2, and Study 5. Experiences of the creation process of (social) innovation were introduced as data in Study 3, and the interviews linking EP with business creativity served as data in Study 4. A summary of all the articles (Studies 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) and their results is presented in Section 4.1, Summary of results.

### 3.1 Phenomenology

The influence of the researcher's background and work as a professional facilitator and art-based educator is more than evident in the multidisciplinary methodologies used in the sub-studies. They are also the reason the working and research methods are mixed and were continuously developed during the research process. The researcher's experience in practice guided her into investigations of lived experiences and the use of phenomenology. As participating members of the research process, both the researcher and the participants were co-constructors of the descriptions and interpretations of EP. All the participants who authorized the researcher to use their EPs in the research should be considered co-authors. When looking at the dissertation from this perspective, the researcher is neither distant nor objective (Zafft, 2013).

Phenomenology is a useful methodology for studying phenomena of lived experience that have been studied little or not at all, or that cannot be named yet (Rehorick and Nugent, 2008). Viewed as an EP phenomenon, phenomenological wonder is an invitation to ask questions such as: What is the essence of the phenomenon of presence? What is happening during EP? What are its characteristic features? Alternatively, what constitutes the nature of the phenomenon (Bentz and Rehorick, 2008)? The reason for using phenomenology in analyzing the data is nature of the human EP, the individual way of being in the present moment, how different people experience and write their own lyrics to it. It was important that participants be allowed describe the unique essence of their experiences using their own words. Whereas phenomenology is concerned with who we are in our everyday, direct experience (Halprin, 2003), the phenomenological way of understanding is a way of understanding the outline of our everyday experiences

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(Cunliffe, 2009; Van Manen, 2016) or those immediate or instantaneous conscious experiences more commonly known as intuition (Rouhiainen, 2015). The phenomenological approach calls for immersion in actual experiences, which are not “reality as such,” but the way a person experiences reality and the situations in it – what she observes, thinks, feels, senses, imagines, and remembers through her body in the moment (Halprin, 2003; Rouhiainen, 2015).

The research was composed following the methodological impression of hermeneutic phenomenology, which studies the uniqueness of each human being as a human science, whereas traditional research is interested in knowledge that is generalizable. Hermeneutic phenomenology is the philosophy of the unique and the individual. It is pursued against the backdrop of understanding the other, the whole, the communal, and/or the social. It aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning of our experiences. Phenomenological reflection on lived experience is retrospective and re-collective, because the experience has already passed or been lived through (Van Manen, 2016). Phenomenological practice that helps us see opportunities for transforming one’s self and then others can be cultivated from a deliberate act of curiosity, from an appreciative sense of wonder (Bentz and Rehorick, 2008). According to Heidegger, the hermeneutic method is a destruction and deconstruction of all possible levels of meaning (for example preconceptions and assumptions) present in one’s interpretation of phenomena (Lehikoinen, 2014).

The reflections, results, and interpretations of this dissertation were developed simultaneously during the reading and analysis of the themes manifested in the collected narratives and transcribed interviews, workshop facilitations, discussions, observations, and of course, the literature. The hermeneutical method applied is the act of description and interpretation, in which the researcher provides a description of a lived experience and then expands the description of the meaning of the lived experience with imageries, reflections, interpretation, and engagement (Van Manen, 2016; Zafft, 2013).

A hermeneutic phenomenological research framework consists of four parts: (a) giving attention to a phenomenon of “serious” interest; (b) reflecting on essential themes of the phenomenon; (c) writing a description of the phenomenon while maintaining a relationship to the topic and balancing the parts to the whole; and (d) formulating an interpretation of the lived experience (ibid.). The most important concept in understanding hermeneutics is the *hermeneutic spiral*, the spiral of encountering a phenomenon and then working to understand the phenomenon by going to a deeper and richer place of awareness and knowledge (Simpson, 2008). According to Heidegger, there is never one right or systemically correct interpretation; there may be myriad of them (Lehikoinen, 2014).

The hermeneutic spiral of this dissertation came into existence in 2011, with the discovery of the topic. Since then, the dissertation developed by moving through a hermeneutic spiral. Later, during experimentation with interpretations of the data, the core concepts emerged as phenomenological tools of interpretation (Simpson, 2008). These core

concepts are also some of the core discoveries of this dissertation, as introduced in Chapter 4, Key results. Each of the core concepts emerged from an in-depth analyses of the sub-studies. Phenomenography was used in Study 5, in the thematic analysis of the participants' experiences (Khan, 2014; Richardson, 1999) to investigate variations and commonalities among the experiences (Marton, 1986). Study 4 relied on participatory action research, a relevant method when there is a wish to conduct qualitative research in collaboration with study groups and a desire to improve circumstances in a community (Hennink et al., 2011). Participatory action research usually includes elements that focus on social change; typical elements include conducting research with people, not on them, seeking social change or improvement, and reflection between the researcher and the researched (ibid.).

### 3.2 Research process and questions

The seed for this dissertation was a practice-based problem the researcher discovered in an organization she visited as a facilitator-developer. As seen from the researcher's point of view, the problem was a lack of presence that increased silos within the organization. It seemed the employees did not have the time, space, or will to fully or correctly hear each other – they were not present in a dialogical relationship with each other. This observation was eventually refined into the idea to explore whether EPs could change things, be integrated into a more creative organization. The idea of collecting individual EPs and considering their possible links to communal creativity was developed and processed during practice-based development work with people from a variety of organizations in a variety of milieus.

The first participants in this dissertation were recruited through social media in 2011. Three hundred people were asked via Facebook if they were interested in the phenomenon of presence; 28 indicated they were interested and willing to participate in a study. Three questions about EPs were sent to these 28 participants, who were asked to answer in their own style. Soon after, once the first batch of unique EP narratives and interviews had been collected, the researcher came up with the idea of building test platforms (called *presence workshops* at the time) for collecting and testing EPs across diverse organizations and communities. Over the period 2011-2016, various contemplation- and art-based methods and experiences were integrated into those workshops, developing them into a tool called Innopresence, which is introduced in Section 3.2.5.

In the initial analysis of the data, the aim was to describe commonalities in the structure of the EPs and describe their main themes. Perspectives and implications for social innovation and for a more holistic or sustainable approach to innovation, leadership, and collective creativity took shape during that process. In this practice- and process-based hermeneutic spiral, one question followed another and each answer led to another question. The thoughts and ideas gleaned from the narratives and interviews were tested in the presence workshops. Table 2 summarizes the studies, perspectives, questions, data sources, and analyses included in this dissertation.

**Table 2: Sub-study perspectives, participants, research questions, and analysis methods.**

Study	Primary perspective	Research questions	Data source	Analysis method
Study 1	Awareness	What is <i>waking up</i> as an experience? How could simply intending to be present make a difference in participants' quality of experience at work, and how would it impact the people with whom they work?	Written notes produced by the participants, interviews	Phenomenological analyses, qualitative content analysis
Study 2	The essence of EP and its connection to a holistic approach to innovation	How does the Finnish EP manifest itself? What variations exist between people's descriptions of EP's? Are these experiences linked to the creativity and innovation of our time?	Written notes and narratives, workshop post-it notes, individual and group interviews with the participants	Phenomenological thematic analysis
Study 3	<i>Common spaces of sharing</i>	Can a new social enterprise function as a laboratory for social innovation in community development?	Post-it notes by participants in a participatory process for establishing a new social enterprise	Participatory action research and content analyses
Study 4	Contemporary business world	How can creativity be maintained in the current culture of innovation? What elements could an individual creativity framework include?	Literature and semi-structured interviews	Dialogue between current creativity theories and semi-structured, analyzed interviews
Study 5	Sustainable leadership	How can individual experiences of presence act as a key factor in generating the kind of leadership that enables deep sustainability?	Written notes and narratives produced by the participants	Phenomenological analyses

The background, direction, and main findings of each sub-study are introduced in Chapter 4, Key results, and in the sub-studies themselves in Part II.

The main research question of this dissertation is:

*What is the connection between an individual experience of presence (EP) and organizational creativity?*

The sub-questions asked in the sub-studies show the possible contributions of EP to more sustainable and holistic approaches to innovation and leadership.

The research questions were investigated through narratives, interviews, notes, observations, and the literature.

The organizations that participated in the collecting, testing, and sharing of the EPs during the period 2011—2016 are from the public and private sectors. For the most part they are from the fields of health care and social work, but there was also a forest-product company, a theatre, a youth employment organization, a group of individual businesswomen, and a group of adult students of communication management.

### 3.3 Data collection methods

The dissertation includes experiences and data gathered from 591 participants. The data comprises facilitated, collected, re-read, analyzed, and contemplated heterogeneous free-form narratives, interviews, and Post-it notes from 418 participants in Finland during 2011—2016. The data also includes materials produced at social innovation workshops with 140 participants in Finland, Waking Up notes from 15 participants from North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America, and 18 interviews with employees of a Finnish telecommunications company.

The data is summarized by sub-study in Table 3, including information on the type and number of participants and how and when the data was collected.

The polymorphic material was entered the main data (introduced in Table 3) into a database according to phenomenological analysis headings derived from the participants' descriptions and narratives, the researcher-facilitator's research notes and work diary entries, and theoretical emphasizes.

The workshop Post-it notes and interviews (both individual and group interviews) were transcribed verbatim.

**Table 3. Data collected for the sub-studies**

<b>Sub-study</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>
<b>Study 1</b>	<i>Waking up moments</i>	Consultants, scholars, and leaders from 10 countries	Diary notes/narratives of participants	2013-2014	16
<b>Study 2</b>	Experiences of presence (EP)	Workers in health care, social work, youth work and forest company, interns at theatre workshops, a theatre group, businesswomen, students of adult education and volunteers	Diary notes/narratives of participants Social media/internet Free-form narratives delivered via email Interviews Workshops (art- and contemplation-based tools)	2011-2016	418
<b>Study 3</b>	Social innovation process for business ideas	Mental health rehabilitees and workers	Workshops (art- and contemplation-based tools)	2012-2013	108
<b>Study 4</b>	Elements of individual creativity	Employees of a Finnish telecommunications company	Interviews and literature on creativity	2011-2012	18
<b>Study 5</b>	Sustainability leadership	Participants from Studies 1 and 2	Social media Internet/email Interviews Workshops Diary notes	2013	418 + 16 (same as Studies 1 and 4)

### 3.3.1 Free-form narratives

The collected narratives include both long and short free-form descriptions of EPs written by participants. Some of the collected narratives, and the first step in the directional research, consisted of 36 long descriptions sent via email. A couple were written in verse;



the others were delivered in essay form. The length of the long narratives varied between half a page and six pages. The short narratives were collected through facilitated workshops. They consisted of the free-form texts or Post-it notes written by the 382 workshop participants. Studies 1 and 5 also included lengthy work diary notes, which were collected during the international collaborative study *Moments of Waking Up at Work*.

### 3.3.2 Interviews

The interviews were spaces for the participants to share their story as it pertained to the phenomena being studied. Individual interviews lasted from one and a half to two hours each; there was also one group interview with six people that took three hours. All interviews were semi-structured, allowing interviewees to freely explain their own perceptions and thoughts concerning themselves and the themes of the research. This is relevant when the phenomenon under research is not fully clear or the area is unknown and when it is important to get answers that can be placed in a wider context (Hirsijärvi and Hurme, 2000). It also helped to listen and hear the unique details of the experiences. Different participants emphasized different things. The aim of the interviews was to preserve authenticity.

A total of 34 people were interviewed for this dissertation: 18 telecommunications company employees (Study 4), 10 individuals who wanted to be interviewed about their EPs, and one group interview with six female theatre amateurs (Studies 2 and 5). All interviews took place in a naturalistic setting selected by the participant(s) so she, he, or they would feel comfortable. All interviews and were transcribed verbatim afterwards.

### 3.3.3 Workshops

Spoken during a lecture, Juha Varto's words "the practice comes first, and everything else follows" (2011) were the watchwords that steered the initial development of this dissertation. After gaining some initial impressions of EP from the narratives and interviews, a natural next step was testing some ideas regarding the phenomenon of presence through workshops. The researcher realized that workshops would also offer an opportunity to collect participant EPs. As a result, she started to facilitate dedicated quiet spaces for participants – first to remember their unique personal experiences alone, and then to share those remembered experiences with each other. It was surprising how willing many participants were to take part in these silent sittings. This identified need for silent spaces was the impetus for the *common spaces of sharing* that were integrated into the Innopresence tool. In each of the communities, the methods utilized were intentionally selected or created using working methods from the applied arts, contemplation, or improvisation, which were familiar to the researcher from her long-term experience as a coach. For example, various meditation exercises were used to create mental images of remembering and applied-theatre practices were adapted for sharing personal experiences, co-creation, and participatory design. These methods are explained in Studies 2 and 3 and the section below.

#### 3.3.4 Art- and contemplation-based methods

Organizations in the fields of social services and health care have recently used and noticed the benefits of arts-based approaches to improve collaboration in Finland as well as elsewhere (Lehikoinen, 2017). One of the primary concrete experience-based tools used in this research was contemplation- and applied-arts-based methods. Particularly in the presence workshops, these methods typically involve listening sensitively to the needs of the participants in an attempt to increase personal and reciprocal listening within the groups. According to Stacey (2007), a *group* is any number of people who interact with each other, are conscious of each other, and identify themselves to be a group. Within and across the formal groups identified in work organizations, there is a natural tendency for informal groups to develop. A group can serve as a vehicle for learning. When people rely on a certain recognizable pattern automatically without examining a new situation more broadly, according to Stacey (2007) this is single-loop learning. In single-loop learning, people are not aware of their thinking models. Double-loop learning, on the other hand, is learning through questioning and adjusting one's unconscious mental models and actions (Stacey, 2007). If used well, art-based tools are excellent for helping participants become more aware of their mental models and ways of learning, and they offer facilitators effective methods for approaching people with an open mind and clear perception (Lehikoinen, 2010).

In the collaborative applied methods used in the arts, especially theatre, one important tool for group work is the participant-led method of *devising*, which was used in the workshops involved in this dissertation. In devising, participants learn from each other by teaching what they know, observing each other, and sharing their (tacit) knowledge and experience through learning-by-doing. The group of individuals may serve as a source of inspiration, with new ideas emerging through various types of sharing and broadening participants' perspectives on creativity (Sveinbjörg, 2008). Devising was used in the workshops, where experiences such as workplace EPs were shared, EPs were demonstrated through live simulations, insights were gained through demos, and ideas were collaboratively developed into something new – for example, a social innovation. Various other reflective methods from the arts (for example, photos, pictures, drawings, and writings) were also used, as well as contemplative methods and practices for silencing the mind and body through meditation and relaxation.

When facilitating and creating spaces for sharing in communities or organizations, it is worthwhile to invest in the passion and communication skills of the facilitator. In the hands of experienced facilitators, shared experiences will help participants understand each other better and collaborate more easily. They may even help the system see itself (Scharmer, 2003). It is important that facilitators be skilled motivators, good teachers, and inspire confidence and self-esteem (ibid; Bopp and Bopp, 2011). Senge et al. (2013) note that talented facilitators can sense and express what is real for participants in the moment. They may help open the space to new experiences, ideas, and insights. Senge refers to this ability as artistic, because the moment of awareness needs an aesthetic sensibility, alertness, and an ability to pay attention, directly and creatively, to the “right

things” (Senge et al., 2013). It also involves intuition and improvisation. Social innovators or facilitators of social innovation, for instance, must be both creative problem solvers and skilled collaborators. They have to assimilate skills such as listening, improvising, letting go, and interconnecting (Lawrence et al., 2012), which are also pertinent to the ability to be aware, or present, in the situation.

### 3.3.5 Innopresence

Innopresence is a tool for examining and eliciting EPs. Not a pedantic or structurally clear method, it lives and changes according to the participants and circumstances. The development of the Innopresence tool during this research resulted from the attempt to tackle the question, How can EP be facilitated in organizations? Innopresence involved the use of a short meditation (described in Study 2) as a first step to “re-membering,” (going back to basic, simple existence) for example, EPs or other meaningful experiences at work related to the phenomenon of presence. In this research, Innopresence also involved the use of various tools from the arts to help concretize participants’ experiences and other needs during the organizational workshops.

The Innopresence tool was developed together with participants in workshops where the driving idea was that participants could express the topics they feel are important to share – generally orally, but also in other ways (for example, in writing or by drawing, acting, or moving) – by being given the time and space to do so. The workshops utilized art- and contemplation-based methods that helped participants stop and be aware of what it is happening in the moment: How am I talking or using my body in this situation? What is my intention right now, in this specific moment? Why do I act this way? What is my motivation? Innopresence-based workshops provide a different approach to more rationalist approaches, such as commonly used ideation techniques, because it involves methods such as meditation, improvisation, creative writing, painting, or other applied-art methods that require time and concentration.

For this dissertation, the Innopresence tool and its modifications were used in social innovation, contemplation, and idea-collection processes in a child-welfare organization, a forest-industry enterprise, a dental-care organization, and in a mental rehabilitation organization. Appendix 1 presents one example of using Innopresence during facilitation for the child welfare organization (see Appendix 1). Although the form facilitation takes varies with every instance and organization due to a variety of factors (tasks, atmosphere, energy level, place, and so on), some of the most common and important features are presented there.

## 3.4 Thematic data analysis

A theme is an element that occurs frequently in a text, for example a motif, formula, or device. In theme analysis, the researcher creates a process for recovering the themes embodied in evolving meanings. It is a living process of insightful invention, discovery,

or disclosure, a free act of “seeing” meaning. As Van Manen states, in the human sciences, to be human is to be concerned with or to desire meaning (2016).

In this dissertation, phenomenological thematic analysis was used to categorize participants’ individual EPs and *waking up* moments and their possible connections to organizational creativity. The participants’ first-person reflections about EP (described in Studies 1, 2 and 5) were reviewed and analyzed. Through reading through the data various times, taking notes, and noticing patterns, the themes of the EPs linked to organizational creativity started to take shape. Some of these themes were further developed and refined through practice and theory (described in Studies 3 and 4).

First, the researcher bracketed her personal preconceived judgments and experiences about presence and organizational creativity. Then she read the data and allowed herself to receive it, noticing different patterns and motifs. She made sense of the data by reading through the free-form narratives, interviews and Post-it notes several times, drafting notes with reflective comments. Then she transcribed the collected narratives (workshop notes, interviews, and other material) verbatim and input the main data (introduced in Table 3 and Study 2) into her own coding system, categorizing participant descriptions and narratives, her own notes and observations, and the literature under various thematic headings. This enabled comparison of the categorized data and identification of connections between the themes that emerged (Lester, 1999). After this, the researcher drew up a list of significant statements expressing the main themes that appeared in the data.

These primary themes are presented in Chapter 4, Key results, along with rich description. Rich description is the process of applying detailed examples of the themes, and it allows the readers to put themselves in the participants’ shoes by transferring the research findings to their own experience (Zafft, 2013). The researcher’s intention was to uncover the reality of the phenomena of EP and organizational creativity as expressed in the studies (Hatch, 2002; Zafft, 2013). As they were discovered, the themes introduced in Studies 1, 2 and 5, for instance, indicated the path forward during the research process and helped the researcher develop the presence workshops (introduced in Study 3). With experience gained during those workshops, she developed the Innopresence tool, which helped her more concretely understand the connections between presence, self-efficacy, and communication, and their links to creativity (described in Study 4).



## 4 Key results

*I am surrounded by my classmates...----... happy, laughing people. We are connected. There is closeness, the freedom to be who you are...----... I am filled by a powerful feeling of serenity and happiness. I am so full that I am going to burst, the feeling fills every cell of my being...----... I am looking at the people around me; I remember faces, flashes of looks. I have lots of such memories of presence from my high school days, and they all involve a feeling of connectedness and a sense of community. (Woman, 47, psychotherapist)*

The quote above shows how an experience of presence may remain memorable for a long time, perhaps because of its polymorphous, integrative nature. The abundant data and heterogeneous descriptions of EPs and their potential connections to creativity proved very rich, with multiple levels and essences, making it possible to engage in discourse in many possible ways. This chapter summarizes the key common themes that emerged from the results of and reflections on the sub-studies. Various essential themes were discovered through phenomenological thematic analysis, but a few appeared relentlessly through all the reading rounds and hermeneutic spirals. These main themes are described in Sections 4.2-4.7, which attempt to lay out possible links between EPs and creativity. The section heading indicates the sub-study or sub-studies in which the theme emerged.

Section 4.1 provides a joint summary of the results of all five sub-studies.

### 4.1 Summary of results

The sub-sections below present summaries of the five sub-studies making up Part II of this dissertation. The primary perspective of each sub-study is identified as follows: Study 1, awareness; Study 2, the essence of EP and its connection to a holistic approach of innovation; Study 3, *common spaces of sharing*; Study 4, the contemporary business world; and Study 5, sustainable leadership. (See also Table 2.) These perspectives and their connections to each other and organizational creativity are elaborated in greater detail in Chapter 5.

#### 4.1.1 Study 1: “Moments of waking up”: A doorway to mindfulness and presence

Study 1 is an international two-year collaborative action-research project. It demonstrates that the phenomena of presence and “*waking up* moments” are akin, children of the same family, through analysis of *waking up* notes made by participants around the globe. These voluntary participants were asked to be alert to the daily situations during which they noticed themselves to be more awake in their context of work. Phenomenological analysis of the notes indicates that the aware and present mind, a mindfulness approach, might be useful for leadership development and education, for attaining the steadiness and flexibility needed to deal with global problems nowadays.

The phenomenological themes identified in the data were: *waking up* as either a gradual or sudden shift; heightened experience of bodily sensations, feelings, and thoughts; a sense of connectedness, safety, appreciation, and gratitude; empathy, relationships, and meaning; and creativity, flow, and effectiveness.

According to Study 1, *waking up* moments are intentional changes from one state (of mind) to one in which participants were aware of what their minds were actually doing at the moment. Participants sensed how their emotions started and developed – with a heightened capacity to notice small changes. Their self-awareness and self-knowledge about their personal beliefs and behavior increased. The research suggests that a practice of *waking up* might help leaders in various professions become more aware of the blind spots and baggage in their organizations. Focusing on *waking up* may help leaders feel more connected to people, more relaxed, and more open to listening. If professors, consultants, and leaders were invited to experiment with *waking up* in the context of their work, they might be able to bring more awareness to their work.

#### 4.1.2 Study 2: Experiences of presence as an inner shift towards a more holistic approach to innovation

*For me, experiences of presence are moments of spiritual insight....---  
...they educate, help me change my ways, help me see through a curtain,  
take me back to my roots, to my self – the soul to the body – and inspire me  
in the creative processes. (Woman, 29, therapist)*

The citation above is an example of the many ways EPs may serve as sources of creative processes. Study 2 investigates what EPs are like and how they are connected to creativity. It focuses on Finnish awareness of being in the moment and its links to more holistic approaches to innovation. For the study, 418 individuals' recollections of EPs were analyzed, and the themes discovered were reflected against new approaches to creativity and innovation. The aim of the research was to investigate three questions: 1. How does the Finnish experience of presence manifest itself? 2. What variations exist between people's descriptions of EPs? 3. Are these experiences linked to the creativity and innovation of our time?

Study 2 shows that EPs are connected to moments of thinking in a new way from different points of view, but also sharing these ideas with other people. The main themes appearing in the results of Study 2 involve the levels of listening described in Scharmer's Theory U – with open mind, open heart, and open will (Scharmer 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). The main themes of the EPs found in Study 2 were *another point of view* (compared with Scharmer's Open mind), *connection/connectedness* (Open heart) and *meaningfulness* (Open will). Study 2 shows a strong connection between Finnish EPs and Theory U.

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According to the study, presence has an important role at both the individual level (an inner shift in awareness) and in terms of communal innovation ability (through *common spaces of sharing*). One key finding was that participants generally became aware of EPs that were “powerful” and “meaningful” because they involved some special insight. Maybe that is the reason why so many of them could easily remember EPs afterwards.

#### 4.1.3 **Study 3: Creating social innovation: Approaches to community development in a social enterprise**

Study 3 introduces the practice-based refinement of ideas on how to facilitate presence and creativity. The main aim of Study 3 is to address social innovation by investigating it within a framework of seven specific approaches to community development (Bopp and Bopp, 2011). Study 3 developed during a new social enterprise innovation process targeted at mental health and substance abuse rehabilitees; this establishment process was viewed through the lens of a social innovation process and executed through workshops. Art- and contemplation-based methods were used in and the data collected during these workshops. The research question was whether the new social enterprise could function as a laboratory for social innovation aimed at community development.

All of the Bopps’ (2011) seven approaches to community development – liberation, therapeutic, issue organizing, community organizational, economic development, cultural spiritual, and ecological system models – were identified in Study 3. According to the results, the new social enterprise functioned as a laboratory for social innovation in many ways. One common feature was that social innovation could develop in so-called “*common spaces of sharing*” as one type of “*space of common presence*.” A *common space of sharing* is a space of equally shared experiences, where community members could listen to themselves and others. Through these spaces, community members were more likely to become open enough to share their experiences, insights, and ideas with each other, and to create new (social) innovations together.

In focusing on a participatory process of establishing a new social enterprise, Study 3 demonstrates how a *common space of sharing* functions in practice. The Post-it notes written during and after the workshops served as the seeds of more than 100 business ideas that the participants developed together in groups. In early 2014, one of those business ideas was implemented as the social enterprise’s first pilot project. This case was key to understanding the necessity of providing *common spaces of sharing* to encourage EPs and innovation.

#### 4.1.4 **Study 4: Presence, creative self-efficacy, and communication – the main key-actors of creativity in today’s business context**

Study 4 examines the interrelationship between presence and other necessary elements of business creativity. The idea is to investigate the main components of individual creativity in the current business context. Creativity requires combining different kinds of data, information, and knowledge from various sources. In addition, it requires building new



potential worlds and drawing on detailed and strict science- and practice-based innovation processes. The research questions of Study 4 are: How do we maintain creativity in the present innovation culture? What elements could an individual creativity framework include? What prerequisites are necessary to encourage organizational creativity? What do we have to be able to do in our societies if we want to be more creative?

Based on the literature and interviews conducted with employees from a Finnish telecommunications company, three basic elements for creativity were introduced: self-efficacy, communication, and presence. These three elements were considered through the intentions of focusing and opening. In order to model the interaction between focusing and opening, a creativity framework called the “Creativity triangle” was formalized. The Creativity triangle is formed of the three points of self-efficacy, communication, and presence. The interior of the triangle represents focusing (on one thing at a time), while the exterior symbolizes opening up and expanding towards new knowledge. Creativity processes take place in triangular reciprocity between a focused goal and vast amounts of diversified knowledge.

The Creativity triangle model was developed to further understanding of the necessity of the three critical elements and their moving positions (intentions) within contemporary business contexts. The triangle is a holistic framework that can be used as an abstract tool when trying to understand individual creativity in an eco-system context. The model does not work in hierarchical circumstances, because both the model and the ability to innovate take place in collaboration where individual creativity is seen as tool for building possible worlds through grass-roots and other interaction. This is not typical for hierarchical organizations.

#### 4.1.5 Study 5: Experiences of presence as a key factor toward sustainability leadership

Study 5 addresses how individual EPs may play a key role in the creation of leadership qualities that enable sustainability. The research comprises two distinct studies on the same theme: *waking up* moments and EPs. Goldman Schuyler and her colleagues developed an international action-research project on moments of *waking up* at work (Study 1) at the same time as research was being carried out in Finland to study the implications of being present on innovation and creativity (Study 2). The empirical data analyzed in Study 5 is a mixture of reflections from those two studies and their results, which is then investigated from the perspective of sustainable leadership. The common results of the studies discourse about the productive qualities of the experiences. Both *waking up* moments and presence suggest the importance of moments of awareness in inner shifts. Study 5 explores how personal experiences may be a catalyst for developing leadership that advances sustainability.

*Waking up* moments appear to refer to workplace situations when participants notice they are more present to what is happening within and/or around them. One important thing to

note is that these *waking up* moments serve as entry points to EPs. The ability to be aware in the present moment brings a shift of perspective, which often occurred through a connection with nature, especially in the presence of trees. In Study 5, this was the reason for choosing an approach through (and under) the Tree of Life, an ancient symbol of common ancestry and sustainability recognized in various human civilizations, mythologies, philosophies, and biology (Thiaw, 2015). This is similar to the aboriginal recipe for sustainability, in which everything is connected: we are a part of that whole and responsible for our actions in every field around the globe.

Sustainability leadership can be understood as being rooted in the idea that organizations are part of the natural (or even sacred) world, and as such are not free of the laws of nature. A paradigm shift towards greater sustainability means leaders becoming aware they are not separate from the environment or nature and understanding the ways in which the mechanistic approach exploits nature (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Varto, 2009).

## 4.2 Becoming aware (Studies 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

*For me, presence for me is a kind of peaceful condition where I am able to hear what another person is saying, discuss it, observe what is happening around me, and introduce my own thoughts and opinions...---... Identifying your own emotions and noticing other people are part of presence, too.*  
(Woman, 50, social worker)

EPs frequently manifest themselves as parts of intensive or sensitive moments of strict observation, as described in the quote above. Conscious observation of details – both regarding one’s own thoughts and the surrounding circumstances - is typical of these moments. Before we go deeper into the theme of becoming aware, which appeared in all of the sub-studies, it is necessary to say something about the collecting of the EPs.

All the EPs are different, with great variety in the descriptions. Participants often provided very personal descriptions of presence based on their own experiences and common understandings. Further, the participants also had various ways of understanding the process of presencing and of exploiting their experiences of it. Firstly, a couple of workshop participants were not eager to describe their personal experiences, because they felt doing so was overly intimate. There were also a couple of participants who did not find the subject of presence relevant to their daily life or work; they found it too difficult or irrelevant. Two people doubted having ever been present; others said perhaps they did not know what presence is. For example, one female entrepreneur indicated that she found the subject interesting, but she hoped the researcher would produce “an analysis” of her answers. She seemed not to believe in her own experiences. Some participants wanted the researcher to know or explain what “real presence” is, and others said that maybe they had never been present “in the right way.” The researcher’s response that there is no “right way to be present” or “right way to be creative” or even right way to write freely about

their experiences did little good. The notion of creativity seemed more familiar to participants than the phenomenon of presence, even if there was a lot of variation in participant understanding of creativity.

However, most of the data was created or produced under circumstances where participants were already interested in the subject. Many mentioned how timely EP – or, in most cases, the lack of it – is for them in their work or life. Moreover, their personal interest seemed to be the reason they wanted to participate in the study. Many participants mentioned having experienced conscious or aware moments of presence and creativity before.

The ability to be present does not always mean exclusively positive feelings or observations; it may mean a powerful, conscious moment of non-connectedness, like an insight regarding a “wrong place”. One example was a 37-year-old female leader who was acutely aware of many unpleasant feelings during the workshop process in her organization. Afterwards, she took a yearlong leave of absence, eventually resigning and finding a better place to work. She indicated how, through the workshop process, she had found the space to approach her situation from another perspective. She had time to listen to her body, which did not feel the way it should. She understood that her body had felt that way for a long time, for as long as she had been working in that organization. Through this insight, she came to understand that she was working “in the wrong place.” These unpleasant emotions and bodily sensations that surfaced during a moment of awareness helped her to make a decision to move on. Regardless of whether the moment of presence means connection or non-connection, it always appears involve awareness.

The participants who found EPs important were often artists, teachers, educators, or workers in the fields of social services or health care – people who are viewed as serving other people. They all found presence a useful tool in their work and were aware of the subject in one way or another. In some cases, they were used to working independently – like some artists, or people who do writing, planning, or development work. Many mentioned solitude as is intrinsic part of their EPs. For participants who do not necessarily find presence as important as community, EPs and creativity often seemed to be linked to being with another person as a pair or a couple or other people as a group or a family. As indicated by the workshops, narratives, and interviews included in the data, the participants who seemed to benefit most from sharing experiences in workshops included unemployed young adults, mental health rehabilitees, and members of hierarchical work organizations.

Another interesting feature is that the descriptions of EPs often refer to the openness of children’s behavior or to childhood memories. In their narratives, many participants described EPs through childhood memories or by comparing EPs to the sensitivity or awareness of a child. During the Innopresence workshops, a childlike attitude was often referenced during improvisation or other tools to open the mind and the senses.

At its essence, then, EP is a shift in the quality of participants' awareness, a shift from thinking to sensing and feeling differently, becoming more aware, or conscious – either alone or in a group.

One theme that emerged through the sub-studies were individual, aware connections with one's "inner" and "outer" nature. In the context of this dissertation, *inner nature* refers to individual emotions, thoughts, attitudes, ways of behaving, thought routines, preconceptions, fears, dreams, and hopes – everything connected to the personal mind and inner life. *Outer nature*, on the other hand, refers to connections with the environment and/or other people.

According to the sub-studies' results, it seems the aware state of mind that makes EPs possible offers an opportunity to "concentrate on one thing and moment at a time"; the person experiencing presence "is not going off anywhere or on to the next issue in her thoughts." Many participants strongly underline this kind of description. It seems the more people are aware of EPs and their ability to be creative, the more they may benefit from both in their daily life and work. For example, in many cases, EPs open up, broaden, and brighten larger spaces in the mind and awareness. Sometimes this means intuitive knowledge, insights, or answers to problems haunting them. It may open up a bigger picture of their life or work or a new point of view. The essence is broadening their usual patterns of thinking and behavior. The more the participants were aware of the importance of presence, the more they noticed its benefits. This applied to creativity, too. The more the participants were aware of the importance of their individual creativity, the more they shared it with each other in the workshops. These are significant observations. EPs may be connected with creativity in any variety of dimensions; they may increase ideas, insights, and creativity at both the individual and the communal level, in a single person and/or within an organization. In addition, EPs may also deepen interconnectivity with nature and increase capacity for sustainable leadership. At the communal level, EPs are linked to listening, the communal sharing of experiences (*common space of sharing*), and the ability to co-generate ideas or innovations.

Other main themes appearing in the sub-studies are covered in greater detail in the following sections. One feature sticks out as linking nearly every description of EPs: EPs are usually connections with somebody or something.

### **4.3 Feeling of connection (Studies 1 and 2)**

The most-used word in the study participants' individual descriptions of EP was "connection". Descriptions of EPs usually included the capacity to connect directly with one's inner self (emotions, preconceptions, or thoughts), with other people, or with nature.

Typical to this connection is the lack of longing for control, benefits, or aims. The connection often appears suddenly and unexpectedly. "You just know" is a sentiment

mentioned repeatedly by many people in their descriptions and during the workshops. This sort of intuition plays an extensive role when participants express their connection to or with something. For example, a middle-age female teacher of yoiks, a form of singing practiced among the Sami peoples of Lapland and neighboring regions, describes how the yoik “comes to you” at a moment of connection with somebody or something. The best yoiks “just come,” “you just feel it in your whole body: this is it.” She relates that the yoik, as an expression of connection with the oneness of nature and with the thoughts of a special person, always takes place through your bodily senses.

Another frequently mentioned way of connecting is equal or reciprocal dialogue, or a successful encounter between two or more people. The most important aspect in this instance is listening, which is also the most important element of collective sharing. According to one participant, a 47-year-old male priest, EPs come more readily during solitary contemplation, a trope many religious cultures have espoused for thousands of years. For him, the phenomenon of presence is a connection with the phenomenon of grace, which it is “possible to feel in both inner and outer nature after a storm”. The connection with one’s inner self and the outer world often comes through aware self-reflection. In another example, a 56-year-old female adult education teacher described how she usually tried to control things when she was teaching her students. After finding more presence to her life, she understood that she was ready to let go of this need to control. She became aware that her urge to control was a disconnection from trust and safety. She learned to open her mind, body, and heart to others – and herself – through applied-art methods: practicing storytelling improvisation and empowered photography. Doing so created an enormous shift in her life: “The whole world shifted into a new position.”

EPs that seem to connect participants with both their inner and outer environments increase equality in relationships and develop participants’ abilities to be aware of their own thoughts and actions, to recognize their blind spots.

Most participants from healthcare organizations describe EPs as equal encounters with patients or customers. Two of the most frequently appearing descriptions of such equal EP was compassionate identification, “being human to another human,” and the “possibility to be who you are,” the relief of showing your real personality or authenticity to the other.

One important element of the connections appearing in the data is the feeling of belonging to something, for example, a team, a family, another person, or a special group of people. It appears that the ability to be present may improve our interaction with ourselves and thereby with others: colleagues, employers, customers, patients, bosses, and so on. In short, for many participants, presence seems to manifest in equal, reciprocal encounters and a capacity for better dialogue. Connectedness is analyzed in greater detail in Study 1 and Study 2.

#### 4.4 Nature-connectedness (Studies 2 and 5)

The inspirational influence of being out in nature during EPs plays a surprisingly large-scale role in the data. EPs that happened outdoors are often described through a variety of creative, expressive, detailed, and even poetic definitions. Poetic words are particularly typical of longer narratives involving nature.

Most of the EPs described in the data took place in nature. Even participants who work inside all the day mention nature, or its special magic, as an important elements of their EPs. Nature-connectedness seems to be the first step to calming or emptying the mind. For many, nature is a source of relaxation, contemplation, comfort, and – what is worth noticing – solitude. Nature-related EPs helped participants cope with hectic working life and spark new ideas. Many mention spending solitary moments in nature for the purpose of calming their mind; this may be one reason nature plays such a big role in participants' experiences.

EPs occurring in nature usually took place during aimless roaming, when participants were admiring the beauty of nature or observing some unique details in it. Indetermination seem to be an important part of nature-connected experiences; they were typically not very goal-oriented. Participants who experienced presence in nature were wandering, drifting, and contemplating outside.

Participants also describe nature-connectedness during EPs as coalescence, where the past, the now, and the future are one. Nature-connectedness helps them achieve a holistic mind-body connection, a connection both with their inner and outer environments or natures, as described in Section 4.2. Some EPs are described as spiritual awakenings, and also as bodily and sensory experiences. Nature opens up the senses, and opens up mental space as well. Once this opening takes place, unexpected insights start to emerge. For many, nature is a place to empty the mind; nature makes it possible to be connected with oneness or, as many describe it, "the flow of life." In some cases, EPs were linked to the participant's ecological consciousness.

According to the results of Studies 2 and 5, nature-connectedness is one of the main factors that seemed to awaken participants' creativity. Many participants highlight nature as the source of creative insights and ideas for their work. In the descriptions, nature appears as a benevolent living being that makes it easier to find connection with intuition and receive answers, ideas, and insights. In the contemplative state of mind that is the essence of nature-connectedness, it is possible to identify with the various elements of nature, to get insights and ideas about them, to understand them. The surrounding wilderness or local nature is, in many cases, the main source of inspiration or ideas for the participants' daily work.

It seems that contemplating nature may wake up emotions and help participants find connection with the self, other people, creativity, and the bigger picture of (one's) life. Nature-connectedness is analyzed in greater detail in Study 2 and Study 5.

#### 4.5 New perspectives (Studies 1, 2, 3 and 4)

*I was driving home after our first team meeting at my new job, as a leader in a child welfare organization. Reading those stories for the first time, I felt black blood flowing through my veins. I felt enormous anxiety about those terrible reports of children and youth who had been mistreated in so many horrible ways. I cried. Suddenly, I started to notice the landscape outside the car. It was spring, and nature was beautiful. I started to breathe more deeply, and at the same time, I felt the black blood start to disappear. The space shifted.* (Woman, 37, customer coordinator manager)

Like many other descriptions of EPs, the quote above shows how, individual EPs or *waking up* moments are sources of new viewpoints and incentives to change. They shift perspectives, attitudes, and preconceptions by opening participants to new experiences and ideas. The quote above describes this shift in space. This open-mindedness, in turn, nudged participants out of their individual comfort zones, helped them find new points of view, increased curiosity and activity, and led to insights regarding future choices. EPs are often surprising doors to new points of view and may be manifested as, for example, sudden insights, ideas, or larger landscapes replacing troubling views. In a moment of EP, many participants felt a “broadening of space,” something “opening up,” and the space – or state of mind – shifting. When space expands, it is easier to look at things from another perspective.

Another important element of experiencing a new point of view during or after an EP is the ability to slow down, stand still, and consciously notice what it is happening now. This may happen during a moment of silence, after processing some difficulty, or during flow or concentration. According to the data, an impulse or an opportunity to stop is necessary to access a new point of view. Without silencing the mind, it is impossible to observe other perspectives.

Some participants described having rediscovered something that was ‘lost’ (forgotten) for a long time through these new perspectives. In the data, these moments were categorized as ‘re-memberings,’ and they are often moments of inspiration or intuition, when the participant remembered (or ‘re-remembered’ with) something that had been forgotten. A few described this as a “homecoming” or “belonging.”

The ability to see things from a new point of view, from another perspective, is natural for children, who are mentioned several times in the data. Many participants highlight that children are much more talented at being present and seeing things in new ways than adults are.

New perspectives, new ideas, and shifts in states of mind and themes arising from EPs are discussed in greater detail in Study 1, Study 2, Study 3, and Study 4. Study 4 offers a new perspective on and idea for (business) creativity.

## 4.6 Bigger pictures (Studies 1, 2, 3, and 5)

Many participants describe EPs as having powerfully affected their lives by causing shifts, but also by increasing meaning. The feeling of meaningfulness during or just after an EP often opens insights onto a bigger picture of the participant's life or work, and help them form more holistic images and ideas of them. Participants describe feeling more creative after experiences of meaningfulness – like the female manager cited in the previous section, who describes the thought processes that were aroused during observations of presence and non-presence at her work as being so important.

Meaningfulness in EPs is related to, for example, finding one's roots, revelation, receiving comfort, love, grace or gratitude, intuitions, seeing the bigger picture of everything, finding one's mission, understanding the meaning of one's work, finding a solution to a challenging situation, or understanding more about other people. Being at peace and silence with the self or listening to others with awareness may have elicited the bigger purpose of the participant's existence or, more commonly, the meaning of their daily work. Many participants connected EPs and meaning, especially in working communities. These experiences are described more in Studies 1, 2, and 3.

One woman expressed that becoming aware of presence and creativity is an important part of a bigger worldwide process of increasing human consciousness. In the data, there are many of examples in which meaning is compared with spirituality and a bigger picture of life itself. People feel that they have “returned home” – come back to something they have always known but have forgotten due to life's demands. This “homecoming” is meaningful for them and is deeply linked to a feeling of being connected to something bigger – the local or global community, the earth and all its living beings, or even the unity of the entire universe. According to the data, some participants achieved this and incorporated it into their contemporary lifestyle. This idea also seems to be linked to accessing a sustainable or more holistic way of thinking, which is covered in greater detail in Study 2 and Study 5.

## 4.7 A common space of sharing (Studies 2 and 3)

*If you only focus on the teeth, you forget there is someone bearing and invested in them...---...After the presence workshops in our organization, we've started to focus more on bringing presence to our style of working and attitudes towards patients....---...The number of people whose lamp is burning brightly has increased. (Woman, 61, dental nurse)*

The quote from the dental nurse above describes how the Innopresence workshops have helped her organization to be more attentive to interaction with patients and coworker collaboration. Although EP is an organic process of individual awareness, an inner shift, it is also possible to tap it in community development work as a possible path to creativity, collaboration, and a more holistic approach to innovation. EPs may help people access



new perspectives, connections, or meaning in their daily life and work or, as a couple of participants expressed it, “more room for listening to myself and others.”

According to the data, both creativity and more sustainable innovation seem to be linked to EPs in various indirect ways. EPs offer various opportunities to be used experimentally in development sessions with groups and organizations.

One of the main results of the dissertation, the concept of a *common space of sharing*, emerged during the workshops; it signifies a space where participants could mutually share thoughts, experiences, and ideas through facilitated participatory creative methods. A 34-year-old female social worker describes how:

*Genuine and natural presence also liberates others to be who they are; nobody needs roles for anything. A person with the ability to be present is a good listener and interested in other people and their opinions, even they are different from her or his own.*

This is a descriptive definition of an ideal *common space of sharing*.

The various workshop processes are introduced in greater detail in Study 2 and Study 3. Methods grounded in the applied arts and contemplation helped participants to be aware of their thoughts, preconceptions, emotions, and actions. These methods also helped them listen to others more carefully. The more we are conscious of our own thoughts, the easier it is to understand other people. The *common spaces of sharing* were spaces where workers from the participating organizations could share their experiences, listen to each other, and generate ideas together. EPs, practicing presence, and remembering individual EPs may be part of a common space of sharing – as took place in the Innopresence workshops. Based on the thematic analyses of the experiences of all the workshops, it seemed that the participants have benefited from presence in general. In many workshops, the participants connected all their experiences by suggesting new ways of innovating their daily work together, for example, by concrete suggestions of changing their un-effective daily routines.

Workshop participants shared their experiences in pairs, in smaller groups, or as a group. Mutual sharing and listening to other people is the most important and instructive activity in a *common space of sharing*. When participants evaluated themselves, assessing what they already knew, did not know, and would like to know about their own strengths and weaknesses. Many described becoming more familiar with personal beliefs, misconceptions, and cynicism. They were also able to set goals they felt were attainable with the new knowledge they had acquired about themselves. Some people said the insights gained from the group improved the quality of their work. They felt that a *common space of sharing* might provide tools for practical changes. Many reported an increase in self-knowledge. For example, workers at a dental clinic (see the participant quote introducing this section) noticed that awareness of their own processes and blind

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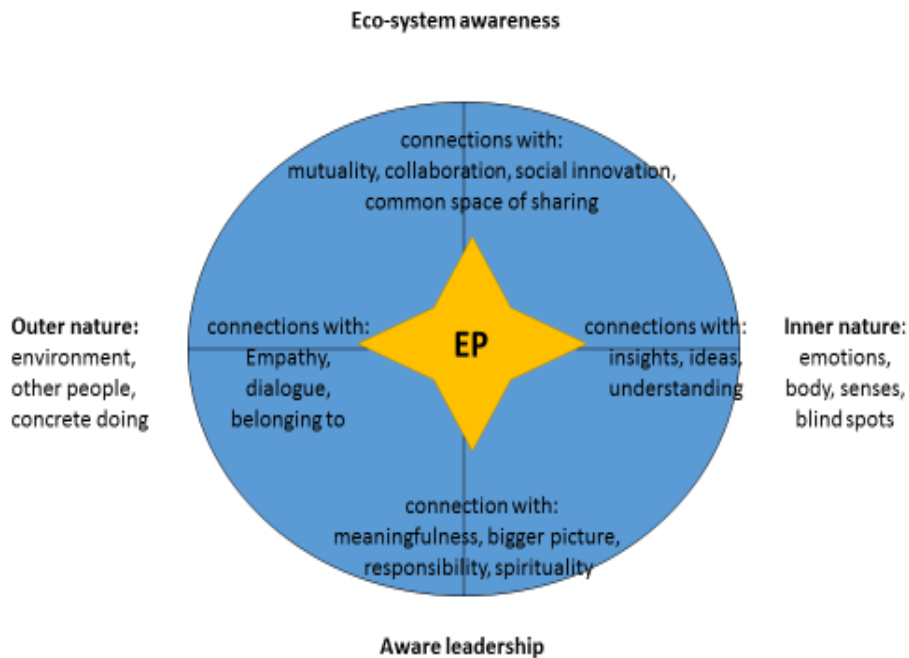
spots had increased. Now they paid more attention to ways of developing hope in their client relations and relations with themselves.

Participants in a long-term Innopresence process (involving for example seven three-hour workshops over a twelve-month period) described learning to pay attention to the power of more positive thinking (and observation) and to things that disturb their ability to be present. They found ways of being calm in the middle of a rush, possibilities for recognizing and becoming aware of their working methods, and new ways of developing their work and themselves as workers. They also found certain distracting structures, both in their ways of thinking as social workers and at the organizational level. They started to change some of those disturbing structures immediately; others appeared at the upper level of their hierarchical organization, making it impossible for them to effect the change. This is valuable information for organizations needing to develop social innovations. When practice-based knowledge and concrete experiences can be shared in an atmosphere of mutual trust, the potential to improve organizational creativity increases.

A *common space of sharing* is a dialogical process of equality, a process by which each member of a community speaks on her or his own behalf while the others listen. One female special education teacher posed presence as occurring at two levels: first, you have to be present with yourself; this is the basis of everything. After that, you will be better at being present with others, too.

## 5 Discussion: Perspectives on presence and creativity

The primary results introduced in the previous chapter have relevance in, for example, approaches to holistic sustainability (e.g. Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006), new organizational creativity (e.g. Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013), and more authentic leadership (e.g. Cunliffe, 2009). Those results indicate that EP may be seen as the ability to make connections with one's inner and outer nature (or environment/spaces), as a *common space of sharing*, as eco-system awareness, and as more aware leadership. The intertwining links between EPs and their potential to create new spaces for organizational creativity are illustrated in Figure 5, through these core concepts of inner nature (right), outer nature (left), eco-system awareness (top), and aware leadership (bottom). The EP appears at the center as a tool for a needed shift in individual awareness (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Macy and Brown, 2014; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al., 2013). EP is linked (horizontally in Figure 5) with both inner and outer nature, which represent the dialogical, human quality of presence ("connecting people"). EP is also (vertically) linked to aware leadership and eco-system awareness, both of which represent the quality of sustainable organizational creativity ("connecting organizational creativity").



**Figure 5: How EP links people and creativity.**

The following five sections discuss the key perspectives on presence and organizational creativity discovered during the sub-studies.

## 5.1 Connecting people

Many of the descriptions and impacts of presence collected through the sub-studies echo the aboriginal mythologies where time is one, past, present, and future are the same, and humankind needs to take a wider perspective and recognize that the living elements of the earth are holistically linked (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Varto and Veenkivi, 1997). In many cases, presence accompanies a relaxed state of mind in natural surroundings, which, according to the latest research, is also the birthplace of inspiration and new perspectives (Leppänen and Pajunen, 2017). The results of this dissertation support recent scientific evidence indicating that direct exposure to nature may improve cognitive abilities and capacity for communication, cooperation, and decision-making. Nature-connectedness improves creativity and resistance to negative stress and depression. According to the literature and the sub-study results, not only does nature help us survive (Leppänen and Pajunen, 2017; Louv, 2009; Louv, 2011), it also has an indisputable impact on creativity.

There also appear to be various connections between people's experiences in nature and a holistic concept of organizational *presencing* (Scharmer, 2009). In many descriptions, one's ego disappears when nature is allowed to take its place. Being connected with nature enables us to disregard the self by becoming at one with the objects we perceive; the self-conscious "I" disappears (Louv, 2009). The sub-study results indicate that connection with both inner and outer nature bring us away from the "ego-system" and connects us to the "eco-system". This shift is the main goal of Scharmer's (2009) Theory U. The disappearing of the self may be seen equated with Scharmer's (ibid.) *fourth level of listening*, a form of generative listening to the emerging future that draws from the abstract field of tacit knowledge. If we want to transform our "ego-system awareness" into "eco-system awareness," we need to open our minds, hearts, and wills, all elements of Scharmer's Theory U (2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013) as well as key aspects of EPs.

Maybe the way to shift the self in a more aware and creative direction is to reconnect with the timeless quality of nature in the present moment. This is an intriguing question for Finns and the future of our nation. It seems we could start to find more possibilities for creativity through conscious connection with nature. There is still a bit of the aboriginal living inside Western individuals. Maybe that inner nomad is the part that should be reawakened globally in these times of climate change?

### 5.1.1 Connection with inner nature

An authentic, reciprocal relationship with one's self, nature, and the cosmos may open a path to inner nature, to the inner self. Many people enjoy being in the woods, near water, in silence – without manipulating any elements of nature. This echoes Berry (1999) and Goldman Schuyler (2016), both of whom stress how a connection with nature facilitates genuine connection to both the self and other beings. A connection with nature serves as a connection with one's inner nature, too.

Nature-connectedness is always an experience of one's individual body. Ideas of body always begin from existence and questions about the nature of skill and knowledge. The body is the manifestation of our being; it is tangible, concrete, time-bound, and place-bound, and something new appears in it at every moment. Embodiment includes our history as "acting flesh," and incarnation enlightens the moment where the flesh appears so we experience it (Varto, 2009). These kinds of bodily experiences play an important role in the sub-study results, where people describe in detail their bodily relationships with the environment, with soil, rocks, trees, wind, or water. In many cases, these bodily experiences are also the gates to inner insights about one's life or work.

According to recent international studies, one of the most important reasons to go out into nature is a sense of satisfaction. Nature's interactive artwork is something to step into with all senses. Such nature-connectedness may also awaken a sense of mystery and imagination in the mind (Leppänen and Pajunen, 2017; Snyder, 2010). Nature is not as distinct from the body-mind as it used to be. Whereas an anthropocentric attitude serves

the idea that man and nature are separate (Varto, 2009), nature-connectedness increases feelings of unity. Respect and gratitude for nature is present in many of the EP descriptions included in the data. Important ideas and insights appeared for participants during aimless roaming, when they were simply admiring the beauty of nature. Indeterminacy was an important part of these experiences. It seems experiences of beauty and sacredness in nature may awaken our forgotten senses and give us back to ourselves. A 37-year-old project manager who views nature as the main source of his creativity believes that the moment of presence is the “awakening” of the “true mind,” “the authentic mind of Homo sapiens.” The sub-study results indicate that this sort of open communication with the environment can contribute to increased self-knowledge; EPs help people understand more about themselves. The literature emphasizes that a communicative and creative organization needs individuals who have developed self-knowledge (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006).

One model for looking at ourselves would be to see ourselves as a blue planet with inner and outer spaces, our inner and outer nature (see Figure 6). Inner nature consists of our emotions, ways of thinking and behaving – everything involving the individual mind, learned behavior, attitudes, and backgrounds. Outer nature is a free, open space for connections with the environment and other people.



**Figure 6: “The blue planet” of human nature**

This little planet symbolizes the experimental space available to every individual. If we consciously connect or practice connection with our inner nature, we can gradually become aware of our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, behaviors, as well as our unconscious blind spots. The contemplative attitude described in the literature (Klemola 2013; Padilla, 2012) is a good example of connection with inner nature. As EPs seem to increase connection with our inner world, they could naturally increase our awareness, and thereby improve our leadership abilities as well. One 37-year-old female managing director, who profoundly enjoys her nature-connectedness, describes that when she is present, she

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learns best, listens most effectively, and understands more deeply. The way to increase these inner abilities in her work as a manager was to commit to being in outer nature whenever possible. This illustrates how these inner and outer connections are intertwined dynamically with each other. This is typical also for the dynamics of Tao (introduced in Section 2.3.2), where the feminine Yin and the masculine Yang are the main forces we can consciously and continuously recognize through our bodies if we practice the mind, body, and body-mind to be more open and more aware (Padilla, 2015). Without “inner” there is no “outer,” and without “outer” there is no “inner.”

### 5.1.2 Connection with outer nature

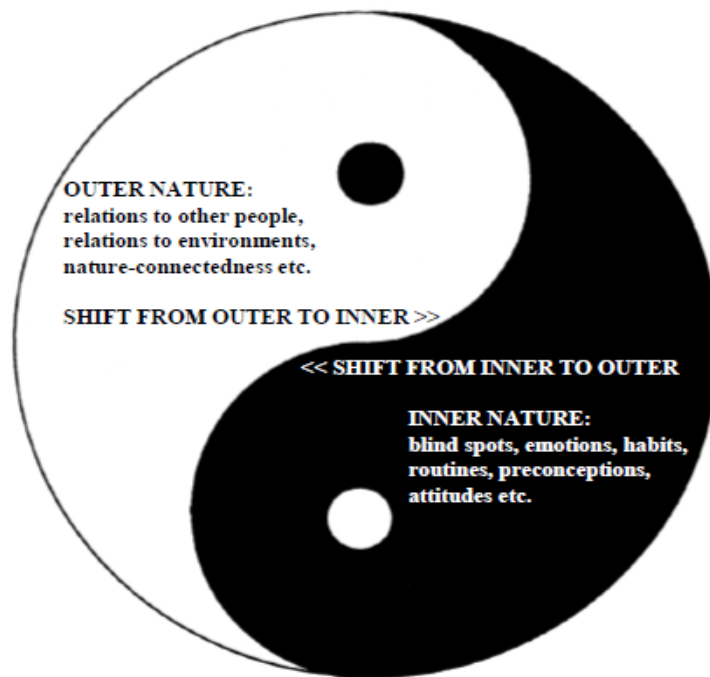
Both Goldman Schuyler (2016) and Scharmer (2009) believe there are countries that have a deeper knowledge of interconnectedness to nature. When Scharmer visited Finland, he perceived that people have deep relationships with nature, and that Finnish children are encouraged to develop this relationship. He sees this kind of relationship as special, even sacred, and feels it may contribute to Finnish children excelling in school and to the many social and technological innovations coming out of Finland and the other Nordic countries (Scharmer, 2009).

Connecting with nature allows one to see the self as a part of a larger whole, of a unity (Scharmer, 2009; Sveiby and Skuthorpe 2006), and of a possible future (Senge et al., 2005). Senge calls this kind of mental state an artist’s work, an aesthetic sensibility where one has many ideas but has to set them aside to be able to pay attention directly, to learn to “go with the flow” of events (Chia, 2014). The moments we pay attention to this aesthetic are epic; they occur on a scale none of us could possibly manufacture, because it does not originate with us (Senge et al., 2013). This is the opposite of the mechanistic approach. EPs share qualities with aesthetic experiences: active, alert collaboration with the world. Neither wants to rule, control, or own anything. Such experiences come when one is in an aware relationship with other people, the environment, and/or the universe. An aware relationship means dialogical, dynamic communication.

Dialogue may be seen as an opening up towards the other. Dialogue is not possible without the opening of the individual human being (Varto, 2007). Dialogue takes place when present people have a unique reason and ability to share experiences confidently and meaningfully with each other. This resembles the *common space of sharing*. Meaningful things accumulate when people share experiences with each other in an uncontrollable dialogue. Dialogue is also important ethically, because it is a democratic space where is no room for controlling or injunction. It is the communicative space of equality (Varto, 2007).

It seems that the personal and communal capacity for creativity in many ways depends on connectedness and balance between inner and outer natures. People who experience presence and creativity move dynamically and consciously between these two spaces, like the forces of Yin and Yang in Tao. The same people can focus on details in outer nature while receiving insights from inner nature. This was one of the most important findings

in the research. These natures change places at their own rhythm in a creative act. A superb symbol for this kind of transposition of different spaces, forces, or energies is the symbol of Tao as described by Padilla (2015). Crucial synthesis of all the cosmic connections that make life possible in the universe can be found in the way of the Tao. According to Padilla's interpretation of the dynamics of Laozi's Tao, all human incidents or functions are subjective perceptions or sensations. Humankind as a whole is living in a space of continued relativity and subjectivity that offers limitless flexibility, creativity, and possible new evolutions for the dynamics of existence (Padilla, 2015).



**Figure 7: The dynamic dialogue between inner and outer nature inspired by Tao.**

According to sub-study results, it seems the more consciously our inner and outer natures communicate with each other, the more opportunities we have to be connected to our creativity and innovation. To be creative, flexible, and rich in ideas, we need dialogue between these spaces. For the most part, the descriptions of the EPs portray connection with inner and outer nature. Many of the narratives describe how during these connections, the participant's space of mind expanded, opened, or shifted, and the frontiers between inner and outer nature melted, faded away, or merged. The research suggests this new "space between," this *terra incognita*, is potential space for organizational creativity and innovation. In Figure 7, it appears as the S curve delineating inner and outer nature from each other. This S is new, creative space.

The abstractions of the blue planet (Figure 6) and the Tao (Figure 7) and the dynamic between inner and outer natures display similarities to Bergson's notion of inner and outer perception of the body (1975). In Bergson's thinking, the body, as a live body, is a personified realization of man's wishes, motivations and movements, which does not resemble a mechanism, because it is characterized by wholeness (Bergson, 1975), much like the symbol of the planet or the Tao. According to Freiberga (2007), Bergson stresses that we are not divided into body and spirit, but are dynamic entiretyies that open up to the self through intuition, from the "inside," which is guided by the activity of the will. This is reminiscent of Scharmer's (2009) *open will*, the source of *presencing*. Deep personal commitment to one's inner and outer nature is an aware act of individual will, which is a very different mindset from the current approach of exploiting nature(s).

During EPs, it would appear that people, environments, and creation are in dialogical, dynamic interaction. This supports the existing literature, which highlights that creative processes take place in equal encounters (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Yaron, 1993), as many of the sub-study narratives describe. Maybe the experience of the blue planet can help us "re-member" how to live in a more ecological and sustainable way, how to lead others and ourselves more authentically, and how to move dynamically and creatively between different spaces – and forward in space.

### 5.1.3 Disconnection

The sub-study participants described how it is impossible to be present at work if they are too busy, stressed, restless, or overloaded in one way or another, and if there is no space for genuine contact. When they felt they were not present in the moment, they felt divided, disconnected, or separate as a result of, for example, a negative atmosphere, challenging circumstances, or bad relationships with other people. One noteworthy feature of non-presence that appeared repeatedly in the data was *performance*. Many employees from health care organizations described how constant hurry leads them to feel like operating objects, not human beings. These observations echo the mechanistic approach described earlier. For many workers, performance is the opposite of presence: routine work is usually done on autopilot, but authentic work, genuinely encountering people, requires presence. Other descriptions of non-presence included "trying too hard," "being afraid of something," or "controlling." For example, many people who do artistic work describe how when they let themselves be led by overly strict ideas, desires, or aims, the flow inherent to the creative process disappears. However, sometimes noticed (aware) moments of non-presence at work created insights and new points of view inside the team or organization.

We have to be acquainted with our individual and collective constraints if we want to expand our creative intelligence and reinvent ourselves in rapidly changing environments (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). The three major divides described in the literature, ecological, social, and spiritual, which separate us from the environment, one another, and our inner self respectively, demand new levels of listening to be spanned. The sub-study results suggest that EPs could serve as necessary bridges to span those divides and



help us recognize our blind spots. For instance, Senge et al. (2013) note that the most important thing for welfare organizations is what members see for themselves and how they collaborate and help each other.

## 5.2 Connecting organizational creativity

The practices applied in the sub-studies demonstrate that common spaces of sharing could be important factors in developing more sustainable communities and organizations. They could also serve as acts of social innovation in any community or organization. Nevertheless, *common spaces of sharing* are not typically encountered in, for example, today's Finnish care-sector cultures. Despite the great number of team, weekly, and management meetings, most sub-study participants indicated there is a lack of intentional and facilitated spaces and times for non-hierarchical sharing of work experiences. As Goldman Schuyler et al. point out (2016), the thing that really matters is how an organization's workers make sense of their own day-to-day work.

EPs take place in spaces (or states) of open communication. The EP descriptions relate how "space expands" between, for example, the observer and another person – a customer, a patient, a colleague – creating special moments of open interaction. Peoples' creativity is usually a dynamic process, which is linked to unique ideas and values and is often born in communication between different views (Robinson, 2007). This also applies to EPs, which could be valuable new tools for creativity and innovation. Both creativity thinking and innovation demand tools for generating new and different perspectives (McLean, 2005; Sternberg, 2006). Many of the free-form narratives of EPs share features with creative thinking: experiences of intuition, which in these cases is the ability to master the personal mental dimensions of one's (tacit) knowledge and awareness of the present moment (Raami, 2015).

For creativity and more innovative solutions, we need environments that support creative ideas (Eaton et al., 2017; Sternberg, 2006) and spaces that foster open debate and interactions of trust (McLean, 2005), perhaps in or through EPs. Individuals and groups need each other to awaken the ability to innovate at a more holistic, larger scale. The key word in this state of connection is "we." If the "we" shows up, people's awareness – and ability to do things – changes (Senge et al, 2005). Similarly, the act of authentic sharing and cooperation implied in "we" is the foundation of community development (Bopp & Bopp, 2011; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006) and an important step towards eco-system awareness.

### 5.2.1 Eco-system awareness

The preceding sections highlight that presence is a space of connection (with nature), fruitful encounter, or better dialogue. The nature-connectedness appearing in EPs mirrors the thinking of deep ecologists who frequently offer an alternative narrative of the self to the modern view of the divided and isolated human being solely responsible to herself (Baugher et al., 2016).

According to Scharmer and Kaufer (2013), when we can integrate our individual and societal needs, we share a common vision that can serve as the seed of a more sustainable world and more creative organizations. In many cases, the people who participated in this research by describing EPs seemed to recognize the things they longed for, describing and identifying personal inner needs. Sometimes these needs were community needs: intertwined societal, ecological, and spiritual needs, for instance. They can be significant elements of a more sustainable approach to community or organizational creativity. Again, according to Scharmer (2003) and Scharmer and Kaufer (2013), shared will and vision are key to successful social innovation. They may help the system see itself, enabling people from many points of view to collectively “sense” how they could jointly deepen their commitment to change and opening a quality of collective listening and acting that could produce fundamental innovation (ibid.). In this process, certain practices, methods, or ways of doing that increase sharing and contemplation can build the capacity for discernment and respectful relationships to other people, nature and environment (Eaton et al., 2017).

Nowadays, when the focus of organizational creativity is generally on interrelationships and the dynamics between actor and environment (MacLean, 2005), the ability to be present should be understood as a critical element of an organization’s innovation culture. The results of the sub-studies indicate that individually experienced moments of presence could be useful tools when building more interactive and creative eco-systems between people and within organizations, as described in the U curve of Theory U (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). A *common space of sharing* is a good example of an effective way of furthering such eco-systems.

*Common spaces of sharing* and all the main themes of EPs are closely related the phenomenon of open dialogue. Open dialogue within a community can contribute to the potential to reinvent or develop an organization or system from the ground up. It is important that workers or citizens have the opportunity to question the future of existing systems and to build new ones. In many cases, a space for open dialogue of this nature is the place where a promising new approach has taken shape (Scharmer, 2003). Just as people need to be able to develop their inner potential, a community or organization needs to be able to develop to its highest ideal. *Common spaces of sharing* could create spaces for needed and fruitful exchange. They are similar to applications of third-space theory, in which third spaces are seen as dialogical, safe and supportive platforms where practitioners can develop individually and collectively and where the process of change can be nurtured in a space that stands between formal areas of practice (Hulme et al., 2009).

It is possible to increase dialogical spaces between the “other” and the self through the ability to be present. One example of a working human relationship is the *common space of sharing*, which has the potential to serve as a dialogical venue for Stacey’s (2007) double-loop learning, in which people learn to adjust their actions and question their mental models (see Section 3.3.4). This pattern has similarities to Scharmer’s (2009) recognition of blind spots (see Section 2.5.2) and Matrix of Social Evolution (see Table

1). We must first be aware of ourselves before we are ready to undertake aware actions and collaboration with others.

A capacity for reflection is essential to making meaning of and participating in one's world, and the ability to pause, step above the fray, allow, and imagine alternative futures can help us think more creative and systemically (Eaton et al., 2017; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). Such themes are evident in the main results of the sub-studies. The more we are aware of our models of thinking and behavior, the better our interactions will become. This balance in life – on an individual, group, and planetary scale – can only be achieved if we view our individual selves as part of a bigger picture and understand the multiple connections within that picture as a planetary community. This is eco-system awareness.

Goldman Schuyler et al. (2016) note that the key factors in a shift in awareness are a compelling vision and sense of deeper purpose that means something to people and offers something to commit to, as well as a level of openness and reflection. This way of challenging our old habits of seeing the world is evident in the descriptions of EPs collected for the sub-studies. Through the process of “*waking up*,” people are getting better at seeing how they are dependent on and part of larger systems (ibid.). This awareness also increases the capacity for dialogue and respect, which are critical to thinking and acting in a state of eco-system awareness (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006).

In this research, *common spaces of sharing* are seen as spaces of equal, reciprocal dialogue. Non-hierarchical *common spaces of sharing* and better dialogue invite people into greater balance as leaders, but also into greater balance in their own lives. These spaces expand the Bopps' communal development model of “rebirthing a true sustainability community” (2011, presented in Figure 1). EPs seem to have ability to balance the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of life, allowing connections with all levels described in the Bopps' sustainability model (Bopp and Bopp, 2011). When comparing the main themes of individual EPs to a holistic sustainability model, it appears EPs could offer one possible tool for balancing many levels of sustainability that are critical to more aware leadership.

As described in the literature (see Table 1), eco-system awareness means operating with a mind that perceives an experience or a problem from all perspectives in a given social-ecological system and internalizing the issues important to others in one's decision-making (Scharmer, 2014). By focusing on the great variation in individual information sources and flexibility in professional roles, transdisciplinary groups can increase opportunities for achieving creative, holistic solutions. If we look at EPs from this perspective, we see that in many cases EPs act like can-openers to the bigger picture of one's life, work, and the present challenge or situation. They may include ideas, insights, or intuition. The answers or solutions arrived at are linked to individually or communally profound, ethical, responsible, ecological, or meaningful questions (of worldview). The most sustainable results are obtained when all participants in an action give of their most free and creative selves, and when they work in open, reciprocal interaction. Leadership

that is compatible with the systematic nature of shared challenges can accomplish a lot towards creating a healthy organization that has space and time to come together and thoughtfully solve problems in collaboration (Goldman Schuyler et al., 2016). Innopresence and facilitated *common spaces of sharing* show promise as useful dialogical tools for furthering a transformation towards eco-system awareness.

Contemporary society requires social consciousness and global ecological responsibility as well as new, more sustainable – and aware – leadership (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006), all of which can be achieved through leadership that places a higher premium on awareness. The capacity for presence could be a major piece of this new type of leadership.

### 5.2.2 Aware leadership

One of the most surprising findings of the organizational workshops implemented during the research process was that so few people were aware of what is going on in their body-minds. Many participants burst out crying when given the opportunity to simply sit still and listen to what was going on inside of them. Some reported afterwards that practicing presence was important and instructive, because they could “recognize themselves” again. This insight prompted the researcher to ask what aware leadership could be like.

Most participants who work with customers or patients used descriptions like “reciprocal interaction,” “authenticity,” “being who you are without any roles,” or “equal listening and hearing” when describing their EPs. Klenke highlights (2007) that the construct of authenticity in leadership refers to accepting, being one’s self, and remaining true to that self – qualities captured in the famous injunction from ancient Greek philosophy, *know thyself* (ibid.). According to the results authenticity is also something, which has to do with non-hierarchical social interaction and collaboration. Maybe more aware and authentic leadership could be understood as a social construction, as meaning collective mobilization towards a common purpose, as Virtaharju (2016) describes in his dissertation.

According to Scharmer and Kaufer (2013), new organizational creativity needs a global movement of conscious connection and sharing that is nameless and lacks a leader, ideology, or program. It is collective concern about the well-being of all living things on the planet (ibid.). This means that leaders who want to think in new ways must live in new ways, too. On the other hand, as Rogers (1961) notes, when we accept ourselves as we are, we can change. Living in a new way requires the ability to be aware of our autopilot thoughts and behaviors and notice our blind spots. As Bopp and Bopp (2011) state, you have to see the way you see the problem because that is the problem. More often than not, the problem is us. Senge says in Goldman Schuyler’s (2012) interview:

*...---...we’ve got a lot of people in positions of authority who don’t know anything except how to project their own worldview on the larger world, so we have lots of problems. (ibid.: pp. 326-327)*

When we understand that we shape and are shaped by our social, cultural, and core belief experiences, we have the capacity for self-reflexivity. Through the various self-reflexive processes that are part of our inner nature, we may become responsive to others (outer nature) and open to possibilities for more creative solutions in our daily lives. Authentic self-reflexivity involves dialogue-with-self and self-knowledge about our fundamental assumptions and ways of interacting. At its best, self-reflexivity means questioning our core beliefs and understanding of particular situations and how they shape our responses. Through self-reflexive processes, we can become responsive to others and open up to potential new ways of being (Cunliffe, 2009).

Together, the focus on individual responsibility and the hermeneutic emphasis on the self in relation to other can offer a way of reframing leadership. This phenomenological way of understanding who we are applies to leadership, too. For example, in the area of the self and ethics, existentialism brings a need to accept responsibility for ourselves, our actions, and others. From a phenomenological perspective, authenticity (in leadership and in organizations) is about understanding, being responsible, and being true to ourselves in relation to the pressures and influences around us. A new kind of leadership requires questioning the nature of social and institutional realities, thinking about the types of organizations we want to create and be a part of, and seeing the future as one of infinite possibilities. The most important capacities for leaders, and for us as the leaders of our lives, are the capacity to consider how we relate to others and what assumptions we hold about them and the capacity to create opportunities for open dialogue. Accepting that we all are interconnected opens up a completely new understanding and awareness of how we engage with others. It is necessary to recognize that, as human beings, we are first and foremost ethical beings with a moral responsibility for our relationships with others and to be trustworthy in our attempts to live a good life together (Cunliffe, 2009).

A more sustainable, holistic way of life means connection to all of one's knowledge, roles, and leadership positions, while being conscious about the responsibility that knowledge entails. Such qualities seem to be the essence of the EP descriptions related to organizational creativity. Senge (Goldman Schuyler, 2016: p. 67) says:

To me, leadership and organizational learning are just two different lenses on the same fundamental phenomena. They are inseparable. Leaders are people who build organizational capacities. My favorite definition of leadership has always been this really simple one: **leadership is the capacity of a human community to shape its future.**

For Senge, leadership is a quality of a human community, not of individuals. If you want to be a leader of your own life, other people, or both, you must tackle your toughest problems to shape your future. According to Goldman Schuyler et al. (2016), our wicked global problems are unsolvable from the perspective of the mainstream myths of heroic, individual, patriarchal leaders. We need a new mythos, a new way of thinking about leadership that is compatible with the systemic nature of our problems. Instead of

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leadership, we need more “mother-ship” – more fair care, empathy, and responsibility for our common planet and its inhabitants.

Bishop (2013) compares authentic leadership to the work of a great artist whose skills have been developed over years of experience. The same tendency is seen in the sub-study results; the more the participants were aware of their EPs, the more they benefitted from them. Those results indicate that becoming more aware of your ability to be present and practicing it more consciously could be the seed of more aware, more sustainable, and more authentic leadership. This counters old-fashioned notions of “heroic” leadership. Sustainable organizational change is more effective if it takes place through relaxing one’s control and “letting happen” (Chia, 2014) – with equal space for *presencing*.

### 5.2.3 Practicing presence

Contemporary leaders should be aware and present enough to understand the developmental journey of learning how to listen, of cultivating steadfastness of mind, and of sensing into the larger unfolding in any complex situation (Goldman Schuyler, 2016). This might sound like a lot to demand, but after contemplating the sub-study data, it is not impossible. People are the authors, or “mothers,” of their social and organizational realities, identities, and sense of self. Organizations, which are both sites of continuously changing human action and sets of institutionalized categories, and organization scientists, need to give theoretical priority to microscopic change (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). This microscopic change could be central to the understanding of the self, of being aware that is being present in the moment. The research process involved in this dissertation has demonstrated that the ability to be present is a skill that can be practiced. It does not necessarily require specific qualifications or expensive practices or methods, even if experience meditating or contemplating could help practitioners understand and develop these skills. It seems that people who have been keen on the subject also have also more experience with it, and many of them use it consciously in their work. The more we experience these moments, the more we seek them out. The ability to be present increases when we start paying attention to it, and awareness increases the more we come to be aware.

What if we started to pay more attention to presence? What if we started to train ourselves to use it more, thus deepening our personal connections to the world around us by learning how to navigate the emotions of anger, despair, and frustration, which can arise when such challenges are studied deeply?

The fundamental method of changing our typical behavior and routine thinking patterns though practicing the mind could be, for example, the method practiced during Innopresence workshops: Stop and sit still. Relax your stomach and breathe. Quiet your mind by concentrating on your breathing more consciously every time you find yourself surrounded by thoughts. Listen to the silence behind your thoughts. Hear and understand the messages in that silence.

Maybe through practicing presence, we can find answers that help us solve the problems besetting us at the moment. Sub-study results indicate the answer is often found in nature, or the answer is nature itself – either our own authentic inner nature or outdoor nature. As the leader of our own lives or a leader in others lives, we have to start practicing from ourselves.

Unfortunately, the task is not easy to fulfill, because there are plenty of ambushes around the corner. You really have to be aware and alert of how, when, where, with whom and with what intention you are going to practice presence or, for example, mindfulness, which has been very popular all over the Western world in the past ten years (Goldman Schuyler, 2016). There is an increasing discussion about what mindfulness is and whether it can be used as a tool for improving performance (ibid.). That has been called ‘McMindfulness’ (Goto-Jones, 2013). The ‘McMindfulness’ phenomenon is the commodified and marketed populist version of the mindfulness practice. It consists of different courses, books and other items for sale to the public in the pursuit of materialist gain. This is a contradiction to the Buddhist ethical precepts linked to the authentic mindfulness: right action, right view, right effort and right livelihood. In many organizations, ‘McMindfulness’ is used in increasing productivity in workplaces or for achieving short-term objectives in training, which is also ethically problematic. According to Hyland (2016), the ‘McMindfulness’ models represent monstrous mutations of the original core values derived from Buddhist traditions. Goto-Jones (2013) describes the dark sides of the popular phenomenon of mindfulness as follows:

The mindfulness movement pathologies the experience of stress that is caused by life under capitalism, suggesting that it requires treatment (a therapeutic intervention) to cure this “thinking disease” so that the patient can continue in the service of capitalist society without breaking. (Goto-Jones, 2013, unnumbered pages)

### 5.3 Assessment of the research

This dissertation is a combination of various practice-based development and research approaches to enhancing understanding of the phenomenon under investigation: individual EPs and their contributions to organizational creativity. The quality of the research is assessed here in terms of relevance, validity, reliability, and generalizability, relying primarily on Varto’s (2005) methodology of qualitative research.

First, some notes about the researcher herself. She was not objective or separate from the research; as researcher, she formulated and asked the participants questions regarding EPs, conducted interviews about the subject, and facilitated all the workshops detailed in the sub-studies. This active role is one reason a phenomenological methodology was used, as it seeks to present potential insights that bring us into more direct contact with experiences of the world (Van Manen, 2016). The researcher embarked on this dissertation in 2011 with a hypothesis prompted by personal experience of the lack of presence in Finnish organizations; the research is a scientific endeavor to test the truth of

that hypothesis. Starting the dissertation was a relevant move for her at that time and place, when she was counseling and developing communities and organizations using art-based methods. Her background as a theater director and consultant and practice-based researcher was representative of the rigorous science that means to be in an interrogative and participatory relationship with the world. The dissertation is deeply intertwined with a praxis in which all questions come to the fore. Through the research process, she pondered the meaning of presence in human life at both the individual and the communal levels and in common practices at those levels. Perhaps in daily life, the ability to be present is taken for granted, but through this dissertation the researcher problematized it into the subject of broader and deeper research related to a paradigm shift she and others see as necessary. As researcher, she and her research aims belong to the same reality; the research contributes to participative action that could have had impacts at many levels in the field of organizational creativity. The facts of this research are not neutral, but conducted through understanding of them. The main goals of this dissertation are to enrich human existence, to deepen understanding of ourselves as active individuals and the world in which we live and work. Hence, the dissertation also has deep ethical meaning. Strongly connected with practice, her pondering has continually changed both the researcher's thinking and the methods used in her research (Varto, 2005).

The validity of the dissertation's findings "is seen to be dependent upon the ability of its presentation to convince the reader that its findings are trustworthy" (Halldórsdóttir, 2000: p. 70). This means constant questioning and checking as well as theoretically interpreting the findings throughout the research process. The dialogue between researcher and participants is, at its essence, a communicative process, where lived experiences become the nucleus of the inquiry process and further understanding of the complex world from the point of view of the people who lived them. This offers valuable insights into and understanding of the phenomena being studied and ourselves as human beings (Halldórsdóttir, 2000; Varto, 2005).

One factor impacting the validity of the research is that it is closely related to the researcher's professional experiences. Naturally, she reflected on and processed her beliefs, suppositions and experiences about organizations, creativity, leadership, and human nature as a communal coach, theater director, and pedagogue at the outset of and throughout the course of the research. Without those experiences, she never could have done the whole dissertation. She made note of the personal philosophies she held prior to collecting the data, and documented in her personal work diaries how her journey with her individual EPs evolved over the course of the research process. As the research process progressed, she had new insights and reflections that confirmed or challenged her views of the findings. For example, her preconceptions about workers' willingness to participate in various arts-based – and especially contemplation-based – methods changed during the research process. Most of the people really wanted to participate and try different kind of working. In many organizations, the participants were surprisingly eager to use their bodies and share their experiences in an atypical way.



There were also different surprises. To commit to the unknown means taking a step away from your comfort zone. In some cases, this happened to both the researcher and the participants. The first challenge within the “test-workshops” appeared soon after the first workshops in one child welfare organization. Many workers were absent. One office worker was excused from further meetings, because she “only takes care of paperwork”. Some other participants began to question the necessity of attending, as taking part was voluntary. The manager was demanding everybody’s involvement. She wondered if the workers were nervous about what the workshops would reveal about them. After a while, the group grew in size, as the manager had time to encourage the workers to participate. Soon there was a conflict again. Two people had decided to leave the group. One person felt it was too difficult to achieve the presence due to personal anxiety, while the other believed that the “idea of presence” was too ideological, as it reminded her of Eastern philosophy (she was deeply Christian). The manager was disappointed and thought that this situation will affect the whole workplace: *“The most difficult issue for me was encountering resistance from two of the key employees; it was, and still is, very difficult to understand. I didn’t know how to handle it as a manager.”* This was also a moment of reflection for the researcher. The whole episode with the first workshop process – and with many other workshop processes after that – taught that the workshop participation should be voluntary, and the workshop facilitation should be as sensitive and delicate as possible. Many mistakes and aberrations appeared on the winding path of this research process, but fortunately, they also served as good lessons in seeing things from another perspective and helped the researcher find the “right” path again.

According to Varto (2005), reliability refers to research free from randomness and irrelevant actors, especially in the acquiring and storage of data in qualitative research. The data should not include any randomness or irrelevant material. In qualitative research, where the research process is under constant evaluation and reflection, possible randomness will usually fall away during the research process. Nevertheless, if the researcher comes across mistakes during the process, she must adjust her data collection processes to ensure more reliable data when procuring new material (ibid.). The theoretical part of the dissertation is critical to assessments of reliability. The researcher strove to maintain the holistic approach, demanded in the human sciences, throughout the process. The complexity of human life is articulated as clearly as possible.

There were many ethical considerations, and ethical requirements, which were taken into account throughout the research process. During the process, it was important to understand distinctive differences between participating organizations and their workers. In some organizations, the participants were volunteers, but in others, they were maybe participating under some pressure and control by their managers. In some cases, managers themselves were participating, in others not. All these matters naturally influenced the action in the workshops. For example, in some hierarchical organizations, it was challenging (or, not possible at all) to get managers and workers to come to the same group to work equally on the group’s topic. However, most of the participating organizations understood the ‘equal nature’ of working with presence. The findings are

related to the reality of the human experience and are ethically acceptable. Both the researcher/facilitator (as sensitive as possible) and the investigated experiences of the participants are intertwined in the same wholeness of meaning (Varto, 2005).

#### **5.4 Limitations of the research**

One aspect of phenomenological approach is its dynamic nature; it is challenging or even impossible to accurately describe lived experience, as it cannot be captured in conceptual abstractions (Van Manen, 2016). This is typical of the findings of this dissertation, because in investigating the phenomenon of presence and its contributions to organizational creativity, the researcher was looking for something that escaped all description. The direct relationship between presence and creativity has not been researched before. Naturally, this is a primary limitation of this dissertation. Secondly, this dissertation is interdisciplinary and relies on a variety of methodological tools, which is both a strength and a weakness. The data, which consists of hundreds of descriptions of personal experiences, dozens of workshops, interviews in various communities, background literature, and a significant experience in participatory group facilitation methods, proved so comprehensive that it could serve as the source for much more research.

The types of workshop processes that were included this research could serve as essential living laboratories for testing, developing, and formalizing EPs as a tool for more creative and sustainable work inside organizations; however, those organizations would need to demonstrate genuine interest and devote time, space, and resources to such an undertaking. For example, if we want to change work routines, we first have to be aware of them, then identify them, then develop and change them, and finally adapt them to our daily work. It is not a one-afternoon process. This could be seen as a larger problem in innovation and development research in Finnish organizations. Conscious change is not a fast process. More and longer periods of practice-based experience would be required to generate proper results in the field.

EPs require a certain willingness to face ambiguity and create one's own process, which does not sit well with everyone. Those who completed the process seemed to be able to handle a certain amount of ambiguity and apply self-discipline. Vigilance and self-discipline are required to change typical thinking routines, break work routines, and move towards collective creativity. There are no quick fixes or self-help facilitations for this, even if all the possible methods and tools used in the applied arts around the world were available. To become more aware of our thinking and behavior and be prepared to change them is a long-term process involving experiences of heart, mind, and body, which no one can learn during one workshop or study.

## 5.5 Suggestions for future research

It is clear that plenty of further research into EPs and creativity are needed, but common elements of the collected experiences, reflections, and perspectives on the phenomenon of presence suggest new approaches for us as leaders, citizens, and individuals, as well as for organizational creativity. Further research into the phenomenon of presence could boost its becoming an important part of building a more sustainable world for future generations. We need more practice-based experience and research into whether EPs could serve as portals to the kind of *presencing* that, for example, Bopps (2011), Scharmer and Kaufer (2013), and Senge (Senge et al., 2005) see as essential to addressing the global issues we are facing at the moment.

The tools for “re-membering” and creating presence in organizations – Innopresence and *common spaces of sharing* – must undergo more testing and experience in practice, for example through jointly setting collaboration goals with participants. Collaboration that brings individual experiences of work to a group’s consciousness helps build a deeper understanding of personal and communal creative processes. The process of sharing experiences with each other also strengthens professional expertise and personal self-esteem, or could be used as an important tool to do so. There were some indications in the workshop processes included in this dissertation that demonstrate a correlation between EPs and the evaluation of one’s work; EPs could be utilized as useful tools in this regard as well. Accordingly, some practical and concrete paths for future research could be found through organizational and communal workshop processes, leadership education, and human-based grassroots projects that more deeply test how to benefit from EPs in daily life.

Practice-based investigation into experiences of presence/non-presence in organizations could offer a largely untapped field for those who want to understand and concretize practical ways of solving the wicked global problems we currently face.

## 6 Conclusion

What would happen if we started to put more trust in our experiences of presence and were aware enough to understand the “natures” in them?

During the research process, the researcher had the opportunity to test, through various participatory workshops, how the aware, listening, and silent moment of presence could serve as the basis of, for example, new social innovations.

Memories and moments of presence were tested through workshop processes in several organizations, where people sat silently, meditated, and re-membered, for example, meaningful actions in their daily life or work.

Facilitating and creating *common spaces of sharing* is challenging in the Finnish work organizations of today, due to the prevailing demand for productivity and goal-directed rationality. Productivity requires performance and constantly accelerated routines, but a *common space of sharing* requires time, presence, and the ability to be still, listening and sharing. This is quite a paradox that overshadows this dissertation, a paradox that should be solved one way or another.

If we become more aware of presence – and thus of our blind spots – the first thing to change would be the quality of our encounters. However, this would take time, space, and various experiments in different fields at different stages and levels with different people. Many traditional hierarchical organizations or companies are so focused on short-term productivity, performance, and profits that their members or employees do not have time to stop and look at things from a radically different perspective, or demonstrate an interest in cross-pollination (Elliot & Simon, 2011). During the research process, this was noted in Finnish working life, where efficiency needs and economic pressures decrease people’s ability to be present at work.

In many of the interviews and workshops, participants described EPs in terms of contrast to their normal work performance, when they have to work fast and efficiently, or in terms of stressful circumstances when they suffer from lack of presence.

The notes, experiences, and discussions produced through the workshops served as the inspiration for Table 4, which presents the interplay between presence and performance as described in the data.

The ability to be present is labeled an “input-oriented approach,” while the ability to perform is labeled an “output oriented approach.”

**Table 4: The interplay between presence and performance as described in the data**

<b>Presence: “input oriented approach”</b>	<b>Performance: “output oriented approach”</b>
Improvisation	Control, routine
Authentic encounter	Professional distance
Being who you are	Strict professional role
Listening in the moment	Foreknowledge
Being heard	Sharing/getting information
Equality	Hierarchy, statuses
Empathy	Object of action
Giving time, timeless moment	Hurry, limited time
Freedom	Bureaucracy
No diagnoses/reports	Diagnoses/reports are important
People as sources of information	Formal documents as sources of information
Customer-oriented approach	Expertise
Transparency	Certain agenda
Humanity prioritized	Economic benefit prioritized
Experience as indicator	Numbers as indicator
Responsibility	Resettlement
Quality	Price
Sharing	Ownership
Intuition	Instructions
Community	Individual
Connection with nature	Exploiting nature

The input-oriented approach was constructed using the concepts appearing most frequently in the sub-study descriptions of EPs. The output-oriented approach was constructed through descriptions of common experiences of non-presence, for example at their work. The output-oriented approach seems to be a totality of technological, social, and economic control integrating peoples' experiences, identities, specialties, and the practices, economy, and administration of institutions. It spans a range from individual self-evaluation to national and global government and represents an efficiency or "machinery" state of mind. People live and work towards a certain aim that is manifested in various evaluations, comparisons, reports, statistics, and indicators. The output-oriented approach does not only operate through rationality, but also through emotions: joy, pride, envy, shame, guilt, and fear. Responsibility for profits as well as organizational accountability under continuously changing requirements set chronic survival pressures. People are constantly asking themselves if they are being effective enough, doing the right things, and how "valuable" they are in the existing circumstances. When we examine the participants' experiences of non-presence at work, they seem to land at level 1.0 (habitual awareness) in Scharmer's and Kaufer's Matrix of Social Evolution (2013) described in the literature (see Table 1). Experiences of non-presence thus take the form of downloading habits of thought, downloading conversations, organizing through control, and coordinating through hierarchy.

For example, the trait of an output-oriented approach called "formal documents as a source of information" came out of one organization where employees felt non-presence and feelings of being overloaded when they had to make important decisions about human lives and futures based on formal documents without seeing the objects of their actions (living people). The workers understood that the ability to be present and human encounters are the nucleus of their work, but they felt that they had too few opportunities to benefit from them. This was not the only organization where employees felt there was too much of the performance or output-oriented approach in their daily work in a period when are many challenges in Finnish working culture and society.

Politicians are crying for a leap in productivity to save the nation, but the sub-studies suggest that they should be crying for a leap in consciousness instead. The ability to be present and experience the world could be one of the most important solutions to tackling the wicked problems in organizations and society as a whole. When we experience our inner and outer worlds deeply with our senses, we can use those experiences to think, act, and share them creatively – together. A holistic approach that takes both our individual nature and nature as a whole into account could provide a key method of meeting the organizational and ecological challenges our planet is facing (Klein, 2014).

The data supports the notion that EPs may be the needed "inner tacit actions" or personal practices that help us achieve a shift in awareness from the ego-system to the eco-system, a shift that may well be one of the most important undertakings of our time. EPs seem to serve as a kind of a transformer of individual consciousness, a new connection with

somebody or something. The phenomenon of presence broadens the perspectives of our thinking at both the individual and collective levels.

New approaches to organizational creativity demand qualities like listening with awareness, dialogical communication, and the courage to encounter one's own blind spots openly in order to solve collective problems. If we want to be authentic leaders of our own lives or others' work as leaders or coaches, we should seek out the attitude of the artist: being present in the moment before we start to create. Finnish theatre director Juha Hurme, who is also the winner of the most recent Finlandia Prize in literature, wrote in one of his latest books:

*Art demands time and inactivity. The touch of art is contemplative, inspecting, and lingering...---...The creative act is the opposite of imitation and copying. It is practicing independent thinking and acting.”* (Hurme, 2017: pp. 189-190.)

In this era of unstoppable information flow, it is necessary for us to be at peace or in inactive connection with our thoughts. People of every age should be allowed to enjoy the slowly maturing fruits of insight through a peaceful mind and aimless roaming (Koivunen, 1997).

This research involved collecting, experimenting, and investigating individual and collective EPs through reflective learning-by-doing. Such learning is not a digital skill, but a living bodily experience that takes place in the same space with somebody or something. It is related to silencing your mind, contemplation, listening, receiving, accepting, and sharing. It has nothing to do with struggling, trying, pushing, pressing, or competing. Through the various experiments and reflections on the experiences related in this dissertation, we can maintain that EP could be a key element in helping us shift from ego-system awareness to eco-system awareness and understanding our inner and outer nature better. Amid global challenges, changes, and hurry, we need to slow down and start to pay attention to “what wants to happen.” EPs could be vehicles for this process, once we accept that they are not controllable, bought, or ordered, but natural parts of our individually developed open will. Moreover, it is clear that EPs have connections to organizational creativity, but it is equally obvious that more research is needed in the name of the common good. Hopefully this dissertation is a step in that direction.

Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) emphasize that we are middle of a battle for the future of our planet, which

*...will not be won by dropping bombs on other people. The primary battlefield of this century is with our Selves. It is a battle between the self and the Self: between our existing, habituated self and our emerging future Self, both individually and collectively. It is a battle between absencing and*

*presencing that plays out across all sectors and systems of society today.*  
(Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013: p. 33.)

The change we need is already here, inside ourselves. We just have to re-member, or reconnect with, it. We do not need a new Nokia connecting people (and the earth); we need a new way of thinking and behaving that can start in the present moment, in the Now, if we allow it to.





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## Appendix 1: Example of workshop facilitation using Innopresence

1. Warming up –> free movement in space, gently awakening both body and senses, finding a new perspective on moving your body at the moment
2. Finding your own space and body position in a room > Why did you pick that position now? <i>“I can see outside...---... the sky is a beautiful element: stars, sun, moving clouds, there’s still light in middle of gray sky...---...At this moment I have some pain in my back, I get this movement from the movements of the clouds...”</i> > listening to one’s self and others, getting to know both from a new point of view
3. Changing places: an opportunity to go through all the places and positions – “jumping into another’s shoes”
4. Observations on the movement exercise in a “round-floor discussion” (e.g. sitting in a circle on the floor)
5. How has the subject of presence appeared in your thoughts at your work? Talking in groups/pairs, sharing experiences
6. <b>“Common space of sharing”</b> > Sharing experiences you have discovered and thoughts about them by talking together in a bigger group – mutually, all participants together. > In this step, the role of facilitator is to be very alert to all the insights and themes people share about their experiences.
7. What was the main theme of the discussion? What is the most important task we should address in our work (organization)? > The first part of the workshop may end with a discussion about the main theme that has emerged. In some cases, the discussion may serve as the impetus for a new (social) innovation.
8. The next part of workshop can be facilitated indoors or outdoors. In this example, it takes place outside, in a large park near the participants’ workplace. This part is called “silencing your mind and contemplating nature” – one of the main themes from the shared experiences.
9. Find yourself a nice place to be at one with yourself. Try to identify with it in unique way, for example by “hanging out.” Focus on your subjective relationship to nature.
10. When you’re in your place, clear your thoughts by silencing your mind. Be aware, observe and sense everything around you. If you feel comfortable enough, let one issue from work (maybe one you’ve been worried about lately/some task from the last discussion together) enter your mind. Accept it and let the image, answer, idea, or insight come from this situation, from nature, from yourself.
11. Coming back together to share the captured thoughts and insights. This is similar to steps 6 and 7 above.



## **Publication I**


Goldman Schuyler, K., Skjei, S., Sanzgiri, J., and Koskela V.  
**“Moments of Waking UP”: A Doorway to Mindfulness and Presence**

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# “Moments of Waking Up”: A Doorway to Mindfulness and Presence

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## Abstract

The context for this article and the research project that it describes is the potential importance of being awake and present for leaders. This 2-year collaborative action research project was designed to explore whether simply intending to be present could make a difference in participants' quality of experience at work and also to find out whether this would impact people with whom they worked. The study included a phenomenological analysis of contemporaneous notes taken several times a week for 4 weeks by two groups of 12-15 people from North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. The study also explored the possibility that this approach to mindfulness might be useful for leadership development and education on a broad scale. The results suggest that sustaining ongoing awareness practices supports leaders in attaining the steadiness and flexibility needed for addressing the adaptive problems of our world.

## Keywords

mindfulness, presence, action research, leadership development, awareness, first-person reflection

I maintain that there is an irreducible core to the quality of experience that needs to be explored with a method. In other words, the problem is not that we don't know enough about the brain or about biology, the problem is that we don't know enough about experience. . . . We have had a blind spot in the West for that kind of methodical approach. . . . this notion implies a going back to work with experience, the importance of taking seriously first-person experience . . .

—Francisco Varela (In conversation with Otto Scharmer, January 12, 2000, Paris)

People have tried for centuries to develop practices that bring them into the present moment in order to experience the fullness of life in a richly meaningful way. Many spiritual traditions have called this experience *waking up*. Inspired by Francisco Varela's comment on blind spots in research, in this article we focus on individual experience from the first-person perspective to illuminate and explore the experience of waking up. Our goal is to understand this phenomenon, learn more about its dynamics, and to discern whether it is something that occurs naturally or if it requires extensive training. Most important, we wish to see what impact having this experience has on people's lives.

The broader context for this article and the research project that it describes is our interest in the value of inner development as applied to leadership. Increasingly researchers, theorists, and practitioners argue that good leadership depends upon being self-aware and acting with a sense of responsibility to one's constituencies and to the planet (Carroll, 2007; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, &

Flowers, 2004). We wished to hear the first-person “voice of practice and experience” (Boal & Trank, 2011, p. 343) with regard to this relatively unexamined aspect of human awareness that many regard as critical for leadership and even for simple well-being in the workplace.

Recent books and research support the belief that leaders benefit from being self-aware, present to those whom they lead, and awake to the emerging situation (Carroll, 2007; Good et al., 2016; Gunnlaugson, Baron, & Cayer, 2014; Rakoff, 2010; Romano, 2014; Weick & Putnam, 2006). Our study was designed to learn about this from the perspective of practitioners interested in reflecting intentionally on such an experience. In a 2-year participatory action research project we chose not to predefine waking up, but instead to invite people to bring their own experiences of this phenomenon to life. Had we defined it and made our views explicit, we were at risk that participants would try to achieve or meet some externally imposed standard. Our intention was for them to explore and describe their own experiences, providing a rich foundation for understanding this long-acknowledged yet little-studied phenomenon.

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We developed the project to explore the possibility that such an approach may be useful for leadership development and education. We are not arguing that waking up is all that leaders need in order to be effective: MBA programs largely agree on a core set of skills useful in leadership, and we acknowledge the need for specific skills pertinent to the job at hand. There was also no intention to link the process of waking up with any one specific spiritual tradition; readers may be familiar with how the notion of being awake appears in Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, or other religions. However, given Boyatzis's (2006) conclusion that "there are few models or theories of how individuals change and develop in sustainable ways, and most programs and the research on them focus on single characteristics, rather than on transformational shifts in a leader's way of being and leading" (p. 610), it seems useful to explore the potential contributions of mindfulness and awareness to leadership development, as these ways of training one's mind have been argued to have the power to evoke such transformational shifts (Senge et al., 2004). As Senge (2012) commented about the importance of such training for leaders,

Until you can stop the habitual thought flow of your mind, you cannot see what's around you. If you're going to be in a position of authority, you'd better have a high level of awareness of what's going on. Otherwise all you can do is project your inner dynamics on the outer world. . . . You look at our world today, and we've got a lot of people in positions of authority who don't know anything except how to project their own world-view on the larger world, so we have lots of problems. (pp. 326-327)

Given the increasingly tight interdependencies of action across companies and nations, a healthy world requires leaders who can distinguish between their own projections and what is actually being said or done by people from another cultural context.

## The Context

By *waking up* we mean something distinct from *mindfulness*—a term originally derived from Buddhism which describes a focused state of mind that can contribute to reduced stress and increased work performance (e.g., Dane & Brummel, 2014; Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). We use the term *waking up* to refer to the fleeting moments when people notice they are more aware and present to what is happening within or around them. These moments can be seen as an entryway to mindfulness: They are transient experiences where one senses a transition from one state to another. Mindfulness, on the other hand, has been defined as "the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 291). This definition highlights the emphasis on sustaining focus which can be discerned in mindfulness as the term is most commonly used in contemporary scientific

research and practice. Note that this is not what mindfulness has meant historically in all meditative traditions, but for simplicity, because our work is intended to communicate within the world of social science, we are using this widely used definition. We could have contextualized our practice as one of "open awareness," a term that describes another long-standing approach to meditative mind training (see, for example, M. Rinpoche & Tworokov, 2014), but because this notion is unfamiliar to Western social scientists, it would not have provided a meaningful reference point.

We chose to differentiate mindfulness from the term "waking up" for various reasons. First, waking up has a rich history across many spiritual traditions, and it allows participants to engage in this experience without linking it to a particular conceptual framework. We wish neither to encourage nor argue with those who use the term mindfulness in a utilitarian way, although our interest is in the way that such practices build on Eastern wisdom traditions. Kabat-Zinn (2011) himself has alluded to his widely quoted definition as merely an operational one. In a journal article, he said that mindfulness

. . . is not one more cognitive-behavioural technique to be deployed in a behaviour change paradigm, but a way of being and a way of seeing that has profound implications for understanding the nature of our own minds and bodies, and for living life as if it really mattered. It is primarily what Francisco Varela termed a first-person experience. (p. 284)

Second, a radical shift is needed for most people to develop a conscious, sustained effort toward being mindful in the context of work, as compared with doing so within a formal mindfulness practice outside of a work context. Weick and Putnam's (2006) groundbreaking article, which introduced many social scientists to Eastern perspectives on mindfulness, began to suggest the value of such ways of thinking. In pointing out how Weick and Putnam (2006) take "the reader beyond a Western emphasis on exteriority to an Eastern emphasis on interiority, intensity, and being mindful in the moment," Glynn (2006, p. 274) highlighted the importance of this possibility.

Third, our research seeks to add to yet remain distinct from most recent research on mindfulness in the context of work. It is unique in its focus on the "moments" of becoming mindful, as contrasted with the state or trait of mindfulness, which is more typically what has been studied. Furthermore, we approached the topic from the perspective of people's reflections on their own experiences—known as a "first-person" approach, which is central in the action research process. There are very few first-person research studies related to mindfulness or awareness (see Bradbury, 2013; Bruce & Davies, 2005; Torbert & Taylor, 2008), despite the acknowledged value of investigating people's experiences from their own perspectives in action research. In contrast, the norm in research on mindfulness in the business context is to

consider it to be primarily a cognitive process that generates an internal state that can be assessed through scales and other measures (Good et al., 2016). Finally, studying such reflective practice as a value-adding component of leadership development is uncommon, despite the increasing numbers of quantitative studies about the value of being present or mindful in the workplace (Dane, 2013; Dane & Brummel, 2014; Good et al., 2016; Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013; Rakoff, 2010; Romano, 2014), as well as considerable research on the value of mindfulness in clinical settings (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009).

As Varela affirmed, such a first-person foundation is fundamental for studying experiences relating to human awareness, as only the person who has such an experience knows what it is (Varela & Shear, 2000). Much contemporary mindfulness research presumes either that people know when they are mindful and can accurately label such experiences on a scale (Grossman, 2010, 2011) or else that what should be studied is the impact of training in mindfulness through measuring workplace performance or levels of stress before and after such training (e.g., Good et al., 2016; Hülshager et al., 2013). Instead we wished to understand what people actually experience when they wake up to the present moment, as well as the impact of such experiences. This led us to use a phenomenological approach within the broad context of action research. We were interested in deepening our understanding of the experience of moving from distraction or unawareness to awareness—the moments of transition between these states—and what enables people to elicit them with more ease and frequency. In the initial analysis of the data, we sought to describe the structure that such moments have in common and to portray the themes we saw across the participants. We also began to consider the implications for leadership, stress reduction, organizational health, and people's approach to work.

By investigating the moments of transition from distraction or absence to presence in the first person, we hoped to create a lived understanding of the experience itself. We suspected that this is something that occurs naturally, yet can be encouraged and deepened through intention, so we introduced this notion in designing the project. Even with training in meditation or mindfulness, people often find that they do not bring such presence into their daily life and work, but consider it to be a special experience that happens only when meditating. Because our interest is in exploring how people can be fully present to whatever is happening—be it chaotic change in a start-up organization, the highly analytical process of grading student papers, or the pressured interactions of leading a political campaign—we thought it would be valuable to observe systematically what might happen if people held a strong ongoing intention to notice when they were “awake” as they went through their ordinary workdays.

When we designed our research project, we were sensitive to Argyris's admonition to practitioners always to make

research a part of practice, as well as to his deep interest in the critical contribution of authentic behavior to organizational and management change. There are few research projects on spiritual practice from the perspective of practitioners, as many spiritual practitioners who also do research try to keep these two arenas separate in their lives. In contrast to the notion that the two ways of thinking and seeing might confound one another, we wished to see how such an approach might offer richer insight into the contributions of awareness practice in our own lives and those of others at work. The inner world is typically relegated to the margins of leadership discourse because of its ineffable nature. Although on the surface, this research appears to be about passing moments and internal awareness, the project begins to put in place an empirical foundation for affirming the value of awareness practice for leaders with regard to their interactions with others and thereby, their effectiveness as leaders (Cortés Urrutia, 2016; Goldman Schuyler, 2016). Unless they sustain an ongoing awareness practice, leaders are not likely to have the steadiness and flexibility needed for addressing the adaptive problems (Heifetz, 1998) of our world. We thought we might find such moments of waking up to be portals to the kind of presencing that Scharmer (2009) and Senge (Senge et al., 2004) see as essential for addressing complex societal issues that are so resistant to resolution within existing institutions and structures.

## **The Study**

This 2-year participative action research project was designed to explore the nature of the waking up experience, to see whether simply intending to be present could make a difference in participants' quality of experience at work, and also to find out whether this would impact people with whom they worked. Because we knew of preliminary data showing that the practice of meditation affects not only the therapist's inner state in a positive way, but the progress of clients as well (Grepmaier et al., 2007), we decided to address the impact on our professional work, moving from first-person inquiry through second-person to third-person analysis (Reason & Torbert, 2001) in the larger program of research. This article focuses on the first question: the participants' quality of experience at work and the impact of this from the participants' own point of view. The impact on others is addressed more fully by another project that used these data plus focus groups and interviews (second-person inquiry) (Cortés Urrutia, 2016).

## **Project History and Design**

The study grew out of Goldman Schuyler and Skjei's longtime focus on the importance of meditation practice and “presence” for leadership development (Goldman Schuyler, 2007, 2012), combined with Skjei's prior research on authentic leadership



moments (Skjei, 2014). After working for decades training people in varied approaches to mindfulness and awareness, we became curious about what enables a person to become present. We began to wonder whether training in a technique was necessary or whether simply eliciting intention might be more useful. It began to seem plausible that being alert and paying attention might be intrinsic to being a human being. Babies and very young children seem to have a vivid kind of connection with life that fades for most people as they learn to talk, drive, think, and write. Rather than assuming that what people need is training, we became interested in questioning whether paying attention in a deliberate way might trigger a different way of approaching life and action (Goldman Schuyler, 2013).

Some awareness practices arrive, after extensive training, at inviting people simply to be present to their minds, people, and the space around them (see Dowman, 1994; Gyatso [Dalai Lama], 2004). Such a capacity to intentionally bring oneself into the present moment is foundational for what we see as the most exciting change and organizational learning projects being undertaken aiming toward systemic, global change (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al., 2004). This can be regarded as the quintessence of awareness: the capacity to live and act from a way of being sometimes called “non-meditation” that is mindful rather than mindless (see, for example, Dowman, 1994).

Goldman Schuyler and Skjei designed the project to focus on *moments*, rather than presence or mindfulness as ongoing states of being, because as longtime practitioners, our experience suggested that although people may wish to be mindful or present in an ongoing way, for most people such states last usually for mere seconds and must be refreshed again and again. The study is grounded in our training and practice of meditation and other awareness practices for over 40 years, as well as in current mindfulness research. Our practice has been supported by study with major Tibetan wisdom teachers whose books are widely respected throughout the world and who are considered reliable authorities within their own traditions. Our main teachers include Chogyam Trungpa (1973, 2003), Tenzin Gyatso (The Dalai Lama) (1999, 2004 and many other books), Mingyur Rinpoche (2007), Sakyong Mipham (2003), Sogyal Rinpoche (2009), Tsoknyi Rinpoche and Swanson (2012), and Lama Tharchin Rinpoche (Dudjom Lingpa, 2011). The way that the research project was designed (based on both our practice and on scholarly research) contributes to its nature as action research, as it involves contemplating current actions in order to refine future action.

Goldman Schuyler and Skjei wanted to find a creative way to bring together research and personal practice while building community virtually among practitioners who shared these interests. We sought to extend the experience of awareness beyond workshop sessions at conferences and individual contemplative practices, in order to actively cultivate a collective shared process of year-round inquiry. The

aim was to make visible and discuss the invisible, liminal moments that allow people to shift their attention and live with such open awareness.

Therefore, we planned a conference session as the launch for this research project and invited everyone present to participate in a project studying their own experience. Participants were asked to take written or recorded notes about moments that they regarded as “waking up” 2 to 3 times a week over a 4-week period. Participants would have access to the data generated, which would be used to write a paper together. People volunteered based on their interest in such a project, and during the first year, 12 completed a pre-test and a posttest, wrote their observations, and participated in follow-up focus groups reflecting on the impact of their participation in the project. (More began, but did not complete all phases of the project.) It was decided to continue for a second year, in order to allow for more people and depth of experience. During the second year, 16 people from North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America completed all phases of the project, of whom nine were participating for a second time. There was no interaction among participants about their experiences. During the study period, many worked in countries outside of their birthplace. As shown in Table 1, we used three broad experience categories in the analysis of the data, to find out whether the experiences differed in ways we could perceive across levels of experience: 0 through 3 years of experience with any type of mindfulness or awareness practice; 4 through 9 years of such experience; and 10 or more years of experience. All participants appear in this article with pseudonyms that have been used consistently across publications based on these data. Because of the small size of the sample, to reveal additional data about specific participants would reduce the confidentiality.

We found it intriguing to do “action” research on a process that lives at the juncture between internal experience and visible action. Waking up is not something that others can necessarily perceive—which is usually what most people consider to be action. However, human action, in contrast with mere activities, begins in this liminal space. For the purposes of this article, we hold that mindful action is inseparable from awareness (Senge et al., 2004), so investigating awareness is a form of research on action. We also made this a collaborative, community-building project (second-person) because we sought to nourish the development of a global community of practice comprised of people interested in the interface between professional research and personal contemplative practice. Finally, the project had major third-person components, as we investigated the impact in the workplace. Without this last, the project cannot serve as intended: as a foundation for better understanding how being awake makes a difference for leaders and for everyone at work. The aim was to invite each participant, and ourselves as the designers of the project, to suspend the knowledge that

**Table 1.** List of Participants.

Name	Participation	Extent of contemplative experience
Aaron	Year 1	0-3 years
Arielle	Both years	>10 years
Cassandra	Year 2	4-9 years
Cynthia	Both years	0-3 years
Damian	Both years	0-3 years
Eliza	Both years	>10 years
Elizabeth	Both years	0-3 years
Eva	Both years	>10 years
Frank	Year 2	4-9 years
Georgia	Both years	>10 years
Greta	Year 2	4-9 years
Larry	Year 2	>10 years
Michelle	Year 2	4-9 years
Miriam	Both years	>10 years
Rona	Both years	0-3 years
Simone	Year 2	4-9 years

we brought to the experiment, so we could be open to whatever might happen in such moments and to develop new ways to do research that would make visible such evanescent experiences which happen to people naturally all over the world across cultures and centuries, yet are much like bubbles that burst when one tries to hold onto them.

### Data Analysis

The four of us analyzed the first-person reflections, working individually, in pairs, and as a team over a period of 8 months. We began by reading through the data and allowing ourselves to simply receive it. We noticed patterns and themes and wrote memos to ourselves. As we continued reading, we realized that there were many different ways to determine themes; we noticed mental models that were familiar to us and tried to bracket these deliberately, resisting the urge to categorize things according to an existing model. For example, we realized that the data could be looked at thematically, sequentially, or developmentally, all of which were of interest, but these took us away from our wish to focus on the experience itself. We noticed that we were becoming overwhelmed by choices, but continued to resist the urge to categorize content, and instead, tried to stay present and attentive to providing a space or *clearing* in which patterns could be discerned. We each read through the participant data multiple times, wrote memos that we shared with one another, and discussed the data and our memos through emails as well as in virtual meetings where we could see one another and feel like we were talking personally, despite being globally distant. This enabled us to look for the essential structure of the experience and also to identify the key themes that we perceived in the data. Once we agreed that

the participants' variations on these themes were distributed across all levels of previous experience, we looked for quotes that would express such unique variations to readers. What follows is our perception of the essential structure of the experience followed by the themes.

*What is waking up, as an experience?* What the participants experienced as waking up is a shift in the quality of their awareness that happened either gradually or suddenly: (a) The gradual experience occurred when participants noticed that they had been preoccupied and became aware of their momentary experience; (b) the sudden experience was often triggered by an external event or relationship that was unusual, surprising, disruptive, irritating, beautiful, or awe inspiring, or by noticing their own physical or emotional reactions to an event. In both cases, there was an interruption to the status quo, which generated a gap in their habitual way of being in the world. Sometimes they responded to these gaps with delight and humor. At other times, they reacted with defensiveness and stress. However, when they were able to embrace and suspend these reactions, they relaxed into the experience and opened to a deeper level of present moment awareness. This is what we called waking up: an intense sense of being present.

Many participants reached this state of intense presence primarily by focusing on sensory experience. This seems to have allowed them to shift from "thinking" (and removing themselves from the lived moment) to "sensing and feeling" (which brought them in touch with the moment). Sometimes just taking a few breaths was all that was necessary. Becoming present seemed more challenging when participants were experiencing painful sensations or emotions that they wished to avoid, but those who stayed with whatever feelings arose tended to discover that feelings of tension or claustrophobia would lift, so they then felt more space, both mentally and physically. This heightened awareness often generated a feeling of connectedness, accompanied by insights and feelings of gratitude. Such a state is not permanent once achieved—no human state is—but must be refreshed again and again. When awake, participants appreciated nature, people, and other beings, and felt that they had more choice about their actions.

As shown in Table 2, the phenomenological themes that we identified in the data were

- Waking up as either a gradual or sudden shift;
- Heightened experience of bodily sensations, feelings, and thoughts;
- Connectedness, safety, appreciation, and gratitude;
- Empathy, relationships, and meaning; and
- Creativity, flow, and effectiveness.

*Waking up as a gradual or sudden shift.* The first theme that we identified in the data related to a shift in attention which initiated the moment of waking up. As we've said, this shift can be

**Table 2.** Examples of Phenomenological Themes.

Theme	Types of experience
Waking up as either a gradual or sudden shift	Gradual: a feeling of “coming to” after being preoccupied Sudden: triggered by an external event Pleasurable and intensely meaningful Person asks, “Am I present?”
Heightened experience of sensations, feelings, and thoughts	Becoming being aware through “negative” experiences Intense awareness Heightened emotions Becoming being aware of negative sensations Seeing the mind in action Helps with sense of overwhelm
Connectedness, safety, appreciation, and gratitude	Sense of the wholeness and integrity of self and the space around oneself Shift in awareness that leads to feeling of connection with nature Strong feeling of connectedness in urban environments as well
Empathy, relationships, and meaning	Relationships with others more workable and meaningful Sense of self-compassion, resulting in new way of engaging others Increasing trust of other
Creativity, flow, and effectiveness	Words listened to by others Freedom of expression Knowing what to do next Sense of “letting go” Being connected with larger whole, leading to increased sense of effectiveness and choice

experienced as gradual or sudden and can be triggered by a variety of events, both internal and external. The gradual experience may be a feeling of “coming to” after being preoccupied. Cassandra found this could happen while driving to work.

When driving to work I almost would never notice how I arrive because I am in my own head all the time, in a trance. So, today, I decided I would be completely present. It was very difficult and I had to switch the radio off because it was making my mind drift away. . . . I noticed the roads, the people, the scenery; I also noticed my body movements and breathing while driving. . . . I arrived at the office having a less cluttered mind than usual; it felt as if I took a break.

For Aaron, the experience of waking up was triggered by an external event.

Suddenly I came to full alertness when I saw a small bird walking in the middle of the road junction looking for food. It was an unusual sight because I don't expect a bird to look for food in the middle of the road. . . . My full attention was on the bird. I felt concern for its safety.

For some, the experience of the shift was pleasurable and intensely meaningful, as in this example from Cynthia.

My attention focus changed from my reading to me, to my experience of being there at that moment. I felt so lucky and had a true joy feeling being there. I felt healthy, fortunate. I listened

to the rain, tasted the sweetness of my coffee, and observed other people around me and the rain in the window.

Waking up moments also occurred when a person asked simply, “Am I present?” as in this example from Georgia. “To bring myself present, first I am silent. Then I notice the first thing I do is look around and get my bare orientation in space. Then I take a few breaths and notice how I feel.”

For others, being aware of negative experiences sometimes triggered a moment of waking up, as in this observation from Larry. “To be awake is not just to awaken to the higher states but also awaken to the negative. It is much more challenging to observe what is stressing emotionally, mentally, and physically.” He went on to describe his physical sensations. “The sharp feeling that comes in the gut, the tension in the legs, tightening in the mind, contracting of the heart.” These sensations, painful as they were, stimulated a moment of waking up for him.

*Heightened awareness of bodily sensations, feelings, and thoughts.* The second theme involved a heightened awareness of bodily sensations, feelings, and thoughts during the moment itself. Rona had this comment: “By focusing my attention on identifying moments of waking up, I get a better sense of my bodily sensations and realize faster and more intensely when I get overwhelmed by choices or stimuli.” In this example, Eva described her heightened sensory experience in a meeting with her business partners.

As I listened, the colors in the room and her clothes seemed to brighten and come into a strong focus. Everything about her was deepening and brightening. I could hear everything she and others were saying, and I could also contribute minimally to the conversation while remaining aware of the colors in the room and particularly everyone's clothes.

An example of heightened emotional feeling was described by Miriam.

When my consciousness started to be "here and now" I felt that my emotions started to move fast. Suddenly I noticed that the tears were running down my face, but I was not sad. It was a nice, grateful feeling to be alive, to be here and now, surrounded [by] all my stuff: papers, books, notes and pictures, surrounded [by] all that chaos. I felt I was [in the] middle of my life, [in the] middle of something important which is difficult to describe.

In each case, remembering that they had committed to writing about these experiences brought in a discipline of self-awareness that was in the background and allowed them to see the process of waking up, in addition to the mental content or physical experiences that were there upon waking up. Larry described it this way.

The mind feels like a pile of icy snow at times—translucent to the light but surrounded by a sea of impressions: the stereo streaming an old Beatle's song, my left thumb pointing upward for no apparent reason, the taste of oatmeal and yogurt in my mouth, the thought of my guest coming today from IBM in Abu Dhabi to speak to my . . . class, what mini-lectures do I add to his sharing of IBM strategy and leadership. The flux of thoughts, feelings, and sensations keep pouring through the mind.

For Cynthia, heightened physical awareness helped her experience the process of waking up.

I feel the freezing wind in my face. I like that cold wind, it made me feel my skin, almost never I feel it and now I can perceive my skin. The sun illuminates the street; I'm walking on the sunny side, but when I walk into the shadow, it feels different, cold. This seems so obvious to me, but realizing that hardly ever do I enjoy feeling the difference between walking in the shadow and on the sunny side of the street makes me feel that I'm enjoying a whole new experience. I take my time while walking in the shadow: I feel how my pants feel colder, and my body feels the wind. Walking in the sun feels warm, and the wind in my legs feels nice, refreshing.

**Connectedness, safety, appreciation, and gratitude.** The third theme was about the experience of connectedness, safety, appreciation, and gratitude that participants felt during the moments of waking up.

At one point, Rona was sitting at her desk, working on a grant, when she looked up and noticed

the snow reflecting in the bright sunlight and some deer right in front of my window. They look me straight in the eye, it is an

honest look. The peace and the beauty of nature remind me why I am here.

Being connected with themselves helped participants feel connected with the larger world.

Many participants described a strong feeling of connectedness in urban environments as well and how this experience was related to their work. Here is an excerpt from Miriam.

Suddenly I'm realizing that "everything is connected to everything." The beautiful sky with the dark colors of sun setting (which is almost over), fast clouds rushing through the horizon, the sounds of other passengers when they're talking to their mobile phones and organizing [the] coming weekend with their friends and lovers.

Georgia described a heightened sense of clarity both external and internal. "In doing this process of paying attention to the moments, of noticing the relationship between my state and the environment, it helps me have a sense of the wholeness, the integrity of me and the space around me." Often this extended to the workplace as well, as suggested by Michelle's comment:

I am working on a strategy document, and suddenly I feel exactly the same as I did in yoga this morning . . . My body and my work has [sic] become the same. There is no difference. Just a feeling of wholeness.

**Empathy, relationships, and meaning.** Overall, participants reported that they were more empathic, and their relationships with others seemed more workable and meaningful during and after a moment of waking up. The shift often began with an experience of self-compassion that resulted in a different way of engaging others. Aaron described the impact of taking a deep breath and relaxing.

I then took another deep breath. This time I could sense that my body became less tense and I was more ready to read the email again. To my surprise, I found this time the email did not appear to be as antagonistic as the first reading, and I became more receptive to what my . . . [student] was trying to tell me in the email.

Greta too focused on breath as a source of becoming present, both alone and with students. "Pausing to breathe for just a few short moments awakened in me my sense of calling and delight." She explored various ways that breath helped her to feel connected with others and sense life as meaningful. Both the role of breathing and the importance of being connected are apparent in her comments. "My awakening moments this month come from conversations with former students who expressed deep appreciation for my contribution to their lives and development . . ."

During a conversation with a client, Ariele had a sudden experience of waking up and a feeling of spaciousness in her interaction. She also perceived a feeling of trust developing between her client and herself.

Suddenly I felt that there was more space for me to hear what my client had to say. Instead of anticipating his comment, I was able to wait to hear what he would actually say. I noticed the tension in his face and shoulders and felt empathy for him and the difficulty he was experiencing at work . . . I felt that he was beginning to trust me and was opening up more in our conversation.

Michelle brought this into her teaching and found that her students too seemed to become more present.

I am teaching a class. I have prepared a two hour lecture, but halfway through, the students are becoming really engaged and asking amazing questions. I feel the energy in the room rising; I can see how they step out of the passive, listening mood, into the active, participative mood. Their eyes and postures are changing. . . . It is like a . . . dance in the classroom, something is happening. I decide to skip half my lecture and let the students discuss in groups instead. They seem very happy and engaged.

*Creativity, flow, and effectiveness.* Another frequently mentioned theme in the participants' notes was a sense of returning to one's creative self and inventive flow in a moment of waking up. This may be similar to Csikszentmihályi's (1990/2008) flow state. Mind, body, and spirit were all in alignment: Participants described knowing just what to do next and feeling a freedom of expression and heightened sense of awareness. Eva gave a specific example of this occurring as she was giving a talk during a conference.

As I began to speak I felt connected with the audience, was able to speak primarily without my notes, and felt "in flow." The words came, I ad-libbed and even told two jokes which were actually laughed at! . . . I shared from the heart and I could tell that the audience was with me.

Participants described their willingness to "let go and let come" so that something new could emerge. (This terminology comes from Theory U; see Scharmer, 2009, and the description in the Discussion and Implications section.) The new came into being by letting go of old intentions and refocusing attention on an emerging future identity and purposes. As Eliza said, "In the process of sharing these past experiences, we had been able to let go of them . . . It made for a feeling of great cohesion and becoming part of a larger whole." Elizabeth described her experience this way,

I felt so peaceful. I am in the middle of facing my fears. And there I am, all of a sudden. I feel how calm it is inside the storm. I regained trust in everything. Whatever will be, I will be here and face that.

Arielle described her experience of effectiveness and choice as she was able to see the bigger picture and not get caught up in personal concerns.

I was so grateful that I was awake to my feelings in the moment and was able to suspend actions until I could see the one that would actually help the situation instead of the one that would help me feel better about myself.

## Discussion and Implications

Having described what we gleaned by a phenomenological reading of the participants' comments, we now discuss the perceptions we had as a research team in considering the implications of the data for leadership and work, as well as for first-person research on awareness.

### *The Impact on Others and on Work*

Participating in the waking up process led to distinct insights about oneself and one's work. Many participants commented on the quality of interaction among people in their organizations. For example, Elizabeth wrote,

I have been in the middle of a conflict in our organization . . . But how did we end up to this situation where we are not talking to our colleagues? I have just realized that when we said that everyone is equal and we will work together and find a common ground, we actually meant "it just takes a bit of time until they think like us. Because, you know, we know better."

Frank commented on an interaction at work—a chance meeting with a coworker whose actions had prevented him from obtaining a position he wanted. As they talked, he saw the personal side of her, and suddenly his sense of resentment and dislike evaporated.

People understood more deeply their typical attitudes and emotions in the challenging situations and encounters in their work fields. They "woke up" and saw a new point of view, new perceptions, ideas, and solutions for work. Many of them described these changes as a sudden, intuitive act like "knowing what to do." Because we are interested in the relationship of such moments to the process of presencing, as developed by Scharmer in *Theory U* (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013), we found it helpful to notice the parallel between how participants described their new awareness, how it influenced their behavior, and the U curve, which is a framework for describing how people move through change. In both our research data and the U curve, people notice, pause deeply to reflect, and emerge with insights that lead to rapid action or changes in behavior.

Aware moments at work seemed to improve relationships and communication with colleagues, clients, and students. The impact was bidirectional. Many participants described how it was easier to feel empathy after the waking up

moments and to build authentic encounters or real dialogues. For example, as Cassandra wrote,

I felt bad and went and sat with her and really was present listening to her with all my senses. I was feeling my whole self, being present, breathing normally and really being attuned to what was happening to me, to my colleague and to the dynamic between the two of us. She thanked me for devoting time to her, and I was not agitated anymore and felt much more relaxed.

As in the U process, the moments at work often connected to moments of accepting the current challenging situation or person and letting go of the old ways of thinking or acting. At that moment when the energy shifted—as is described by Theory U (Scharmer, 2009)—the energy increased, suddenly expanding the space for action. As Michelle wrote,

I am planning my work week, when suddenly a feeling of space appears. Instead of just writing long lists of things to do, I start writing them in my schedule. It is a concrete action, but also a very physical experience, as if something is opening up. I breathe more easily. It feels like my entire upper body opens up, as if my rib cage grows. I feel lighter.

Some of the participants described their “new space” and connection as kind of flow or unity. They were not separate from the other person; they felt they could deeply understand another’s point of view or a bigger picture of the whole situation. Such experiences were a relief for many, leading them to a better quality of collaborating and working with others. People enjoyed and felt gratitude for their work. They spoke of it being easier to relax, feel in a flow, and control reactions to stress. Most of the participants commented that experimenting with such moments at work helped them to approach work more holistically and connect better with people.

### *Relationship of Waking Up Moments to Traditional Buddhist Mindfulness Practice*

Because there has been considerable discussion in the literature about the relationship between so-called “Western” mindfulness and more traditional Buddhist practices (see Purser & Milillo, 2015, as well as Grossman & Van Dam, 2011), we coded the first-person comments to see how what participants described compared with traditional mindfulness practices.

*Seeing oneself in the middle of action.* Typically, mindfulness students are trained in a sequence of steps to pay attention to various aspects of experience. Often, they are taught to attend to their breathing in order to focus and calm their minds. They are taught various types of meditation (see good basic descriptions in Mingyur Rinpoche, 2007; Sogyal Rinpoche, 2009; Tsoknyi Rinpoche & Swanson, 2012) or are talked through forms of practice, mostly sitting still for extended periods of time.

In contrast, the participants in this study were encouraged to seek moments when they noticed themselves to be more awake in the general context of work. Whereas typically Westerners begin meditating to calm themselves, our participants sought instead to experiment with themselves, which is a different mind-set, and to focus on being *awake* as a sensitizing concept, as compared with being *mindful* or *calm*. How do these differ? By looking at the settings and moments, which were quite varied, and going back to the experience itself, as described above, it seems like mindfulness seems to bring a steadiness, whereas waking up is intentionally active—a transition from one state to another. The difference is perhaps the distinction between a state or trait and an action. Given that we and others are interested in applications of awareness for leaders in action, this distinction may be important.

Some chose to notice moments while driving and sensed the speed, danger, and the relationship between movement and stillness. As Georgia commented,

there’s pressure, and there’s cars going very fast around me and a situation that everybody is in everyday and is actually completely dangerous—but we all do it. And life is good and somehow all these things combined to a very very odd taste, that’s why I compare it to coffee.

Whereas in traditional practice, one would be sitting *after* driving in a more formal practice, this approach invited participants to notice or wake up while engaged in everyday activities. This seems to provide a vivid picture of the array of types of experiences that people who are leaders or professionals may experience. Rather than focusing on trying to be calm or attend to breathing, they are simply “coming to” and paying attention to experiences in coffee shops, meetings, walking in cities, riding on trains or buses, and teaching. Sometimes there is a sense that what is usually considered ordinary is actually dangerous, like the speed at which cars and people intermix in cities. At other times some find themselves smiling as they see, while it is happening, how their beliefs about themselves are stirring up their own anxiety.

Many commented about feeling that life was good, despite things not working as they wished. Consciously noticing these moments seemed to aid in sensing a fundamental goodness in life and people, not as a generality or belief, but as something palpably present in experiences. For example, as Miriam said about a trip to work,

I stepped out from the train in [the city] . . . and noticed the rhythm of the capital. It was fast. Everybody was walking much faster than me; they were going somewhere they have to hurry. I didn’t. I was enjoying my private peace inside the hurrying crowd. I felt myself comfortable and large (in a mental way) opposite than usually when I arrive to [the city] . . .

Whether in classrooms, meetings, or public transport, many comments showed how the participants felt a sense of

presence and proportion and of greater connection with those they were leading, teaching, or listening to.

*Being aware of what the mind is actually doing.* Rather than simply “doing” and then reflecting later or not at all, these participants noticed how their minds worked in the middle of the doing. They sensed how they were becoming anxious, how they were enacting tiredness, and how they were tracking others’ words. Often this came with a heightened acuity or capacity to notice small distinctions and differences.

As mentioned above, Larry referred to his mind feeling “like a pile of icy snow at times—translucent to the light but surrounded by a sea of impressions.” Damien said, “My mind is like an eel slipping all the time? How do you manage an eel?” Georgia saw her mind as feeling like a lively puppy, delighting in everything almost randomly at times, enjoying the moment-to-moment tastes and smells. She also described how her mind was when working, when it was grasping at things that do not exist—trying to “hold on” to concepts and use words to make them clear to others.

I’m grasping onto and holding something else and there was the sense of great delight in this grasping, almost as if the concepts were things, but with great clarity and directness, so a kind of alacrity and quickness and precision. It almost seems like . . . like what am I trying to say, I want to say like a martial art, but not a flowing one, one with kicks and grabs and that when I am simply sitting, my mind is trying to sense the space between things, the emptiness, the things that do not move. They’re two very different modes . . .

In other words, she noticed three different modes of functioning in her mind: playful puppy, grasping and sharp kicks, and sensing space.

Although we cannot be sure, given the small number of people who self-selected into this action research project, it seems that those with more experience in meditation may have tended to more often describe waking up moments in the context of emotionally challenging situations and a busy work life. As previously mentioned, we divided the total group of participants into three categories: those with 0 through 3 years of experience with some type of awareness practices, those with 4 through 9 years of experience, and those with 10 or more years of experience. Although participants from all three groups described the moments similarly, those with longer experience in an awareness practice more often discussed seeing themselves in the middle of action, as compared with in stillness; being aware of what the mind was actually doing instead of just doing it, and the value of documenting these moments, as compared with simply experiencing them. They also seemed to be more articulate in describing the nature of open awareness: the process of letting thoughts come and go, whereas those with less experience more often focused on specific thoughts and concepts and reflected upon these, rather than on the process of awareness itself.

*The value of documenting these moments.* Finally, this practice intrinsically involved contemplating on experiences and documenting them, rather than simply having them and letting them go. Although the documenting was not done out of any intention to ask participants to hold onto their experience, documenting something holds it in a different manner, simply by virtue of writing it down or speaking it—gives it a lasting quality, which of course is the opposite of what a moment of waking up is otherwise, as it is so transient or ephemeral.

This is quite distinct from meditative or mindfulness practice, which usually involves letting go of discursiveness and tuning into experience. We know of no traditional practices that involve documenting the process. Several participants commented explicitly about this. Simone wrote, “These ‘moments’ of awakening come and go, but unless we write them down and then assimilate them into our being, their transformative impact is lost.” Thus, this practice is both more open than traditional mindfulness, as it requires no training but instead encourages the mind to look in a certain way at itself and events, yet perhaps it has a more constraining aspect, as it requires the participants to write or speak, describing what they experience. Such writing or dictation of notes encourages reflection on the experience, so perhaps bridges open awareness and contemplative practices, yielding a novel kind of experience.

### *Effect on Burnout and Stress*

Another important finding was the way in which participants reacted to feelings of stress when faced with a difficult task. For many, the experience of stress evoked a response of increased self-awareness: They noticed that their anxiety level was rising. When they accepted the feeling of stress, rather than resisting it, this prevented the level of stress from spinning out of control. Even when faced with physical danger, the same pattern of remaining calm and focused in a difficult situation was prevalent. Most participants expressed anxiety, but were able to accept it. They were awake to their resilience, their stamina to move beyond being “stuck” in the experience of feeling stressed.

This capacity to defuse anxiety has implications for burnout. Although most people experience burnout as resulting from stress that has been building up for long periods of time, and there is no reason that they would have had less pressures than others, our participants rarely mentioned burnout. There was one poignant exception, as expressed by one of the participants, who was not able to see the person she loved deteriorate in health and appearance without being affected. She wrote that she felt as though she had a “heavy blanket” on her shoulders that she could not move beyond. This remains an exception to the ways in which most participants experienced stress, but it is worth pointing out that not all stresses can be lifted, not all anxieties resolved.

Simone offered an illuminating reflection for ways in which people may prevent burnout:

Most people I know are trying to do too much. Why do we take on too much? I think I take on too much as the opportunities feed my ego. If that is true for me, then becoming less ego-driven may be key to finding balance. There is always work that we have to do . . . that for which we have "contracted" for at work, with family, or with friends . . . If we want to do things well, and stay "well," i.e., healthy, then we need to do less.

Such reflections, connected with moments of waking up, suggested to us that the traditional Buddhist connection of awareness practices with what is called sustaining the "view"—a sense of larger perspectives, almost like going up to the highest place one can find within one's self and then observing life—emerged for many participants through this practice. Such a learning about how to find such higher ground within oneself hints at the kinds of thoughtful wisdom that these moments produced for the participants.

### Implications for Leadership, Research, and Practice

Many comments throughout the data shed light on the implications for leadership. Although we began the study believing that being awake might matter for leaders, we tried to bracket this belief and look concretely into the participants' actual circumstances, to discern what *they* saw about leadership and waking up.

#### Leadership, Pain, and Humility

The study suggested that the waking up practice might help leaders become more aware of the pain in their organizations in a positive way, so as to acknowledge its reality rather than pretend it doesn't exist. Beyond this, it may help leaders release what is often called "old baggage" in leadership development sessions, which tends to be difficult to do. It may help leaders operate more out of what is actually happening in the present in their organization, rather than being shadowed by demons of the past:

Ariele experienced what she described as "an incredible wake-up call." She saw that there was much more pain involved on all sides of a conflict than she had realized.

For me it was an incredible wake-up call about the importance of making it OK for people to reveal their personal feelings about things and not to just be stoic and "leaderly." The conversation went much better after that and we came up with some good solutions for how to present the issues and make requests and offers rather than just trying to control or punish the people involved.

Another observation about pain came from Eliza, who discovered that by allowing herself to feel the pain of the past

and talk about with colleagues who were part of it, it dissolved. "In the process of sharing these past experiences, we had been able to let go of them. Our present became more open, less shadowed by past difficulties. It was a very special experience."

This connected with observations from Cynthia, Georgia, Miriam, Eva, and Aaron that they saw how they were the "same"—that there was no gap between themselves and those they were leading or teaching in these moments, in a very positive way. It reminded us of the way a noted spiritual leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, often opens his public talks: "We same." As his main English translator Thupten Jinpa (2012) wrote, when asked to describe the Dalai Lama as a leader, his humility and his belief that all people are fundamentally equal stand out above all other characteristics. "This belief in the absolute equality of beings when it comes to our fundamental human nature is a very important part of his leadership and who he is" (Jinpa, 2012, pp. 40-41). If this practice can bring people to sense their interconnectedness with others similarly to the way the Dalai Lama does, it seems worth exploring further.

#### A Powerful Sense of Connectedness and Time

Time pressures diminished when the participants made space for waking up moments. The sense of having to operate at the same speed as those around one diminished, as was mentioned by Miriam (above). Cynthia commented that she simply lost any sense of time pressure, while Eva commented that she felt a greater feeling of safety and freedom to take action without feeling pressured to act. She had to let go of her desire to attain a particular leadership position. In doing so, she found that she felt at ease and more connected with the universe.

Gradually the most incredible sense of relief filled me and I felt as if I was being held, literally held, and lulled and kept safe. It was almost overwhelming and I felt tearful with the grace and loveliness of it. I felt exquisitely safe and held and a knowing arose that despite all my attempts to gain this role, it was not meant to be and that I just needed to trust and to slow and to accept that it was OK.

These pauses helped some to sense that they had a purpose and that they were able to connect with it, something very important for leaders.

They gained a sense of rootedness, with two comparing themselves to trees. Miriam saw that leaders needed "the attitude of a tree":

I looked at the trees, long firs, understanding my place on the Earth. Same time I could understand what is a tree, what is the "attitude of a tree." The Attitude of a Tree is just breathing the universe and light, giving away "my best" through the roots, leaves, and fruits . . . spreading my strength and calmness and flexibility . . .



Eliza found that by connecting with a tree when she was overtired from hard mental work, her focus and energy returned.

While I was grading class finals, I was particularly tired from the amount of work that I was caught up in during the semester. Suddenly, I looked out through my study window, and saw a gorgeous tree, decked out in flaming autumn colors: red, orange, gold. The tree just stood there, splendid, adorned. My spirit was deeply refreshed, and I completed my grading, energy renewed. Suddenly, the work I was focused on spoke meaningfully to me, and my spirit was restored.

Eva has a role that often involves speaking before hundreds of people. She felt that using the waking up approach within meetings let her have more influence, while being at ease, both to not speak too much, not be pushy, and also to give public talks that magnetized listeners. She found that she was more able to listen to herself, in the middle of speaking with constituents, and respond with what was more helpful in the situation.

In the middle of a conversation with a key stakeholder . . . I suddenly became aware of myself and what I was saying. It was as if I was witnessing myself from outside. I could “see” my negativity in the conversation, and as I spoke I felt “wrong” as if I had woken up to something which was now staring me in the face, but a moment earlier I had been unaware of. . . . I returned to the conversation very differently. On reflection I can see that I was reading her body language and responding to that, but it was the suddenness of the seeing and sense of witnessing myself that struck me most. . . . It left me feeling more relaxed and less burdened by the ongoing situation, and I could see that the other person felt more comfortable and responsive to me.

These comments raise a possibility that by focusing on waking up, leaders may feel more connected with people, reduce the sense of time pressure which tends to be acute for most leaders today, and be able both to root themselves more deeply and listen to the pain that is inevitable in all organizations.

### *Implications for Research and Practice*

It became clear to us that people responded in a variety of ways to the experiment of being asked to notice waking up, which suggests that it is a process that may be more useful for some leaders than others. From the start, participants responded differently from one another to our initial guidelines for the study. For many of them, the mere invitation to be present and “wake up” was sufficient, but for a few it was not. Most of those who completed the process immediately began noticing and reflecting on experience, but two opted instead to buy and read books on mindfulness, and some asked for more detailed instructions. For a few, the practice made painfully apparent the gap between how they wanted

their lives to be and how they were. For example, although many participants noticed that stress and pressure could lead to moments of waking up, a few saw the practice as something that could only be done in nature or when not under stress. Some in the former group are longtime practitioners, but some are not, so that is not the differentiating factor. In a study of the interview data, Cortés Urrutia (2016) independently concluded that the variations in response did not appear to be related to differences in length of experience in meditation or awareness practices. While the participants come from and work in different parts of the world, Cortés Urrutia (2016) looked carefully at the data in this regard and concluded that national culture did not play a deciding role in this group, although of course the numbers are too small to generalize.

A further review of the data when sorted by practice categories suggests that some people, regardless of their background or lack of it in awareness practice, are able to immediately let their minds rest in open awareness, whereas others tend to describe the activities they are involved in or write a contemplation on a theme—in other words, they do not just let their minds rest and be present to experience, which was the intention. We do not know what makes for such differences in the way that people are able to let their minds rest in the present without actively thinking. Because one intention of this action research project is to see whether this may be a useful way to develop leaders’ awareness and presence in assorted work settings and populations, some of the authors are exploring this question through further action research studies.

It does seem that the process of noticing waking up moments only works for those willing to engage with it. The task, as approached in this project, requires a certain willingness to face ambiguity and create one’s own process. Not everyone wishes to do this. Because the observations had to be sustained over several weeks, those who completed it seemed able to handle both a certain amount of ambiguity and the need to apply self-discipline: This combination of underlying skills may be a factor in determining those for whom the process will have most impact. Finally, because all of the note-taking and interviews were done in English even though this was an international project, perhaps we’d discover different patterns if future iterations encouraged people to record their observations in their native language. It may be that although the participants came from 10 countries on four continents, cultural differences may be less among people who are well-enough versed in English to conduct such activities in English, whereas if there were a larger sample and they used any language they wished, there might perhaps be more culturally rooted differences.

With regard to practice implications, major growth has been taking place over the past 10 years in including contemplative practice as part of education in many fields. This is shown by the creation of The Association for Contemplative

Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE) in 2008 and its new (2013) peer-reviewed journal, *The Journal of Contemplative Inquiry* and the journal *Mindfulness*, launched in 2010. In this context, we see potential for building on this project in a variety of settings. We continue to believe that the notion of focusing on the intention to wake up and be present holds promise for a secular practice that is easy to incorporate into an active life without extensive time set aside for trainings or involvement in a particular spiritual tradition. Because some of those who participated did so at the invitation of one participant who decided to incorporate it into her teaching, we have reason to suspect that others can use the approach relatively easily in their teaching or consulting.

Despite increasing discussion among consultants, scholars, and leaders of the potential outcomes of being more mindful or aware at work, as recently as 2013, mindfulness researchers continued to state that empirical research in this area remained limited (Dane, 2013; Dane & Brummel, 2014; Hülsheger et al., 2013). While Waddock and Steckler's (2009, 2013) intriguing study of "difference makers" that was presented at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting in 2009 showed the importance for successful entrepreneurs of "some combination of *practices* integrating *mind, body, spirit and heart*," few have followed up on their line of research. Having conducted the research described in this article, it seems evident that the cultivation of moment-to-moment awareness has the power to evoke transformational shifts in certain types of people under some circumstances. This leaves us with the intriguing questions, "With which people? And under what circumstances?"

One way to begin to answer these questions is suggested by two studies that sought to develop paths of practice for mindful or contemplative leaders. Rakoff (2010) studied the impact of daily somatic awareness practices on three abilities that he considered to be intrinsic to leadership: the capacity to focus, to maintain authentic relationships, and to minimize stress. His focus on this came both from his experience and from a thorough review of various somatic practices that led him to conclude that few systems of leader development practices addressed "habitual tendencies of the body and mind relating to attention, connection, and tension/stress" (p. 57). The sole practice system that did what he sought had been developed by a student of the founder of *aikido*. Based on Tohei's aikido-based system, Rakoff trained five participants in seven practices for developing *ki* energy, meeting weekly with each and monitoring their progress over a period of 12 weeks. The results showed improvement in 360-degree ratings and in their self-assessment of their capability as leaders (p. 107). Similar in design, Romano (2014) trained six study participants to pay attention to breath, observe their own and others' behaviors, suspend judgments, and practice "opening" for 10 to 12 weeks in order to address the themes of stillness, movement, and relational practices. He too met weekly with all participants as a coach. Both studies included

detailed measures for the participants to monitor their own participation and for tracking this by the researcher. Both generated measurable positive results.

Romano (2014) noted, as we have, that while there is considerable research on formal mindfulness or meditation practice and its impact, "few studies show the efficacy of how mindfulness can be practiced outside of structured bounds" (p. 14). Both researchers commented, as we have, on the relative lack of qualitative research on mindfulness. These studies contrast with ours, in that we did not provide training, instead seeking to explore what is possible when people are invited to rely on their own ability to be mindful or attentive and simply remind them to do so. Ours was inherently collaborative, whereas these two studies situated the researcher in a central role of content or process authority as well as researcher. Finally, although both researchers gathered some qualitative data, they were more interested in the impact of the practices on predetermined measures, whereas we were more interested in the quality of the process that we called *waking up*, so focused on the way that the participants conceptualized and spoke or wrote about their experiences. We were intrigued by the nature of people's awareness of themselves and how being invited to wake up might influence this, rather than aiming for a predetermined result that could be measured and tracked from outside.

Nonetheless, having seen their thorough reports of their studies and results, it might be interesting to combine some minimal focused practice on breath and somatic awareness into our design, as this might make it easier for those who want more direction and guidance to remain with the practice. We are interested in retaining a design that leaves choice to the participants, rather than one that trains them and measures the impact of the practices, yet by introducing the project with discussion and experience of breath and its impact on thinking and action, we might support more participants in making greater discoveries about waking up to the moment. Traditional mindfulness practices assume that the meditator has already been trained in calming his or her mind through focusing on the breath, so incorporating such a preliminary practice into our design might be useful for future research. Finally, it is intriguing to note that of three suggestions that Romano (2014) developed as a starting place for people wishing to develop as mindful leaders, while the first related to breathing and the second to asking "powerful questions" (p. 311), the third was to "uncover everyday moments" (p. 315)—which is surprisingly similar to our aim.

## Conclusion

Exploring how to increase people's focus on being present at work, both alone and with others, seems to have promise, based on our study. Although increasing research is being conducted on mindfulness training and its impact (see Reams, Gunnlaugson, & Reams, 2014), longtime meditators do not

necessarily act mindfully as leaders. Mindfulness practice does not inevitably lead to becoming more mindful in the way one interacts with people or leads them, so our thought was that if professors, consultants, and leaders were invited to experiment with remembering to *wake up* in the context of their work, such an experiment might support them in actively bringing awareness into their work. An experiment conducted by Goldman Schuyler in a graduate course with a variant on the process used here was quite impactful as assessed by student reflection papers: Many of the students were able to describe quite vivid experiences of becoming present and subsequently experienced meaningful shifts in their behavior.

We hope that this analysis suggests how easy and practical it may be to introduce such practices into the workplace, without a need for extensive and expensive training or deep personal commitment to a contemplative tradition. As Varela suggested, bringing people's attention to their experience, in the moment, may indeed be a key to being less blind to the quality of our lives and, in the spirit of action research, to then acting from new perspectives.

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## **Publication II**

Koskela, V.

**Experience of presence as an inner shift towards a more holistic approach of innovation?**

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## Experience of presence as an inner shift towards a more holistic approach of innovation?

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**Abstract.** This article focuses on experiences of presence and their potential to increase creativity. The question posed is about whether singular experiences of presence are constituents of creativity and innovation, and if so, what we can learn from them. The material studied includes descriptions of the experiences of presence of 418 around in Finland. Certain main characteristics were found between the experiences, such as finding new perspectives, being connected, and meaningfulness. Many experiences recalled in the descriptions, and the three main themes, seem to be related to the inner shift, which is the necessary part of the new approaches of creativity introduced in this paper. Due to the interconnectedness of the founded themes of the experiences of presence and also to the more broad and multifaceted approaches of innovation, it is possible to think that the experiences of presence could be one of the key factors towards more creative, and more sustainable future.

**Keywords.** Presence, Experience, Creativity, Holistic approach, Innovation, Sustainability.

### 1 Introduction

*“And while I stood there, I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being.” - Black Elk –*

Previous quotation describes the moment when the holy man of Sioux, Black Elk as a child, got the insight of the structure of unity of all living (DeMallie, 1984). Correspondingly, there is a description among the data of this research based on a diary-note of young Finnish girl: “I stopped to admire a drop of water glimmering on a birch leaf. I looked at the drop and suddenly I realized that I was seeing the structure of the whole universe in that drop. I realized that the pattern repeated itself and extended everywhere...” (Woman, 27 years, Student of Health Care)

The both experiences have happened when one has contemplated nature by being conscious and present at the moment. The visions tell about integration of the various dimensions of life into a single whole, about the bigger picture of living systems. In Black Elk's larger vision, there is also an ability to connect strong individuals and groups as a unity, and integrate the various dimensions of life together. The unification of different groups as a unity and the integration of different dimensions are two aspects that can help us to understand what sustainable development really is (Bopp and Bopp,



2011; Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Senge, Scharmer, and Winslow, 2013).

The purpose of this article is to compare the existing literature of new, more holistic approaches of creativity and innovation to the Finnish individual experiences of presence, whether there are connections between peoples' descriptions and new theories of organizational creativity.

### 1.1 The need of a more holistic point of view

Nowadays, we are living middle of the global challenges, which are linked with ecology, society, economy, and culture. The specialists of the holistic innovation development and managerial thinking introduced in this paper (such as Katrin Kaufer, Otto Scharmer, Peter Senge, Kathryn Goldman Schuyler, and Karl-Erik Sveiby) are convinced that the next great opening of a new, creative worldview will have to be an internal one. The next level of human development is the stage about bringing back the interior to be in balance to the exterior (Kaipa, 2007; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013), as the shift in the social field, and as the important part of the needed innovation ability (Scharmer, 2009). By becoming aware of your mind construction by observing it, you may learn a lot about yourself, others, and creativity (Goldman Schuyler, Skjei, Sanzgiri, and Koskela, 2017; Kaipa, 2007; Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). World economist Brian Arthur has said: "Every profound innovation is based on an inward bound journey; ongoing to a deeper place where knowing comes to the surface" (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers, 2005, p.13). Consequently, solving global crises requires new kinds of creativity and more sustainable innovativeness instead of old paradigms and patterns (Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Moss, 2012; Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer, 2010; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006). We will not be able to solve our problems if we disregard the global problems facing our planet and if we do not reconsider our approach consciously towards the fundamentals that uphold life, the unity of all living in the planet. Peter Senge calls this kind of aware moment of presence as participating in a large field for change: "When this happens, the field shifts, and the forces shaping a situation can move from re-creating the past to manifesting or realizing an emerging future" (Senge et al., 2005, p. 13-14). It is necessary to change a reductive kind of awareness that is based on alienation and separation to one of co-creation (Senge et al., 2005). This is a new point of view to the Western technological thinking, which has its roots in Judeo-Christian traditions, where nature is considered to be separated from human beings, and instead it exists for the benefit of humanity (Klemola, 2004; Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Singer, 1993; Varto and Veenkivi, 1997; Varto, 2011). In many indigenous cultures, nature has been the critical factor for the production function (Kaipa, 2007; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Sveiby, 2011; Varto and Veenkivi, 1997).

This article focuses on the phenomenon of Finnish presence and its links to the new, holistic approaches of creativity and innovation. For this qualitative study, there were analyzed and thematized 418 subjective descriptions of individuals' recollections of experiences of presence, and the founded themes were looked through the new sustainable waves of creativity and innovation. The aims of the research was to find out three different things: 1. How the Finnish awareness of being at the moment manifest itself? 2. What variation there are between different experiences? 3. Whether the

experiences are linked to the needed holistic creativity and innovation of our time? The results of this paper will show how the experiences of presence can be seen through the three different main themes, which are strongly linked to creativity and also to some new, holistic approaches of innovation. It seems that a singular experience of aware moment of presence could be an important part of broader space of human interaction, managerial thinking and creativity. Or like Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) explain the gist of this framework: "The quality of results produced by any system depends on the quality of awareness from which people in the system operate" (p. 18).

### **1.2 The birth of this research**

The idea for this study was born during the year 2011 when I got an insight about the common need of being at the moment, the ability of being present - middle of chaotic working life. At that time, I was working in an innovation unit of university, and my work was to facilitate practice-based innovation sessions and try to develop more creative work community together with the members of different organizations. As a long-term community facilitator (also as a theatre pedagogy which is my profession), I soon noticed that many people do not truly have time, space, or tools to encounter each other in their daily communication at work. This situation is apt to deliver "bottlenecks" of interaction, which profoundly affect the entire organizational system, increase uncertainty and decrease creativity. After this grassroots' observation, I started to contemplate if the experience of presence could be used to alleviate this issue. That was the birth seed of my dissertation research, the first step to research people's individual experiences.

### **1.3 The progress of the research and the research questions**

The first participants for this study were collected through social media (Facebook). I asked for 300 people, if they were interested about the experiences of presence. There was about 10% of them (exactly 28 people), who wanted to answer my research questions by sending me self-written narratives about their individual experiences. Some people asked me to interview them, because they found it easier to talk than write about their tacit experiences. That is why there are also many interviews in a data. It was important that people could describe their individual experiences with their own ways and words. For methodology, I chose phenomenology because it prioritizes direct experience (Bentz and Rehorick, 2008; Cunliffe, 2009; Halprin, 2003; Van Manen, 2016). After the collected narratives and first interviews, I had a possibility to start collect experiences of presence in the innovation workshops at my work as a facilitator, and as an art based -tools experienced community trainer. Therefore, my research is also extensively process-based and developed by en route. The 'certain human experience' (the nuclear of phenomenological studies) that I wanted to understand, is the human experience of presence, the ability to be in the present moment, how people experience and describe it. Being a phenomenologist requires a mindful engagement with phenomena, which may be the lived experience of self or others. (Simpson, 2008; Van Manen, 2016.)

The main research questions have been the same from the very beginning: What are the individual experiences of presence like? How do people describe them? In addition, do the experiences of presence have any connections to innovation and creativity?

## 2 Literature

According to Francisco Varela (Scharmer, 2000) the problem of Western science is not that we do not know enough about the brain, the problem is that we do not know enough about our experience (practice), about the importance of taking seriously first-person experience (Goldman Schuyler et al., 2017). We have had a blind spot in the West for that kind of methodological approach, which is in other words: consciousness (Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013), or, the process of becoming aware (Carroll, 2007; Scharmer, 2000; Senge et al., 2005). Western science and Eastern Buddhism have this common fingerprint: they both examine human experience through observation, analysis, and empirical experience (Goldman Schuyler et al., 2017; Bruce and Davies, 2005). The human experience is related to every single human being's capability to innovate, which must be nurtured since birth along with the values like liberty, responsibility, solidarity, and compassion (Tribolet, 2013). According to the literature, an organization that has encourage, free, diverse, and collaborative culture of open communication increases creativity and innovation. Information flows are dependent on organizational culture. An organic and communicative organization facilitated greater creativity and innovation compared with a mechanistic one. (McLean, 2005.) In addition, self-knowledge is possible only if the relation between people and creation is understood to be a dialogical relationship. In human encounters, there is the space where the creative processes take place. (Yaron, 1993.) Individual creativity is at its best, when human mind experiences the unity, the whole, and is keen on to solve the problem of the world (Varto, 2008). The essence of organizational creativity and innovation is to re-create the world according to a particular mission and value (Takeuchi, 2006).

This paper is a qualitative study with phenomenological approach to discover the different ways that people experience presence and how people's experiences are connected with the literature of organizational creativity and innovation.

### 2.1 The nature-connected lifestyle as an example for a more holistic point of view

Many indigenous tribes of humanity have (or have had) same kind of holistic and phenomenological approaches to life, the aboriginals are no strangers to their own experiences (Varto and Veenkivi, 1997). For example, Karl-Erik Sveiby and Ted Skuthorpe (2006) have researched Australian aboriginal culture, where the "recipe" for sustainable progress happens in a deep connection with the inner and outer world. This selective way of creative act consider consequences before introducing new technology into society (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006). The aboriginals' daily actions in nature is led by the ancient all-encompassing creativity and intelligence (Hidalgo, 2015; Sveiby, 2011; Varto and Veenkivi, 1997). A lucid example of the sustainably society is one of the world's oldest (and longest-living) cultures, the Australian Ngunnabarra (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006). The main difference between Western society and the society of the ancient Australian Aboriginals lies in the perception of being connected with nature. Western people, "Homo Economicus", have used nature as a property and a source of produce to be possessed and to be sold (Hidalgo, 2015; Louv, 2011; Macy, 2014; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006) whereas aboriginals have been aware of their connection with it. In their language there is no word for 'time', instead past, present and future

are the same - existing in the present moment. Innovation is perceived as being the discovery of ideas that have always been there, you just have to pick it up. For the indigenous Australians, the effect of actions depends on the “innovativeness” of people in their own community in interaction with other communities and the environment. The “recipe” for sustainable progress, which happens always in a deep connection with the inner and outer world, is to be selective and to consider consequences before introducing new technology into society. (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006.) Certain indigenous myths include the conceptions of the visible and invisible worlds and entities being brought firmly together without any dichotomy (Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Varto and Veenkivi, 1997). Anthropologists, such as Paul Radin and Mircea Eliade, have noticed similar universal ideas of contemplative thought focused on meaning (as opposed to calculative thought and resultorientation) everywhere and at all times (Tedlock and Tedlock, 1992). Certain American Indian legends also speak of a simultaneous future which has already happened (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Louv, 2011; Varto and Veenkivi, 1997).

The mental and holistic aspects of individual creativity and innovation ability have so far only been researched marginally. However, during recent years, the subject has slowly aroused more interest for example in some studies into biomimicry that draw inspiration from admiration and respect for nature. Nature is “not an enemy to be vanquished, but our design partner; not the problem, but the solution” (Louv, 2011, p. 190), even it is still often seen as something to travel to – not something, we are dependent upon for our physical, emotional and mental health (Baker, 2009). According to international studies, the power of nature and connection with the natural world are fundamental for human intelligence, well-being, spirituality and survival (Frumkin 2001, Louv, 2011), and the observations of nature can evoke a sense of spirituality (Louv, 2010) and a desire to protect the environment (Chawla, 2007). Previously, there are even found many relations with nature and creativity in the new research (Williams, 2017).

Some theorists in the field of sustainable innovation suggest or talk about the ‘bigger picture’, the holistic model that portrays the interdependencies and interconnectedness between economy, society and environment (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Draper, 2013; Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Seebode, 2011). The economy depends on society and the environment (although for many people, society did and still does exist without a formal economy). Nature will continue to exist without humanity and human activity. The holistic view breaks down barriers between sectors and disciplines, because it allows diverse, currently unaligned and even competing players to work together. This interconnectedness is seen to be the important key to sustainable development. (Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Seebode, 2011.) This task of interconnectedness is typical for evolution. Modern quantum physics teaches us that all living creatures and elements are connected in this kind of creative way (Bopp and Bopp, 2011.), and the most creative learning happens in groups (Robinson, 2010). For example in a world, where children play in their local green space and are welcomed to do so, they become part of the community, understand more, feel and behave better, are healthier, and work more cooperatively (Moss, 2012). There is a lot of new studies that emphasizes that being outdoors and the contact with nature inspires and increases creativity, and decreases stress and depression (Louv; 2009; Louv, 2011; Williams,

2017). In some of these research, it is found that children exposed to nature improved their awareness, reasoning and observational skills; did better in many school studies; were better at working in teams; and showed improved behavior overall (Moss, 2012). Sir Ken Robinson highlights (2010) that according to the large international studies we all have the capacity of "genius level" until kindergarten age. When we go to school and become educated, the level of this creativity decreases year after year. Robinson criticizes our modern Western education about too mechanistic thinking, and calls for that we have to start think differently about human capacity. Creativity, the process of having original ideas that have value, is nearer very little children who are still open to the world with all their senses than educated adults. (Robinson, 2010.)

## 2.2 The difference between creativity and innovation

Creativity and innovation are closely related constructs, but not the same phenomenon. In the fields of organizational studies, the difference between creativity and innovation is often described that innovation is part of creativity. Words associated with the definition of creativity include for example idea and invention, when innovation is on taking a creative idea and bringing it to fruition. There are many ideas that never see the light of day in organizations. A useful idea, which is processed from concept to market, must be recognized for its potential in many various ways. This important process is referred to as innovation when talking about creativity in the context of organizations. McLean (2005) highlights that in the context of organizational development creativity without innovation is of significantly diminished value and the same vice versa, without creative ideas the innovation is an engine without any fuel. Another intrinsic difference between creativity and innovation is that the focus of creativity is usually on the individual, when the focus of innovation is more on interactions, and dynamics among parts of the organizations and its environment (Martins and Terblanche, 2003). (McLean, 2005.)

There are many unutterable ways to understand innovation. Innovation is often understood as a new idea, device, method, or a process of introducing them, and one of the main characteristic for the birth of innovation is the ability to co-operate, collaborate, learn collectively, and create trustful and creative atmosphere with the people who are participating in the process (Harmaakorpi and Melkas, 2005). Another way to understand the innovation ability is a situation, when there is found new solution for the problem by considering the phenomenon in a new point of view, and by developing new tools and methods for this necessity (Melkas and Harmaakorpi, 2012). Organizational culture is a critical factor in the success of any organization. The basic elements of organizational culture and interaction are for example shared values, beliefs and behavior. All those factors influence also creativity and innovation. If the organizational culture supports creativity, it encourages innovative ways of finding solutions, too. According to the literature, one of the best approaches to describe organizational culture is based on open systems approach, which offers a holistic perspective that allows the investigation of the interdependencies and interaction of the different sub-systems and elements in an organization. The organizational interaction between people, technology and the external environment represent a very complex environment, where creativity and innovation can be influenced by several variables. For example, the values, beliefs and behavior of individuals and groups that play a role

in organizational creativity can either support or restrain creativity and innovation. Personnel must feel emotionally safe and trust to be able to act creatively and/or innovatively. Open communication between individuals is an important key for that. (Martins and Terblanche, 2003.) Creativity is a dynamic and interactive process that is linked with the peculiar ideas and value, and it is often born in interaction between different views (Robinson, 2007). Nowadays there have been started to consider the multidimensional character of innovation also in all human and organizational interaction and relations (e.g., Darso and Hoyrup, 2012; Elkjaer, 2004; Nilsen and Ellström, 2012; Pässilä, Oikarinen, and Vince, 2012).

To understand creativity in all of its richness is to emphasize pluralism and different theories, assumptions, and methods. There is no need to emphasize any theoretical perspective at the expense of others. The more complex the system, the more freedom there is for individuals. Freedom is necessary for ideational variation and creativity, which usually needs also divergent thinking. Sometimes too much divergence may lead to ideas, which are not creative in the sense of originality or usefulness. (Kozbelt, Beghetto, & Runco, 2010.) Creativity has also the shadow side on it: some people may be unaware or unwilling to anticipate the dark side of their creative work. They may blinding themselves to evil consequences, because for example of the prospect of money and fame or the manipulation of a dominant principal. (Cropley, 2010.)

In organizations, creativity also need abilities to facilitate so called 'open spaces'. These situations need that facilitators will have exhibit to sense people and things around, and inside yourself. Peter Senge calls this ability as a work of an artist. (Senge et al., 2013). One intrinsic role of leadership is to facilitate the dynamic and continuous knowledge-creating processes and understand them (Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2000).

In this paper, the focus is in the individual experiences of presence and its interrelation with creative thinking, and with more holistic way of innovation, which presume factors like the ability to interact collectively and create open relationships between the innovating partners in order to solve collective problems (Harmaakorpi, 2006; Kallio, 2012).

### **2.3 Presence – the inner ability of being at the moment**

In this article the concept of 'presence' - 'the state of condition of being present' – as defined by the Illustrated Oxford Dictionary (1998), is used to signify a combination of sensing and being present. Presence is described as being fully conscious in the present moment when one no longer waits for the following moment to fulfill this current one (Senge et al., 2005; Tolle, 1999), and to be connect with the source of the highest future possibility and to bring it into the now (Scharmer, 2009). The roots of phenomenon of presence are in the Buddhist Philosophy wherein the emphasis is direct experience in the here and now (Bruce and Davies, 2005; Scharmer, 2009). The understanding of the phenomenon has spread to the Western world through different approaches of meditation, yoga, mindfulness, and contemplation. Presence can be defined as a quality of awareness, a flexible state of conscious (and mindful) mind that includes the intentional ability to pay attention non-judgmentally to the present moment, and notice new things (Bishop, 2002; Kabat-Zinn, 1996; Langer, 2000; Takanen, 2013; Tugend, 2013). In the mindful moment, people are more aware to what

is happening at the moment than they were a moment before by being highly attentive to one's experience and surroundings, so their attention is focused on present-moment both externally and internally (Dane, 2010). Over the last decade, much research in this area has been carried out under the label of mindfulness (Dane, 2010; Grossman, 2010; Grossman, 2011; Grossman and Van Dam, 2011; Rinpoche and Swanson, 2012; Weick and Putnam, 2006). The recent leadership research support the perception that leaders need to be self-aware and present to those whom they lead, and to the emerging situations (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2103; Senge et al., 2005; Weick and Putnam, 2006). There is still lack of research that would investigate whether presence, or mindfulness, matters – for example from an organizational standpoint (Dane, 2010).

In phenomenology, presence may be seen as an actor that makes every moment appear constantly new and fresh, reorders itself every moment and changes individual denotations of phenomena (Varto, 2011).

#### **2.4 New waves of innovation - the sustainable, holistic approach**

Humanity is now facing global challenges (climate change, hunger, pollution, economic crisis etc.), which need new perspectives for our outdated technological and organizational thinking. There is need to build new patterns of creative thinking and innovation in relation to all life forms on the planet Earth (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Macy and Brown, 2014; Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al., 2005; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Sveiby, 2011). For that, we have to see and consciously recognize our own, individual and experience-based ways of thinking: we have to be aware of our blind spots (Flipse, Vrieling, and van der Sanden, 2015; Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). Blind spot is the part of human thinking and doing that is usually invisible, or, the inner place of source from which a person operates, and the part which matters most (Scharmer, 2009). These blind spots have their influences in innovation economy as well; they have an impact on the environmental and societal consequences of new products. Innovation is not always 'good'. According to such organizational thinkers as Peter Senge et al. (2009), Otto Scharmer and Katryn Kaufer (2013), and Karl-Erik Sveiby (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Sveiby, Gripenberg, Segercrantz, Eriksson, and Aminoff, 2009) there is needed more discourses on desirable and undesirable consequences of innovation, because we face today the problems, which are the result of thinking whose time has passed. There is need to invent the institutional innovations that will upgrade the economic operating system from 'me to we', from ego-system to eco-system logic and awareness (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). This kind of innovating as an attitude towards the world (Tribolet, 2013) includes many elements of sustainability (Prud'homme van Reine, 2013; Senge et al., 2009; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006), but it also needs the individual awareness of one's acts and attitudes, the 'social technology of presencing', as Otto Scharmer describes it in his Theory U (2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). This signifies realization a new, more conscious way of understanding meaning that especially leaders need to take into consideration wider perspectives, such as inner development towards the common values that uphold all living on our planet in order to cope (Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Santorelli, 2011; Scharmer, 2009). New tools, approaches, and ways of collaborating and innovating are needed across boundaries by shifting the current leadership culture of into a culture of empathy, and transparency. The way for that is to

become more aware of what is happening - inside of yourself - and outside in the world. This is also a one way to find creative solutions to humanity's tricky challenges. (Drader, 2013; Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al., 2005.)

Many new approaches of sustainable innovation want to take different systems in a new direction - beyond 'business as usual': systems which are more resilient, more equitable, and able to continue into the future (Drader, 2013). These kind of approaches are related to the way of life where the goal is to achieve more sustainable and interactive development in every dimension of the organizational, living systems (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Hidalgo, 2015; Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Senge et al., 2009; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Sveiby, 2011). Nature is an integrated entirety, full of colors, shapes, circles, and an immense diversity of relationships that hold different systems together. This diversity is also an expression of practical and sustainable problem solving. If people had better ability to understand the complex natural system that support life on Earth, then they would be more likely to respect the limits of the system and to create communities that operate in balance with the natural world. This is the key requirement of sustainability. (Hempel, 2014; Juniper, 2013; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006.)

In this paper, there is contemplated and analyzed through the practice-based experiences, whether the ability of being present at the moment could be one approach, or method, to the new kind of creative thinking in organizational development and innovation.

### 2.5 Scharmer's ways of listening as a model for inner shift and for more creativity

Scharmer claims that the old paradigm of government aid is simply inadequate to the challenge, because the crisis of our time reveals the dying of an old way of thinking, and enacting collective social forms (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). Many participants of this research are the frontline professionals, like managers, teachers, nurses, physicians, laborers, entrepreneurs, and artists who share the current reality where they can feel the heat of an ever-increasing pressure to do more work in a spinning hamster wheel. Scharmer (2009) believes that inside of the hamster wheel there is rising a new form of presence and creativity that starts to grow spontaneously: "... a different quality of connection, a different way of being present with one another and with what wants to emerge" (2009, p. 4). It is a different social field, which manifests through a shift in the quality of interaction. In that shift, people can connect with a deeper source of creativity by stepping into their real power of their authentic self. Scharmer calls this change as a shift in the social field, in which there are four different levels of projecting, or the levels of listening. The organizational creativity and leadership need all those levels together. (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013.) The four levels of listening are seen in the Table 1.

**Table 1.** The new levels of listening by Otto Scharmer (2009, p. 11-13)

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | - "I-in-me" -attitude, where the conversation reconfirms what you already knew: "Yeah, I already know that". This approach depends on the "past" and customary ways of doing things where the matter and source are separated each other. This is still the most used way of human behaving in many organizations. |
| 2. | Factual/Seeing/Suspending - "I-in-it" -attitude you disconfirm what you already know and notice what is new, an ability to see things with fresh eyes: "Ooh, look at that...".   |



This is called open mind, which mirrors new facts, ideas and views. This is typical level for research and education.

3. Empathy/Sensing – “I-in-you” –attitude is seeing the situation through the eyes of another: “Boy, yes, now I really understand how you feel about it”. This is called open heart, capacity to empathize with others. The space between two separated worlds (I and the Other) starts to shift and open up – like a new landscape.
4. Generative/Presencing – “I-in-now” –attitude is reflecting the power of silence where you are no longer the same person you were when it began: “I can’t express what I experience in words. My whole being is slowed down. I feel more quiet and present and more my real self.” This is called open will, which operates creating from the Source and helps you step into the Field of Future. It is an ability to access authentic purpose of self.

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According to Scharmer (2009), and Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) most organizations, institutions and larger systems still remain on the levels 1. or 2. because they are not capable of cultivating these capacities on a collective level. In the ideal circumstances, when the three first attitudes (I-in-me, open mind and open heart) are connected in the experience of open will, it will access spiritual intelligence, i.e. the authentic purpose of self, and carry you to the possibilities of your future potential. The most important tool in new organizational leadership is the last one, open will as a connection to our real source of presence, yourself, purpose, creativity and power. Open will is a turn inside of ourselves, by silencing our minds and observing our expressions – by come in, emerging future identity and purpose. (Senge et al., 2005; Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013.)

The contribution of this qualitative article (with practical implications for further research) is recognizing a Finnish experience of the presence and benefitting from it as a factor contributing to more holistic and sustainable approaches of creativity and innovation.

When going through all the data with phenomenological thematic analysis, it is seen that the most described meanings of the experiences may be separated for three main themes. They are a new point of view (inspiration, insight, change, understanding the other’s point of view, etc.), feeling of connection (with nature, another person, or oneself), and meaningfulness (or bigger picture of your work, life, or mission). All these aspects of present moment are connected both with the inner shift and with different approaches of holistic innovation, creativity - and with the leadership capability (Goldman Schuyler et al., 2017; Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016).

Common elements in different experiences suggest new approaches towards holistic ways of thinking, which encourages further research into the phenomenon of presence, which could become a necessary tool for a new, more sustainable way of thinking and acting.

### 3 Data and methodology

The data of this paper include 418 Finnish experiences of presence. The data has been collected during the years 2011 - 2016, it comprehends 36 free-written narratives, 16 interviews, and 366 post it -notes from presence-workshops or -sessions. The whole data are seen in the Table 2.

**Table 2.** The data.

<b>Data material</b>	<b>When collected</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>The amount of participants</b>
Self-written narratives	2011 – 2012	Through social media from different parts of Finland	36
Interviews	2011 – 2016	In Tampere and in Lahti	16
Free-written post it -notes	2011 – 2015	In innovation workshops. Finnish organizations of public, private and third sectors.	366

The structured questions in collected narratives and interviews were:

1. Where/In what situation have you experienced a NOW-moment/presence (and in some cases there was also asked contrary: In what situation you have not been present at the moment)? Describe your experience with your own words.
2. How do you think your experiences have been affected to you?
3. Is this topic important to you? If it is, describe the reason? If not, why do you feel it is not significant?

The main questions in workshops - during the practice silencing your mind - were:

1. Where/In what situation have you experienced a NOW-moment/presence? Look at your experiences, pick a one, and re-examine it in all its details.
2. How did your experience affected to you?

In the workshops (after becoming acquiring and warm-up -practices) I asked people to silence their minds (with the help of basic meditation practice) by focusing with breathing at the moment. The next, and the most important exercise after meditation, was an image practice, where people were facilitated to remember several individual experiences of presence, and to pick a one of them: What kind of details was seen in the experience, what was it like? Who were present in that moment, where did it happen? What was the weather like, what time of the year or a day it was? How did the experience affected? What is the effect of that experience here and now? After these reflecting exercises, the participants of the workshops wrote down their experiences to the post it -notes. In the last part of workshop, there was a common session where people shared their memories, experiences, and insights together. It is called the 'common space of sharing', the space of equally shared knowledge, which may also be a space of new perspectives, ideas, or in some cases even social innovations - depending on the group and their goals.

Later in this paper, I will mention two workshop processes, which were both part of the data, and connected to the birth of social innovations - such as a social enterprise and a new collaborative tool for social work. The contemplative, art-based exercises - and the experiences of presence - were the main tools for collecting the business ideas (Konsti-Laakso, Koskela, Martikainen, Melkas, and Mellanen, 2016). There is a strong link between the arts and community innovation and development (e.g., Skippington and Davis, 2013). It has been shown that art- and experiences -based tools may increase creativity and innovation, and challenge organizations to broaden their roles to include active support of the development of social and human capital in communities

(Scharmer, 2009; Skippington and Davis, 2013). Artistic, mindfulness and contemplative capabilities have also been shown to be valuable in creative community development including decision-making, creative problem-solving, design skills, interaction, reflection and evaluation (Koskela, 2012; Scharmer, 2009; Skippington and Davis, 2013). In all the workshops in this study were used contemplative, art-based, and experiential exercises, and the most important of them was the moment of silencing your mind, the moment of being present, and the image practice after that which asked participants to 're-member' their experiences of presence.

Because there were larger numbers of participants in this research, I entered the data into a database according to the phenomenological thematic analysis headings by using a facility to extract and compare both participants' descriptions and narratives, my research notes, entries, and theoretical emphasizes. This also enables data entered under different headings to be compared, particularly useful to identify relationships between different themes. (Lester, 1999.) The workshop post it –notes and singular interviews were transcribed verbatim. The purpose was to investigate so distinctly as possible the manifold of people's experiences by using their own words, descriptions and phenomenological analyses. Phenomenological analyses is a useful tool to discover the differences between understanding and experiencing certain phenomena (Marton, 1986; Van Manen, 2016) concerning the relationship between people and the world as well as to describe them (Hasselgren and Beach, 1997). Both positive and negative side of the phenomenological theme analyses is its living nature; it is challenging, or even impossible, to describe strictly the lived experience, which cannot be captured in conceptual abstractions (Van Manen, 1998). In this article, the phenomenological analysis is used to categorize the different, individual experiences of presence to pick up the most popular of them. In the next chapters, these main themes of the individual experiences is introduced more in detail.

#### 4 Results

*“Being present in the now provides the only way to silence inner speech, which along with conscious thinking, keeps the mind restless. (Woman, 42 years, MA)*

The collected experiences of presence were thematized based on the perceptions that people had of their experiences, and the types of qualitative differences. Most people used the word 'connection' to describe their experiences of silencing the restless inner speech, but their connections were different. When I had gone through the data several times by using phenomenological analysis I could separate and thematize three main characteristics with different emphasis between the narratives: 1. Finding a new point of view, 2. Feeling of connection (with oneself, another, or nature) which in many cases seem to lead to 3. Connecting with meaningfulness. All those three themes were linked to Scharmer's definitions of the states of open mind, open heart, and open will. The themes were also partly familiar with the theories of creativity and more holistic, sustainable innovation.

The three main themes are categorized in table 3. and compared with the levels of listening in Scharmer's theory of a new social technology (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer

and Kaufer, 2013).

**Table 3.** The main themes of the data compared with Scharmer's three levels of new social technology of presence: Open Mind, Open Heart and Open Will (See Table 1.)

1. *New point of view:* Like a fresh look, perceiving objects and facts, observing from another perspective, uncontrolled thoughts, moving to the border of your comfort-zone, curiosity towards new things. All these characteristics are typical for an Open Mind in Scharmer's Theory U (2009).

2. *Feeling of connection:* Like connection with nature, connection with another person, connection with oneself: connection with harmony and stillness/empty mind, flow (bodily/mental connection), connection with synchronicity in everything (inside and outside of oneself) and feeling of respect and responsibility (towards oneself or the Other). All these characteristics are typical for Open Heart in Scharmer's Theory U (2009).

3. *Meaningfulness:* Like finding your roots, revelation, receiving comfort, love, grace or gratitude, "I know now" -intuition, "bigger picture" of everything, finding your mission and finding an answer, a solution. All these characteristics are familiar with Charmer's (2009) Open Will.

According to the data, people describe presence as a state where they are in touch (or connection) with themselves; their minds are relaxed and "off" yet focused although not on a task. Being sensitive to one's own mind in a state of relaxed alertness opens the mind to all possible options, sources of new viewpoints, in the current situation: "I was looking at a straw swaying in the wind and suddenly it happened: The moment became lucid. I could feel it all around my body as if I could feel all my cells and atoms...----.In a way I disappeared and in a way I was present more than ever before." (Woman, 24 years, Drama Student)

The experience of presence is often kind of a new awareness of your daily being. The participants of this research find both new perspective, feelings of different interconnections, and meaningfulness from their experiences. Several of details of these three themes are mentioned often in the data. There are lot of self-reflections connected for example with one's emotions, attitudes, interaction, and behavior - in other words: increased consciousness, or inner shift. Peter Senge, systems scientist and founder of the Society for Organizational Learning, describes this reflected process of increased awareness: "There is this Peter who is talking and one who is observing. It is kind of a binocular vision. You have to be in yourself talking, and also have that awareness of standing to the side of yourself. I think part of it is not being attached to your self. We all started to kind of disassociate ourselves from our mind strategies -- like if I do this, this will happen as opposed to just being present and saying whatever happens is fine. It is about really supporting our intentions and supporting people who are there." (Peter Senge's Interview by Kaipa, 2007.)

Creativity thinking in novel ways is facilitated when people are to put in up-front time to think in new way (Sternberg, 2006), from different points of view (McLean, 2005), or to share a common oneness with other people where the focus of that common oneness can be all inclusive or very specific (Bopp and Bopp, 2011). When individuals and environments are related to each other, the problematic situation can only be studied as a united whole. It is researched that when we understand experience as a transaction between individual and environment, we understand such experience both

as a process and a product where intuition, emotion, and body are important part of it, important part of organizational knowledge. (Elkjaer, 2004.) For creativity, and for innovative solutions, people need environments that are supportive and recompensing of creative ideas (Eaton, Hughes, and MacGregor, 2017; Moss, 2012; Sternberg, 2006).

The remarkable part of the experiences of the presence in the data happened somewhere outside in nature. One approach of creativity is found from the Australian aboriginal culture, which followed sustainable recipe for society tens of thousands of years in a nature-connected living-model where all are connected (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Sveiby, 2011). Even today, it is possible that society is in balance with its various environments, respecting all living as having the same value, a sense of connection with life as holy (Macy and Brown, 2014). This kind of mental attitude towards nature is largely found through the data, especially in people's free-written narratives. Many participants have get ideas, inspiration, and insights to both their work and private life when they have been wandering around woods, parks, or lakesides of their cottages.

In the examples of the next chapters is described more deeply how the main themes of the experiences of presence are intertwined both the conceptions of open mind, open heart, and open will, and the other approaches of creativity and more holistic or sustainable innovation.

#### **4.1 Experiences of presence as sources of new viewpoints and incentives to change (Open Mind)**

Open mind can be seen as an attitude or a point of view, which may change one's attitude and perspective to see things for example with new eyes: "----... when being alone by myself, I do not control my thoughts or what I say to myself. It is easier to drift to a situation and a state of mind where something grabs my attention, empties my mind of all thoughts and I no longer see my surroundings the way they are." (Man, 45 years, Stage Worker)

Or in some cases people open themselves for everything what shows up from the mind by giving space for emptiness: "The most important insight about my experiences of presence has been kind of orientation of opening, not exclusion. When I am first accepting all the noise of my thoughts and images, even the dirtiest emotions, I may get space for emptiness". (Woman 34 years, counselor of social services)

Sometimes the experience is like a space which expands or appears during the challenging moment of a concentration: "Sometimes when I am writing, not any fiction but for example the financial aids, or some other official writings when you just have to justify your application. It is like you are detaching yourself during the work...and same time you may 'know' that 'this will be good'. This flow." (Woman, 52 years, Academic Degree Unemployed)

According to the data, it seems that opening your mind is the art of opening the space for something still unknown by letting go the old. Creativity needs opening oneself to new, sometimes even strange and foreign ideas (Senge et al., 2009). These kind of experiences are difficult to describe by words: "Actually, words cannot describe my experience; I do not believe that there is any way to describe that moment." (Man, 37 years, Project Manager)

The Western people usually are used to target, set goals and get benefits. But often,

when you try too much to force something, it fails. This is also mentioned in the data. It seems almost impossible to capture presence. In Western thinking, the focus – also in innovation and creativity – is often on individuality, individual rights (and wrongs), and self-determination – in myself. The difference between Eastern and Western thinking is that when the East generally encourages personal inquiry into the relationship between self and cosmos, the West encourages and value belief. (Jones and Mason, 2009.) An open state of mind is “a window away from oneself” (Scharmer, 2009, p.11), from the ego – like at the moment in the data when a couple is waiting for a birth of a first newborn: “...---...time stopped. There was nothing else, no baby yet, only my husband and me. There was no need to rush anywhere. We were there and waited for something to happen, but because we did not know what it was, we could not rush.” (Woman 32 years, Research Scientist)

In creativity research, the shift of perspective can contribute to original insights and be useful for creativity, but not if the change is so extreme that ideas have no connection to the problem at hand (Kozbelt, Beghetto, and Runco, 2010). According to the data, the experiences of presence seem change many people’s perspectives, attitudes, and preconceptions – by opening people towards the new world and experiences. The open mind may lead to boost out from the individual comfort zone, help to find new points of view, increase curiosity and activity, and in many cases, lead to change insights into future choices.

#### **4.2 Feeling of connection (Open Heart) to inner and outer nature**

The most used word in the descriptions of the presence was ‘connection’. Connection to yourself, for example to your physical body and to your emotions (which are not always positive) was one of the most experienced ‘presencing’ at the data. A female worker of the child welfare organization writes about the experience when looking through the reports about children taken into custody: “Reading those stories for the first time I felt black blood flowing through my vessels.” (Woman, 37 years, Customer Coordinator Manager)

Many experiences of presence have happened when people are feeling connection with other people, for example by encountering customers: “Presence has remarkable role in social work...Only by being present in certain situations gives you the possibility to encounter customers as best as possible.” (Woman, 34 years, Social Worker)

Another typical feature in the data is that during the experiences of presence people are feeling more compassion for each other: “When I have listened to another person’s sorrows, I have felt completely dissolved in the moment and present with my full potential...” (Woman, 27 years, Student of Health Care)

Open heart as listening with empathy means capacity to connect directly with another; the world is seen through someone else’s eyes forgetting one’s own agenda (Scharmer, 2009). The authors of the Presence (2005) write that the key word in this state of connection is “we”. When the ‘theys’ go away and the ‘we’ shows up – without blaming others for every problem – people’s awareness – and capability to do things – change. (Senge et al, 2005). The act of authentic sharing and co-operation of ‘we’ is the stone foundation of community development (Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006). According to the literature, when workers perceive

that an organization has their best interest in mind, when an open debate is in place, and when trust exist among interaction between people, employees can take more risks and put forth creative ideas (McLean, 2005). In one workshop process, during the years 2011-2012, all the workers participate to this research by trying to increase their abilities to be more present with their customers, one female social worker describe the workshop collaboration and sharing like this: "Self-guidance of the group is a useful technique to incorporate. It would not be meaningful to be working with something given from outside. The group dealt with issues that were relevant and came up with positive development ideas."

According to all the collected data the presence in interaction between people is a skill, which is not hierarchical. It is often created in the state of equality, in the place of open dialogue, which can be facilitated with the help of art-based tools. Presence is a multi-dimensional capacity that involves releasing, accepting, surrendering and letting go, even if we don't exactly know what it is like or how to describe it. 'Presencing' can only be learned through personal experiences and awareness – like reflecting learning by doing, which is one of the most important part of learning for example for the leaders or whoever, who have to take charge, make decisions and be responsive to other people (Taylor, 2005). If we started championing instead of worshipping competition, our thinking would improve, and we would stop to crucify each other's courageous thinking. If we transformed the "killing meetings" with heightened awareness, we would stop to kill all energy, initiative, innovation and insight in them – by equal listening and talking. (Kline, 2015.) Organizational culture that supports open flow of communication between people will be more likely to have more creativity and innovation, when organization that encourages control will result in diminished creativity and innovation (McLean, 2005).

Some experiences have happened also during the strong connection with things, or with doing something with a focused intention: "When you are concentrating on what you are doing, time seems to disappear and you experience that you are fully present." (Woman, 62 years, Journalist)

**Identifying with nature.** The most common place of connection of the data seems to be a concrete one: outside nature. Nature is present in almost 90 % narratives. People tell for example how the mindful experiences in nature have helped, provided insight, changed direction, given perspective, taken people back to their roots, induced retrospection, empowered and inspired creative processes, and assisted in making the right decisions regarding the future as well as given meaning to life and a sense of spirituality. The scale of inspirational influence of being in nature is huge through the data. It is obvious to perceive that the outside nature is substitute of kind of supportive environment that is essential element of creative thinking (Sternberg, 2006). When by contemplating the elements of the nature, it may wake up your emotions and help you to find a connection between yourself and the creature. In that meditative state of mind, it is possible to experience and identify how the tree is breathing, and how liquids are flowing inside of it. (Hidalgo, 2015.) This kind of coalescence and emphatic identifying with nature is common among the participants. Connection with nature seem to help to get connection also to yourself, your intuition and insights. In many experiences, nature has been the source of inspiration and ideas: "I breathed deeply and suddenly I noticed that I was at one with nature. The feeling was marvelous! I was no longer conscious of

time but everything around me was powerfully healing. I could not distinguish my body from the natural surroundings; I was ultimately at one with it. ....when resting there I had a vision that I need to repair the summer cottage that I had inherited.....nature has an important, invigorating effect and a message, too – whenever I am ready to hear that message.” (Woman, 40 years, Interpreter)

Nature can lead a person deeper into the meaning of why he or she is here, and be a place of awareness (Macy and Brown, 2014; Senge et al., 2005; O’Donohue, 2010).

The results support the idea of nature’s positive impact on people’s senses and intelligence (Louv, 2011; Sveiby, 2011). People’s experiences in nature seem to be subjective in the same way how the landscape may be seen through its own natural subjectivity and self (O’Donohue, 2010). In the nature, it is easy to forget all the daily problems: “When I am in nature, I always feel fully present because I cannot or do not want to think about anything but the beauty of the nature when I am there.” (Woman, 35 years, Economics Student, Employed)

Nature is something to be respected in its own expressions, to be experienced with its own spirit. Interaction with landscape may be individually healing, or it can also return its pain to human being if he abuses or damages it. (Louv, 2011; Macy and Brown, 2014; O’Donohue, 2010; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Sveiby, 2011.) Hempel thinks (2014) that developing emotional connections to the natural world (to wild places, wildlife, plants and natural beauty) is as important for protecting the nature as for example breakthroughs in environmental science or policy. According to the data, people honor nature as a place of awareness, and an idea-refinery temple. “Then, what a hell we are doing here inside of our box offices and staring our computers if we really are creative and innovative outside in nature?”, asked one adult student in a leadership education workshop, where people were sharing their experiences of presence together. According to the collected narratives, the experiences of presence when happening in nature are singularly inspiring, stimulating, and assimilated. Many participants can reach new depths of understanding about themselves, their abilities and their relationship with the world inside and around them. Nearly all the studied narratives include the elements, which are familiar with the worldview of nature-connected indigenous cultures (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Sveiby, 2011; Tedlock and Tedlock, 1992), where people’s holistic approach of life, ideas, emotions, and actions are interconnected. Their nature-connectedness may be perceived also as a messenger: “All morning voices surrounded me. My mind was filled with an overwhelming brightness and a happiness that came with it: this is your life, this is the purpose of your life, what you should do and protect with your life.” (Man, 37 years, Project Manager)

In the aboriginal recipe of sustainability, all - people, animals, plants, ancestral spirits - live together equally in timelessness world, which is mirrored on earth everywhere. Similar elements of nature-connectedness is seen in the data of this research. Nature helps people to connect with their real selves and with other living beings. Nature also serves people as a metaphor for insights, “right answers” and gives paths to follow. (Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006.) : “The only thing that bothered me was that I could not find the right location [for a certain sequence in her first short film].....After the day’s filming I decided to find the right place. I went alone. When I left, I felt being present in that moment and connected to nature....I was walking around in the woods for about an hour and I was confident that I



would find the place I was looking for. I changed direction at random when it felt right. Then I started to hear steps behind me, I didn't turn to look, but continued. The footsteps were following me but not very close by, I understood that it was an animal. I concentrated on listening to the steps and stopped when they stopped. I turned to look behind me and I saw an elk that turned and started to walk away from me. When I turned around again I saw that I had arrived at the perfect location for my film." (Woman, 41 years, Film Director)

In ancient Australian stories, nature is full of symbolic images like a physical map that remind people about creation, and leads the way home, the way to back yourself (Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006). Mindfulness, the one description for ability to be at the moment, is also described to be a path which may lead you deeply into an authentic way of being (Tugend, 2013), or way 'back to home' as many participants describe it. A modern example of this kind of "map" is the experience of a young woman who used to be a drug addict. She had been off drugs for two months and was sitting on a bus looking out of the window when she suddenly noticed: "Has the world always been this bright? I looked at the pattern in the ice on the window of the bus and I was moved to tears by its beauty... Has the world always been this beautiful?" (Woman, 29 years, Therapist of Chinese Medicine)

According to Karl-Erik Sveiby (2016), our modern society may learn a lot about the holistic approaches of aboriginals, for example in making corporations and governments develop more ecological key production methods. A needed new focus for innovation includes social consciousness and global ecological responsibility. (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006; Sveiby 2011.) The ancient "recipe" for sustainable progress is "to be selective and to consider consequences before introducing a new technology into society" (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006, p.193). Scharmer finds also similarities between aboriginals and Finns in the concept of power-places, "simple cabins in the woods" where parents teach their children to listen to the forest. He thinks that this kind of heartfelt relationship with the presence of places in nature is special, and it may have contributed to the many successful technological innovations in Finland. (Scharmer, 2009.) For example, different kind of reflective and contemplative practices can build the capacity for discernment, and respect human relationship to nature and environment (Eaton et al., 2017). "Forest bathing" is standard preventive medicine in Japan, where also is an own term for death of overwork, which is *karoshi*. People come out from cities, go to the landscape and shower in the greenery in Japan and South Korea. With the help of the nature, they are able to become relaxed and feel all their five senses in authentic way. Their blood pressures decrease, and people find balance for their hectic life. Nature-connection and its benefits are natural for Japanese people because of their long tradition and culture, where nature belongs to their minds and bodies through philosophy. All things are relative to something else, when in Western thinking, all things are absolute. (Williams, 2017.)

According to the data, there is still some aboriginal spirit living inside the Western individual. Maybe we can learn from the first peoples, both in terms of sustainable environmental practices and in terms of more equal leadership (Sveiby, 2011), but also in terms of trust for our own senses and intuition. Creativity needs to stem from ethics and values that respect all life understanding the laws of nature and being at one with them (Macy and Brown, 2014; Moss, 2012). By connecting with nature, one can see

oneself as a part of a larger whole, of a unity (Scharmer, 2009; Sveiby and Skuthorpe 2006), and as a part of the possible future (Moss, 2012; Senge et al., 2005).

#### **4.3 Meaningfulness – experience of presence as homecoming, seeing the bigger picture, or a spiritual experience (Open Will)**

Presence is also appreciated as deep listening, of being open beyond one's pre-conceptions and historical ways of making sense by seeing the importance of letting go the old identifies and the need to control (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al., 2005). Open will as generative listening means often that "I am connected with something larger than myself." (Scharmer, 2009, p.12). It can be understood also as a phenomenological space of interface, the experience of human existence, which is monistic state in which spirit is present in every part of the body (Varto, 2011). In interface, man is one with the world and opens towards it (ibid.). In the data, many experiences of presence appear in the shape of interface or coalescence, or as remarkable spiritual experience of "homecoming": "In those moments, the world is not out somewhere, but it comes up. I can't say that I am a part of nature, universe, or anything else, but I feel that I am home." (Man, 37 years, Project Manager)

The meaningful understanding of you 'Home', seeing the 'Bigger picture' of your life, or feeling the existence of something larger than yourself may lead sometimes to an insight, which may change your life: "I remember it very clearly, although I was drunk at the time. Enlightenment struck me like a lightning bolt and woke me up from a dream. It felt like I saw everything for the very first time, although I was in the middle of the place (a pub), where the people and everything were actually too familiar for me. Everything around me was strange and I no longer felt the communal spirit that I had thought there was." The woman, who had been frequenting the pub for many years, wandered around and kept asking everybody: "Why are you here?" People looked at her as if she had lost her mind. "In my mind I understood it crystal clear. This was not what I wanted and this was not my life." She felt that she was given instructions from "above" and she obeyed them. The incident made her realize that she was in charge of her life and made her own choices, and "As a consequence of the night, I went to rehab and started to take care of myself and my life....—...I understood distinctly that I cannot steer my life with my own power. It was my first humbling experience as well." (Woman, 31 years, Social Worker)

The main key factors towards the more creative thinking are a compelling vision and sense of deeper purpose that means something to people they will commit to, the level of openness and reflection so that people are challenging their ways of thinking. Through that process, people are getting better at seeing how they are depending on and part of the larger systems. (Goldman Schuyler, 2016.) The kind of spirituality acts important part in some cases of the data. According to research, spirituality is the anchor of ethics and social morality for most people. In work life, it removes bottlenecks and barriers and eradicate us-against-them mentality between employees and employers. It increases the effectiveness of teamwork and induces a creative culture. Being in touch with your inner spiritual being enables people to identify and use their best qualities such as confidence, alertness, courage, trust, commitment and hope. Recognizing subordinates' spirituality would help leaders to motivate and inspire their subordinates and to intensify the unity of the group. (Fairholm and Fairholm,

2009.) The data shows that understanding the meaning or the bigger picture of the value of your action is an important experience. To becoming aware of your ability to be present at the moment may mean that you become conscious about the values and truths you are involved, for example in your daily work. Like one woman describes about her experience: "Presence means that you know yourself as a worker, too; what are your strengths, and in what areas you still need to develop. This way you may benefit from your own resources as a worker and not burn yourself out. The presence has a big influence on the work community. Presence affects well-being and the structures of the (work) community." (Woman, 35 years, Social Worker)

## 5 Discussion

When comparing the main themes of the data and the concepts of new approaches of organizational creativity and sustainable innovation (for example Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013, Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006), it seems that there are parallels between them. If the more holistic innovation ability needs a shift in your consciousness, the experience of the female social worker is a good example for that: "I have been more present by myself; I am more aware of my body, senses, attitudes and emotions...What could this mean in working life?"(Social worker, 37)

Many experiences seem to be similar to the kind of presencing that Scharmer (2009) and Senge (Senge et al., 2005) see as essential for addressing complex societal issues that are resistant to resolution within existing organizational structures. A capacity to intentionally bring oneself into the present moment is fundamental as the most exciting organizational change being undertaken aiming toward global change (Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Goldman Schuyler et al., 2017; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al, 2005).

Both creativity and innovation are present in this paper, because they seem to be connected with experiences of presence in various ways and levels. The individual experiences of presence may include such actors of creativity as a new point of view, better communication, empathy, understanding the bigger picture, meaningfulness, nature-connectedness, or broader awareness of what is going on. In addition, the experience of presence also include different possibilities be used in the development of innovation sessions in groups. By using such tools in a group as silencing your mind for the present moment (meditation or contemplation exercises), or sharing your experiences, for example of your work creativity by listening and telling consciously, may in some cases lead your group or society to a new social innovation (Konsti-Laakso et al., 2016; Koskela, Oikarinen, & Melkas, 2015). In this case, creativity is found to be connected with an individual experience of presence, when innovation seem to be connected with a creative group working. According to literature, the focus of organizational innovation is more interrelationships, interactions, and dynamics among actor and environment (McLean, 2005). Nevertheless, this result will need much more practice-based experiences in the working field, 418 people is still a little amount of participants. Peoples' capacities for reflection are essential for their meaning-making about their world and their participation in it, and the ability to pause, step above the fray, and imagine alternative futures can help them think more creative and systemically (Eaton et al., 2017). Through the experiences of presence is seen that

human flourishing is not a mechanical process; it is an organic process – like creativity in itself (Robinson, 2010).

The multifaceted experience of presence has a plausible role both in a state of individual awareness (as an inner shift), and in a communal innovation ability. The ability to calm your mind has its role also in the significant change that is happening now both around us, and inside our organizations and societies. Meeting the global challenges requires more sustainable and holistic tools and ways, to innovate, and become agents of practical change (Mateus-Berr, 2015; Sveiby, 2009; Sveiby, 2011). Global leaders need to shift from “ego-system awareness” to “eco-system awareness” (Scharmer, 2011; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). But the shift in society and organizations will not happen before the individuals will change. The change has to be happen first in the individual level, and after that, it will spread to society and its organizations (Hidalgo, 2015; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). We could concentrate more on our experiences of aware moments of presence which help us to ask such questions like "Who am I?", "What am I here for?", and "What is my direction?", because the path of real innovation is that you do what you love and you love what you do (Scharmer, 2013).

The experiences of presence are not necessary positive experiences; they can be also evil ordeals of negative emotions, or pains. They varies in many ways and levels, from a small everyday detail of cooking to the strong apparition of one’s professional mission. Essential for the experiences of presence is that the participant is always aware of her or his experience. She is so conscious of it, that she can easily remember it afterwards, because it is one way or another special and memorable.

**Connections to the practice-based innovation research.** The data shows that understanding the meaning or the bigger picture of the value of your action is important experience for many. Today, when organizations list values they do not really live (Kline, 2015), becoming aware of your ability to be present at the moment may mean also that you become conscious about the values and truths you are involved, for example in your daily work. This is useful ability also for today’s leaders (Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Goldman Schuyler et al., 2017).

In the workshop session during the year 2011 in a child-welfare organization, one female worker got an individual insight about the experiences when she was not present at her work. This insight led to a collective process, which changed something in the workers working style in that organization. They noticed that inside their work is a huge “natural” spiral of negative thinking and connotations, which increases strain and disharmony and decreases presence. It is the reports about the customers. The reports the workers read all the day are full of negative testimonies of bad backgrounds of the children. The workers and customers (children) have to repeat repeatedly these bad upsetting past experiences. The collective idea during the process was crystallized in one worker’s sentences: “Our goal should be the presence. We need to be more courageous to change our old myths, routines and limits.” After that, the workers changed the ways to report for a more positive. They wanted that all the reports should include also positive, or neutral, information about their clients, not only negative one. The workers noticed also how the formal, social-worker-based education of the foster families should be changed towards the contents produced by the customers; the education should be more individualist, more child-based, and more interactive. This was a significant and creative shift in the daily routines of the child-welfare

organization (which includes to the data of this research). I have described this case more closely in one conference paper of the European Evaluation Society (EES). (Koskela, 2012.)

Another case example of practice-based social innovation connected to this research by using the individual experiences of presence of the participants, was the participatory design process for a new social enterprise in the Lahti (Päijät-Häme) Region, Finland, to employ rehabilitates of mental health. There were many people with entrepreneurial interests and skills, but there was a lack of concrete business ideas. The innovation process was implemented between the years 2012-2013 with the help of presence-workshops and the participants' experiences of meaningful acts. Business ideas were collected through co-creation, co-learning, and ability to be present and reflect your experience. This social innovation process of the common business ideas is described more closely in the journal of WORK 55 (Konsti-Laakso et al., 2016). In organizations, it is possible to create social innovation in workshops and groups with the help of aware collaboration (Koskela et al., 2015).

When people share experiences with each other in a community, there is also a possibility for the community to turn to its highest ideals (Bopp and Bopp, 2011) or towards its future potential (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). Unfortunately these kind of practice-based workshop-processes, which could be essential 'living labs' to test, develop and formalize the experiences of presence as a tool for a more creative and sustainable work inside the organizations, need real interest, time and resources. If we want to change our working routines, we first have to be aware of them, then to search and develop them, after that change them, and finally we have to adjust them to our daily work. It is not an one-afternoon -process. I think this a larger problem in the area of innovation and development projects inside the Finnish organizations. Conscious change is not a quick trick. This is also one of the limitations of this research; there should be needed more and longer periods of practice-based experience in the field for proper results.

Fortunately, I have had also an opportunity to compare these results to the corresponding international studies, too, from the point of view of sustainable leadership (Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016). From the year 2012, I have had an honor to work and study in this issue together with Professor Kathryn Goldman Schuyler and her colleagues who have been interested about almost the same theme, but described it as the "waking up" -moment. Our first, common paper was presented in the Academy of Management Conference in Philadelphia, 2014. After that, we have written couple of published papers (included also in this study) together.

## 6 Conclusions

And as the result of this paper, I may countenance myself to say that one possible new path for the more holistic approach of innovation could be an individual experience of presence, the inner shift, which may help you to get new perspectives, connections, or meaning to your daily life and work: "... There is now more room for listening both to myself and to others. Maybe these experiences have given me creativity and courage that I can use in my art." (Woman, 37 years, Visual Artist)

According to the most common themes of the experiences of presence, it is seen that when a person has opened one's mind to a new point of view, it is also easier to open one's heart to connect with somebody, or something. Then, after opening one's heart, a person has more space and possibilities to achieve the state of open will, the level of aware and authentic purpose of self. (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). It is also possible to facilitate and create open, common spaces of shared experiences in organizations with the help of contemplative or creative methods. These kind of spaces, which have been involved in this study as the presence-workshops, are near to the 'ba', the shared context for knowledge creation (Nonaka, Toyoma, and Konno, 2000). If the tacit, experienced-based knowledge, which is an important part of organizational capital, is shared and deferred together, it will be increased the organizational creativity (Koivunen, 1997; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

In this research, I have tried to show how the processes of presence, which in many cases are also parts of the creative insights, could also be the seeds of new social innovations and a more aware (sustainable) approach of leadership (Koskela and Goldman Schuyler, 2016; Goldman Schuyler et al., 2017). It is still crystal clear that it is needed more research for that. In the huge and international field of the studies of organizational creativity and innovation, the amount of 418 Finnish individual experiences of presence is still too few for the prominent and comprehensive results.

In the middle of the global challenges, we as humans, leaders, and workers face issues that require us to slow down, and need to start really paying attention, listening, sensing 'what wants to happen', reflecting, and connecting to our inner source of knowing (Scharmer, 2010). Experiences of presence could provide a holistic anticipatory perspective to meet, for example, organizational challenges, but unfortunately, it cannot be obtained just like that. Presence as a phenomena is hard to handle. Ability of presence cannot be controlled, nor induced, forced or learned from textbooks. Only possible is to live it through with the help of your own experience. Even so, the experiences of presence are constantly shifting, fleeting and momentary; they are never at a standstill, but always on the move like a flow – like the whole evolution or a human mind. Moments of presence come without planning and effort by just being there: "The flow was gone. Then some of it returned. Oh, I wish I had the courage to be/do/paint what I actually feel without rationalizing! ... Desiring it is a problem. You cannot experience a moment of presence by will or way... If you have a clear idea, desire or goal etc. you will not be relaxed and your mind will become rigid." (Woman, 37 years, Visual Artist)

Researching experiences of presence is particularly challenging, because the subject is new in the field, the literature is hard to find, and the experiences are fleeting. There is not much research to be found of this topic. Further research into actual experiences of presence will be needed as well as developing methods of being present at work situations and studying through practice-based experiments whether the awareness of the present moment increases creativity and innovativeness in organizations. One-step for the daily testing could be to be more aware, to be an observer of the singular experiences of presence, and share them together in a bigger group, in the center of the organization's interaction. The singular experiences of presence could help us to understand more about ourselves, others, and the spaces and connections in our societies and environments.

Now, going back to the second poetic experimental citations of this paper, and read forward the last words of the experience of fourteen-year-old girl: "After that experience, I understood everything much more clearly. I understood why dreams and physical reality so often are mixed up in my head, why I experienced time both merged and as fluttering shards. I understood that everything was one and the same, a reflection and a shadow of the universe." (Woman, 27 years, Student of Health Care)

On the other hand, like Peter Senge, et al. (2009, p. 50) state: "The revolution is not about giving up; it's about rediscovering what we most value. It is about making quality in living central in our communities, businesses, schools, and societies. It is about reconnecting with ourselves, one another, and our fellow non-human habitans on earth."

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## **Publication III**

Koskela, V., Oikarinen, T., and Melkas, H.

**Creating Social Innovation:**

**Approaches to community development in a social enterprise**

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*Virpi Koskela, Tuija Oikarinen & Helinä Melkas*

### **3 CREATING SOCIAL INNOVATION: APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

#### **Abstract**

This paper addresses the creation of social innovation by investigating it through a framework of approaches to community development. The empirical part concerns a new social enterprise that employs mental health and substance abuse rehabilitees. Its establishment process is looked into as a social innovation process. The research focuses on whether the new social enterprise functions as a laboratory of social innovation for community development. The data consist of materials produced at six workshops with about 140 participants (rehabilitees and social workers) and observation conducted in 2012–2013. Participatory methods were utilized. The results showed that the new social enterprise functioned as a laboratory of social innovation in many ways.

#### **Introduction**

Innovation has been widely studied, and recent research has led to increasingly differing views rather than a common understanding. According to Damanpour (1996), innovation is “a means of changing an organization, either as a response to changes in the external environment or as a pre-emptive action to influence the environment”. Innovation is born through a comp-



lex set of processes that links many different actors together (e.g., Tidd et al. 2005; Hartley 2006; 2008; Stähle et al. 2004; OECD 2005; Windrum & Koch 2008). The expansion of the definition of innovation (e.g., Damanpour 1996; Plessis 2007; Osborne & Brown 2011) has enabled and promoted the discussion on innovation activities in new contexts and environments. One expansion has been to bring up and emphasise *social innovations* along with the traditional technological or product innovations. Social innovations are made by people in a way different from technological product innovations which are based on more homogeneous knowledge production. Still, innovation is often used as a synonym for the output of an innovation process. Understanding how and why innovations actually emerge, develop, grow and terminate over time is essential (e.g., Van de Ven et al. 1999) for policy makers, individual organizations and individual people. Increasing such understanding with regard to social innovation is particularly timely.

This paper addresses the creation of social innovation by investigating it through 'seven types of approaches to community development' (Bopp & Bopp 2011). We approach social innovation as a process where a new solution is found by considering the challenge – the phenomenon of the work community – from the point of view of Bopp's framework. Social innovation is based on developing 'common spaces of sharing' based on equality among people in the community. Through this, people are likely become open enough to share their practical, emotional, and tacit knowledge.

The empirical part of this study concerns a new social enterprise in the Lahti (Päijät-Häme) Region, Finland. Päijät-Häme Social Psychiatry Foundation and its three partner organizations are in the process of establishing a social enterprise that employs mental health and substance abuse rehabilitees. This establishment process is looked into as a social innovation process. The research question is: *does the new social enterprise function as a laboratory of social innovation for of community development?* Social enterprises have been acknowledged as major producers or laboratories of social innovations, especially at local or community levels (EU, 2012). The contribution of this paper lies in clarifying this link through an empirical analysis focusing on the approaches to community development.

## Background

### *Social innovation and social enterprise*

The understanding of basic terms and concepts such as ‘social enterprise’ and ‘social innovation’ varies not only in literature but also in national and international contexts and in the public, the private and the non-governmental third sector. ‘Social innovation’ is characterised by very many interpretations. Well-structured views and ideas about social/societal innovation are lacking and in high demand (OECD 2012; cf. Cervantes 2012). Nussbaumer and Moulaert (2007) noted that “social innovations can be macro or micro, structural or local, they are introduced by an entrepreneurial spirit and through solidarity, either to improve the functioning of the organisation or to transform the organisation into a social enterprise, an enterprise with social objectives, an organisation pursuing social objectives or to empower it with a more participatory governance system”. In this study, social innovation is an umbrella concept when examining the establishment process of a new social enterprise. They are thus not synonyms, as often seems to be the case in research literature.

There is a wide consensus on the need to perform empirical research on social innovation, observing how current realities develop. A process dimension of social innovation has evolved stressing that an important aspect of social innovation is the *process of social interaction* between individuals to reach certain outcomes. This evolution is consistent with the many other recent developments in the field of business innovation stressing open, collaborative, participatory and non-linear aspects of innovation processes (cf. Hudson 2008).

Some definitions of social innovation are very specific and exclude many practical examples, especially those coming from the private sector. Others are so broad that they include examples of projects and organizations which are not particularly innovative (even though they deliver benefits to the communities they serve). (Hennala 2011.) Broadly considered, the concept of social innovation can be used to explain any individual and social development; any social, economic and cultural action irrespective of time and place (Joutsenoja & Lindh 2004), or the ‘public good’, benefiting people or the Earth (Centre for Social Innovation 2010; Pol & Ville 2009). Social inno-

vation has also been described as changes in the ways of thinking: changes in mental models and institutional and social norms that increase the renewal ability of society; novel solutions to social problems with societal value (e.g., Phills et al. 2008; Stähle et al. 2004), or as new ideas that work in meeting social goals (Mulgan et al. 2007). In a somewhat narrower sense, social innovations are defined as changes in the cultural, normative or regulative structure of society, which enhance the collective power resources of society and improve its economic and social performance (Heiskala 2007).

Social innovation thus usually describes the processes of invention, diffusion and adoption of new services or organizational models, whether in the non-profit, public or private sector. Particular innovations often move between sectors as they evolve. Social innovation also describes the outcome – the service or model being developed. In the BEPA report (2010), the following definition was adopted; “social innovations are innovations that are social both in their ends and in their means. Specifically, we define social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. In other words they are innovations that are both good for society and enhance society’s capacity to act.” Participatory processes are central in this regard. This definition that the EU uses is still rather broad, but it does offer guidance in distinguishing social innovation and interrelations between that and other innovation types.

Social innovation has also been linked to factors emphasizing novel ways to do things, novel ways to see old and new challenges and more generally the ability to see behind and out of the usual. Thus social innovations need not always be big and significant, but they can be generated and formed with many different starting points, just like any other type of innovation. For instance, work communities and their networks are a core resource at the grass-roots level in social innovations. Social innovations give the community an opportunity to assess and develop its own operations and take the users’ view into account. (Hämäläinen 2005.)

‘Social enterprise’ has different definitions in literature as well as different legal and political standings in different countries, which greatly affect how they are set up, funded, by and for whom. This obviously impacts on how they may be evaluated or compared to one another. In the academic literature, there is no consistent usage of the term social enterprise or social ent-

preneurship (Dart 2004). Social entrepreneurship covers a broad range of activities and initiatives that fall along a continuum, including more generally speaking non-conventional entrepreneurial initiatives (Galera & Borzaga 2009). Social enterprise is seen as something new and distinct from classical business and traditional non-profit activity, combining to different extents the elements of social purpose, market orientation, and financial-performance standards of business (Young 2008). Alter (2007) calls social enterprises 'hybrid organizations' it is the intersection of business and traditional nonprofit where the social enterprise lies. Also the EMES' definition distinguishes between, on the one hand, social enterprise criteria that are more economic and entrepreneurial, and, on the other, indicators that are predominantly social (Defourny 2001).

Forms of social enterprise found in Finland are (i) work integration social enterprises which offer employment to the disabled and the long-term unemployed and which are provided for by law, and (ii) organizations which have adopted a social enterprise business model and are therefore eligible for the social enterprise mark. Facilitating a viable ecosystem for social enterprises is a key point; it requires, inter alia, development of business expertise; funding and investments; advisory services and publicity, and increasing demand through public procurement and corporate social responsibility programmes. (Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2011)

### *Seven types of approaches to community development*

Michael Bopp and Judie Bopp (2011) have found in their practice-based organizational action research in several countries around the world that a sustainable community is a basic human need (Bopp & Bopp 2011, 14). In their newest book "Recreating the World – A practical guide to building sustainable communities" they describe – through theory and practice – how to facilitate and build the art of sustainable community development together with the local people. They have identified seven distinct approaches within the field of community development and compared and contrasted them with each other (Bopp & Bopp 2011, 10-11). These 'Seven Types of Approaches to Community Development' are the mirror through which we will look at the social innovation process in this paper.

According to the Bopps, community development is a process of transforming people and their communities into new models of living that are truly life-promoting and life-enhancing for them, for others, and for future generations. Typical characteristics in community development are (Bopp & Bopp 2011, 41-42):

1. Participation – the meaningful involvement of the people whose lives are being affected by the process of development in all parts of that process (analyzing issues or problems, discovering solutions, making plans, implementing strategies and projects, and evaluating outcomes)
2. Re-creation of the world – the use of community building as a primary strategy
3. Transformation

The usual way of community development is driven from outside the communities by certain experts, professionals and facilitators or consultants. This leads to a situation where unfamiliar cultures and organizational models are followed, and development goals are talked about in the language of development professionals, for instance (Bopp & Bopp 2011, 73). Yet, the starting point of development and innovation needs to be the resources and strengths of the culture of the people. There are certain similarities between this contrast and the contrast between practice-based innovation and traditional science-based views (cf. Melkas & Harmaakorpi 2012). The word community comes from two words: ‘common’ and ‘unity’ – and to be in ‘community’ is to share a common oneness with other people where the focus of that common oneness can be all inclusive or very specific (Bopp & Bopp 2011, 12). When people share experiences with each other in a community, there is also a possibility for the community to turn to its highest ideals (Bopp & Bopp 2011, 13) or towards its future potential (cf. Theory U by Scharmer 2009). The common space of sharing may be seen as a space (or place) for participation inside an organization, in a community. The common, participatory space of sharing may also be seen as ‘a scene’ where common experiences, values, beliefs and interests can be shared and processed with the help of, e.g., participatory functional methods such as arts-based (Pässilä, Melkas & Uotila 2013), or contemplative methods – as in this study.

The Bopps' seven approaches to community development and their brief characterizations are as follows:

1. The liberation model > liberation (equal participation) as an answer
2. The therapeutic model > healing of personal & community traumas
3. The issue organizing model > a project focused on change
4. The community organizing model > co-operation for better services
5. The economic development or trickle-down model > economic development
6. The cultural-spiritual model > beliefs, goals, ethics and dominant thinking patterns of community
7. The ecological system model > an integrated, holistic approach

These seven approaches are used in the following empirical investigation.

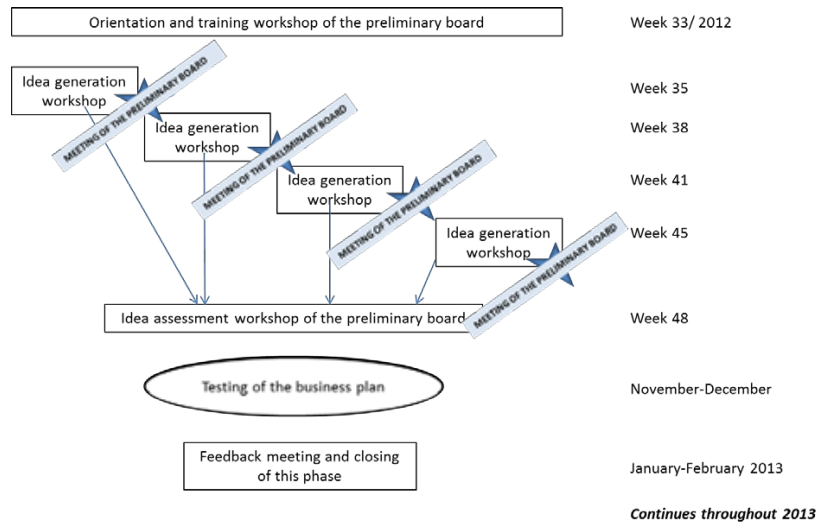
## Methods

### *The data*

This paper focuses on a participatory establishment process of a new social enterprise in the Lahti (Päijät-Häme) Region, Finland. Päijät-Häme Social Psychiatry Foundation and its three partner organizations are in the process of establishing a social enterprise that employs mental health and substance abuse rehabilitees. The starting point of the establishment process was the common participatory collection of business ideas through co-creation of common spaces of sharing and interactive innovation tools. The background philosophy was that of practice-based innovation (Melkas & Harmaakorpi 2012); in addition to gathering business ideas utilizing people's resources and strengths, also rooting of competence in innovation and creative methods in the enterprise-to-be was aimed at.

The data consist of original materials produced at six half-day workshops organized in the autumn of 2012 as well as observation of the process that followed throughout 2013. The participants, i.e., rehabilitees, a few of their relatives, and social workers, were from the four partner organizations. Among all the collaborating organizations, many people showed up with entrepreneurial interest and skills. Four of the workshops were targeted at anyone interested and two at the preliminary board of the future enterprise.

About 140 people participated in the workshops – about 120 rehabilitees and 20 social workers. Figure 1 shows the process in 2012. In 2013, it continued with the selection of the first ideas to be implemented; the streamlining of the plans, and the implementation of the first idea (5 employees).



**Figure 1. The establishment process investigated in 2012.**

In addition to the original materials, the data utilized in this study consist of field notes made by the workshop facilitators. Each workshop was also evaluated afterwards by the Päijät-Häme Social Psychiatry Foundation and its partner organizations in a meeting with the facilitators. Besides this, the observations from this evaluative meeting and from the workshops were discussed and validated by the facilitators. The qualitative data are analysed with the help of content analysis. This research is essentially participatory action research.

### *Participatory methods*

Most organizations, institutions and larger systems still lack new social leadership based on an open mind, an open heart, and an open will – and the cultivation of these capacities also on a collective level. An *open mind* is an

ability to see things with fresh eyes, an *open heart* relates to the capacity to empathize with others and an *open will* relates to the ability to access authentic purpose of self. The most important tool in new organizational leadership is the last one, the connection to our real source of presence, creativity and power (Scharmer 2009).

How does something new manifest in a community? The new comes into being by changing the quality of attention by letting go of old intentions, and allowing something new to come in, emerging future identity and purpose. It means letting go with a light touch, and accepting the experience from a deeper place of stillness where it is easy to let go the old and connect with higher-order intentions (Scharmer 2009, 37). This kind of a participatory method of contemplation was facilitated in all the workshops.

The facilitators – who have work backgrounds in the fields of applied theatre and therapy – had experience in arts- and contemplation-based methods. Research studies have shown that there is a strong link between the arts and community innovation and development (e.g., Skippington & Davis 2013). Playfulness, improvisation and contemplative methods were used as tools for co-creation in the workshops. It has been shown that such tools may increase creativity and innovation, and challenge organizations to broaden their roles to include active support of the development of social and human capital in communities (Skippington & Davis 2013; Scharmer 2009). Artistic, mindfulness and contemplative capabilities have also been shown to be valuable in creative community development including decision-making, creative problem-solving, design skills, interaction, reflection and evaluation (Koskela 2012; Scharmer 2009; Skippington & Davis 2013).

The main goal of all the workshops was to facilitate the creation of concrete business ideas for the new social enterprise. The participants were encouraged to produce their preferences and mental images of meaningful work. Playfulness and improvisation were used as warm-ups in the beginning of the workshops. One crucial approach for the participants was to remember ('re-member') again their meaningful acts or doings. In this context it meant sensing and being present; being connected with the inner source of one's own potential, and bringing it into now (Scharmer 2009). The contemplative exercise started with silencing the participants' minds, observing their bodily emotions in that moment. Then they were facilitated silently to find and go back to their individual memories of 'meaningful doings', to the place



and situation when they felt connected to something (e.g., action or work) that they found important. This kind of an experience may also be described as an aspect of one's own spirituality ('spirit') – meaning the essence of who we are. The Bopps' approach to community development and participatory methodology has also built on the spiritual and cultural strengths that exist within a community (Bopp & Bopp 2011). These methods were primarily linked to the liberation and therapeutic models of the Bopps.

The post-it notes written after this exercise were the idea preforms for the business ideas that the participants developed together in groups. More than 100 business ideas were found with this method. This stage was primarily linked to the Bopps' issue organizing model. (At the time of writing, in early 2014, one of those business ideas is being implemented as the first pilot project of the social enterprise.)

The functional and creative methods guided the participants to acknowledge their own strengths in their possible future. These visions of the future were the basis for the creation of meaningful knowledge for the participants – seeing themselves as they would like to see themselves (as in an ideal vision of the social enterprise). This is not a usual basis to establish a social enterprise – but the people who participated in the workshops already started to commit to the establishment process at that early stage. (Konsti-Laakso et al. 2013, 4). This has to do with the cultural-spiritual model, in particular.

This is a holistic approach to developing social innovation and a social enterprise – meaning that the necessary knowledge for the development should be found both from the inner and the outer space of individual experiences. People could share these experiences in the meaningful space, place and time for a special common cause. Because of that observation the whole innovation workshop process was called a common space of sharing, and a certain creative community-based way of sharing experiences, emotions and attitudes was involved. It may be claimed that this is usually lacking in the Finnish work life.

## Results

In the following, we describe how the establishment process of the social enterprise in Lahti was suited to the seven approaches to community development of the Bopps.

### 1. The liberation model

In the liberation model the main qualities are empowerment and equality which are used to improve lives and communities. In our study this included the activation and employment of the rehabilitees. They were encouraged to find and express their own views of meaningful work with the help of methods such as playfulness, improvisation and contemplation. Through that kind of co-creation people produced dozens of business ideas after each workshop. In terms of the aspects of social innovation, this is related to enhancing the society's capacity to act and, generally speaking, being good for the society.

### 2. The therapeutic model

In the therapeutic model, traumatic situations that require healing are present. Here, employment was used as a therapeutic act. The therapeutic model includes the ideal that the people who would like to participate in some way in common work would also become healed and empowered through this meaningful action or work. In the workshops, people were facilitated to remember their previous meaningful doings again – with the help of contemplation exercises. The 'danger' we noted in the therapeutic model is that people (rehabilitees and workers) should not put too much emphasis on diagnoses – or place themselves in a position "we (rehabilitees) against them (the 'normal' people)". As to the aspects of social innovation, this is also related to enhancing the society's capacity to act and being good for the society, in general

### 3. The issue organizing model

This model includes the identification of issues around which people can be mobilized for change (for example, participation, capacities and resources). In the workshops, hundreds of post-it notes were collected. The pre-forms for the business ideas were developed together with everybody involved. As a result, more than 100 business ideas were gained. Notable in this model is that it is important to be persistent and not to give up to adversities on the road to a social enterprise. This model is related social innovations as new ideas.

#### 4. The community organization model

The main purpose of this model is the need for people to cooperate and for providing improved services for them. In the process studied, the model is seen as a part of the participatory selection of a few business ideas – and also as a part in the further development of the first pilot of the social enterprise. The notable challenge of this model is keeping the common needs of people going strong for a longer period of time. In terms of the aspects of social innovation, this model is related to creating new social relationships and collaborations.

#### 5. The economic development or trickle-down model

In this model, the main characteristic is that material prosperity and economic development are seen as the foundation of human and community well-being. In the process studied, the order of priorities of the participants was different from that of the establishment of a 'usual' enterprise. It is notable that there is a danger of taking finances, business and products too seriously and as the only way to success. It appears that much more relevant in this case is to ask: what is success? This is related to productivity as well as market orientation and financial performance at the intersection of business and sustainable economic development. The challenge in social enterprises lies in finding a fruitful balance.

#### 6. The cultural spiritual model

The structure of beliefs, goals, ethics, and dominant thinking patterns are the key to well-being and prosperity in this model. In the process studied, the creative and contemplative methods were used to make the participants start acknowledging their own strengths or preferences in their possible future work within the social enterprise. Meaningful knowledge was gained concerning how the participants see or would like to see their vision. This appears to be a unique basis to create a social enterprise – the people already started to commit to the project at a very early stage. This is related to the aspect of enhancing society through social innovation.

## 7. The ecological system model

This model is a holistic, integrated approach that weaves together key elements from the main streams of development thinking. It is illustrated as a metaphor of a tree with a strong trunk and branches (Figure 2). In the process studied, it was seen that the roots of the tree (the ecological system model) were deep in the culture and spirit of rehabilitee organizations, while the trunk of the tree was the participation and empowerment of the participants (the rehabilitees and the workers) and their building capacities and growth towards realizing common wishes and visions. The branches of the tree were different factors of personal, social, political, economic and cultural transformers. This holistic model is related to the whole width of social innovation (cf. the earlier parts of this paper).

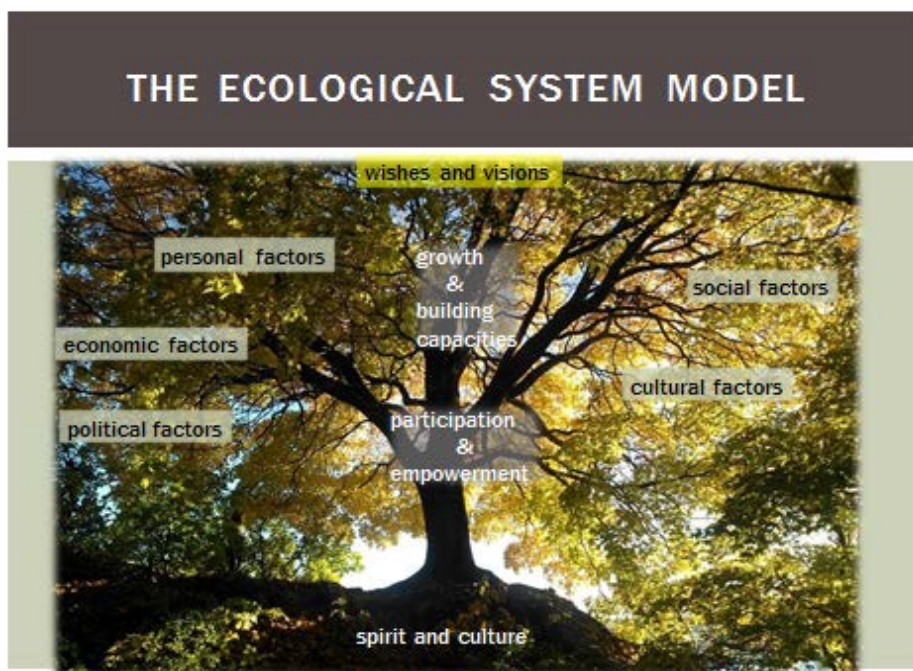


Figure 2. The ecological system model (drawn on the basis of the factors identified by Bopp & Bopp 2011).

The ecological system model can also be seen as similar to Scharmer's thinking concerning a new way of understanding – meaning that mankind needs to take into consideration wider perspectives, such as common values that uphold all living on our planet in order to cope (Scharmer 2009). It is related to the way of life where the goal is to achieve sustainable development in every dimension of organizational living.

## **Conclusions**

The results showed that the new social enterprise functioned as a laboratory of social innovation in many ways. All the seven approaches to community development could be found and advanced. The establishment of the social enterprise supported community development at different levels, the individual, organizational and local/city levels. It needs to be kept in mind that the people involved in this process – the rehabilitees – are in need of special encouragement; they often have bad experiences of work life and difficulties in integrating back to the community or communities. Through this process, these people could be served, and they now have brighter perspectives into the future that is their common one.

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## **Publication IV**

Koskela, V., Parjanen, S., Frantsi, T., and Harmaakorpi, V.

**Presence, Creative Self-efficacy, and Communication – the Main Key-actors of  
Creativity in Today’s Business Context**

Submitted 2018

*Business Creativity and the Creative Economy*



Presence, Creative Self-efficacy, and Communication - the Main Key-actors of Creativity in  
Today's Business Context

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### Abstract

According to the innovation research is perceived that creativity processes are often cooperative and collective by including very complex knowledge conversions. It is not easy to contribute individual creativity in the present business context. Creativity is increasingly about ecosystem platforms instead of hierarchical organizations. It requires combining different kinds of data, information, knowledge from various sources, building new possible worlds and drawing on rigorous scientific and practice-based innovation processes. The main questions of this article are: how do we maintain creativity in the present innovation culture? Which elements could an individual creativity framework include? According to the used literature, and the interviews conducted among the personnel of a Finnish telecommunications company, the perspective here points to three basic elements for creativity: creative self-efficacy, the ability for enriching communication, and presence. In this paper these three elements are considered through the intentions of focusing and opening. To modeling this interaction we made a creativity framework called Creativity Triangle. It combines the three elements under consideration, and may help understand the necessity of them in the modern business contexts.

*Keywords:* creativity, innovation, self-efficacy, communication, presence

## Presence, Creative Self-efficacy, and Communication – the Main Key-actors of Creativity in Today's Business Context

Nowadays innovation takes increasingly place in collaboration, but that does not diminish the role of individual creativity. However, the features of individual creativity are in change. Individual creativity could be seen as general ability to build possible worlds in interaction. The aim of this paper is assessing the present business world and its demands for innovation and creativity. The article stresses the importance of the certain different elements of individual creativity for successful innovation in the present business environment through the literature and interviews.

First we considered the common demands for creativity through the research literature, and then we used the interviews of the staff of a Finnish telecommunications company to compare their perceptions for the literature. The interviewed staff of a Finnish telecommunications company was asked to assess their work from the point of view of the elements of individual creativity in their business context. The themes of the interviews were: communal innovation culture, co-operation between departments and used idea generation process. So, our speculative method was to find out, what kind of dialogue there could be between the modern creativity literature theories and the interviews of the staff of the telecommunications company. When we compared the analyze of the interviews to the today's creativity literature we found the joint elements we want to underscore in this paper. There seem to be some intrinsic features to take into account in the business environments of our time.

In the conclusion part of this paper we propose to approach innovation and creativity through a certain holistic framework for individual creativity, if it is suitable in business context. It is modulated as a creativity-triangle, the combination of five common elements which were found both in the literature and in the interviews: Focusing, openness, creative self-efficacy, communication and presence. Each of the elements are important as such, but only in combination they can really advance the innovation performance through creativity.

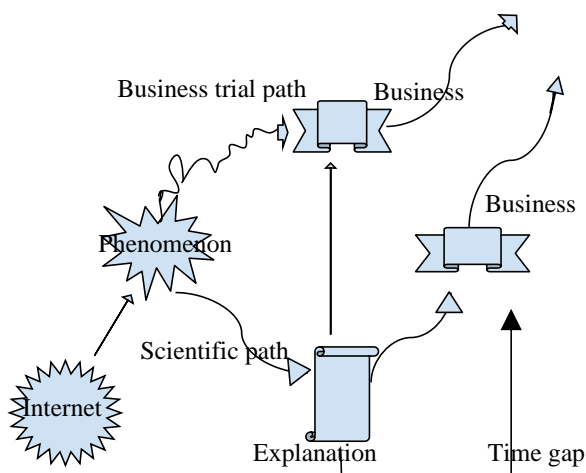
### **The Modern Business Context for Research and Innovation**

This article is trying to assess the elements of innovation in modern business context. In innovation research it is generally acknowledged that creativity is an individual resource (Miron, Eres, & Naveh, 2004) but in this article it is understood as field-specific skill or resource, too.

The business environment is in a fast disruption. Usefulness of the decades-old hegemonic concepts in business development such as clusters, value chains and core

competences is beginning to decline. Internet economy has changed the economic environment remarkably: central terms of the new business logic are business and innovation ecosystems, development platforms, technology adjacencies, value networks, crowdsourcing. (Shaughnessy, 2015.) As business logics changes, research and innovation must respond to this development. And of course, all the old practices are challenged considerably in the near future. Formerly at the field of research innovation was usually built in science-technology-innovation (STI) processes. Science was made in universities and research centers and the results were applied R&D departments of companies and finally some products got through to the customers. This model has been strongly challenged.

An influential innovation scholar von Hippel even predicts the disappearance of R&D departments in companies due to the internet economy. Doing-using-interacting (DUI) is increasingly the way to shape innovations (Berg Jensen, Johnson, Lorenz, & Lundvall, 2007; Harmaakorpi & Melkas, 2012). Nowadays there is extremely much data and information in the internet and it is more about utilizing this data in trial processes rather than scientific problem setting and related scientific processes. The traditional scientific approaches are too slow and are not accustomed to the management of complex information and actor flows. Figure 1. depicts the situation. We still need the processes following the lower path, however, the upper path seems to be the main stream way of producing innovation.



**Figure 1.** Scientific paths in internet economy.

Knowledge production is one of the key phenomena to understand within this context. In science it has been categorized in various ways, e.g., Gibbons and his colleagues (Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwarzman, Scott, & Trow, 1994) defined two different processes of knowledge production: Mode 1. and Mode 2.

Mode 1. is hierarchical and tends to preserve its form, Mode 2. is more heterarchical and transient in nature. Mode 1., traditional knowledge production based on single disciplines, is homogeneous and is primarily cognitive knowledge generation context sets within largely academic paradigms. Mode 2. knowledge production, by contrast, is created in broader, heterogeneous interdisciplinary social and economic contexts within an applied setting. One of the key contrasts between these two modes is that in Mode 1. problem solving is carried out following the codes of practice relevant to a particular discipline and problem solving whilst under Mode 2. knowledge activity is organised around a particular application and is more diffuse in nature. Already Gibbons et al. (1994) reported an epoch change in knowledge activity with a shift from Mode 1. to Mode 2. knowledge creation. (Howells, 2000.)

Digitalisation and internet economy have strengthened this direction remarkably. It is, in fact, linked to the ways in which IT is revolutionising innovation (Brynjolfsson & Saunders, 2010) as well as to the rise of virtual networks in work life (e.g., Melkas, 2004).

In innovation there is often a need for some new technological or scientific knowledge. To acquire this is just innovation in science – scientific discovery. However, innovation occurs in business contexts and hence the context cannot be specified only by characterizing the framework of research work. Research work that is part and parcel of innovation processes is called practice-based inquiry. (Mutanen, 2007.) The nature of innovation is that the innovation process generates something new, something unexpected. Of course, the result is surprising also in a scientific knowledge-seeking process. However, the source of the goal is different. In basic research the goal is specified by the underlying theory. The role of the theory can be seen from the fact that the theory or rather the method provides the foundation for justification. (Hendricks & Pedersen, 1997.) In innovation there is no such justifying theory: justification occurs within the markets. Products or services have to be sold out in market. That is the “justification” needed. So, the technological or organizational “justification” is not enough. Hence innovation cannot be reduced to scientific research. Justification given by the market is temporal and has to be earned again and again. (Harmaakorpi & Mutanen, 2008.)

Already Husserl (2012) was worried about scientific methods and described the situation as crisis of European science. Many present phenomena are difficult handle with traditional



scientific research approach and put to arithmetic problems leading to calculating of nonsense whereas the core of the problem can be reached only by visionary view inside the research object. Husserl divided in his critics the science to exact science and rigorous science. Roughly said exact science is steered by mathematics in STI-process and rigorous science is steered by practice in DUI-process. According to Heidegger (Keller, 1999) practice-based science must remain inexact to be rigorous. It is not a lack, but an advantage of this science.

Perhaps a good example of building innovation is the emergence of Apple ecosystem. Steve Jobs was not much of an engineer or programmer, but something he could: build totally new world for us by combining the latest scientific knowledge in a revolutionary way. This leads possible worlds' semantics (e.g., Hintikka, 1976, 1988). Following those ideas we define general ability to build possible worlds as a crucial ability in practice-based innovation. Therefore, one of the aims of this study is to understand how to foster creativity as a general ability to support building new possible worlds.

To summarize, the context of creativity in the present business context is increasingly about acting in ecosystem platforms (not in hierarchical organizations), combining different kinds of data, information and knowledge from various sources and building new possible worlds in rigorous scientific and practice-based innovation processes. Let's go now to have a deeper look at the hero of our article, creativity, in modern business context - through the literature, and the creativity interviews.

### **Literary Review**

Much of the research in modern business context has defined creativity as an outcome, focusing on the production of new and useful ideas concerning products, services, processes, and procedures (e.g., Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Ford, 1996; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). For example, Oldham and Cummings (1996) define creativity as products, ideas, or procedures that satisfy two conditions: (1) they are novel or original and (2) they are potentially relevant for, or useful to, an organisation. Further, they consider a product, idea, or procedure novel if it involves either a significant recombination of existing materials or an introduction of completely new materials. In these kinds of definitions, novelty is not considered an absolute term in the sense of novel versus not novel, but rather a continuum of ideas possessing different degrees of novelty from somewhat new and incremental such as suggestions that improve existing practices to radically new and original ideas that create totally new practices and products that transform industries. Almost all definitions of creativity involve the concept of usefulness and appropriateness as well as novelty. More specifically, a product or procedure should not be only novel and original but

also have some practical value: in other words, being both novel and useful are important and necessary characteristics for qualifying an idea as creative (Madjar, 2005). To make distinctions between creativity and innovation, it can be argued that every innovation needs creativity, but creativity does not necessarily lead to innovation. As for innovativeness can thus be argued to cover a broader range of behaviors than creativity (de Jong, & Kemp, 2003; Parzefall, Seeck, & Leppänen, 2008).

Drazin, Glynn, and Kazanjian (1999) define creativity as an ongoing process rather than an outcome. This definition refuses to consider whether an idea is creative because it did or did not become an innovation. This definition permits an examination of how creativity arises from big or small ideas, ideas that evaporate or those that take hold. The potential value in this process orientation is that it enables questions to be raised about the daily acts of creativity, about the many small ongoing acts that solve practical problems, and about those acts that aid in the implementation of initiatives, instead of concentrating solely on ideas that radically transform or those that result in major innovations (Watson, 2007).

According to Amabile (1997), a person with a high level of expertise will not produce creative work if creative thinking skills are lacking. Skills relevant to creativity can be defined as the ability to think creatively, generate alternatives, engage in divergent thinking, and suspend judgement (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Vincent, Decker, & Mumford, 2002). Creative thinking means that an individual is able to see things from more than one perspective and is able to question the existing working models. If problems are solved the way they have always been solved, it blocks creativity and prevents new ideas from penetrating. Creativity and innovativeness also require a certain level of internal force that pushes the individual to persevere in the face of challenges in creative work (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Research has repeatedly highlighted the importance of intrinsic motivation in creative work. An internal force or intrinsic motivation also keeps the person going after the challenges are successfully overcome (Amabile, 1997; Amabile et al. 1996).

In today's society a single source of creativity coming only from one individual is inadequate for the organization to survive in this changing business world. Innovation is mainly based on the capacity of collaboration, generating new ideas that meet perceived needs or respond to market opportunities. Creativity is considered a prerequisite or a necessary condition for innovation (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). The rationale behind this consideration is that in the dynamics of creating knowledge, people can foster innovation, share knowledge and create new ideas (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). In fact, collaboration between people with expertise in different domains creates an environment conducive to the

emergence of new ideas (Parjanen, 2012). It is the rise of the network – a group of people with highly diverse skills and professional backgrounds – that can get a step ahead of companies' innovation departments consisting of isolated inventors and researchers (Hautamäki, 2010). The clear advantage of networked and open innovation environments is the creativity, knowledge, and diverse perspectives of a large number of participants.

The networked economy and the advent of ICT that supports wide knowledge sharing have opened the possibility of much wider collaboration for innovation. Now collaborations are not restricted to only between organizations but with any entity such as external research institutes, universities, scientific communities, individuals, and the like worldwide. A variety of internet based environments like web-based toolkits (Piller & Walcher, 2006; Thomke & von Hippel, 2002), virtual concept testing (Dahan & Hauser, 2002), virtual worlds (Hemp, 2006), and idea competitions (Toubia, 2006) have been introduced, enabling individuals and online communities to become contributors to the innovation process in a much more active and in-depth way. These virtual platforms not only allow users to disclose their ideas to companies, but also allow interaction with like-minded peers, building social networks, and establishing a sense of community (Füller, Hutter, & Hautz, 2013). The success or failure of a collaboration lies with the ability to motivate contributors' to take part in collective creativity process (Antikainen, Mäkipää, & Ahonen, 2010; Wallin & von Krogh, 2010). It is therefore fundamental to understand how to stimulate users and companies' participation in collaboration and a proactive knowledge sharing.

According to Füller (2010), for example, consumers' motives in contributing to co-creation may be heterogonous. Differently motivated consumer groups may have different expectations towards the co-creation process, the content, as well the co-creation partners. Wasko and Faraj (2000) explored reasons why people participate and help each other in online communities. According to their study, giving back to the community in return for help was by far the most cited reason for why people participate. Furthermore, Bandura (1995) proposed that online community members may contribute valuable information because the act results in a sense of efficacy, that is, a sense that they have had some effect on this environment.

But, what are the observed necessities for creativity in the fields of organizational creativity? What do we have to be able to do in our societies, if we want to be more creative?

**Demands for individual creativity: aware using of attention, focusing and opening - the ability to be at the moment**

Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) have noticed that the quality of results produced by any system depends on the quality of awareness from which people in the system operate, so the formula of change is “form follows consciousness” (p.17). In individual level this means “shifting the inner place from which we operate” (ibid., p. 18) by using attention skillfully through her or his individual sensory system (Raami, 2015), and by changing our habits, and “knowings” in one way or another. It is examined that breaking our daily routines by seeing things from more than one perspective and by trusting senses may increase creativity (Takanen, 2013; Thorsted, 2008; Scharmer, 2009). This is something as opposed to calculative thought, or thinking that is oriented toward meaning as opposed to thinking that is oriented towards results (Tedlock & Tedlock, 1992). The – sometimes totally unexpected - new comes into being by changing the quality – the focus - of attention by letting go of old intentions, and allowing something new to come in emerging future identity and purpose (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

Another point of view for the awareness is the certain quality of interaction – or a dialogue play of focus and openness - which could also be described as the phenomenon of a “flow”. This is the special sense of effortless action people feel in middle of their important, individual moments of creativity: for example, athletes refer to it as “being in the zone”, mystics as being in “ecstasy”, or artists and musicians as “aesthetic rapture”. People may use “flow” and “complexity” (the realization that individuals and organizations need to be both unique and connected) to create personal happiness and organizational effectiveness. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997.) Flow may be seen also as a part of the holistic, sustainable creativity (Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006).

Other important tacit elements of creativity are use of intuition, use of intentional focus of attention, which seems to be similar to the flow experiences that are also described as highly focused states of consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). When using attention, a person should remain open, accepting, curious, and expansive, receiving and observing by keeping intuition open enabling unity and flow. When a person focuses his mind on a task, not only the conscious but also the non-conscious faculties start processing the information. (Raami, 2015.)

So, kind of non-attachment attention has been studied to be a way to acquire information – for example by stressing the importance of emptying the mind, getting the person’s own projections out of the way and using perception as a method for reading radiant waves in the surroundings (Mayer, 2007; Peirce, 2013; Raami, 2015). All those elements of individual creativity - aware using of attention, flow, focusing, and opening - are typical for the

experiences of presence, for the ability to stay at the present moment which is a crucial – but forgotten and unseen - part of sustainable leadership and innovation processes, as well (Koskela & Goldman-Schuyler, 2016). Flow and sustainable creativity are familiar with the moments when something “new” can emerge by changing the quality of our attention - that is, by the way, one reason why the use of meditation, (silencing of mind) is widely applied in organizations (Scharmer, 2009). The roots of the phenomenon of the presence are in the Buddhist Philosophy and Buddhism wherein the emphasis is direct experience in the here-and-now (Bruce & Davies, 2005), but it has spread to the Western world through different approaches of meditation, yoga, contemplation, and mindfulness (Koskela & Goldman Schuyler, 2016). Western science and Buddhism have a common fingerprint: they both examine human experience through observation, analysis, and empirical experience (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flower, 2004). So, the condition of presence is often compared with the description of mindfulness as a state of mind in which one is aware and focused on the present moment with an open and accepting attitude to whatever arises in the mind, what is present from moment to moment (Bishop, 2002; Bruce & Davies, 2005; Kabat-Zinn, 1996). The experience of presence may also be seen as a special state of awareness where we find ourselves in the realm of presencing and learning to sense the future that is seeking to emerge (Scharmer, 2009).

Phenomenological conception of silence is similar to the phenomenon of presence; it slows us down to be present with that something which is shining through itself - despite of our will and representations (Varto, 2011). Phenomenologist Varto admits that: “Skill is about coming to terms with what you are facing at any given time, and recognizing this comes down to sensory alertness” (Varto, 2008, 10). Hence, the moments of presence may be seen as the moments of individual, or collective awakening, which may lead to the consequent changes in social systems (Senge et al. 2004).

In this paper the concept of ‘presencing’ is used to signify a combination of sensing and being present (Scharmer, 2009): “When we are presencing, it moves further, to arise from the highest future possibility that connects self and whole. The real challenge in understanding presencing lies not in its abstractness but in the subtlety of the experience” (Senge et al. 2004, p. 89). Presence is a flexible state of mind, mindfulness (Bishop, 2002; Bruce & Davies, 2005; Kabat-Zinn, 1996) in which people are actively engaged in the present and notice new things (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al. 2004). Focusing at one thing at a time by taking time to be present at very moment, the ideas may line up and create a bigger idea, a new solution, insight, or innovation (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). One aspect for

the present moment is a mindfulness exercise, a practice about recovering or re-learning freshly and then residing for a time in the 'not knowing' and in the willingness to stay put until the right decision or action emerges into awareness (Santorelli, 2011).

So, the phenomenon of presence in this context is a state or a space for a new, more open interaction, the possible to develop a new kind of leadership and innovation. Such a capacity to bring oneself present is the foundation for what is considered to be the most exciting organizational change projects being undertaken aimed at systemic, global change by going hand in hand in the cultivation of leadership (Santorelli, 2011; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al. 2004).

When an individual experience of aware creativity is shared with other peoples' flows (or experiences of presence) in the certain space of collective sharing, in the bas of equality (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), it may increase the co-operative innovation ability and creativity in organizations. For example, social innovation may be seen as a process where a new solution is found for a problem by for example developing 'common spaces of sharing experiences' (Koskela, Oikarinen, & Melkas, 2015) where participants of dialogue in community are valuable resources of knowledge and innovation (Heikkilä & Heikkilä, 2001). Being in 'community', or sharing a common oneness with other people where the focus of that common oneness can be all inclusive or very specific, may be a possibility for a community to turn to its highest ideals (Bopp & Bopp, 2011) or towards its future potential (Scharmer, 2009; Smith, Joseph, & Das Nair, 2011) by becoming aware of the evolution of the whole system, and consequently to act from impulses that originate from that shared awareness (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

Becoming present at work may help leaders and business organizers release "old baggage", and operate more out of what is actually happening at the moment in their communities. By focusing on the moments of experiences of presence, they may feel more connected with other people, reduce the sense of time pressure, and be able to root themselves more deeply to the pain that is inevitable in all organizations. (Goldman Schuyler, Skjei, Sanzgiri, & Koskela, 2017.) But becoming present as an ability to effect on one's thoughts and actions is not the only necessity skill according to the creativity literature. Creativity as human individual domain has also been linked to ones' self-perception, which is another way to effect on one's thoughts on the meta-cognition level.

### **Creative Self-efficacy and Individual Creativity**

The term metacognition literally means cognition about cognition, all kind of self-regulatory processes (Metcalfe & Shimamura, 1994). Metacognition as general ability enables individuals to enhance their performance and utilize their capability in many cognitive tasks. The theory of self-efficacy is one of the most prominent and widely applied concept of human agency to enhance individual performance not only by learning the skills, but also to improve the self-regulative functions (Bandura, 1997).

According to Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) individuals possess a self-system that enables them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, motivation, and actions. Bandura (1986) states that exercising control over one's own behavior is not a matter of willpower but of the tools of personal agency and the self-assurance to use them effectively. By comparing personal standards versus performance, individuals can evaluate how satisfied they are with the outcome of the behavior. If standards and performance are closely matched, this leads to satisfaction and confidence in the performance. This in turn may help to sustain motivation, even if there is a discrepancy between the standard and performance a next time. Increasingly, more difficult goals can be set that help individuals to learn. As such, self-efficacy influences thought patterns, actions, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1986). A lack of self-efficacy hinders task completion, and a high level of self-efficacy facilitates it. In terms of enhancement of individual creativity and pursuits in testing and implementing new solutions in social context the concept of self-efficacy has validated being important element of the process. As being task specified concept self-efficacy scholars have discovered the creativity specific concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

A strong internal belief in one's ability to successfully engage in creative behaviors is generally considered an important part of the creative process (Amabile, 1983; Bandura, 1997; Ford, 1996; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Creative self-efficacy is a specific application of Bandura's (1997) conceptualization of self-efficacy as a targeted perception of capacity that involves viewing oneself as being good at creative problem solving and novel idea generation (Houghton & DiLiello, 2010). The greater the creative self-efficacy possessed by an individual, the more likely the individual will be to perceive opportunities to actually apply their creative potential in the form of creative action. Although this relationship could possibly be attenuated by factors such as a bad fit between the person and the job (Farmer, Tierney, & Kung-McIntyre, 2003) or an organizational environment that does not support individual creative behavior (Amabile et al. 1996) this relationship is still likely to be strongly positive. In one of the few studies to empirically examine the role of creative self-efficacy in the creative process, Tierney and Farmer (2010) reported connection between

creative self-efficacy and creative performance. Based on longitudinal examination of employees they proved that domain-specific efficacy views are instrumental for domain performance and that creative endeavors are supported by an enhanced self-efficacy according Bandura's former findings (Tierney & Farmer, 2010).

According to Bandura (1997) the path to innovative achievements is heavily strewn with impediments and inherent disincentives than are the paths for more common pursuits. To achieve something new in organisational context demands not only creative skills but also resilience to enable the further steps in selling and implementing the invention or first concepts to the society. Innovations demand heavy investments of time, effort, resources. Furthermore the benefits of the new ideas are often realized gradually through a lengthy process of developmental refinement with numerous setbacks. The unconventional thinking and innovation efforts are more likely to bring social rejection than fame for the creator (Bandura, 1997). Thus the individual optimistic self-efficacy beliefs and resilient sense of one's ability has proved to be important elements to override the numerous discouraging impediments to significant accomplishments (Bandura, 1997). But without communication we can't open the door of innovation. Communication is the key, and a servant, which opens the door to the unconventional thinking.

### **Communication About Ideas**

Communication and especially communication about ideas occurs during all stages of the innovation process and it can serve in different functions for creativity (Binnewies, Ohly, & Sonnentag, 2007; Perry-Smith, 2006; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). In the early stages of idea generation, by communicating ideas, an individual shares his or her knowledge with others. During this phase the individual also receives input from others. This input might include relevant task knowledge or a change in perspectives (Madjar, 2005). Furthermore, individuals might build on the ideas suggested by others to develop their own ideas. These processes are rather cognitive in nature and contribute to the novelty and usefulness of an idea. In addition, when communicating about the idea a person has a chance of receiving emotional support (Madjar, 2005), thereby building confidence, and publicly commits to working on a given problem. These are social processes stimulated through communication. (Ohly, Kaše, & Škerlavaj, 2010.)

Innovation emerges as a kind of a synthesis of several points of view. This leads naturally to the problem of how to fit together different perspectives. Often there is even cognitive dissonance between different points of view. People with different points of view use different languages and interpret the problem differently. However, collective creativity



can only emerge if all participants take part in the process of communication and interpretation. Collective creativity relies more on communication breakdowns as a vehicle for innovation. Actually, it is a dialogue between individuals who in some sense share a mutual goal. (Sonnenburg, 2004; Sundholm, Artman, & Ramberg, 2004.)

Dialogue at its best is a way of creating profound levels of shared meaning in a group so that creative courses of action can emerge. It invites people to participate in the creation of something that may challenge their “own” ideas, feelings and experiences. It also asks people to handle others’ ideas so that they are worthy both for them and for other participants. (Palus & Drath, 2001.)

During dialogue novel knowing is constructed by the participants themselves in a socio-cultural context through the interpretation of information and the construction of a common socio-cultural ground, rather than through simply managing information (Mahy, 2012; Pässilä, Oikarinen, & Harmaakorpi, 2010).

Virtual collaboration can support the participation of previously unavailable expertise into the creation of innovation. Advancing information and communication technologies also offer new solutions for efficient collaboration between the organisation and the customer (e.g., Antikainen et al., 2010; Füller, 2010; Füller & Matzler, 2007; Verona, Prandelli, & Sawhney, 2006). The key benefits of virtual integration are the direction of the communication, as the internet leads to an interactive dialogue with the customers; intensity and richness of the interaction, as the richness of interaction with virtual communities enables organisations to tap into the social knowledge of customers in addition to the individual knowledge; and the size and scope of the audience, as even physically remote customers can be reached at low costs (Sawhney, Verona, & Prandelli, 2005).

Virtuality presents many positive aspects such as the possibility to use the competencies of the participants effectively, and speed and flexibility. Virtual idea generation may also facilitate creativity because it is possible to limit verbal interaction and exchange ideas by typing on computers (e.g., Nunamaker, Applegate, & Konsynski, 1987). Writing ideas instead of talking about them in groups eliminates the problem of production barriers since individuals do not have to wait for their turn to generate ideas and can generate ideas at their own pace. It may also reduce evaluation apprehension since the written format eliminates the need for public speaking and is more anonymous than oral brainstorming. (Paulus, 2000.)

According to the results of the study of Antikainen et al. (2010) collective work with others at virtual environments was seen as being enriching, fun, productive, efficient, and even the best way to trigger creative innovations. The authors state that collaborative work in

the innovation online communities is something that should be sought for in order to get the most out of peoples' creativeness. However, supporting this kind of collaboration is demanding. In an online environment there is a lack of physical contact with others. It is already challenging to create collaboration between strangers in face-to-face situations, and the virtual environment can make this even more difficult. Limitations of virtual teams involve the decrease in productivity due to the lack of face-to-face communication and interaction and the distrust arising among the members as a result of insufficient communication. A considerable loss in the innovation potential among the virtual teams due to a considerably large geographical and cultural distance among the team members has also been indicated (Lojeski, Reilly, & Dominick, 2006).

### **Interviews**

The case company for this research is a Finnish telecommunications company providing high-quality, state-of-the-art voice, data and mobile communications and TV services to private customers, organizations and corporations. The case company was established shortly before the turn of the millennium, and in the beginning, the company was owned by approximately 40 Finnish telephone companies located all over the country. Preparations for opening a new, national mobile phone service were made during the year 2000. In 2007, the case company changed from a mobile communications operator into a major telecommunications company. The current company began operating in 2007, when its business operations merged with six telephone companies. Alongside its mobile communications business, the company obtained a strong fixed-network business, including voice, data, cable TV, and information security services for both households and companies

The data is collected by using semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview allows the interviewees to freely explain their own perceptions and matters concerning themselves. This is especially relevant when the object of the research is not fully clarified or the area is unknown, and moreover, when it is important to get answers so that they can be placed in a wider context (Hirsijärvi & Hurme, 2000). There were 18 employee level interviewees. The interviewees were purposefully chosen all over the company to get the best possible overview of the ideas of the employees. As the interview process evolved and the understanding and knowledge of the researchers accumulated, some more specified questions were added to the semi-structured interviews. The themes and the example questions are introduced in Table 1. The Atlas.ti software was used to help to analyze the data.

**Table 1. Example questions**

<i>Themes of the interview</i>	<i>Example questions</i>
<b>Background data</b>	What is your job description? How long have you worked in this organization?
<b>Communal innovation culture</b>	How would you define communal innovation culture? What kind of elements an ideal working environment has? How do you motivate yourself? How would you define creativity? Do you need creativity in your work? What kills creativity?
<b>Co-operation between departments</b>	What kind of co-operation is done between departments? Are there any problems in knowledge sharing between departments? What kind of problems? How would you develop the co-operation between departments?
<b>Idea generation process</b>	Where do the good ideas come? How is it possible to develop ideas further? How are the personnel motivated to present ideas?

**Analysis of the Interviews - What Was Seen About the Creativity?**

In the Finnish telecommunications company of the interviews, employees were not lacking creativity as one interviewee said “people get ideas many times during the day”. Creativity was needed in every day work, for example when “tailoring the services to fit the customer’s needs” or “finding the best practices and implementing them”. Ideas were considered as raw material, for example, for incremental innovations: “most of these ideas and innovations are small things, like developing every day work routines”. This highlights the meaning of practice as a source of innovations. Practice-based innovations are typically

based on ideas from employees, customers, or partner networks of daily operations (Harmaakorpi & Melkas, 2012; Melkas & Harmaakorpi, 2012).

The organizational changes in the case company have especially emphasized the need for creativity in the organization. The time in the beginning from the founding of the current company was considered a time when creativity was especially needed: “people were employed without clear job descriptions and everybody had to define his/her place in the organization”. The organizational changes were considered “a fruitful time to change things and do things in a different way”.

According to Antonacopoulou and Gabriel (2001), organizational change can be viewed as an opportunity for employees to learn and to reorganize their understanding and changes may provoke creativity. However, employees experience the changes differently and for others to change things was not necessarily easy to do because “there is a need to hold on to the old and safe even if it has not been a functioning solution in the changed situation”.

Innovation was defined as “open thinking” and it is enhanced by an atmosphere, where “you can freely do things and where is interaction” between employees. An atmosphere open to creativity has certain features: it is open-minded to encourage flexibility and group involvement, perceptive in seeing things from different perspectives, respects everyone for the diversity each brings, stimulates the expression of ideas, encourages employees to find creative answers, and gives clear aims and specific feedback (Roffe, 1999). One interviewee described his/her team having an ideal working atmosphere. According to him/her “people are highly motivated and having different kind of expertise. We complete each other in a right way. We are able to continuously interact and communicate. The best thing in the work is that you are every day able to share your ideas with others and that way these ideas are upgraded by others know-how”. However, it was acknowledged that creativity needs “focus” or “common rules” so that creativity is to be directed to the right things relative to the company. One interviewee explained that “you should design the frames and build the overall picture and then focus to specific subject”. The focus could help, for example, to organize formal an informal gatherings. Without the focus there is danger that nothing will be developed. The focus would also “help to analyze ideas and convert them from words into action”.

Creativity was considered as field-specific skill. Employees’ creativity should focus on those issues that benefit the company. For example, one interviewee explained that “you have to be good at what you are doing to generate ideas that have utility for the company” and those “who implement the ideas should have expertise”. Further development and

implementing the ideas were considered difficult especially in the situations when “there is no resources”, “formal procedures are lacking” or “ideas are concerning other departments”. The implementing of ideas calls for “capability for prioritization”, “managing the (innovation) process” and a skill to do things “on one's own initiative”.

In the case company, creative ideas came from a range of internal and external sources. For example, seminars and conferences were mentioned as a source of external knowledge. Also the role of competitors and other stakeholders was acknowledged as a source of useful ideas. The findings of van Kessel, Oerlemens and van Stroe-Biezen (2014) show that an employee’s social embeddedness outside the department is enhanced by a strong orientation towards the organization’s external environment. Acquiring external knowledge was appreciated: “... it should be encouraged more to be informed about what is happening in this industry”.

Employees tend to be more creative when they have higher levels of creative self-efficacy (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Creative self-efficacy is a motivational state that is an individual's self-efficacy for expressing creativity (Abbott, 2010). The interviewees acknowledged the need for creative self-efficacy. According to the interviewees, the motivation in their work comes from “the challenges of the work”, “the successes of the work”, “feedback”, or “when you have the possibility to show your expertise”. It is important that you “like the work and there is enough challenge in the work”. Shalley and Gilson (2004) says that when the job is complex and demanding, employees are more likely to consistently focus their attention and effort on the job, and to consider various alternatives when looking for solutions.

Individuals also develop self-efficacy beliefs as a result of the verbal messages and social persuasions they receive from others. Positive persuasions may work to encourage and empower. (Pajares, 2003.) This was also shown in the interviews. Interviewees acknowledged the role of positive feedback. For example, clients’ and other stakeholders’ satisfaction was considered as source for enthusiasm. Many interviewees stressed the importance of encouragement at individual and organizational level. This include, for example, employee’s perceptions of the extent to which innovation is encouraged in the organization, encouragement of risk-taking and of idea generation (Amabile et al. 1996).

An important part of interaction in an organization is the worker’s ability to be present – with a workmate, with a customer or attending to his or her own work. Nowadays it seems that there is a lack presence due to the stress of everyday life. (Koskela, 2012.) According to Amabile et al. (2002), one of the most frequently cited factors necessary for innovativeness is

sufficient time to think creatively and explore different perspectives. Many of the interviewees stressed that there are no time to be creative or the right feeling is missing: “If you want to be creative, you have to have a right feeling.” The increased workload and keeping with the timetables was seen as especially detrimental to creativity by the interviewees: “...it is really challenging to find the time to be creative because you have to keep to timetables and do routine work”. One described work as it “is like extinguishing fires. There is no time to have a pause and think through what new things there could be in my work” However, the need for a possibility to concentrate on what you are doing was acknowledged. According to the interviewee if employees would have more time “they perhaps have a possibility to assimilate what they are doing ... they would have a moment to think: do I do my work properly, could there be another way of doing this and how could I do this better”. There is a danger that lack of time will produce a situation where “you are too tied to think and you turn a blind eye to what you are doing”. In these kind of situations there is a lack of being aware what you’re doing at the moment. Other interviewee stressed that these kind of situations reflects indifference to creativity and innovation. The interviewees also pointed that ideas are many times generated in “free time in open atmosphere, where time is dedicated to only one thing”.

The problems in the case company are highly complex, requiring multiple different forms of expertise; as one interviewee put it, “you can’t be expert in every issue”. As a result, creative work often requires collaborative efforts of different compositions. Social ties with colleagues are important antecedents to creative output. Employees with contacts in many different areas are more likely able to contribute to creative and innovative outcomes (Perry-Smith, 2006; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). According to the interviewees, diversity existed only in the management level. In different kinds of development groups or teams, the advantage of having employees with different kinds of backgrounds was not used. However, the diversity was considered useful especially in the development of new products and services: “...I think that it would be most fruitful that people from all over the company would participate ... from sales and the technological department and from all over the company”, or “when generating ideas, it would be good to have people with different kinds of expertise”.

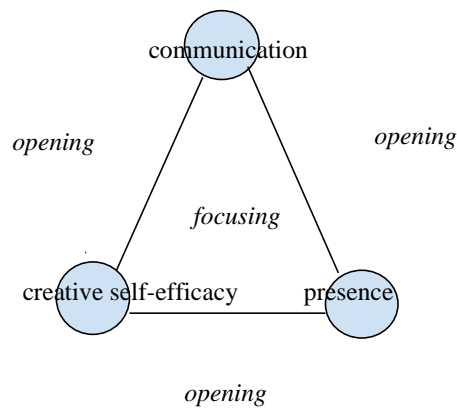
The interviewees acknowledged the collective nature of their accomplishments: “not many are capable of thinking about these challenges only by themselves”. It was also acknowledged that diversity helps the ideation: “others with a little bit different expertise help to see the issue from another perspective”. Despite this, the interviewees described

creativity as an individual endeavor, noting that “thinking on your own generates ideas”, “the poor product manager is thinking all by himself about what to do” or “I’ll do these things mostly by myself”. However, the need for collective creativity was obvious.

There were several reasons why there was so little collective activity in the generation and developing of ideas. It was considered time consuming, especially in this geographically distributed company. It was acknowledged that communication was easier with proximate work mates that have same kind of job description. One interviewee said that overall, discussion partners from different parts of the company would help in inventing new ideas and solutions, but “it is difficult to find the right person in a distributed organization”. Mixing did occur in some places in the company because people could mix with the help of routine interactions, an open office or some subunits that were small enough so that the same people could see each other daily. In many interviews, the importance of informal meetings in generating new ideas and implementing the best practices was acknowledged. Face-to-face situations were considered important vessels “to build a common language and understanding about problems”.

### **Discussion and Implications**

In the paper, some of the most common similarities inside the collected narratives are pointed out and their connections to the new theoretical approaches are shown. These approaches concern innovative thinking and creativity at the human and organizational level. So, our main principle was to make a dialogue between the modern creativity literature theories and the interviews of the Finnish telecommunications company. When we compared the analyze of the interviews to the literature we found some special joint elements we want to underscore. The important elements seemed to be: the movement between focusing and opening, ability to be at the moment (presence), self-efficacy, and communication. Trying be more accurate and concrete, we put all these five elements for the model of a triangle, so called Creativity Triangle, which was already a familiar construction for innovation speculations of Vesa Harmaakorpi, that is the reason for the name: “Creativity Triangle by Harmaakorpi”. The Creativity Triangle (Figure 2.) is an abstract tool for reflecting the (collective) creativity in the business context. According to this study it includes the main common elements of individual creativity in the present business context.



**Figure 2. Harmaakorpi's Creativity Triangle**

The first element of Creativity Triangle is focusing, which is set inside the triangle. Focusing is essential to have some meaningful goal that is steering creative thinking. This is following the idea of Csikszentmihalyi (1994): if you have an important and meaningful goal, you begin to assess the world through that goal; it is the matter of consciousness. It enables a cumulative knowledge creation process in one's brain leading to deeper and deeper understanding of the essence of your goal.

The second element of the triangle is openness. It might look contradicting the need to focusing, but it is not. Even if we have a clear focus the present business context is very complex. The present problems require ability to combine many different knowledge-bases in novel ways. The creativity process is about complex interaction between focused goal and vast amount of diversified knowledge. Normally this leads to collective creativity (also virtual), since it is impossible for one person to have access to all the knowledge needed in the creativity process. The rapid development of IT is challenging strongly the creative innovation processes in the present world.

The one corner of the creativity triangle is creative self-efficacy. Children don't hesitate to express their ideas and are therefore seem to be more creative than adults, since making innovations demand sufficient idea flow. Our ideas get too often neglected or dismissed making us to hesitate to express our ideas; creative self-efficacy is needed. If we have enough self-efficacy to express our ideas, we need even more self-efficacy defend our ideas during the innovation process.



The another corner, communication, is according to Bohm and Peat (1987) the best medicine against “creativity destroying germs”. Also we stress the importance of communication in preventing lock-ins and opening new ways for innovation. Communicating with different kinds of people enables a process of intellectual cross-fertilization, keeping the process open enough not lead harmful lock-ins. The present environment (e.g., social media) enables totally new ways of communication including crowdsourcing and use of big data: This opens up a totally new aspect for innovative co-creation.

The last but not least corner of the creativity triangle is presence. Creativity gets nourished of communication and movement, but it needs to be fertilized also by silence and thinking. This could be related to emptying brain every now and then e.g. by meditation. New ideas need to be matured in peace, but being permanently in isolation is seen harmful for creativity. Creativity needs an amalgam of presence in peace and presence in communication. The essence of presence is challenged strongly by IT and virtual development environments.

### **Conclusion**

Through all these speculations and interviews we are trying to offer a one new perspective here, or an ideas, for business creativity. In this paper the creativity triangle is a holistic framework for individual creativity in ecosystem platforms (not in hierarchical organizations) combining different kinds of data, information and knowledge from various sources and building new possible worlds in rigorous scientific and practice-based innovation processes.

### **Limitations of The Research**

There are many limitations in this kind of speculative research, which is a mixture of different perspectives towards the business creativity. The number of the interviews was not a big enough that we could admit anything substantial. And the model itself, the Creativity Triangle, is only a one try more to put for an image a phenomenon (creativity), which is even hard to describe or control - because of its limitless and slippery nature.

### **Future Research**

Anyway, it could be very interesting to see, how this kind of Creativity Triangle could work in practice inside the different business organizations, and societies. For that we would really need real empirical research, practical experiments and experiences.

After all, it is obvious that our world needs desperately new kind of thinking and creativity to solve the wicked global problems we are facing as a human species at the moment.

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## **Publication V**

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**Experiences of Presence as a Key Factor towards Sustainability Leadership**

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## EXPERIENCES OF PRESENCE AS A KEY FACTOR TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

VIRPI KOSKELA AND KATHRYN GOLDMAN SCHUYLER

In the current article, we describe how individual experiences of presence may be a key factor in giving birth to the kind of leadership that enables deep sustainability. The empirical data come from two studies of the same theme: (a) an international action research project about *Waking Up Moments at Work* and (b) a Finnish phenomenographical study about experiences of presence. Both studies address the generative qualities of *waking up* or presence, suggest the value of such experiences as catalysts for inner shifts in human consciousness, and begin to explore how this may be a core component of developing leaders' potential for contributing to sustainability.

Many today believe that the only way toward both individual and societal success is economic growth, even if such a focus appears to be ecologically, socially, and economically unsustainable. In contrast, based on our research, we suggest that leadership sustainability implies a need for significant change in human consciousness. We do not address the many scientific developments that are needed as these are already being undertaken in universities around the world (see for example Hond, 2015 on new ways of thinking about water shortage and supply) or the vast political shifts of will that will be required in nations like the United States. Our focus is on the inner shifts that may be easier to attain than people anticipate—but only if we choose to seek them.

Modern technological thinking has its roots in the dominant Western Judeo-Christian traditions, where nature is considered to exist for the benefit of human beings (Singer, 1993; Varto, 2011). Such thinking, which involves regarding *body* as distinct and separated from *soul*, *mind*, *spirit*, and rational thinking as distinct from emotional knowing, implies an ontology where the brain is considered to be more valuable than the

body, and human beings are considered to be more valuable than nature (Klemola, 2004). Increasing numbers of thought leaders see that such ways of thinking are not conducive to sustainability—particularly those coming out of Nordic cultures (Jakonen & Silvasti, 2015; Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006; Valkeapää, 2011). They are actively seeking to create a new kind of holistic leadership grounded in wider perspectives, such as common global values and ecological responsibility toward all beings living on our planet (Fuda, 2013; Hosking, 2010; Jakonen & Silvasti, 2015; Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004; Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006; Valkeapää, 2011).

There have been (and still are) civilizations in which people have not lived as we do in Westernized, industrialized, technology-oriented countries. For example, in Australia, Indigenous people developed a “recipe” for society that lasted tens of thousands of years: a sustainable model where all are connected, where society is in balance with its natural and social environment (Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006). Far away, across the planet, Tibetan cultural traditions focused

on the development of “enlightened beings” rather than material development (Willis, 1995). Their value system produced a way of life that shielded the watershed of the great Asian river systems from human-induced change for centuries, thereby protecting the overall ecosystem (Goldman Schuyler, Jue, Mitroff, Muckerjee, & Rudisill, 2007). Western societies have exploited natural resources as commodities to be traded, whereas some other cultures have had a strong connection with nature, respecting all living creatures as having the same “value” by sustaining a sense of connection with life as holy (Bopp, 1984/1989; Eisler, 1987; Spiller, 2015; Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006; Varto, 2011). Senge et al. (2004) described this as an “earth-based spirituality” (p. 66) grounded in deep relationships with one another, with other species, and with the Earth itself, a profound sense of connectedness that is generally not present in contemporary life. We are not urging a look backward to some supposedly happier, simpler times as Jean-Jacques Rousseau or many fundamentalists might. Instead, we see the value of combining ancient wisdom with the best of contemporary *technes* to allow something new to emerge for our global ecosystem.

To our surprise, many participants in our research studies of presence described experiences of time and nature that were reminiscent of the models of life from indigenous traditions. The current article briefly discusses findings from the two studies that we conducted. Based on our research, we see sustainability leadership as being rooted in a different kind of awareness of what it is to be a human being than is the norm in postindustrial societies. One way to describe this is by referring to what Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) have called a shift from *ego-system thinking* to *eco-system acting* by “changing the inner place from which we operate” (p. 16). We wonder whether the emergence of more relational, distributed, sustainability leadership actually requires that such a new mindset be present among sufficient numbers of people if it is to transform the health of the planet.

The remaining portions of the article briefly describe our two studies and their findings as they pertain to sustainability leadership. We relate this to ancient traditions of the notion of a “tree of life” and then reflect on the practical implications for leadership development. The

extent to which experiences of waking up and presence are core to sustainability emerged for the two of us as collaborators as we analyzed the data; it had not been a focus of the original research questions.

### Researching Waking Up and Presence

Nature around me is waking up the authentic mind of myself, the authentic mind of the homo sapiens, the mind who is born millions years ago in the path of evolution as a reflection of the surrounding environment. I believe that the moment of presence is the waking up moment of that authentic mind. (EP#4)

We conducted two research studies over several years that led us to suspect that being present leads to or is part of being committed to sustainability. Goldman Schuyler developed a two-phase international action research project on moments of *waking up at work*, while Koskela carried out presence studies in Finland to study the implications of being present for innovation and creativity (Goldman Schuyler & Skjei, 2014; Goldman Schuyler, Skjei, Sanzgiri, & Koskela, 2015; Koskela, Forthcoming). While *waking up* refers to those moments when people notice that they are more present to what is happening within or around them (Goldman Schuyler & Skjei, 2014; Goldman Schuyler et al., 2015), *presencing* means more than simply being present. Scharmer (2009) connects the term, which he created, with Indo-European linguistic roots that mean goodness, truth, and “the beings who surround us” (p. 166). Building on the research of cognitive psychologist Rosch (2007), Scharmer sees presencing as a way of moving from conventional analytic knowledge to wisdom awareness. We suspect that waking up moments are entry points to experiences of presencing.

The research on *Moments of Waking Up at Work* was carried out from 2011 to 2013. The project was designed to explore whether simply intending to be present could make a difference in participants’ quality of experience at work and also to find out whether this would impact people with whom they worked. The collaborative action research study included a phenomenological analysis of contemporaneous notes taken for 4 weeks by 15 people from North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America (Goldman Schuyler et al., 2015).

Koskela's study of presence was carried out in Finland between 2011 and 2014, with data collected through innovation workshops, free-written narratives, and interviews with 134 people. The data were analyzed thematically using phenomenography (Khan, 2014; Richardson, 1999) to find out how the individuals' experiences varied and manifested with regard to common themes (Marton, 1986) and whether the experiences were linked to sustainability.

### Results With Regard to Sustainability

When I am in nature, when I live in those moments, the world is not somewhere "far away" but it comes to me. I can't say that I would be the part of [the] nature or [the] part of the universe or anything else in those moments, but I feel like being at home. (EP#4)

According to both sets of data, experiences of presence involved individual moments of gradually or suddenly becoming aware of oneself in the context of interaction with others or with the natural or built environment. The ability to be aware appeared as a capacity to observe and find new points of view for seeing the current situation, even when the experience came from becoming present to discomfort or awkwardness. Some participants described how it became easier to interact after such moments, whether with pleasant, neutral, or "irritating" people. Although the other had not changed, the shift in one's own experiencing changed one's experience of the other. In these moments, participants found themselves able to leave behind their comfort zones.

Many participants across both projects experienced moments of uniting with nature that seemed like a reviving of their connection with the Earth in ways that are reminiscent of descriptions from aboriginal people before the advent of colonialism (Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006; Varto & Veenkivi, 1997). "Connection" (one of the words used most frequently by participants) appears to have generated improved individual awareness of, and empathy with, other people or nature. Connecting with nature appears to be an important path back to our inner nature and to a higher ecological awareness, through inner understanding of our human interdependence with other life and our mutual responsibility. Such "inefficient" moments, when we leave behind our analyzing and goal-directed mind by coalescing with

nature, change our perspectives and help us find new insights and flow.

... suddenly, I looked out through my study window, and saw a gorgeous tree, decked out in flaming autumn colors: red, orange, gold. The tree just stood there, splendid, adorned. My spirit was deeply refreshed, and I completed my grading, energy renewed. Suddenly, the work I was focused on spoke meaningfully to me, and my spirit was restored. (WU#162)

Nature includes time, so experiencing time or timelessness is an intrinsic part of exploring one's space alongside other elements and forces of nature (Valkeapää, 2011). In the aboriginal recipe of sustainability, the All (ancestors, people, animals, plants) live together equally in timelessness in a spiritual world, the landscape of which is mirrored on Earth everywhere (Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006). Similar elements of almost mythical nature-connectedness are seen in our data. Nature helps people forget their egos, tolerate volatility and change, sense the "bigger picture," and intuit "right answers" and paths to follow.

In Finnish culture, the forest has always been the place where you find both your daily food and living and your inner self, "homecoming"—through peace, silence, and contemplation (Hyry, Pentikäinen, & Pentikäinen, 1995). Finland and the other Nordic countries seem to have more of a partnership orientation, as described by Eisler (1987, 2007). In contrast with Anglo-American cultures and their domination-style cultures, where fathers take their sons hunting or fishing—connecting with nature while killing other beings (also see Chawla, 2007)—Finnish parents teach their children to listen to the forest. As Louv (2008) wrote, people's experiences as children in nature are a vital step toward awakening a sense of *ecological self*. This suggests ways that child-rearing practices may impact sustainability leadership cross culturally (see also Fogel, 1993).

### Discussion

I looked [at] the trees, long firs, understanding my place on the Earth. ... I could understand what is a tree, what is the "attitude of a tree." The "Attitude of a Tree" is just breathing the universe and light, giving

away “my best” through the roots, leaves, and fruits...  
(WU#142)

The ability to be aware in the present moment brings a comprehensive shift of perspective, which often occurred for our participants through their connection with trees. In reflecting on these experiences, seen in both the Finnish and global studies, we recalled the widespread symbol of the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is an ancient symbol of common descent and resilience in human life across civilizations in religion, mythology, philosophy, and biology (Thiaw, 2015). For example, in Islamic traditions, the leaves of the Tree contain the names of every person on the Earth; in the Kabbalah, the Tree of Life holds all the names of God and the qualities of human life; and in Nordic traditions, Yggdrasil is at the center of the life of all beings, including the Gods (Bonelius & Linder, 2004; Thiaw, 2015). The symbolic representation of the sustainability of life and the structure of creation is found in many parts of the world (Bopp, 1984/1989; Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006). Most recently, it is seen as core to the popular film *Avatar* (Cameron, 2009).

Looking at participants’ first-person comments, it appears that by taking time to reflect on their experiences in the midst of ordinary life, people found time and space to be present to their inner potential wisdom. Our data suggest that contemporary men and women also find insight when they look for moments that are present, and these moments often connect them with nature—with trees, Earth, or water. In the aboriginal recipe for sustainability, all time is the same—timeless, without a descriptive word for time:

...Aboriginal people, on the other hand, conceived time not as a movement from past to future, but as a continuous channelling of consciousness from an intangible to a tangible and explicit expression..... All were both in the sky world and here on earth simultaneously and they had always existed. In this sense, the Burruguu (Time of Creation) was not in the past; it was always present, always ‘here’. (Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006, pp. 6–7)

In this context, sustainability leadership can be understood as rooted in the idea that organizations are part of the natural world, not free of the laws of nature, and that leaders cannot ignore the impacts of

their companies on the world by labeling these “externalities” and disregarding them when tallying up profits. Such a paradigm shift means becoming aware of how a mechanistic approach toward the outer world is fed by a sense of separation from, and exploitation of, nature rather than respecting its presence (Bopp & Bopp, 2011; Varto, 2011). This echoes what Senge et al. (2004) wrote about the “importance of place” in conducting meetings intended to shift people’s mindsets: “I don’t think we can underestimate the importance of place.... We need to rediscover the importance of sacred space, those places that are rich in life energy and potential for connection” (p. 123). In a story they tell to describe how natural places become sacred, they emphasize that it is both physical nature and human awareness that makes such spaces sacred; the sacredness emanates from qualities in nature that are sensed, blessed, and dedicated (using Senge et al.’s language) by humans who recognize and honor this special quality of the Earth (p. 125).

### Concluding Thoughts

The experience of waking up or presencing is not easy to describe or investigate with words because of its silent (tacit) nature and its capacity to connect us with something larger than ourselves. As Goldman Schuyler, Baugher, and Jironet (In Press) discovered in developing a book on creating a healthy world, health may be “that which silently reverberates in the background amidst all the chaos, suffering, and noise” (Jironet, personal communication, August 28, 2015). Waking up and being present are also silent, and echoing. Perhaps experienced-based silent knowledge birthed in repeated aware moments is a door into some type of original “blueprints for organizing,” a way to appreciate deeper and more natural ways of organizing human societies, comparable with the Indian and Tibetan notions of *mandala* or *kyilkor*.

Unless leaders bring such deep awareness into meetings with their executive committees, boards, and shareholders, actions to create sustainability risk remaining superficial. The capability of being present could be a fundamental element of human capital, one that is completely replenishable and can never be used up.

It was a beautiful summer's day; the air was fresh after the rain. I stopped to admire a drop of water glimmering on a birch leaf. I looked at the drop and suddenly I realised that I was seeing the structure of the whole universe in that drop. I realised that the pattern repeated itself and extended everywhere... (EP#6)

Perhaps the singular experience of presence may be a seed for awakening the cooperative and complementary elements of the Tree of Life inside of us? During this challenging period for human societies, the ability to be aware could be one of the most important ways to sustain life on Earth—together.

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