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Self-managed teams and organizational characteristics that affect each other reciprocally

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Dear readers,

In front of you is my thesis, which represents the completion of the Master's degree in Organisational design and development.

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Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this research is to explore how organizational characteristics of self-managed organizations and the behaviour of self-managed teams in terms of organizing practices influence each other. From a literature perspective, it has not yet been studied how these two concepts influence each other. This research is conducted in order to better understand the dynamics that self-management entails and to better understand the challenges self-managed organizations face.

Methodology - In order to achieve these insights a qualitative single case study has been conducted in a Dutch disability care institution. The data of this case study was collected from nine semi-structured interviews and a document analysis that provided appropriate background information on the case organization and its purposes regarding self-management. The data from these interviews and documents were analyzed by applying a combined approach of deductive-a-priori template analysis and a more data-driven inductive approach.

Findings - This research shows that both concepts influence each other reciprocally either in one direction, from organizational characteristics to organizing practice or the other way around. Or they influence each other in two directions; in which a change in an organizational characteristic leads to a change in organizing practices, which in turn leads back to a change in organizational characteristics. This dynamic is called organizational circularity. Changes in organizational characteristics due to management decisions are the starting point for various changes in both other organizational characteristics and organizing practices. This has led the case organization to a vicious circle. This dynamic has been created by the increasing amount of autonomy given to self-managed teams together with the decreasing amount of guidelines and control possibilities. In addition, a large amount of work pressure in the teams plays a role in the creation of an increasingly less advantageous situation for the organization as tasks are shifted from teams to staff departments.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction of the topic

Giving more autonomy to teams is an increasingly popular approach and is the main characteristic of self-managed teams. Autonomy is defined by Hackman (1987) as the amount of freedom and discretion an individual employee has in carrying out assigned tasks. Within self-managing teams, original operational tasks and some managing tasks that used to be done by a manager are distributed throughout the entire team (Weerheim et al., 2019). These managing tasks include activities that allow and enable the team to make independent and quick choices (Hackman, 1987). In this study, we call these managing tasks organizing practices and are a part of the complete behaviour of self-managed teams.

The literature on self-managing forms is mainly positive and focuses particularly on the advantages of providing employees with more autonomy and freedom of choice. Examples include higher productivity, better effectivity, more motivation and higher job satisfaction (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Wellins et al., 1991). However, a relatively small part of this scientific literature is concerned with the challenges or possible dysfunction of this way of working (Langfred, 2004; Mohrman et al., 1995). These researchers found that there are some limitations of giving groups autonomy to organize and structure their teamwork. Examples of (more) negative influences are the self-created restructuring within teams to be less collaborative and the development of norms that restrict their individual autonomy and interdependence (Langfred, 2007). In that way, they end up controlling group members more rigidly than under a more traditional management style (Barker, 1993). These findings trigger a question; why is there a difference in success stories of self-management?

In theory, you see mainly the good things but less visible are the drawbacks of a self-managing approach. Therefore, more research is necessary. Langfred (2000) is a pioneer in this stream and found that different organizational characteristics could influence the behaviour of self-managed teams. These organizational characteristics are according to Langfred; organizational structure, workflow, task technology and the location of autonomy. These characteristics influence the relationship of autonomy, group cohesiveness and group effectiveness. Tata and Prasad (2004) found in their study some more specific parts, namely, that organizational structure has a (negative) effect on self-managed teams. Their findings imply that “teams with high levels of self-management may be more effective in organizations where the authority to make decisions about task performance is distributed, and in organizations with fewer explicit rules, policies and procedures” (p. 258). Thus it may be assumed that organizational characteristics could play a prominent role in the behaviour of self-managed teams.

This research stems from the difficulties of working with self-managed teams. It focuses on how team behaviour and organizational characteristics influence each other. In this study, the behaviour of self-managed teams is focused on organizing practices. Organizing practices are defined in this research as the managerial work of self-managed teams. They can be broken down into six tasks developed by Martela (2019), further developed in the theoretical chapter. These organizing practices stem from the increased autonomy given to teams typical in this approach. On the other hand, the organizational characteristics are defined by Langfred (2000). Since we know it has an effect, but don't know how these two components

relate to each other.

1.2 Research objective

There is a discrepancy in literature and practice since the literature is mainly positive about self-managed teams' effects and behaviour. Apart from the success stories of, for example, Buurtzorg there are enough other organizations that are experiencing difficulties with this approach in practice. Tata and Prasad (2004) found that several organizations with a self-managed approach had a negative impact on their organization. This was expressed by managers that noticed slowly and sometimes no progress in team members' attempt to take responsibility for decisions that previously belonged to managers (p.249). This difficulty also applies to the case organization of this research.

This case organization is struggling with the self-managed approach that it implemented twenty years ago. Some organizational characteristics such as their structure and the location of autonomy changed over time due to managerial decisions, which influenced team behaviour in terms of teams' organizing practices. Also, team behaviour changed over time which had a new effect on workflow and the location of autonomy, some organizational characteristics according to Langfred (2000). The case organization called the problem itself 'dilution' of self-management. Because they feel that the self-management they implemented twenty years ago no longer works so well. Teams have become their own little islands and they no longer experience all the benefits of self-management.

The changes in both organizational characteristics and organizing practices imply a possible reciprocal relationship or expression of organizational circularity (Cunha & Tsoukas, 2017). Organizational circularity can be explained as a recurring dynamic within an organization. This cybernetic way of looking at organizations can help in understanding the relationship between organizational characteristics and organizing practices. The developed feedback (or causal) loop can propose different kinds of circularities. It indicates the dependence of a future state of a system on a past state (Tsoukas, 2005). Cunha and Tsoukas (2017) found that organizational circularity can express how managers create realities that develop an uncontrollable dynamic. Similar to the negative impact mentioned earlier by Tata and Prasad (2004). This system theory could help in the understanding of the effects organizing practices and organizational characteristics have on each other. And in this way to be able to understand, adjust or even prevent negative effects of working with a self-managed approach. This way of thinking could be helpful to include in this study because of the standing assumption that there is an interaction between organizational characteristics and team behaviour. And this way can determine whether a self-managed way of working creates the desired effect within an organization. However, it has not yet been studied how these two components influence each other.

Thus, this study will focus on how the reciprocal effect of organizing practices of self-managing teams and organizational characteristics influence each other. The behaviour of self-managed teams in terms of organizing practices has not yet been investigated in relation to organizational characteristics and becomes especially important for understanding how this relationship relates. The question arises: what happens over time within these organizing practices to create a recurring change in organizational characteristics?

Therefore, outcomes of organizing practices from self-managed teams are needed to understand how this relationship holds. This leads to the question of this study; *how do organizational characteristics of self-managed organizations and organizing practices of self-managed teams influence each other reciprocally?*

To answer the research question, inductive qualitative research in a single case is conducted. This qualitative method helped in the exploration to investigate how the reciprocal relationship between organizational characteristics and the behaviour of the self-managed teams relate in the case organization (Yin, 2018). The organization in this research is a disability care institution which works with self-managing teams for over twenty years. This company is chosen because it has an interesting phenomenon according to their practices of self-managed teams. Self-management no longer works advantageously for them and they have been struggling with this challenge for a few years now. Through various management decisions and introduced projects, self-managing teams started to behave differently and even some organizing tasks were relinquished. Team tasks are interpreted and implemented in their own way, resulting in tasks that originally belong to the teams are no longer being executed or taken over by staff departments. This created a problem for the organization as a whole, leading to more FTE in staff functions (relative to the overall growth they had in these years), resulting in increased overhead. A staff member of the case organization defines the difficulties as “This approach is less efficient than it should and could be”. The question of how the relationship between the behaviour of the teams and organizational characteristics relate to each other and interact over time fit the concept of what happened here in practice.

The intention was to collect data for this case study research using triangulation (Nightingale, 2009). However, this study includes semi-structured interviews with nine members of the self-managed teams and document analysis. It has not been possible to involve a participant observation during a work meeting of one of the self-managed teams because of the remaining Covid measures. Nevertheless, this data should give a comprehensive understanding of the behaviour of the self-managed teams according to their organizing tasks that are influenced by organizational characteristics.

1.3 Contribution

Examining this relationship is important for several reasons. First, there has been no research yet into the specific influential relationship between dimensions of organizational characteristics and the behaviour of self-managed teams. Researching how this relationship holds can bridge the gap between the existing mainly positive self-managing literature and practice which shows that there are also fewer positive sides to self-management. This research can contribute to the scarce existing critical self-management studies from Langfred (2000) and Tata & Prasad (2004). This can be achieved by gathering in-depth knowledge about the changing behaviour of self-managed teams in terms of their organizing practices that are influenced by organizational characteristics. This in-depth knowledge can form the basis for a general typology; by recognizing patterns, which can eventually contribute to the generalization of a theory (George & Bennett, 2004). This study investigated the behaviour of self-management in terms of their organizing practices and not self-managed teams as such, which allows for more fine-grained analysis. By finding out how members of self-managed teams respond to changes and contribute to this relationship, it is conceivable to identify the possible effects of a self-managed approach in a self-managed organization. In

this way to come closer to an answer for ‘why do some organizations succeed in effectively performing self-managing teams, while others do not?’.

By this knowledge, it will contribute to the study of the paradox of self-management by Langfred (2000) where further research is proposed to the four organizational characteristics used in this study. Through this study, the standing negative relationship of individual autonomy and group effectiveness will be further deepened into organizing practices of self-managed teams. These practices emerge from the autonomy that self-managed teams have and are described by Martela (2019) as organizing practices. This covers the practices which a self-managing team should comply with. In addition, this will also identify the specific organizational characteristics that will play a role in this relationship. It will also contribute to the study of team self-management by Tata and Prasad (2004) where connections between organizational structure and team-self management were examined. Their results suggest that contextual variables such as organizational structure can influence team effectiveness.

Finally, this study may help managers or policymakers in self-managed organizations understand the importance of implementing and maintaining self-managed teams appropriate to their organizations. Through a better understanding of how organizational characteristics affect the organizing practices of self-managed teams. To enable organizations to achieve more positive outcomes with working in self-managed teams. Therefore, this study will strive to provide new insights and understanding into the relationship between the behaviour of members of a self-managed team and organizational characteristics. This practical contribution will help the understanding of organizations why some organizations succeed in effectively performing self-managing teams, while others do not? When there is more clarity on how these concepts influence each other, it is possible to look more closely at where the negative consequences of not achieving the intended benefits come from. For the case study organization, it offers tools to look critically at specific organizational characteristics and the behaviour of teams that led to changes. So they can better understand how these two concepts influenced each other and thus explain these challenges and make appropriate choices to solve their self-management problem.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. This first chapter aimed to provide an introduction to the topic and to provide insights into the research objective. The following chapter will present the requisite theoretical background for this study. Starting with an explanation of the organizational characteristics and self-managed teams. Further, the organizing practices of the self-managed teams are explained and their possible reciprocal effect is discussed. Next is the methodological design of the research where it is explained which choices were made for the research. Furthermore, the empirical data is analyzed and discussed in the results chapter. Finally, the conclusion is presented in the fifth chapter. This last chapter provides an answer to the research question, contributions, limitations and the concluding remarks.

2. Theoretical background

This chapter will focus on the theoretical background surrounding the concepts and definitions that are relevant to this research. The context of this research consists of two concepts. Organizational characteristics of self-managed organizations and the organizing practices of self-managed teams within these organizations. To structure these, first, the self-managed organization and corresponding characteristics are explained. After that, self-managed teams and their organizing practices will be discussed. After all necessary information on these concepts is explained, the chapter will close with the research question. The answer to this question is substantiated with a way of system thinking, namely organizational circularity. This concept will also be touched upon because there is a reciprocal relationship assumed and there needs to be an understanding of what organizational characteristics can do overtime to impact self-managed teams and the other way around.

2.1 Self-managed organizations and their corresponding characteristics

2.1.1 Self-managed organizations

Self-managing organizations can be characterized as having decentralized authority throughout the organization in an orderly and systematic manner (Lee & Edmondson, 2017). Self-managed organizations tend to rely on specific sets of formal rules to guide organizing processes and practices that align with self-organizing principles. This leads to more autonomy amongst the employees lower in the organization and makes the organization less hierarchical as a whole. Examples of this way of organizing are the long-known self-regulating workgroups (Cohen & Ledford, 1994) also known as self-managed teams.

Self-managed organizations can be distinguished from more traditional forms of organizing, concerning how coordination takes place (Martela, 2019). This kind of organization, usually, requires all members of a self-managed team to engage in continuous forms of coordination. The decentralization of authority and the reduction of bureaucratic obstacles help organizations to deal with the fast-changing environment by shorter communication lines, flexibility and decision-making powers that lie lower in the organization.

It can be argued that self-managing organizations ideally are based on collaboration and flexibility rather than specialization and standardization (De Sitter, 1998). More and more self-managed organizations face the additional challenge of sustaining decentralized and continuous coordination as they scale their business. Because growth then includes the process of synchronization of the internal coordination and the scope of an organization's activities.

In a self-managed organization, employees have defined decision-making rights that cannot be overruled by anyone just because they are higher in the hierarchy. These employees work together in so-called self-managed teams, which will be discussed further in detail in the next chapter. These teams are groups of independent individuals who have the responsibility for a relatively whole task and share this responsibility by self-regulating, monitoring and controlling the contribution of others on that team (Lee & Edmondson, 2017).

2.1.2 Organizational characteristics

Given the theory and practical examples, there is an assumed connection between organizational characteristics and organizing practices that take place in self-managed teams. Organizational characteristics influence the organizing practices within the teams because the way of organizing affects how teams can work. However, these organizing practices can also affect organizational characteristics, which will be addressed in the next subchapter. To understand how this reciprocal relationship works, the concepts need to be defined. Starting with the organization characteristics.

Langfred (2000) writes in his study on the paradox of self-management about four organizational characteristics that are critical to the effectiveness of the organization. These are structure, workflow, task technology and the location of autonomy. Langfred showed in this study that these characteristics affect employees who have autonomy, which is described below for each characteristic. Since this situation is similar to self-managing teams, where employees also have the autonomy to decide how to organize their work, these organizational characteristics are used as a kind of framework in this study. Because Langfred does not talk specifically about the characteristics of a self-managed organization, each characteristic is supplemented, if necessary, with what this might imply for a self-managed organization working with self-managed teams.

The first and largest organizational characteristic is **organizational structure**. Also defined as “the configuration of people by allocating tasks, responsibility and authority within the organization” (Mintzberg, 1993). The organizational structure is the way in which organizational activities are distributed, organized and coordinated. Often management is responsible for creating these structures to coordinate activities and control employees. As the definition implies, it affects not only the rest of all organizational characteristics but also the organizing practices of self-managed teams. This is because these are the tasks that are distributed and assigned to the teams, partly due to the structure taken. Langfred (2000) describes this as “as the workgroup is embedded in the larger organizational structure with its boundaries and activities. The increased autonomy of the group will involve more coordination with other groups or parts of the organization” (p.568). This implies that organizational structure affects self-managed teams and their tasks in different ways.

In addition, Langfred (2000) indicates that in the context of self-managed teams, the issue is different than for traditional workgroups. Normally, structural variables are seen as inputs, but in the case of self-managed teams, they can also be outputs. This shows that structure not only affects self-managed teams but the organizational structure can also be affected by self-managed teams. This is because self-managed teams have been given autonomy to decide over tasks, which in turn could affect the entire organization.

Other researchers have also found a direct effect between organizational structure and organizing practices. Moorkamp (2017) describes in a socio-technical way that work is divided into different units, similar to self-management. The social interaction network becomes more complex and the possibility of interruptions, interferences and errors become higher. Therefore, the organizational structure can directly contribute to errors in the organization that are a result of a complex network. Tata and Prasad (2004) endorse that organizational structure could have a negative impact on the effectiveness of self-managed teams. These findings propose that self-managed teams with high levels of self-management can be more

effective in organizations where the decision making authority over task performance is divided and in organizations with reduced explicit rules, policies and processes.

The **workflow** in an organization is defined as the sequence of steps that constitutes the entire work process from start to finish (van der Aalst et al., 2003). This mainly becomes visible in written work like procedures or protocols. A tightly coupled workflow is mostly seen when group autonomy is low and individual autonomy is high. This means that teams influence how to perform tasks and in what order if the individual autonomy is high. The group or self-managed team does not determine how to perform tasks, only which tasks should be performed. However, the output of the whole group is important for the result and the internal processes to a lesser extent (Langfred, 2000). The effect this can create is that a change in organizational structure also affects the steps employees take throughout the organization in performing tasks. In other words, there is a direct effect between organizational structure and workflow. However, a change to self-managed teams, whether or not influenced by an organizational characteristic, can also change the workflow within the teams or outside the teams, which in turn affects the organization as a whole.

Task technology covers how tasks are performed in teams and are also frequently described in written work such as procedures or protocols. Although task technology is very similar to workflow, there is a difference, according to Langfred (2000). This difference lies in the fact that task technology looks at how tasks are performed, whereas workflow looks at the order in which tasks are performed. Cohen & Bailey (1997) assumed that the order of execution of tasks was influenced by task technology. Wageman and Baker (1997) also found that teams with similar task technologies often differed in task dependence, suggesting that the order of execution does matter. In theory, it is difficult to find the exact content of task technology, which varies from “the method of execution of tasks” (Langfred, 2000) to “the degree to which a technology assists an individual in performing his or her tasks” (Pentland, 1994). In this research 'how tasks are performed' is used. Due to the degree of freedom members of a self-managed team have in the way of performing tasks may be different for each member, while the tasks are the same. These differences may affect the results of the team or the organization as a whole.

The last organizational characteristic is **the location of autonomy**. Langfred (2000) makes a distinction between autonomy at the group level and autonomy at an individual level. Autonomy is defined as the degree of freedom and discretion an individual has in performing an assigned task (Hackman, 1987). An organization consists of several units and must ensure that the interdependencies between the teams are managed. The location of autonomy is thus determined by the structure of the organization.

The degree of autonomy can have a direct effect on the way self-managed teams can deal with disturbances that occur (De Sitter, 1998). The ability to regulate can influence the way team members cope with disturbances. Going deeper, the division of labour can have a significant influence on the extent to which employees can solve their own problems independently or whether they need to call others to solve them. This implies a direct effect on the self-managing tasks of teams.

Langfred (2000) makes an extensive distinction between autonomy at the group level and autonomy at the individual level. Further on in this study, we will discuss the general influence of autonomy by identifying the location of autonomy. The location of autonomy can influence the organizational practices of self-managed teams because it determines where the attention is focused and refers to the regulatory latitude they have in carrying out tasks. Autonomy at the group level is the degree of control and freedom

given to the group in carrying out the tasks assigned to them. It is therefore not the aggregation of individual autonomy, but a group contract that has no meaning at the individual level. It focuses the attention of the group members on the group as a whole. Individual autonomy is the degree of freedom and control an individual has in performing an assigned task. As individuals work more independently and have more control over the planning and execution of their own tasks, there will be less interaction between group members. This limits the potential for better cooperation.

2.2 Self-managed teams and their organizing practices

2.2.1 Self-managed teams

Cohen and Bailey (1997) define teams as “a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or larger social systems and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries” (p.241). The functioning of the team is created by accomplishing and re-organizing the teams’ own work (Langfred, 2007). Self-managed teams are thus defined as a group of interdependent individuals, that have responsibility for a relatively whole task and that share responsibility by self-regulating, monitoring and controlling the contributions of its members. What comes clear in this definition is that self-managing teams are not managed by a manager but by themselves, in contradiction to how traditional teams function. Teams can have a direct supervisor, but they are responsible for decisions that traditionally lay in the domain of the manager (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). They are therefore responsible for dividing the team tasks and the work processes involved. In traditional teams, managers took a directive role owing decision rights and information. The new role for managers of a self-managing team has become more of a supportive coach (Wageman, 1997; Spreitzer et al., 1999). This coaching includes interaction with the team that is intended to shape processes and produce good team performance (Morgeson, 2005).

Commonly cited benefits of self-managed teams from literature are higher decision-making quality and a quicker decision-making process due to an increased authority within the teams. Studies claim that self-management in teams’ leads to more effort from team members (Cohen & Ledford, 1994), more efficient work (Cohen & Bailey, 1997) and a reduced need for coordination (Glassop, 2002). Due to the responsibility that is in lower levels of the organization, the hierarchy becomes flattened and external coordination reduces (Barker, 1993). In other words, flattening is the decentralization of authority by decreasing the number of levels of formal authority.

However, positive effects of self-management are not always to be found. Although self-managing teams are popular for the wide possibilities it provides. Langfred (2000) found that there is a negative relationship between individual autonomy and group cohesiveness, which can lead to self-created restructuring of teams. This results in less collaborative behaviour and interdependence (Langfred, 2007). Barker (1993) found something familiar earlier, that self-managing groups may end up controlling group members more rigidly than under more traditional management styles. Another challenge can be the allocation of tasks. Allocation requires members of the team to assign priorities to tasks (Feigh & Pritchett, 2013). Team members thus handle multiple goals by prioritizing them and allocate time according to their importance (Gevers et al., 2015). However, the performance of the team may be harmed if members devote a smaller portion of their time to the team. Team members who devote only a small part of their time to the

team may therefore contribute less to the team (Cummings & Haas, 2011). Furthermore, the members that allocate a lower proportion of their time may not be motivated to engage with the whole task of the team (Clark & Wheelwright, 1992).

As discussed in the previous subchapter, organizational characteristics influence the organizing practices of self-managed teams. In the next section, the organizing practices will be explained. In addition, the way they are influenced by organizational characteristics and how these practices can influence organizational characteristics will be discussed.

2.2.2 Organizing practices

To go into more detail about what takes place within these self-managed teams, it is important to know what their task and actions are, further named in this study as their organizing practices. These practices are necessary to understand what occurs with the behaviour of the team. Organizing practices are in this case not the operative work, but the managerial work of the self-managed teams. To better understand the (managerial) practices of a self-managed team Martela (2019) wrote six practices that describe their most important tasks. These practices stem from an earlier study by Puranam et al. (2014) where four universal problems are mentioned that every organization should solve in order to achieve its goals. The starting point of these organizing practices is considered from a self-managed organization working with self-managed teams. As described in 2.1, these organizations consist of a flat structural arrangement and there is little managerial power over employees working in self-managed teams. The decision-making power is radically decentralized.

Task division touches on the mapping of the organizations' goals into tasks and subtasks (Puranam et al., 2014). Task division involves an analysis of resources and goals to create a set of interrelated tasks in terms to divide labour. These interrelated tasks are needed to achieve organizational goals and are necessary to understand how tasks are divided and make a basis of team processes.

The organization's overarching goal must first be outlined, after which a series of interrelated tasks and subtasks can be assigned to groups. When the division of tasks is done in a more self-managing way, employees have the authority and responsibility to identify which tasks are necessary to accomplish in order to contribute to the overarching goal of the organization. One implication of this is that members of a self-managed team need to be both willing and capable of taking much broader responsibility for an organization's success than in traditional organizations (Martela, 2019).

An important aspect to bear in mind is that the divisions of tasks influences the way employees are able to perform their tasks. When they are given a lot of autonomy and room to regulate, they can solve their own disturbances and do not need to involve others to solve them (De Sitter, 1998). This indicates that the structure of an organization together with the location of autonomy influences the division of tasks within the organization and thus within the self-managed teams.

Furthermore, the distribution of tasks could have a reciprocal influence on how tasks are carried out (task technology) and in what order they are carried out (workflow). As when tasks are defined in work procedures and protocols, this influences task division. But when the distribution of tasks changes at the team level, these changes in turn also influence task technology and workflow. Not only does this team change have an effect on the organization level, but also within other organizing practices. The task distribution also provides a framework for task allocation, where tasks are assigned to specific individuals.

Creating packages of related tasks also has an influence on the avoidance of freeriding, because here you lay the foundation of who is responsible for what.

Task allocation touches on the mapping of tasks obtained through task division to individuals and groups (Puranam et al., 2014). According to Hackman and Oldham (1980), allocation can be done in multiple ways using principles as specialization, streamlining or job enrichment.

Within a self-managed approach, teams are characterized by the decentralization of authority to make decisions and apply also to task allocation, which is one of the most important dimensions of authority to make decisions. Teams have the authority to choose what tasks are done by whom. Within the self-managed teams, various tasks are allocated. This requires a commitment to organizational goals because even the less attractive tasks need to be accomplished. The distribution of tasks is easier to implement when there is not too much interdependence between teams and units (De Sitter, 1998). When this is not done with sufficient attention, the task allocation can have an effect on the possibility of free-riding and work processes.

Task allocation is influenced by various aspects, but can also have an influence itself. Task allocation is directly influenced by the task distribution which precedes the task assignment of team members. This is impacted by the structure and location of autonomy within the organization. In addition, the way of working, in other words, task technology (how you perform tasks) and workflow (in which order) influence the way tasks are distributed. Here, a reciprocal relationship can occur, because when there are changes in tasks distribution, whether or not resulting from the other organizational characteristics, this also affects when tasks are carried out and in what way. Furthermore, task allocation could also have an influence on the possibility of free-riding because when insufficient attention is given to the proper distribution of all tasks, including the less popular ones, there is a chance that there will be team members who take advantage of other people's work.

Rewarding the desired behaviour includes the organizational need to provide some form of reward to make employees motivated in order to accomplish tasks (Puranam et al., 2014). The most common form of reward is monetary compensation. However, many other factors can work as motivational as intrinsic motivation such as self-expression, contribution to a worthy goal or status and advancement opportunities (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Martela & Kostamo, 2017).

Furthermore, by providing employees with significant autonomy and thus freedom it tends to require motivation of employees that are not only based on extrinsic rewards. Much emphasis should be on making the work intrinsically rewarding. Martela and Kostamo (2017) confirm this by stating that a self-managed approach relies more on intrinsic motivation than classical bureaucratic organizations. Compensation is often determined through a peer-based process given the lack of information supervisors have about the individual employee making accurate decisions. The most typical way for self-managed teams is peer-based compensation by their coworkers (Martela, 2019).

In conclusion, as with task allocation, the authority also plays a critical role in the design and implementation of the reward system (Puranam et al., 2014). The way of assessing is thus influenced by the way the organization is structured in terms of the location of autonomy. In self-managing teams, mainly colleagues will be responsible for the assessment. This way can influence the possibility to benefit from other people's successes because only your own colleagues will review you. Colleagues must therefore

have a good view of other team members' responsibilities and assigned tasks otherwise no proper assessment is possible.

Avoidance of freeriding is needed when individuals receive the advantages of a good or service without contributing to its facility; free riding comes about (Rockart, 2016). This behaviour is a general problem in any team action (Simon, 1991; Fehr et al., 2002). And there is always a risk that someone is free-riding given the private interest of individual employees.

In self-managed forms, there needs to be some kind of practice to avoid freeriding. It is shown that without any options to tackle free-riders, cooperation quickly declines (Fehr & Gächter, 2002). This is due to the fact that since employees are mainly responsible for and monitored by each other, conflict resolution mechanisms are used. The absence of supervision must be exercised by those who are best able to see what is expected of the employee and what they are doing. However, the emphasis is usually not on controlling the activities - they are free to choose when (workflow) and how (task technology) they work - but on controlling on output. Other performances that are not captured by the output will have to be noticed by other team members. These employees must therefore have the skills to deal with situations in which a party fails to fulfil its responsibilities (Martela, 2019). This affects the workability of a self-managed team and is therefore important to consider.

The avoidance of freeriding is influenced by various aspects, but can also have an influence on others. The avoidance of freeriding is influenced by the organizational structure and its location of autonomy, as this makes the difference between who controls performances and how big teams' tasks are. It is also influenced by other organizing practices such as task division, task allocation and rewarding. The way tasks are divided and distributed throughout the teams can influence how to prevent freeriding. Rewarding has a more controlling function here. Finally, it is important to mention that when there is a change of freeriding, the workflow and task technology can also change. This is due to the fact that tasks are then performed by someone else (task technology) or even not performed at all (workflow).

Providing direction is needed to accomplish tasks. Employees need constantly updated information about other team members and their environment.

Updated and guiding information is especially important as self-managing teams have many interconnected tasks and employees need to coordinate their actions. Individual employees have the authority to make independent choices about purchases that in a traditional organization would be made by a manager. The more comprehensive the choices that an individual employee can make, the greater the impact on the team and the organization as a whole. To make these decisions and also be beneficial to the organization, the employee must have enough updated and guiding information about the organization as a whole. Without this direction, there is a risk of sub-optimization. This means that teams do not fully contribute to the organization goals. The employee makes decisions that are good in his personal view, but do not actually contribute to the organization's goals (Martela, 2019). So when decision-making power is decentralized, the information distribution must also be decentralized to prevent employees from making sub-optimal decisions due to a lack of relevant information (Martela & Kostamo, 2017). Transparency is therefore important, but a high degree of information access also means that employees need the knowledge and skills to understand and take account of this information in their decisions.

Providing direction is influenced by the structure and the location of autonomy. This determines how well self-managing teams can obtain necessary information. Where autonomy lies plays an important

role in the implementation of an information distribution system (Puranam et al., 2014). The more work is distributed over different units; the more complex the so-called social interaction network will be (De Sitter, 1998). In addition, the degree of direction also affects autonomy and workflow because the way teams handle the information and guidelines can affect the work processes of other teams in the organization when they are dependent on each other.

The last organizing practice is **ensuring coordination** of interdependent tasks. Faraj & Xiao (2006) define coordination as the procedure of a “temporally unfolding and contextualized process of input regulation and interaction articulation to realize a collective performance” (p.1157). This implies that the organization or the teams themselves need to ensure that each employee has some guidance mechanism that guarantees that actions are accomplished and contribute to the organization's goal.

Within-team coordination is accomplished through constant communication. Within-team and within the function coordination is mainly accomplished through coordination roles and through extensive use of IT systems in self-managed forms. Self-managed teams achieve coordination through close contact and coordination, regular meetings and sorts of electronic communication. Coordination is one of the main challenges of self-managed teams (Ingvaldsen & Rolfsen, 2012). This is because organizations working with self-managed teams often do not have the possibility to rely on the above-mentioned contact and coordination within teams. When coordination between teams or units requires constant interaction, specific individuals are then often assigned as intermediaries. This ensures that the necessary coordination is achieved. Another possibility to avoid the coordination challenge is to implement IT systems and software. Self-managed teams have many important coordination needs because they now perform tasks that were traditionally done by managers.

The coordination of interrelated tasks is influenced by various aspects, but can also have an influence on others. The organizational structure influences coordination by the way the organization is structured. When there are many interrelated tasks between teams, the coordination needs are high. Coordination can in turn also influence work processes. When teams are given the possibility to deal with decisions and realize performance, this can influence how tasks are carried out (task technology) and in what order (workflow). This applies not only within the self-managed teams, but can also have an impact on other units in the organization.

2.3 Reciprocity

Because the research question assumes a reciprocal relation between the concepts of organizational characteristics and organizing practices it is necessary to reflect on what a reciprocal relationship is and how it can be formed. To explain reciprocity, use is made of what is known as system thinking. This stems from cybernetics in sociotechnical theories of organizations (Weick, 1976). System thinking is a way to use and recognize patterns of return and is applicable in this case study. Returning patterns can also be defined as organizational circularity (Cunha & Tsoukas, 2017).

System thinking is an approach to introduce and understand organizational change and development. Through system thinking it is made easier to understand the complexity of an organization and identify recurring dynamics. Weick (1976) was one of the first influential organization theorists that have worked with the concept of feedback, his focus was on processes of organizing. Organizational and social

phenomena are represented through diagrams in which interconnecting loops of interdependent variables are depicted. Or in other words, when employees interact, the behaviour of one is a stimulus for the behaviour of the other, and vice versa. This generation of differences in a flow of activity through the undertaking of an action by an actor is called organizational circularity.

Organizational circularity explains better than most organizational processes how managers create realities that develop dynamics beyond their scope, often in unexpected ways. Organizational circularity is the durability of feedback loops in time. Feedback indicates the dependence of a future state of a system upon an earlier state (Tsoukas, 2005). The best way to represent feedback is as a loop, where each variable affects the others (Meadows, 2008). The polarity of a causal loop reflects the tendency to reinforce or counteract a change in one of its elements and therefore gives the loop some analytical power. A causal loop that tends to amplify is called a positive or reinforcing loop. Weick (1976) explains this as “once a variable begins to move in a particular direction, the variable will continue to move in that same direction until some change occurs” (p.72). In other words, some small disturbances, whether planned or not, are amplified and could have major consequences. The assumption of recurrence (and the circularity that goes with it) suggests that networks of causality are dense and long enough to repeat themselves. So, an organization needs time to perceive that, and at some point it is facing a (vicious) circle (Senge, 1990).

There are two kinds of reinforcing loops, **vicious and virtuous circles**. A vicious circle is a deviation-amplifying loop that turns a bad situation into a worse one. In cybernetic words, “an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and do so indefinitely” (Orwell, 1968, p.127). A virtuous circle is a reverse; a deviation-amplifying loop makes a good situation better. Organizational outcomes can be multiple and sometimes contradictory, in this case, the same causal loop in an organization can be seen as either a vicious or a virtuous circle. This is due to strategic priorities developed by the management. One circle may be perceived as either virtuous or vicious depending on the selected goal. To this extent, a vicious circle may be seen as an opportunity to fundamentally challenge a system.

Since we now understand that vicious and virtuous circles could stem from the multiple paradoxes underlying in organizations, paradoxes must be defined. In this study as “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time.” (Smith et al., p.387). When paradoxes are ignored or handled in a dysfunctional way, they could cause vicious circles. Whereby the continuous tension between the paradoxical components, turns the system out of balance (dis-equilibrating) and, ultimately, threatens its existence.

2.4 Research question

Based on the information derived from the literature presented above, the following conceptual model (figure 1) is drawn. Organizational characteristics could influence organizing practices. Organizing practices, as elements belonging to the concept of self-management, could influence in turn organizational characteristics. This conceptual model implies that there is a reciprocal relationship between the concepts. More specifically defined as organizational circularity. This organizational circularity could help in the understanding of the effect organizing practices have on organizational characteristics and vice versa.

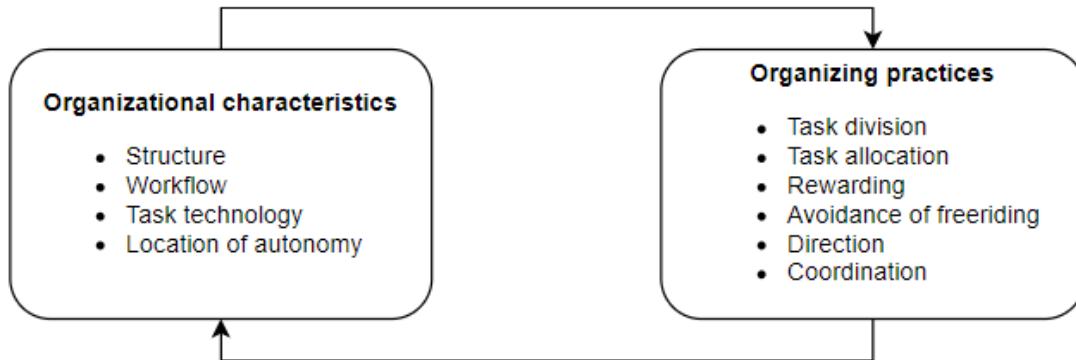


Figure 1: Conceptual model

This chapter aimed to develop conceptual arguments from literature. In order to get to know how this relationship works or how it develops in practice. What do actors in organizations do that create this relationship? Because practical examples show that this behaviour sometimes leads to unfavorable results for the organization. The research question that will help with this problem is:

How do organizational characteristics of self-managed organizations and organizing practices of self-managed teams influence each other reciprocally?

3. Methodology

The second chapter provided the necessary background information needed to answer the research question. A qualitative study was conducted in order to answer the research question. This third chapter discusses what type of research is used in the study and why.

3.1 Research design

This study aimed at investigating how the relationships of organizing practices that affect specific organizational characteristics reciprocally relate to each other. In order to answer, inductive qualitative research in a single case was conducted. The reason for an inductive approach is the few existing theories that can be tested to find out how this reciprocal relationship relates. Using two different methods to gather in-depth knowledge about processes and in this way build a comprehensive understanding of the behaviour of a self-managed team. The in-depth knowledge can form the basis for a general typology of a social phenomenon by recognizing patterns in a limited domain (George & Bennett, 2004). These methods include semi-structured interviews and document analyzes.

Qualitative studies are structured research into social phenomena in natural settings. These phenomena can encompass how humans experience aspects, how people and/or teams behave, how organizations perform and the way interactions form relationships (Teherani et al., 2015). This made it possible concerning this study to describe, interpret and explain behaviours and interactions. The goal is to understand the different behaviours that members in a self-managing team have and give meaning to the reciprocal relationship with organizational characteristics. Therefore, it is important to produce contextual real-world knowledge regarding the behaviours and social structures of a group. Qualitative research makes it possible to look for connections between the experiences and to ask the underlying reasons (Yin, 2018). This rich amount of data provided insights into a specific social phenomenon in a real-life context. This is particularly important in this study because these concerns organizing practices of self-managed employees evaluating over time.

A single case study method is an empirical method where a social phenomenon is examined in its environment (Yin, 2003). The essence of a case study is to look at one or a small number of units of analysis for a given period (Easterby-Smith, 2002). The unit of analysis, in this case, is within an organization providing disability healthcare. Focused on a group of people with common characteristics (the self-managing team), making it a holistic single case (Vennix, 2019). According to Yin (2003), a single case study is suitable when research aims to understand how and why a particular social phenomenon works in practice. A case study is characterized by the fact that it is flexible and able to cope with dynamic elements of real-world problems (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This is particularly important for this study because it allows the researcher to identify characteristics, meanings and implications. Subsequently, this method gives the ability to gather unexpected insights or nuance in existing assumptions. This can lead to practical solutions to the problem and lead to new suggestions for follow-up research (Yin, 2003). For this reason, an exploratory single case study was selected for this research since it aims to gather in-depth knowledge to describe and understand the social and dynamic phenomenon. In-depth knowledge should be gathered from members working in a self-managed team regarding their organizing practices. To accomplish this, this research shall take a deep dive into the processes of self-managing teams to understand and clarify their

work behaviour. This qualitative case study was carried out using a hybrid approach analysis. The combined approach of deductive a-priori template analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 1999) and more data driven inductive approach (Boyatzis, 1998). This has its origin in the fact that this specific research has not been tested in theory before, thus leaving open the possibility of supplementing the existing theory with concepts from practice. In this way, an attempt was made to make a complete and inclusive data analysis in order to provide the best possible answer to the research question.

3.2 Case selection and description

To select a case, the phenomenon should be present in clear substantive reasoning (Yin, 2009). In this research, the case organization is chosen to look at the behavioural dynamics of self-managed teams and how their organizational characteristics relate. The selection of this case is based on two important requirements that were defined for this research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). First, related to a self-managing approach that is implemented in the organization. Second, related to the organizing practices of the self-managed teams.

The selected case fits these two criteria. The first criterion is represented in this case since they work with a self-managed approach in a flat organization since 2000. The second criterion is represented as well. An intern project group focused on re-affirming self-management, has recently been established within the organization. The reason for this project group is the self-managed approach that created challenge overtime for the organization as a whole. Over the years, the organization has noticed fewer benefits from self-management. Practices of self-managed teams affect the organizational characteristics in terms of their workflow and task technology. Certain team-specific tasks are now carried out centrally that should be decentralized according to their self-managed approach. Some team-specific tasks have been withdrawn within the teams and taken over by the staff department, which resulted in an uneven allocation of tasks through the organization. In this way, their support staff grew exponentially relative to the employees in the self-managing teams within twenty years. As various tasks have shifted both within the teams and outside the teams, their outputs vary, which is not advantageous for the organization.

This organizational problem is therefore representative of the research question; *how do organizational characteristics of self-managed organizations and organizing practices of self-managed teams influence each other reciprocally?* This case was thus selected because it fits well in the theoretical gap in literature (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Conducting an exploratory case study that is aimed at building initial understandings of a situation suits this case because it involves some unique development over time.

3.2.1 Case description

The unit of analysis concerns four self-managing teams within a Dutch healthcare organization, Their core activities are providing specialized care for people with disabilities in the field of autism, dementia/ageing, and the indications LVB (light mental disabilities) and EMB (serious multiple disabilities). The organization supports about 950 people in the eastern region of the Netherlands with residential and work locations so that they can function and participate in society as optimally as possible. Employees are

professionals who work in self-managing teams and make their own decisions about the support needed. This can range from a weekly consultation to 24-hour intensive care. Providing personal, flexible and customized care under high-quality care standards is one of their missions to establish direct and personal relationships between residents and their caregivers. To achieve this, 77 self-managing teams have been implemented. To support the self-managed teams, a region manager and supporting staff are involved. Region managers (seven in total) are part of the management team and are jointly responsible for cross-regional activities. In this way members of self-managed teams could primarily focus on providing care for their clients. These tasks include also maintaining contact with the family of clients and volunteers. A small part of their FTE is reserved for specific organizing tasks, given in a task matrix. Such as assessment, planning and health and safety tasks (Personal communication, 19 February, 2021).

3.3 Data collection methods

The use of two data collection methods is applied to ensure the validity of the results in this study. These research methods are used in this study to provide in-depth knowledge and understanding of the tasks of members of the self-managed teams. These methods will be discussed in the following sections. The methods and data analysis were iteratively preceded.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The qualitative data was derived from nine interviews in self-managed care teams that were conducted in an exploratory, semi-structured way. The interviews took approximately one hour and were held online due to Covid measures. Interviews are considered an appropriate method for finding out about the understanding of employees' behaviour (Yin, 2014). The aim is to find out how organizational practices maintain over time and thus influence organizational characteristics. Exploratory interviews can help to find out about these organizational practices by asking about the behaviour of the employees, and are therefore an appropriate method.

Semi-structured interviews contain specific research questions in a schedule of topics, to guide the interview, but the use and sequence of these questions are not fixed. This ensures that irrelevant details and topics will be omitted and enables the researcher to better standardize the situation across multiple interviews (Louise Barriball & While, 1994). Additionally, semi-structured interviews support the ability for an in-depth discussion and to ask follow-up questions to understand respondents' motives in social phenomena. This is essential for understanding how these practices changed over time. Exploratory interviews are fitted when it is unclear what kind of information is available and what respondents' reactions will be (Vennix, 2019). This is useful for this research because actual work practices are not determinable in advance.

The interviews were conducted in multiple iterations. An orientation interview is held with a member of the staff department to gather essential knowledge of the organization and its structures. These results helped with the structuring of the individual interviews to establish a-priori themes for the open-ended

interview questions. This prior knowledge of how self-management was intended and set-up is considered reasonable to better understand how and why practices have changed over time.

Individual interviews dived deeper into the concepts explained in chapter 2. All interviews were held in Dutch allowing participants to express themselves without any possible language barrier since this is their native language. The set of respondents are team members of four self-managed teams. Respectively from two residential locations and two daycare locations. These teams should have the same tasks, which makes the analysis easier, more reliable and firm-specific. Their permission was asked beforehand to record in order to make a detailed transcript. Subsequently, member checking was used to verify correct interpretation by repeating and summarizing their answers in researchers' own words and asking if this has been properly understood while interviewing (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

All the interviews are held online and careful thought is given to how this is done. The researcher was flexible in the use of interview tools such as Zoom, Skype, and Teams. An advantage of conducting interviews online is the flexibility in planning for both interviewer and interviewee. However, it is more difficult to observe and feel the atmosphere and recognize body language (Salmons, 2014). The list of respondents with respective function and work location is listed in table 1.

Table 1: List of respondents with respective function and location

Interview	Function	Location	Duration	Type of interview
0	Central Office member	HQ	35:00	Teams
1	Personal supervisor	Daycare location	55:09	Teams
2	Personal supervisor	Daycare location	1:07:43	Zoom
3	Personal supervisor	Daycare location	1:08:20	Zoom
4	Personal supervisor	Residential location	1:41:52	Zoom
5	Personal supervisor	Residential location	1:10:22	Teams
6	Personal supervisor	Residential location	1:08:41	Zoom
7	Personal supervisor	Residential location	1:05:01	Zoom
8	Personal supervisor	Residential location	1:18:14	Zoom
9	Former Personal supervisor, now Central Office member	HQ	1:06:31	Zoom

3.3.2 Document analysis

To understand what members of the self-managed teams do, documents that provide background information are needed (Yin, 2003). An advantage of using documentation is that this manner is stable and

documents can be viewed multiple times. They cover a broad span (Yin, 2009) and contain exact details. In addition, it is useful to know how self-management was intended and set up twenty years ago. Internal as well as external documents are collected and together taken to enrich the understandings of this case organization. Internal documents contain papers about self-management, work principles and standards of the organization. The case organization has written a document about how they see self-management in their organization. This document provided a lot of guidance on how they initially set up self-management, as a kind of initial stage. This enriches data and the understanding of their organizational characteristics and team practices.

3.4 Analysis

Analyzing the collected field data is completed by transcribing and coding. The analysis was based on a combined approach of deductive-a-priori template analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 1999) and a more data-driven inductive approach (Boyatzis, 1998). This methodological approach integrated data-driven codes with theory-driven ones based on the principles of self-management, organizational characteristics of self-managed organizations and organizing practices of self-managed teams. By doing so, it ensures that inductive themes that were not predicted beforehand could be included in the research. In this way, new insights that come across are not ignored than when you only use deductive doing. This thematic analysis is suitable for searching for themes that appear to be important for the description of the phenomenon (Daly et al., 1997). Given that this research focuses on how a particular relationship unfolds the description of the phenomenon is an appropriate way of looking at themes that are relevant to it. This combination of analysis approaches allowed this study to be integral with the deductive template analysis, and at the same time allowed for new themes and insights from using inductive coding. This is fitted for this research because the few theories available can test this reciprocal relationship and leaves the possibility open of gathering new data through an inductive perspective. This combines the existing knowledge and empirical data to together form a thick base for results.

The coding process of the thematic approach consists of four stages (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The first stage focuses on developing a code manual. This manual is important because it organizes the texts and in this way supports the interpretation (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). This code manual is based on a-priori knowledge from the theoretical framework. The manual is based on theoretical concepts of self-management as an organizational design (Cohen & Bailey, 1997), Langfred's (2000) four organizational characteristics and Martela's (2019) six organizing problems. The reason why this particular approach was chosen is that template analysis gives structure for data analysis (Brooks & King, 2012) by a-priori codes based on the theoretical framework but also enough flexibility for the data to unfold (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This is beneficial for this study because little knowledge exists on how organizational practices and these are potentially used in establishing a reciprocal relation with specific organizational characteristics.

The second stage includes summarizing data and identifying initial themes. Outlining the key points made by the interviewees served as a first step in analyzing each transcript. These key points were retrieved from the responses to the main questions of the interview.

In the third stage, codes from the codebook were applied to the text for identifying meaningful text segments. In this way, the codes are matched with the particular text segments selected as representative

for the code. This is done for each of the concepts and each of the nine interviews. Additionally, inductive codes are assigned to segments of text that describe a new theme found in the transcript. These inductive codes are either separated from the a-priori defined codes or refine them.

The last stage included connecting codes and identifying themes. The connecting of the codes is the process of discovering patterns and themes in the data (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). In this stage, similarities and differences between interviewees came up, revealing the organizing practices in response to the research question. The emergence of patterns and connections due to thematically coding the documents and interview transcripts is especially important in this study where work processes of self-managed teams and their impact are central. The full codebook can be seen in appendix 5.

3.5 Quality

In order to conduct this qualitative study to be as reliable, valid and useful as possible four quality criteria have been established. In general, qualitative research methods are less controlled and more interpretive than for example quantitative research (Crist & Tanner, 2003). This is because the researcher can influence the research by, for example, intonation or a different interpretation of answers. This is not possible with a fixed questionnaire as in quantitative research. Therefore, both interview and document analysis is used to increase the validity and credibility of the research findings.

Reliability is the accurate representation of research results in terms of which decisions and why and the extent to which these results can be reproduced when the research is repeated under equal conditions (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Careful data recording increases this by typing out verbatim what was said in interview transcripts and taking notes during the interviews and document analysis. Keeping a research diary ensures that notes, thoughts and notable findings can be retrieved at any time.

Validity refers to the indicators by which a social phenomenon is made measurable and representative. Internal validity concerns the perception of the situation and the opinions of employees. To get the best possible insight into the phenomenon, the case selection was made to a good representation of the aspects (organizing practices, self-management, and organizational characteristics). This increases the representativeness of the study.

Usability, in this case, is twofold, theoretical and practical. This research will contribute to insights into the reciprocal relationship of organizing practices and organizational characteristics. By doing so, existing theories can be supplemented. The practical objective has the main purpose of providing a better understanding of the change of self-managed teams and their practices over time. So that better organizational outcomes can be achieved. This research will then serve as a practical example for further scientific research.

Generalizability is more difficult with a single case because in-depth research is done within one organization. However, these data can give a lot of practical information and can help to supplement or revise existing views from previous research. Focusing on details rather than generalizability makes this case study idiosyncratic (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This is favourable in this research because it allows one to gain deeper insight into the subjects about which there is little knowledge of and better understand the concepts and the changes associated with them.

Lastly, credibility. In qualitative research there is always a danger that constructed realities of respondents and the reconstruction attributed to them are not fitted (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Through

member checking during the interview this is reduced. Subsequently, by developing a research diary that consists of notes a reflection can be made regarding understanding the initial constructions of this research, which helps cover subjectivity.

3.6 Research ethics

In order to provide the most honest and ethical research possible, the principles of the Dutch code of conduct for Research Integrity will be taken into account. These principles are honesty, scrupulousness, transparency, independence and responsibility (KNAW et al., 2018).

For honesty, this means reporting the research process accurately and taking alternative opinions seriously. By capturing (recording and documenting) all data as accurately as possible, this requirement will be met. In this way, it will also be traceable, which promotes transparency. Notes in my research diary are available upon request.

Scrupulousness implies for this research that all the methods written above will be used in the design and implementation of the research. Writing out this chapter contributes to this principle, because there has been careful consideration of how this research is carried out and ensures that the used methods are scientifically relevant in this research.

The third principle is transparency; this will be done by documenting all data and external information. This makes it clear to readers which data this research is based on, how this data was obtained and what the results are. However, not everything can be published openly because there will be confidential data discussed that could be harmful to individuals and the case organization. Therefore, it will be discussed anonymously, in this way the process remains verifiable and the anonymity of those involved is respected.

The following principle is independence; this will be pursued to make only choices that enhance the quality of the research. This implies minimizing the influence of external parties on the research as much as possible. This was attempted by keeping personal and case organization opinions to a minimum in order to conduct the study as independently as possible.

The final principle according to this code of integrity is responsibility. In this Master Thesis, the main sources are employees in a self-managed team; the focus should be on correctly informed consent. Participants should be provided with the right and adequate information, to make deliberate decisions to participate in the study or not. Participants are provided beforehand with a document including the following information; the purpose of this research, my role as a researcher, how data will be used, what participation will require, subjects covered and time required. This document is listed in appendix 1. Another central element here is anonymity and confidentiality. Data collected should be with great care, information that is leaking could be harmful for the organization. Employees' anonymity should be ensured in order to prevent that no sensitive information is presented. To overcome this ethical issue, data will be stored on a USB stick and anonymized by names. By member-checking the interviews, the participants have an opportunity to provide feedback on any statements that were made during the interviews. By respecting all the above-mentioned principles, as a researcher I have tried to contribute to scientific and socially relevant research in an ethical way.

4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the interviews and document analysis will be discussed in more detail. The research question that was central in this data collection was:

How do organizational characteristics of self-managed organizations and organizing practices of self-managed teams influence each other reciprocally?

First of all, an introduction of the organization will be given, in which the relevant history will be discussed. To get a general idea of major events and choices made in this self-managing organization. Then the characteristics of the organization are reviewed, the organizational characteristics that consist of; the organizational structure, the location of autonomy, workflow and task technology. Followed by the results of the organizing practices of the self-managed teams, consisting of; task division, task allocation, rewarding, the avoidance of freeriding and maintaining proper direction and coordination. The findings are supported by quotations from respondents. A list of the quotations and citations used in this chapter are shown in a coding table in appendix 5.

4.1 History of the case organization

The history of the case organization has been incorporated to create a more understandable picture of the various outcomes that will be discussed in the upcoming subchapters. These outcomes are the result of actions taken by the organization over the years and are thus important to mention.

From 1998 the concept of self-management was introduced in this case organization. Parallel to the change to self-management in 1998, offer-oriented care was changing into demand-oriented care. According to documents written in response to the transition to self-management, this requires organizations in which people work that are able to take responsibility. The organization must be able to respond flexibly and must have little or no coordination problems. That is why this care organization opted for a structure that was as flat as possible in which employees work in teams that work according to the principles of self-management. A flat organization with eventually three layers was created: Board of Directors, regional teams and self-managing teams. Figure 2 shows a simplified visualization of the organization structure and accompanying communication lines.

The supporting body of the organization split in two with the introduction of the regional teams. The explanation of why regional teams were introduced follows in the next subsection organizational structure, 4.2.1. Here it is only explained which functions fall within the regional team. The central office is where the other support services are bundled. This is now even further away from the self-managed teams. This is where ICT and finances are arranged and take away repetitive administrative burdens from the self-managed teams. The regional team consist of support functions that have regular contact with the teams consisting of; a behavioural expert focused on client-related matters and an advisor care process who takes care of the arrangement around client indications (care load) and team matters, a personnel officer comparable to an HR function and the regional manager who handles the teams that fall under this region.

According to internal documents about how self-management was set up and intended in the early 2000s, the case organization has no hierarchy in the organizational structure apart from the Board of Directors and the regional managers who were introduced later. There should be no hierarchy within the teams either, all team members have equal influence. The entire team is responsible for the team tasks that must be carried out. Tasks are distributed on the basis of a task matrix. This is a matrix that lists the tasks necessary for teams to be self-managing. This includes, for example, finances, planning the work schedule, medication for clients, contact persons for different institutions, etcetera. An example of a task matrix is included in appendix 3. The team members work according to the principles of self-management in joint responsibility for their own business processes and their results.

A final two important decisions concern the introduction of two projects. One is the hereafter much-discussed ‘own management and control space’; this project was introduced after the change of directors in 2012. According to the present director, it was necessary to give teams even more responsibility and not to burden them with time-consuming administrative tasks. As a result, many working methods, protocols and predefined frameworks have been eased or even withdrawn. In addition, this has resulted in the central office becoming even more supportive of the teams. This was followed by a project called MOVE in which renewed core values were published by management. MOVE stands here for; Middle of the community, entrepreneurship, craftsmanship and own direction. These core values were received with varying degrees of enthusiasm, especially entrepreneurship, as they placed even greater emphasis on the increasingly important and all-encompassing role of personal supervisors. Some employees felt this did not fit in with their level and function; the following quote describes the dissatisfaction “[...] *some colleagues cry out that they have become half care managers. The way people once started here, like doing nice things with the clients all day that has changed.*” (Interview 5, personal supervisor at 24h residential location).

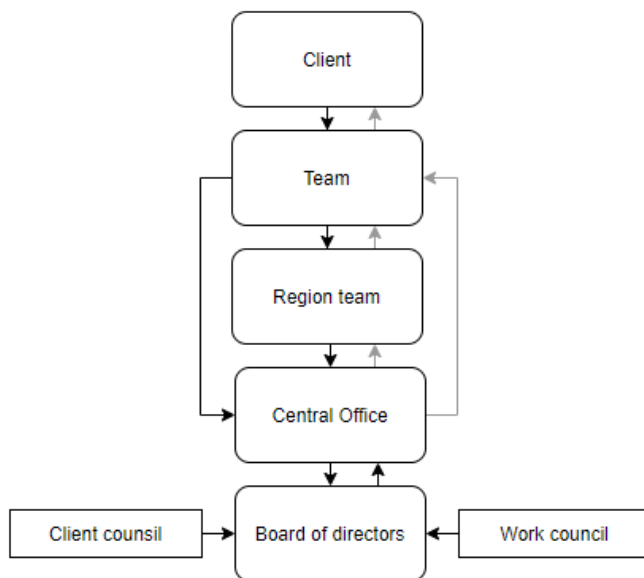


Figure 2: Visualization of structure in the organization including communication lines

4.2 Organizational characteristics

Now that we know the necessary background information about the case organization, it is possible to go into more detail about its organizational characteristics. These are outlined along the four critical organizational characteristics as mentioned by Langfred (2000) in his study the paradox of self-management. Each subheading will consider how that particular organizational characteristic is defined in the case organization. In the next subchapter (4.4), after discussing the different organizing practices, will address the influential relationship between these two concepts.

4.2.1 The establishment of the organizational structure

This section discusses the establishment of the organizational structure. Organizational structure is in this study defined as the way in which organizational activities are distributed, organized and coordinated. A flat structure, associated short communication lines and much decision-making power within the teams are characteristics of the structure of this self-managing organization. A simplified representation of the organizational structure is shown in appendix 2. Over the years, the structure of this organization has changed, starting with the arrival of a regional team.

The arrival of an additional organizational layer about ten years ago, in the form of a regional team, changed the structure of this self-managing organization. Communication and coordination from the care teams now happen through a first layer (the regional team) and is followed by the already existing second layer (the central office) which mainly provides administrative support to the self-managing teams.

The creation of the regional teams has its origins in the growth of the organization over the past twenty years. Started with about ten self-managing caring teams mainly in one region, the work area now covers a large part of the eastern Netherlands in approximately 80 teams over eight regions. However, practical problems arose by increasing the number of care teams. These practical problems centered mainly in the support departments of the organization in no longer overseeing requests for help from teams. Team managers and members of the central office were constantly supporting varying teams. This stems from the fact that teams were not assigned among different managers yet. Teams were assisted by managers or members from the central office who were currently available at that time. This resulted in alignment problems along with a lot of time loss. Teams had to explain to each support member their question, situation and problems they were facing. Which they might have explained to someone else before and who perhaps had already set something in motion. As a result, teams waste time by constantly explaining the information that others already know and support members did not know exactly what still needed to be done. A lot of time was lost in informing each other. In addition, if help had to be provided on location, travel time now becomes a factor due to increasing travel distance within the expanded service area. Dividing teams into regions allows the case organization to work more streamlined. Allowing teams to count on one point of contact.

Some notable features of the structure of this disability care institution are the different care services and different client levels that result in a difference in care load that can vary by location. The organization facilitates disabled people in supervised residential opportunities and daycare activities. There are daycare locations that are open from 9 AM until 5 PM and so-called 24hour residential locations. These differences

are reflected in the location-specific tasks such as working and living. This variance can create coordination and collaboration challenges between the different locations. These coordination and collaboration challenges arise mostly from processing information about (the same) clients and mutual feelings of status differences among the different locations. Many clients both make use of both the residential and daycare services within this organization. The various locations thus must record and maintain information on the same client. What makes it more complex is that there are also clients who only use one of the two services, which means that here the information only remains in one location. The organizations' digital systems should assist in this information transfer. However, respondents described that this does not always work easily and in practice there are calls to be made to check on the current status of the client.

In addition, feelings of status differences between different locations are mentioned several times by respondents which do not foster cooperation. When a client uses both services, the locations need to work together and discuss how to support the client in the best way. However, because residential locations experience more of the client and his environment, perceived status differences arise within the different locations. This is due to the fact that a residential facility is not only concerned with accommodation, but also with maintaining good relations with family members and the search for a suitable workplace or daycare location. Thus, because these locations spend more time with the client than a daycare location, it sometimes occurs that the residential location will make decisions on its own because they feel that the daycare locations have little to add. This again creates cooperation difficulties and important information about the client can be missed.

Another additional difference in the organization's structure is the difference in the level of care of clients. There are different grades of care within the case organization. Ranging from severely multiple limited (EMB) to mildly mentally limited (LVB), this affects the (care) pressure of the team in terms of workload. This difference causes varying pressure within teams. For example, a team with a lower care indication (LVB) would have less pressure because clients are more independent than a heavier care indication (EMB). Since locations have different care indications, the team sizes have been adjusted accordingly by placing more FTEs. However, locations with a heavier care indication still do not get non-care related tasks done within their shifts. This causes not only work pressure, but also leads to varying results between teams. An interviewee outlined this with the following quote: *"We will have more formation [FTE] than that colleague who has more independent clients [...] I can't leave the group place to do things [organizing practices] and that colleague is able to do that [...] That it doesn't all have to happen at half-past four, when your day is actually done. Because that's how we do it now."* (Interview 3, personal Supervisor at daycare).

As just briefly mentioned, the organizational structure has different team sizes along with the self-managing teams. According to the organizations' documentation, the defined ideal team size is an average of eight to fifteen team members. However, there are outliers of two to twenty five team members according to the interviewed employees. The interviewees indicated that this could bring different communication, coordination and responsibility challenges. An example described by a respondent is *"[...] your form of communication also becomes more complicated of course. Does everyone still feel equally involved and is it still equal as employees or do you get a lot of hierarchy?"* (Interview 8, personal supervisor at daycare).

4.2.2 Steps that constitutes the entire work process

This section discusses the workflow focused on the organizational level. The workflow includes the steps in the entire work process inside the organization, from start to finish. In other words, how do the different departments work together to accomplish the overall task of the organization.

The workflow at the organizational level is characterized by demand-driven work. All departments of the organization work together to accomplish the overall task of the organization; providing good support and care for the clients. This demand-driven work starts with the client, because the demand for care starts with them. Client's demands are captured by self-managing teams; these teams are empowered to provide clients with the best possible care. This includes not only making independent decisions about care-related issues, but also making decisions about organizational issues necessary to provide care. When teams are in need of knowledge or want to discuss certain issues, the regional team can be asked for extra information and knowledge. The same self-managed teams can also seek assistance from the central office for more administrative help or search related work. Region teams can also count on help when they ask the central office to look things up or complete administrative tasks. A simplified figure of how demand-driven support travels through the whole organization is shown in figure 3.

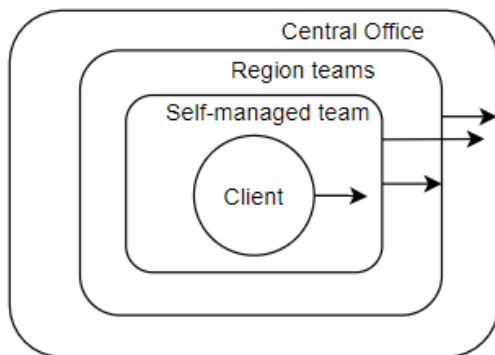


Figure 3: Visualization of demand-driven care and support through the organizational layers

On a self-managing team level, the work process is characterized by a lot of predictability in tasks and task sequencing because clients value a lot. However, the steps in the work process will not always go according to plan because of the ad hoc character of this care type. A respondent describes this by mentioning “*You have a few fixed things in a day, but you also have unexpected things. It's a mix*” (Interview 6, personal supervisor at 24h residential location).

In addition, the steps in the work process differ per team due to the different client needs (care indications) and the different locations (residential and day care). The steps for non-care related issues, the organizing practices, are represented in a task matrix. Here it is not established in which order and in which way these tasks must be carried out, only which tasks. Although the execution of tasks can now be anticipated flexibly. Teams are now allowed to give their own interpretation of the organizing tasks in the task matrix, which leads to different work processes among teams. This change stems from the greater degree of autonomy and regulating capacity that self-managed teams have been given after the introduction of the 'own

management and control space' project. This project is further explained under the next subheading, task technology.

Characterizing the work process is the frequently mentioned pressure on care in general. This is manifested by not getting organizing tasks done on time because the priority is on client care, resulting in working extra hours or postponing it to a later moment. These self-managed tasks are tasks that are necessary for teams to be self-managing and are written down in a task matrix for teams. It appears that for finishing mostly organizing tasks often had to be returned to work or it is postponed. One respondent described it as; *“That means 9/10 times that you just have to come back or what I still do sometimes, login at home [...] As soon as there is some pressure in the team that subjects of ethics and privacy [self-managing task on matrix] are very easily said, we'll discuss it next time.”*. (Interview 3, personal supervisor at daycare).

4.2.3 The performance of tasks

This section discusses the task technology within the organization. Although task technology is very similar to workflow, they both cover work processes, there is a difference in focus. This difference lies in the fact that task technology looks at how tasks are performed, whereas workflow looks at the order in which tasks are performed. Task technology refers thus to the method of execution and covers the performance of tasks. What already has been mentioned with workflow, the demand-driven work, is also applicable here. However, this section goes into more detail on how this demand-driven work is performed.

A change in the management board was the starting point for the easement or withdrawal of protocols and working methods. This change was geared towards working as efficiently as possible within the organization. Where endless files that were set up twenty years ago describing how to do something no longer fit in. This project also gave teams more autonomy and room to regulate, allowing them to use the task matrix as they wished. The decision on how to perform work and where you give priority now relies on each team individually. As a result, the task technology per team has become variable. An effect of removing working methods is also that within the teams there has to be more discussion about how they will perform tasks. One respondent describes this process as *“When you set the boundaries [of self-managing] much more broadly then there are more decision making in the team. How are we going to do something”* (Interview 6, personal supervisor at 24h residential location).

This project and consequent change has resulted in differences in the performance of tasks by teams; tasks that are performed differently or sometimes no longer performed because teams do not find the necessary or they take too much time. Caring tasks take precedence over organizing tasks in order to keep the team running as described under workflow. Some organizing tasks from the task matrix were considered less important by respondents because there was no immediate added value. Tasks such as ethics and the previously mentioned Primus Inter Pares (PIP) are commonly cited tasks that are no longer a priority or are no longer being done by teams. Interviewees confirm this by; *“A lot of teams have also withdrawn that PIPer role because people are managing just fine and everyone feels free enough to go a manager themselves”* (Interview 5, personal supervisor at 24h residential location).

4.2.4 The location of autonomy within the organization

This section discusses the location of autonomy within the organization. The location of autonomy includes who usually has the authority to decide over which matters. According to Langfred (2000), the location of autonomy can be either on organizational, team and individual levels. This distribution is used to write about who has typically the authority to decide over which issues. Over the years, the location of autonomy has increasingly been assigned to the self-managed teams. Autonomy is the ability to make your own decision.

Organizational autonomy - The manager in the regional team is financially accountable for the self-managed teams. How to achieve these results lies with the teams themselves. However, the approach of managers to how strict they are on managing is not fixed or defined and thus varies from region to region. This difference is in the degree of supervision and contact moments. The other regional team members decide over client indication issues. Client's indication determines how much funding will be available within the organization to provide care to this client. The central office, as far as this research covers, has no decision making authority on matters. This office is fully equipped to relieve other departments within the organization of administrative matters. Matters such as personnel issues, ICT and client administration.

Team autonomy - Teams have great responsibility for caring and organizing tasks. They can and may arrange a lot themselves. Teams are responsible for achieving the goals set by the team itself. These goals and subsequent financial decisions are written down in an annual plan, which is signed by the regional manager. Teams make their own work schedule, concerning FTEs, and use the task matrix to perform self-managing tasks. In terms of care, they are responsible for the clients that are part of their location. Teams have to call for help themselves when they need supplementary knowledge. This is then provided by either the regional team or the central office. Yet, there is still some interdependence, as a request for a care indication. Teams are responsible for the correct input, but the actual application is done by the regional team.

Individual autonomy - Within the team, there are different functions. A personal supervisor is the highest function in the teams and includes final responsibility for a number of clients and involves more client administration tasks. The function of supervisor, formerly named assistant supervisor, has a more supporting and executive role in relation to the personal supervisor. Teams are free to determine how these functional differences are expressed in practice. Sometimes there is a clear separation between these functions; other teams let it run more collaboratively without the formal authority difference according to the interviews. This freedom in execution comes from the greater degree of authority and regulatory spaces they have been given to design their own work following the project 'own management and control space'. These accompanying rules and procedures have been greatly reduced if not eliminated within the organization and the authority to establish these rules and procedures has only been increased. This therefore implies higher individual autonomy and high group autonomy.

In general, over the years, teams have been given much more decision-making power. The starting point was the governance change in 2012, in which a different approach to self-managing was introduced. This led to the project 'own management and control', where more emphasis was placed on own decision and

control space without pre-described working methods. This project in turn resulted in a withdrawal of written protocols, working methods and guidelines throughout the entire organization.

Concluding, more autonomy is placed within the self-managed teams, allowing the teams to work more independently and be more demand-driven. However, this approach to greater autonomy was not viewed as equally positive by everyone. Some respondents even said that it has gone too far. The reason for that is because employees no longer work with guidelines and therefore lose the vision of the organization. They also referred to working on everyone's own island. A respondent describes this as *“I wonder if this self-management has not turned into too much of what teams need. Ultimately you do need to have a vision behind it and you do need to be able to work within a framework”* (Interview 9, central office member).

4.3 Organizing practices

Now that we know the organizational characteristics about the case organization, it is possible to go into more detail about self-managed teams organizing practices. These are outlined along the six practices defined by Martela (2019) in the study 'what makes self-managing organizations novel'.

4.3.1 The mapping of organizations' goals into tasks and subtasks

This section discusses the task division focused on the team level. Task division touches on the mapping of the organizations' goals into tasks and subtasks (Puranam et al., 2014). In other words, how each self-managed team divides the total tasks of their team?

The total tasks of self-managed teams consist of providing care to a group of clients and some organizing and administrative tasks. **The division of care tasks** is done between team-members itself, mutually. The basis here is laid in the function differences within the team. A personal supervisor is responsible for a number of clients within the location. A supervisor has more supporting and executive tasks. In practice this means that clients are often helped by the supervisor for more general care services. When important issues need to be discussed or the care plan needs to be updated or adjusted, this will be done with the personal supervisor.

The mapping of **administrative matters** are resolved among team members themselves, these mostly lie within the responsibility of the personal supervisor. This is the person who is accountable for a number of clients within the location. However, how this division of administrative tasks is handled varies from team to team. Some teams keep a very strict separation between these functions, others let it merge more.

Organizational tasks are derived from the task matrix. The aim of the division of tasks in a task matrix is to ensure that teams can be as self-managed as possible at their location and know what their tasks and responsibilities are. Supportive services in terms of the regional teams and the central office are ready to support the care teams if needed.

This location specific task matrix is not created by the teams itself and is already defined with some specific organizing tasks. An example of a task matrix and associated organizing tasks is shown in appendix 2. These tasks were created by the management of the organization when it was decided to move to a self-

managed approach within the organization. But, in recent years teams can adjust it themselves now. The ability to adjust these tasks themselves has come since the project ‘own management and control space’ was launched. This has given the teams the opportunity to decide for themselves how to interpret and execute the tasks matrix. Or as one of the respondents described it as “*that is the choice of each team itself whether they do that or not [...] Do you need it as a team or not*” (Interview 7, personal supervisor at 24h residential location). As a result of this change, tasks are rearranged or even removed from the task matrix since guidelines and protocols are not that strict anymore. However, not utilizing the work methods and protocols anymore has also caused some confusion among the respondents. Employees now have to figure out again who you need for certain things because tasks are no longer so tightly divided. This is especially difficult for new employees because it takes now longer for them to completely settle in.

The difference in task matrices among locations stems from the different care locations within the organization. A daycare and residential location. The task matrix is expanded with location-specific tasks because some self-managing tasks did not apply everywhere.

4.3.2 The mapping of tasks to groups and individuals

This section discusses the task allocation focused on the team level. Task allocation touches on the mapping of the obtained tasks through task division to individuals and groups (Puranam et al., 2014). In other words, how each self-managed team divides the total tasks of their team to team-members?

The mutual allocation of organizing tasks is done by the task matrix as described above. Within the teams, the allocation is mostly done on the basis of personal expertise and interest. This allocation exists in the form of a first and second person in charge of an allocated task, which should be filled in the task matrix as shown in appendix 2. The second person in charge serves as a backup when the first person in charge is absent, although in some teams team members work together to divide the task load between two people. In order to retain knowledge within the team, the organization encourages the rotation of organizing tasks every two years. However, teams respond to this variably. What often comes up is that they decide for themselves whether and how often they rotate tasks, just what they are comfortable with.

Within the task matrix, the sizes of organizing tasks differ. The bigger tasks, such as rostering or finance, are performed by people with the largest hour’s contracts. This means that as a team member you do not have complete freedom of choice in task allocation. Logically, there are also smaller tasks that take little time such as key management. All these tasks are divided proportionally to the contract hours of employees. This means that if you work full time, you are also assigned to more tasks from the matrix.

A difference that arose in task allocation that came with the introduction of the location-specific matrix is the time at which these organizing tasks are completed. These tasks should be part of the employee’s shifts. They are responsible for planning and arranging these tasks individually. However, there appears to be a difference in terms of location. For daycare locations, it is more difficult to carry out organizing tasks within their shift than in a 24-hour care location. These organizing tasks are often done outside the shift in a daycare location. Since they do not have enough time during their work to perform these tasks. This creates an increased workload and tasks that are postponed to a later point in time. This was discussed in more detail in the workflow section (4.2.2).

As just described within task division, the reason for dividing tasks into a task matrix is to ensure that teams can be self-managing. The regional team and central office are thus supportive of the teams. However,

because teams have been given a lot of responsibility and room to regulate - which has been increased by the project - the tasks intended for the teams can also be handled more flexibly. Respondents refer to the ease with which teams ask the central office for help and this question is even resolved by them. Over the years tasks originally intended for the self-managed teams have shifted to the central office. An interview with a central office employee revealed that certain tasks are performed centrally that originally should be performed decentralized. This is described as *“There has been a shift in that. the central office is picking up more tasks from teams.”* (Interview 0, central office member).

4.3.3 The provision of rewarding

This section discusses the provision of rewarding focused on the team level. Rewarding includes the organizational need to provide some form of reward to make employees motivated in order to accomplish tasks (Puranam et al., 2014). In other words, the method of rewarding matters in how employees perform their tasks.

The fact that the case organization works with a self-managed approach makes it a flat organization. A disadvantage of a flat organization is that it has little to no opportunity for career promotion. The possibilities within this disability care institution are only horizontal growth in additional roles, such as a learning coach or participation coach. These options are roles that you perform in addition to your caring function as a kind of job enrichment. There are thus opportunities to grow, but no "appreciation" in the form of a higher position. This appears to be a common stumbling block among the interviewed employees. Not only is the reward in the form of a higher position but also the overall motivation of employees put into question. This is made clear by the following quote; *“[...] how do you then keep people motivated? If it's all running and it's all working and there's no challenge in it anymore.”* (Interview 3, personal supervisor at daycare). But, not every employee sees the lack of career promotion as a problem. A split became apparent during the interviews with team members. Some employees miss a challenge in the form of a higher position. The other would prefer to be as operationally active again without all the extra responsibilities that come with self-management. This division in employees can also be seen in the next heading, free-riding.

The appraisal of employees is done via Personal Development Plans (POP) interviews. These meetings take place with the region manager and other team members. However, these POP interviews are seen as obligatory and bureaucratic by the self-managed teams. Because teams themselves have been given the responsibility to conduct these appraisals, it can be seen that they have been set up differently or even no longer being conducted. A lot of teams set it up in their own way and work under the principle that they ring the bell themselves if necessary. This means that if team members have a question or problem about their performance, job in general or career, they go to the region manager themselves.

The fact that many of these POP interviews have disappeared has to do with the pressure on care teams and the priority they gave to care- and other organizing tasks. The work pressure that occurs within the teams is, as far as this research goes, due to the ad-hoc work with clients which makes it difficult to plan tasks beforehand. In addition, the fact that working hours in day care centers are tightly planned and that organizing tasks almost always occur outside of working hours does not help.

4.3.4 Practices that avoid freeriding

This section discusses the practices that should avoid free riding on the team level. This behaviour is a general problem in team action and therefore should be prevented (Puranam et al., 2014). Because when individuals receive a benefit from a service without actually contributing to it, we refer to it as freeriding.

Freeriding appears to be a big thing when the data is collected. However, the impression is that this does not stem from unwillingness to work or the idea of benefit from other people's work, but from the way tasks are divided and executed. Now opportunities arise that make it easier to benefit from other employees' work. Because the performance of tasks is no longer fixed in working methods, teams are responsible for how tasks are performed. This creates a difference in execution among teams. One employee considers that a task includes only 'x' and another employee considers that a task includes 'xyz'. Because it is also no longer certain how to work, some steps could be skipped to gain results faster. This ensures that it is no longer clear how work is executed and who is responsible. This creates a self-reinforcing loop in which there are always people who do more tasks than others. The shortage of clarity about tasks created by the withdrawal of protocols and working methods has also led to tasks being postponed. The fact that teams are responsible for the introduction and settling of new colleagues themselves only reinforces the problem. This has its nature in the more frequently recurring pressure on teams, which generally means that little attention is paid to properly introduce new colleagues. This results in ever more ambiguity about task distribution.

Since organizing tasks became non-committal, everyone performs their tasks in their own way, according to their own interpretation. Due to the large degree of autonomy and withdrawal of protocols in combination with moderate control, tasks have changed and some have even disappeared. Tools to control teams have disappeared such as the TOP form (team development plan) and the Team Scan. A reason why some tasks are no longer performed is, according to employees; *"If no one comes and says it still has to be done, it won't happen anymore [...] And if it does or doesn't happen, no one says, well you have to do that now"* (Interview 8, personal supervisor at daycare)

Also, team size has sometimes made it easier to take advantage of others who take on a lot of work. Although this is tackled by splitting up teams by the management itself. This implies that team size is a factor in the possibility to freeride. Interviewees confirm this problem by; *"Our day center was split into two teams a few years ago. Some people did all the tasks and the rest didn't [...] that was also very easy to do in a big team, where you can hide behind things quite easily and it is quite difficult to feel responsible in this way [working in a large team]"* (Interview 3, personal supervisor at daycare).

From the organization, there is not much done to prevent free riding, as long as the outcomes of the teams are sufficient, there is no active control or reaction from management. Teams have developed their own way to avoid freeriding and making everyone feel equally responsible. Allocating tasks by explicitly writing down the team member's name, thus personally assigning helps to complete tasks. If a team member does not explicitly give a task to a colleague but leaves it in general, it appears that often the same employee picks up these tasks. Another example that was mentioned during the interviews is to ask in a work meeting the two persons in charge of a certain organizing task to briefly update how they are doing with their task. In this way, teams have some build-in control for task execution.

4.3.5 Providing direction to accomplish tasks

This section discusses the provision of direction on the team level. Direction is needed to accomplish tasks since employees need updating and guiding information about other team members and their working environment.

A positive feature that comes with a flat organization structure is short communication lines which promote the speed of information. Internal coordination within the teams is carried out in various ways. First, the ongoing consultation with colleagues within the location. This includes unscheduled consultations on minor activities and alignments. Second, the use of transfer documents. These are written documents that contain important information between two different shifts. And lastly, a (monthly) work and cluster consultation. Work meetings are for team matters themselves, cluster meetings are specifically focused on client care. Due to the large autonomy and decision-making authority that lies within the self-managed teams, there is much more decision-making and therefore more consultation.

Updated and guided information could come from team members within the team, other self-managed teams or the region and central office. However, the fact that, over the years, it has become increasingly unclear who is responsible for what, also has an impact on the provision of information. In addition, it appears that there are few contact moments with the regional manager. Most teams have a half-hour work meeting once a month that the manager joins. If needed, the manager is accessible on one's own initiative. The PIP officer was intended to be a point of contact and conduit for the team and manager, but many teams have removed this organizing task from the task matrix due to emerging status differences and time considerations. A respondent describes this as “*We have a work meeting anyway*” (Interview 4, personal supervisor at 24h residential location). Due to the limited contact, the manager also has little insight into the teams and lacks control. Lines of communication within the organization are not always well linked, a direct result of teams having more autonomy and performing tasks in their own way.

The choices made by management to no longer provide new employees with standard induction and organization-wide training courses makes it more difficult to house the same information and knowledge. This decision, demand-driven learning, was made along with the change to demand-driven work. As a result, each team may have different knowledge beyond the basic expertise required for disability care. Extra training and courses are for example in autism or Down's syndrome if that only applies to your location and you have explicitly asked for this. Since there is no longer a standard introduction for new employees they struggle with figuring out their responsibilities. Sometimes resulting in doing things they are not ‘supposed to do’ according to former working methods. On the other hand, some employees know exactly who to contact for certain tasks or questions and therefore bypass/skip the lines of communication. However, this does not always have the desired effect as one respondent says; “*It doesn't work the way it should [...] that stagnates*” (Interview 1, personal supervisor at daycare).

The use of tools to provide updated information is often viewed positively as teams can pick up things more easily themselves since there is more insight with tools. This is about the use of CURA scheduling, where hours are shown in relation to the financial plan and the so-called MARAP. This is a monthly report in which financial data but also client records are kept. This report is discussed in a monthly meeting with the regional manager as a kind of measure of performance. Another tool is the KEES intranet. The arrival of

the KEES platform has ensured that organization-wide information can be distributed easily. However, this tool is not much used according to the interviewees “*some click it away and have not used it for years*” (Interview 5, personal supervisor at a 24h residential location).

4.3.6 Providing coordination of interdependent tasks

This section discusses the provision of coordination on the team level. This is defined as “the temporally unfolding and contextualized process of input regulation and interaction articulation to realize a collective performance” (Faraj & Xiao, 2006, p.1157). In other words, what do members of the self-managed teams do on a regular basis to promote coordination with other teams and departments?

Coordination can be broken down into the constant communication of team members within the self-managed teams and the use of IT systems to provide relevant information to other teams and departments. The so-called handover documents are maintained within the team so that colleagues who take over the next shift know exactly what has been going on. In addition, daily reports are made on client-related matters by personal supervisors. These reports can also be viewed by employees from the regional team and the central office. This allows the behavioural expert to request care indications with the right input. On non-care related matters, for example, the execution of organizing tasks no records are kept (online) where insight and control can be carried out by the regional team or the central office. As a result, working methods may differ from one team to another. The role of the Primus Inter Paris (PIP), a task in the task matrix of the teams, is intended to be the contact person between the team and manager. However, this role has disappeared from many teams due to time considerations and the feeling of a status difference within the team. One respondent described this feeling as “*That is the one that has conversations with the manager...At a certain point he gets a certain status again, you are made just a little bit more important*” (Interview 4, personal supervisor at 24h residential location).

4.4 The influence between the two concepts in the case organization

Now that it is clear how the case organization applied both concepts, it is possible to look at how they influence each other. The following section will describe how the concepts, organizational characteristics and organizing practices affect each other in a reciprocal way in the case organization.

The task division of self-managed teams is influenced by the organizational structure and autonomy. This was caused by creating different work locations with accompanying location-specific task matrices and the operating of different types of care within the organization. This difference affects work processes in turn and indicates a recurring relation between task division of teams and workflow and task technology for the whole organization.

A renewed structure due to the arrival of the regional teams has led to a different division of tasks. This change has led in turn to different allocation of tasks within teams. With the rise of more autonomy in the teams through the project, work processes changed in teams. Teams also shifted various tasks to the central office, changing the workflow throughout the organization. With changed work processes there is also (more) chance of freeriding within the teams because established work processes and protocols have been omitted.

The task allocation of self-managed teams is influenced by the organization's structure and the location of autonomy. As just described, the task division of teams also affects task allocation. Because the degree to which tasks are broken down into subtasks affects the task allocation of team members individually. However, because of this influence, the changed task allocation affects the possibility of freeriding. The difference in the sizes of individual tasks influences the possibility to benefit from other team-members' work.

In addition, as with task division, changes in task allocation can also lead to changes in the workflow and task technology of the entire organization. What you saw in the case organization is that some tasks were no longer performed by the teams and were shifted to the central office. This staff department became increasingly burdened with the administrative tasks that actually belong within the teams. This has come into existence because teams have been given more freedom to make decisions and working methods and protocols have been abandoned. The organizing tasks that are listed in a task matrix are now performed according to teams' own interpretation. Because teams are usually in a rush to provide care, tasks they considered less urgent were thus shifted to the central office.

The rewarding of members in a self-managed team is influenced by the organization's structure and workflow. Due to the self-managing structure of the organization, it is almost impossible to grow in a higher function. The flat nature of the self-managed organization does allow for horizontal growth, in terms of additional roles. Where there must be caution is the possible demotivation of employees due to the lack of growth potential. Because when this comes up, there will be staff turnover and the organization will lose important knowledge.

Management's decision to stop taking protocols and predefined working methods so strictly, together with the additional decision-making power given to teams after the 'own management and control space' project, has led to teams having their own interpretations and execution of tasks. Including their personal development plans. These were seen as time-consuming, annoying and 'if there is anything you will go to the manager anyway'. Therefore, personal development plans are set up differently or are no longer executed by teams, which is a difference in workflow and task technology that affects the rewarding of employees.

The avoidance of freeriding is influenced by the organization's structure and growing autonomy given to the self-managed teams. Because of the loosening of working methods and the additional moderate control from the region team, sometimes ambiguity arises about what is expected from team members. This ambiguity affects teams' task division and task allocation, allowing for the possibility to freeride rather than avoidance. This allows team members to be 'passed over' because they do not know who to go to which in turn affects the work processes of the whole organization. However, sometimes teams have also developed their own ways in task division and allocation to avoid this behaviour.

Providing direction to self-managed teams given by the degree of information disclosure is influenced by the organizational structure. The self-managing structure creates a flat organization that ensures short lines of information. However, due to the arrival of regional teams, a new extra information line has been added. Consultations and decisions are most often made within the self-managing teams with colleagues, using documents that provide information from shift to shift. Together with (mostly) monthly work meetings with

the regional manager. This high degree of autonomy affects work processes, which were previously more collaborative with managers. The advent of tools for teams allows them to have even more insight and more decision-making power. However, because teams have been given more autonomy and responsibility, this has also led to less contact with the regional team and therefore less control from outside the self-managing team. This reduced contact and therefore control has an effect on the execution of the work processes organization-wide. This becomes visible in the shift of organizing team tasks to the central office and sometimes non-performance of tasks listed on the task matrix. The network of social interactions throughout the organization can be written down by team members that have to work together with colleagues, the regional team and members of the central office to perform tasks successfully, this complex network can provide disruptions that affect the performance of tasks, task technology.

Providing coordination to self-managed teams given by the degree of control and information technologies is influenced by the organization's structure. This is because teams have been given the opportunity to decide for themselves how they want to execute their work. Due to the arrival of the project 'own management and control space' work processes have changed. The degree of control built into the structure of the organization is marginal, making teams increasingly detached from the entire organization.

5. Conclusion

In the previous chapters, the literature was discussed and the research findings were presented. This chapter attempts to answer the central question of this research: *How do organizational characteristics of self-managed organizations and organizing practices of self-managed teams influence each other reciprocally?*

The following section will answer this research question by describing how both concepts, organizational characteristics and organizing practices, affect each other in a reciprocal way. Subsequently, the contributions are described and openings for further research and limitations of this study are discussed. Concluding with a reflection on the whole research process.

5.1 Conclusion

The conclusion answers the research question based on the analysis of the results in the above chapter. This chapter describes the influential relationship between organizational characteristics and organizing practices. As assumed at the beginning of this research in the main question, there is a reciprocal relationship between those concepts. Based on the most relevant results, an attempt is made to explain how this reciprocal relationship developed and even occurs in a vicious circle. This led to the core problem of this case organization which is an overload of work in the central office.

The reciprocal relationship, characterized by organizational circularity in a vicious circle.

It can be concluded that there is a reciprocal relationship between organizational characteristics of self-managed organizations and organizing practices of their self-managed teams. Changes in organizational characteristics bring about a change in one or more organizing practices of the self-managed teams. Some of these changed organizing practices could, in turn, create a change in organizational characteristics. This makes it a recurring relationship, an expression of organizational circularity.

First, the reciprocal relationship of the two concepts. The role of organizational characteristics could influence not only organizing practices within self-managed teams but also their own organizational characteristics. Important decisions and events that influenced organizing practices of self-managed teams are the advent of an extra organizational layer (the region team), the change of management alongside their decisions and the ‘own management and control space’ project. All these events had an impact on self-managing teams in terms of their organizing practices. Teams have frequently changed their ways of working to what they consider important. Furthermore, the role of organizing practices is not only influenced by organizational characteristics but also other organizing practices of self-managed teams. The same dynamics emerged in organizational characteristics. It is important to note here that some organizing practices may in turn influence organizational characteristics. This mainly includes the workflow and task technology of the organization.

The outcome of this study is thus an expression of organizational circularity, more specifically a reinforcing loop that turned out into a vicious circle. A vicious circle is a reinforcing loop that turns a less advantageous situation into a disadvantageous situation. Or in other words “an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and causing the same effect to occur in an intensified form, and so on, to no end” (Orwell,

1968, p.127). This variable will continue to move in that same direction until the system is destroyed or some (dramatic) changes occur (Weick, 1979). This is what occurred in the case organization. Where the consequence of self-management became a cause for the shift of organizing tasks from the self-managing teams to the central office. The same consequence, self-management, occurred in an intensified form due to the extra autonomy and control space the self-managed teams were given by the introduction of the project, which only intensified the shift.

The well-intentioned project of providing teams with more autonomy and in this way would bring more freedom and less hassle turned out the opposite. The more the organization emphasizes the teams own autonomy and responsibility, the more teams start working according to their own interpretations. This leads in turn to a change in the accomplishments of tasks as they have the autonomy to adjust and shift these themselves. This in turn leads to fewer control possibilities of other departments of this organization and a shift of former team tasks (and thus pressure) from the teams to the central office. This change of teams' behaviour has an impact on the entire organization. Not only have working methods in terms of workflow and task technology changed here, but the pressure on support departments is also increasing. This has led to growing overhead costs. An undesirable situation in a self-managed organization where the focus should be at the bottom of the organization.

Some important decisions that influenced these two concepts resulting in a vicious circle are the relinquishments of protocols and working methods by the often mentioned 'own management and control space' project. This project not only ensured that work processes were changed throughout the organization, but also that self-managed teams were given more regulation room (i.e. autonomy), which only reinforced the change in the execution of tasks. Some organizing tasks were given less priority or were even removed from the task matrix of some locations. This in turn led to a change of tasks in self-managed teams and the central office. The fact that there is little control built in from outside the teams has allowed these changes to continue to a point where it is no longer beneficial to the case organization. The control is vanishing and self-managed teams increasingly operate as their own islands with varying results. This leads to the central office being busier than ever to pick up tasks that teams are not doing (anymore), in addition to the usual support of these teams.

Additionally, due to the unpredictable nature of the work, it is sometimes not possible to carry out organizing tasks, even if they are scheduled in the shift. In addition, some team members find these tasks time-consuming or do not see the need to carry them out in this way. The understanding of why these tasks are necessary for a well-functioning self-managing organization may have its origin in the moderate introduction and training in self-management, making the overall organizational goal less clear.

Another event that (unwittingly) contributes to the reciprocal and vicious relationship are new employees. These employees are trained by colleagues from self-managed teams and are completely dependent on their knowledge transfer and work processes. Since these work processes differ per team due to the large amount of autonomy and regulation room they have within the teams, this drives through in the execution of tasks. New colleagues are therefore trained differently, (self-managing) knowledge is lost and teams are increasingly seen as separate operating islands as a result of which work processes keep changing. In addition, the lack of clarity as to what is expected from employees, resulting from the abandonment of working methods and protocols, ensures that mainly new employees are not immediately assigned to tasks.

This results in tasks not being executed or being completed later, which in turn puts pressure on self-managed teams and the central office. This maintains the problem.

However, probably the main reason for the circular relationship that has characterized itself into a vicious circle is the pressure on care within the case organization. This creates a shortage of time for organizing practices in self-managed teams, which is a problem. As far as this research goes, due to the ad hoc work environment with clients which makes it difficult to plan tasks. Additionally, it does not help that working hours are so tight that non-care related tasks almost always happen outside of working hours, especially in day care centers. Resulting in organizing practices are postponed, not completed or shifted to the central office which in turn creates accumulating workload there. The problem unfolds here in more costs by hiring more employees (FTE). These additional costs in turn create pressure on operational care. This continues the problem and only makes it worse.

The answer to “*How do organizational characteristics of self-managed organizations and organizing practices of self-managed teams influence each other reciprocally?*” is thus;

These two concepts influence each other both in one direction and sometimes in two directions. In which a change in organizational characteristics leads to a change in organizing practices of self-managed teams, this in turn leads to a recurring change in organizational characteristics. This is an example of organizational circularity. These dynamics can arise in any self-managed organization because the organizational characteristics are closely intertwined with the organizing practices of the teams. What makes it a vicious circle in this particular case is, and therefore may cause an undesirable effect in other organizations as well. The increasingly growing autonomy that self-managed teams were given in combination with the lack of controlling facets and mitigating measures from an organization perspective. As a result, teams can change their organizing tasks by no longer performing them or shifting them to other departments. This may be due to time constraints, changing priorities, a lack of knowledge or not seeing the necessity or added value of some current tasks. Resulting in other departments being busier than ever now to handle all these (new) tasks.

5.2 Contribution

The contributions will describe what this research gives back to theory and practice. Finally, openings for further research are described as well as the limitations of this study.

5.2.1 Scholarly contribution

This section describes the contribution of this research to existing theories. With the application of a single case study research at a disability care institution, this research provides a deeper insight into the concept of the relationships self-managed organizations have with the behaviour of self-managed teams in terms of their organizing practices. By describing how organizational characteristics relate to the organizing practices of these teams, this research contributes to narrowing the gap between the mostly positive theory and fewer positive practices of self-management. The fact that this study focuses specifically on organizing practices and not on self-managing teams as a whole makes it a lot more specific.

Looking at how both concepts influence each other has led to the uncovering of a vicious circle, in terms of organizational circularity. This finding is not only a scholarly contribution but can also be of help for practitioners. By linking a system thinking approach to these two concepts, a contribution can be made to the dynamics and influences of self-managed theories. By this research, a contribution is made to the theory of self-management in organizational settings (Cohen & Bailey, 1997) and autonomy in work groups (Cohen et al., 1996). Because now it has become more clear that the outcome of self-management can vary with specific organizational characteristics. In addition, this research has again made clear that giving a large amount of autonomy to teams does not always have to have a positive outcome. Therefore, this research also contributes to the critical self-management studies.

This research contributes to the scarce existing critical studies on self-management. By examining the behaviour of self-managed teams that are influenced by organizational characteristics, it contributes primarily to the studies of Langfred (2000) and Tata & Prasad (2004). Langfred's (2000) research the paradox of self-management, focused on the negative relationship between individual autonomy and group effectiveness within self-managed teams. In addition, Langfred recommends in this study further research on four organizational characteristics. Through this research, group effectiveness is further deepened on the organizing practices of self-managed teams and the organizational characteristics have been used as a framework for this relationship.

The research of Tata & Prasad (2004) describes that organizational structure can have a negative influence on self-managed teams. This study complements the existing results with not only structure but also other organizational characteristics that could have an influence on self-managed teams. In addition, the strong influence of organizational structure has also been found in this research. However, something has also been found that is inconsistent with the results of Tata and Prasad's (2004) research. Namely, their findings imply that "teams with high levels of self-management may be more effective in organizations where the authority to make decisions on task performance is distributed, and in organizations with fewer explicit rules, policies and procedures." (p. 258). This contradicts the results found in this research where the lack of rules and procedures now resulted in less effectiveness of teams where there is high decision-making power. A side note that must be made is that this is not the only result found in practice, which may contribute to the fact that it does not work in favour of the organization. The fact that the organization is struggling with less positive effects of self-organization can also be related to the lack of clarity about responsibilities throughout the organization, the lack of proper training of new employees within the self-managed teams or the arrival of a regional team that brings with it an extra layer of communication.

5.2.2 Practical contribution

This section describes the contribution of this research to practice. With the application of a single case study research at a disability care institution, this research provides a better understanding of how organizational characteristics affect the behaviour of self-managed teams in this specific organization. This knowledge can lead to more positive results in the future. Now that we know how these concepts relate, it is possible to look more closely at where the negative impact or failure arises that organizations hold back to achieve the intended benefits. The knowledge of a vicious circle can therefore be useful to understand how it can be avoided or interrupted to ensure more positive outcomes.

Using system thinking theory, such as explaining organizational events as a form of organizational circularity could help managers to better understand and operate learning organizations. It provides practitioners with the tools to think about interdependence and its corollary. Seeing the patterns of recurrence enables practitioners to become aware of broader unseen forces and in this way think about ways of changing patterns. Looking at how both concepts influence each other has led to the uncovering of a vicious circle. This finding can not only be of help for the case study organization but also for other organizations working with self-managed teams. Namely, by providing insight into what makes organizational circularity a vicious circle, negative outcomes can be understood and can be the basis for a solution to transform these into a balanced or even positive organizational circle.

The new insights and better understanding of this relationship allow a better answer to the practical question facing the case organization. Why do some organizations have (more) positive effects of self-management and others to a lesser extent? It provided the organization tools to look at specific organizational characteristics and the compliance of organizing practices that have led to these changes. In this way, they could now strive for a better understanding of what effects self-organizing have on organizational characteristics and in turn on self-managed teams. With this information, the organization can now make better-informed choices to solve their self-managing challenges.

Comparable organizations can certainly learn something from these research findings, but they should be careful in adopting the recommendations because the situation may not be identical. But knowing what influences it has can in turn help practitioners to better adjust the characteristics of the organization so that it enables the right conditions for self-managing teams. Understanding the influential relationship fosters fundamental insights on successful self-managing forms.

5.2.3 Future research suggestions

During this research, it became clear that little literature has been conducted about self-managing teams whose results were less positive. More critical research can narrow the gap between mainly positive literature and less positive practice. This not only ensures that organizations can learn from the best practice and organize their organization even better.

In addition to this, more research about different self-managed teams is needed to find out how these self-managed organizations evolve. Irrespective of the results of this study, it is not directly transferable to other self-managed organizations operating in other contexts. Hence, further research would be needed to see whether similar dynamics can be found in other types of organizations.

Considering the results of this study, a couple of suggestions can be given for future research. Whilst conducting the research, it became evident that knowledge and training of employees in the area of self-management might play a role in creating a reciprocal effect from organizing practices to organizational characteristics. Further research can be done as to whether the effects of training would have the same effect in the creation of a reciprocal effect in self-managing teams. In addition, this study showed that the workload on the teams was the reason for changing and abandoning some tasks. The influence of work pressure on these choices can be further investigated in order to map out how team tasks change under work pressure.

What also emerged in this study and thus can be further researched is to what extent leadership in self-managing teams plays a role in this relationship. This study shows a split based on character traits. Although a lot of research has been done on leadership in combination with self-managing, it would be an option to investigate to what extent character traits of members of a self-managed team contributes to the development of this reciprocal relationship between self-managing teams and organizational characteristics. Finally, conducting quantitative research alongside this qualitative research would also contribute to more valid results.

5.2.4 Limitations

In any research, there are some limitations that should be mentioned. First, the reader should bear in mind that a limited data set has been used because the study is based on only one organization. This was a deliberate decision because the study has to be demarcated; otherwise, it would have been too broad. The findings of this research are based on a single case study in one of the self-managing organizations in the care sector. The fact that a single case study focuses on a particular organizational setting in a specific company limits the ability to generalize the found results in other contexts.

Second, regarding the methodology of this study, the results are based on interviews and document analysis as primary data. Even though interviews help to get first-hand knowledge from participants, direct observations of their work meetings would have enriched this study through insights on interactions. The observation of work meetings could have provided more information about self-managed teams' dynamics as opposed to just the perspectives of the interviewees (Symon & Cassel, 2012). Unfortunately, it was not possible to add another data collection method like an observation to the study, due to the Covid measures. In this way, there is no triangulation in which interviews, document analysis and observation are part of it. This limits the ability to reduce the subjectivity of the respondents and the influence of the researcher (Nightingale, 2009).

Third, regarding the applied theories in this study. Applying these theories to a self-organized case organization has shown some limitations, which may be seen as an opportunity to further develop the theories to make them more applicable for self-managed organizations. One limitation is that connecting both theories an overlap appeared in explaining the work processes of the self-managed teams. Langfred (2000) writes them down as both task technology and workflow. In which task technology covers the way tasks are performed, the method of execution of tasks. Workflow is defined as the sequence of steps that constitutes the entire work process from start to finish. In the process of research, it turned out that this explanation was not always so easy to distinguish in practice. Therefore, the workflow was used more often than task technology because this includes more explanation than just how tasks are performed. Both have an effect on the work processes, which are often named. This word is used as an overarching term to describe what members of the case organization actually do according to their tasks.

In conclusion, despite the effort to remain objective and discuss the findings and interpretations with fellow students, this study was conducted by one researcher which probably led to unintentional bias. The subjectivity of the study is therefore acknowledged. This leads, for example, to the fact that the coding is done only by the researcher, which means that the things that are not considered important to her are being

overlooked. In addition, a hybrid research method was chosen in this study (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). A different method could also provide partly different results due to a different focus on either deduction or induction of data. It also means that the results and the analysis are only seen from one perspective, which is a limitation.

5.3 Reflection and reflexivity

Reflection - Looking back on the process of writing a master's thesis, I can conclude that I considered it quite difficult. The writing process was hard. In the first phase of the writing process, I found it very hard to be scientific-minded in a practical case organization. This is probably related to the fact that the thesis I wrote to complete my higher education was mainly practice-oriented. This resulted in the fact that the scope and focus during the process were not always on point. The process of this master thesis was not my easiest task ever but I have learned very much about myself in writing a thesis in general.

Regarding the interviews, despite not being able to physically visit the case organization, a relaxed environment was still created through the online interviewing methods. Each interview was immediately transcribed and some additional notes were written down during the interviews. This has helped the researcher reflect upon his own role during the data collection. After the first few interviews, I recognized that sometimes my question was too direct and that it was better to stay silent for a while because sometimes the respondent would elaborate on his/her answer in a more storytelling way. After the interviews, the transcripts were sent to the respondents to give them the opportunity to read them through and (when needed) to give comments and make corrections.

Finally, I feel that the Covid pandemic and subsequent measures affected and impacted my work progress. The experience would have been different if observation and in-person interviews would have been possible rather than getting to know the organization fully digitally. Overall, I learned a lot from working on this thesis; the general thesis writing process, how to systematically go through data and how to conduct qualitative research.

Reflexivity - In qualitative research the researcher plays a central role in doing research, therefore reflection upon the role of the research is an important topic. Reflexivity is described as the “awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which she affects both the research processes and outcomes” (Haynes in Symon & Cassell, 2012, p. 72). I can conclude that as a researcher, it is likely that I had an impact on the research, specifically the interpretations of the research. I tried to keep a realist standpoint in an effort to keep natural during the research. Nevertheless, the change exists that the interpretation of the data was affected. The way I interpreted and coded the transcripts may differ from how other researchers may interpret this dataset. Furthermore, no interviews were exactly the same; the way in which questions were phrased or on how questions were asked, are most likely different for each interviewee.

Ethics - The principles established by the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2018) have served as a guide to make the right choices within this study. As previously described in the third method

chapter, these consist of honesty, scrupulousness, transparency and responsibility. In order to comply with honesty, I have reported as accurately as possible and I have been open to any discrepancies. In addition, I have ensured that results have not been presented differently or better than they really are. By using methods that are scientifically correct and conducting and reporting them in the best possible way, I have contributed to the scrupulousness of this research. By ensuring that every reader knows what data this research is based on, where the data was obtained and how the results were made, this makes my research transparent. My role as researcher was also known to the case organization. However, for privacy reasons, the organization and its respondents have been anonymized. My research is independent because I have not been guided by other non-scientific considerations such as the commerciality of the organization. In addition, I have paid attention to impartiality in the questioning, design, execution and reporting of this research. Finally, I would like to acknowledge that this study was not carried out in isolation, and therefore differences may occur if someone else carries out the same study again. I have tried to make a contribution to science and practice with this research, which contributes to responsibility.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Interview documents

1.1 Interview guide

Small talk + introductie

Leuk dat u mee wilt werken aan dit onderzoek en dank voor je tijd, ben ik zo goed te horen/zien?

Mijn naam is Nadine Tenbergen, master student Organisational Design & Development aan de Radboud Universiteit in Nijmegen. Voor mijn afstuderen ben ik momenteel bezig met het schrijven van mijn Master Thesis over zelfsturing.

Doel

Voor mijn onderzoek zal ik een paar zelfsturende teams van deze organisatie interviewen. Het doel van dit interview is om een beter beeld te krijgen hoe de zelfsturing er bij deze organisatie uit ziet en hoe jullie dit ervaren. Het interview zal ongeveer 60 min duren.

Verder zijn er geen goede of slechte antwoorden en ben ik vooral benieuwd naar ervaringen. U zult daarom ook veel aan het woord zijn. Zijn er nog vragen voor mij voordat we beginnen?

Vooraf benieuwd naar hoe jij zelfsturing ervaart en wat dit voor invloed heeft binnen de organisatie.

Start: over wie gaat het/hoofdpersoon

- Kun je jezelf introduceren (functie, hoe lang binnen organisatie, waar)
- Kun je mij wat meer vertellen wat je huidige functie inhoudt? Hoe ziet jouw werkdag eruit.
 - Hoe is dit veranderd/ontstaan over tijd over de periode dat je hier werkt?
 - Zijn er taken anders dan X jaar geleden? Waarom is dat zo gelopen?
 - Welke keerpunten/wendingen hebben er plaatsgevonden die bepalend waren, hoe ga je daar mee om?
- Je werkt in een zelfsturend team, kun je mij meenemen in de **verantwoordelijkheden** die hierbij horen? Hoe geven jullie hier invulling aan.
 - Hoe is dit veranderd/ontstaan over tijd? Zijn er momenten die hiervoor bepalend waren? Regels/veranderingen vanuit de organisatie?
 - Kun je mij meenemen naar toen je hier begon met werken, hoe zag jouw dag er toen uit qua zorg en organiserende taken?
 - Dus je organiserende taken zijn x.y.z.?
- Voor de (zorg)taken, kun je mij meenemen in een voorbeeld waarin je besluiten neemt over hoe jij je dag/week indeelt.
 - Het kiezen van wanneer je taken doet, hoe je ze doet en met wie bijvoorbeeld? (+**afhankelijkheid** in kennis/communicatie)
- Voor organiserende taken die kenmerkend voor de zelfsturing hier. Heb je hier voorbeelden van hoe je taken indeelt en hoe je ze uitvoert?

- **Is dit veranderd in de loop der jaren? Hoe is dit veranderd/ontstaan over tijd? Zijn er momenten die hiervoor bepalend waren?**
- **Zou je dat terug kunnen redeneren aan de structuur van de organisatie of de cultuur bijvoorbeeld? De manier van werken binnen organisatie?**
- Worden er instrumenten (hulpbronnen) aangeboden? Hoe geven jullie hier invulling aan.
- Wat voor een rol speelt de team/regiomanager of bedrijfsbureau (**aansturing** integraal).

Midden: waar liep je tegenaan, wat heeft je geholpen

- Kun je mij een voorbeeld geven van taken of routines die **veranderd of verschoven** zijn in de periode dat je hier werkt? (niet de corona-periode incl lockdown, niet representatief)
 - Hoe is dit veranderd/ontstaan over tijd? Zijn er momenten die hiervoor bepalend waren? (taken die je niet meer doet/ juist wel doet)
 - Wanneer gebeurde dit, was er een bepaalde situatie die zorgde voor een kantelpunt?
 - Waar kwam dit tot stand en wie waren hierbij betrokken?
 - Welke routines/taken.
- Verdergaand op het voorbeeld van net. Kun je mij een voorbeeld geven van een situatie waarin je **taken uitbested, of door anderen liet doen?**
 - Hoe is dit veranderd/ontstaan over tijd? Zijn er momenten die hiervoor bepalend waren?
 - Was je je hiervan bewust, naar wie of wat verschoof je deze?
 - Welke taken waren dit?
 - Komt dit vaker voor, zo ja in welke situatie(s)?
 - Waarom? Moeilijke beslissing?
- Hoe wordt hier binnen het team en buiten het team hiermee omgegaan?
- Kun je mij een voorbeeld geven over de **afstemming/contact met de team en het bedrijfsbureau.**

Einde: wat levert het op, waar ben je trots op

- Als je terugkijkt op je werk hier, wat waren je belangrijkste ervaringen
- Waar ben je trots op? Waarom wordt je zo blij van je werk
- Heb je nog momenten die je graag zou willen delen met mij?

Dan wil ik u hartelijk danken voor je tijd en informatie. Vind u het prettig als je de uitwerking van het interview te zien krijgt?

Heeft u nog documenten (Gesprekken, mails, mapjes) die u zou willen delen/laten zien?

Hoe heeft u de interviewvragen ervaren? Heeft u nog feedback voor mij?

Nogmaals danken tijd. Bij vragen/onduidelijkheden contacten.

1.2 Research integrity form

Master Thesis research integrity information

This document contains information to inform the participant what they can expect during the data collection process and the handling of the data during the researcher's master's thesis trajectory.

Researcher/interviewer: Nadine Tenbergen

Participant/Interviewee: [name]

Date: [date]

Informed consent

Process of data collection:

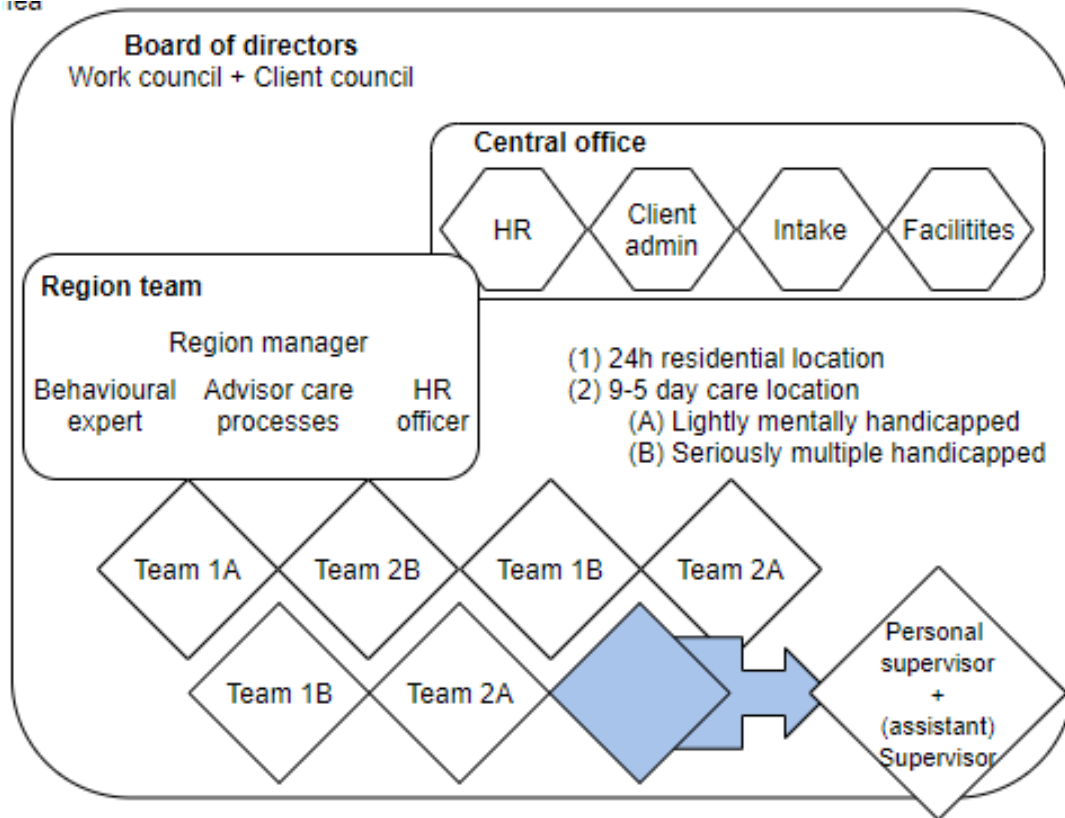
- With the permission of the participant, audio recordings will be made by the researcher. Recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim by the researcher to make it easier to analyze.
- Participation in the data collection process is completely voluntary and anonymous. The participant has the right to withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality and anonymity

In order to protect the identity of the organization and its employees, all names will be anonymized or pseudonyms will be used. Other information that could be used to trace back to a particular person will also be anonymized. All data will be handled at all times with confidentiality.

Appendix 2 - Structure of the organization

Visualization of the organization structure of the case organization.



Appendix 3 - Task matrix example

An example overview of a task matrix to regulate organizing practices of the self-managing teams.

Function	1st responsible person	2nd responsible person
Quality/documentation		
Schedule planner		
Financiën / TOP		
Primus Inter Paris (PIP)		
Medication		
Health and safety (ARBO)		
Training and introduction new employees		
Ethics and privacy		
Purchasing orders		
Hygiene		
Client fellowship		
Internship supervision		
Registration attendance*		
Volunteers		
Key management		
Horizon (newsletter)		
Works council (OR)		
Bus management*		
Transport		
Freedom restrictions		

*Applicable only to daycare and work locations. Not at the 24h residential locations

Appendix 4 - Interview transcripts

See attached file

Appendix 5 - Code table

See attached Excel file