Digital Sufficiency in Flexible Work

Presentation at LOCOS Seminar

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The study

Definitions & goal

- **Digital Sufficiency**[1]

  any strategy aimed at reducing the *demand* for digital devices or services

- Case of **flexible working**

  a way of working that suits an employee's needs, for example having flexible start and finish times, or working from home

How much and which cloud usage is "sufficient" for flexible work?

[1] T. Santarius et al., "Digital sufficiency: conceptual considerations for ICTs on a finite planet", 2022

Research questions

Tasks = daily work activity performed on a computer or phone

- **(RQ1) Which tasks are cloud-based?**

- **(RQ2) What types of cloud-based tasks are perceived as necessary, and under which circumstances?**

- **(RQ3) What is the perception of the benefits and challenges when superfluous activities are provided on demand (elastically)?**

Qualitative research method

Data collection

- 3 focus groups
- 2 companies
- 11 participants

Focus group

List the tasks that you do on your computer/phone in your working day.
In a specific work setting

For each cloud-based daily task
Could you do without?

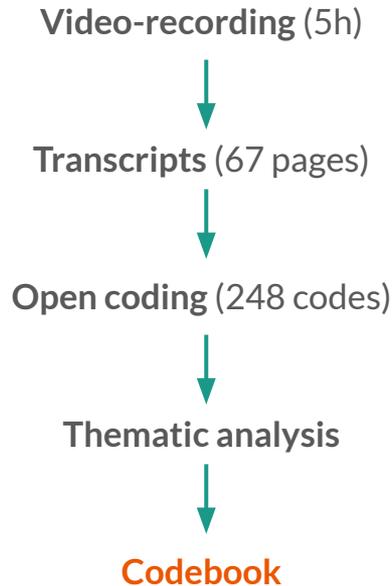- If yes, how?
- If no, why?

Which of them are cloud-based?

Imagine now:
"Superfluous" tasks can be enabled/disabled

- do you see potential **benefits**?
- and any **challenges**?

ON
OFF

Data analysis

Video-recording (5h)

↓

Transcripts (67 pages)

↓

Open coding (248 codes)

↓

Thematic analysis

↓

Codebook

Notebooks / Digital Sufficiency

Pages | Coding | Memos

Focus Group A

Maël Madon 58 days ago · Show only my coding

#1 [What is flexible work for you? (9:54→17:24)]

#2 Mod1: instead of, like, talking about just the phone and our personal use, focus on our work use and try to, like, think about the digital technologies that we use and, like, how it was 10 years ago, why... is that necessary? Superfluous? and stuff. So we will start with a round the table. So, I know that you answered the form already but I just want to know what is flexible work for you, how is your working week organized? ... So whenever someone wants to...

#3 P2(Y): So I'm mostly working from home. I think, 80%, and one day here

work_setting / work_location/home
🏷 Coding by Maël Madon 58 days ago · Remove

#4 P1(Rm): that's 4 out of 5 days, right?

#5 P2(Y): yeah, that's flexible work for me because I can.. we do have a daily standup and a specific time so you need to be there. But other from that I can do whatever I want: if I want to work, I can work, if I want to do groceries I do that. So that's kind of flexible work for me as a definition.

choice_of_location / task_driven/task_locality
🏷 Coding by Maël Madon 17 days ago · Remove

work_setting / work_hours/flexible
🏷 Coding by Maël Madon 58 days ago · Remove

#6 Mod1: any other locations? Home and office, right? P2(Y): yeah, that's it

#7 Mod1: you want to note them down? Two words, left colum, "work location" Mod2: yeah

Results

List of digital usages

Categories of cloud-based tasks:

1. interactive (needs constant access)
2. offline with regular synchronization
3. off-cloud

Suggestion towards sufficiency:

Moving from **(1)** to **(2)** or from **(2)** to **(3)**

Task	#
email	9
messaging	6
planning	5
online meeting	5
phone	4
reviewing	4
project management	4
data analysis	4
preparing presentation	3
giving presentation	3
gathering information (internal)	3
gathering information (external)	3
writing time	2
writing documents	2
watching video	1
taking notes	1
online training	1
online presence	1
creating visuals	1
brainstorming	1
attending digital event	1

Work setting

Reasons to choose a location:

- task driven
- opportunistic driven
- no choice

Choice of tasks driven by location:

- location highly interchangeable
- tasks in the train:
  - individual tasks (email, reading up, …)
  - no meeting

Suggestion towards sufficiency:

Planning ahead for quality work in the appropriate environment

Suggestion towards sufficiency:

Working from constrained environments allows progressing on individual tasks while reducing digital usage to the essential

Zooming in: online meetings

Necessary	Superfluous
Save travel time To keep human contact Easier to arrange For team work Camera for facial expressions …	Too many meetings Too long meetings Recurring meetings Duplication of channels …

Suggestion towards sufficiency:

Understand the **nature** of the service rendered by the task = what should be focused on for sufficient use

Tactics towards sufficiency

- **48 tactics** extracted from the focus group discussions
- Example:

Tactic	Goal	Classification
set mailbox quotas	countering data accumulation	**system**-oriented
block focus time in agenda	increasing focus	**human**-oriented
prepare before meeting	rationalizing meetings	**human**-oriented
give more freedom to employees to use their device	avoid overconsumption	**context**-oriented

Discussion

Dimensions of digital sufficiency

- Multi-dimensional
- Multi-stakholder
  - producer/developer
  - seller/provider
  - private user
  - organizational user
  - policy regulator
  - civil society

T. Santarius et al. 2022
"Digital sufficiency: Conceptual considerations for ICTs on a finite planet"

hardware sufficiency

software sufficiency

user sufficiency

economic sufficiency

- from direct to indirect effetcs of ICT
- increasing difficulty to tackle
- increasing leverage point