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Maria Peltola

STRUCTURED FABRICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

SUBJECT-SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE ON MAINTAINING AND CHANGING LIFE CONDITIONS IN LEARNING CONTEXTS OF ADULTHOOD

MARIA PELTOLA

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Subject-scientific perspective on maintaining and changing life conditions in learning contexts of adulthood

Academic dissertation to be presented with the assent of the Doctoral Programme Committee of Human Sciences of the University of Oulu for public defence in Martti Ahtisaari -sali (L2), Linnanmaa, on 12 August 2022, at 12 noon

Abstract

This research explores spaces and structures formed for agency in two learning contexts of adulthood: multidisciplinary collaboration of school professionals and technology-mediated remote studies. Research material contains research participants' descriptions of their everyday life. Leaning on cultural-historical and subject-scientific psychology, agency is seen as personal ways of relating to surrounding possibilities and restrictions. The focus is on how subjects maintain and change their life conditions. Through the research continues a discussion on how to understand a psychological phenomenon when human beings are seen intertwined with the environment and living in their human–world relations.

The first sub-study focuses on the concerns of school professionals and boundaries and interfaces of multidisciplinary collaboration in pupil welfare. The second sub-study explores university student's agency in their remote learning contexts in the rural north of Finland. Third sub-study focuses on the dynamics of development in the remote students' everyday life. Sub-studies show how personal experience can be grasped though exploring everyday life and grounds for action.

The main findings of the thesis present that spaces for agency are formed through three levels. At first level, places, conditions, and participations shape where and in relation to what agency takes place. Second level opens the formation of spaces, structures, and boundaries for agency within everyday practices and interactions. The third level describes the subject's experience of the space that takes shape in a particular situation and within certain practices. In this research, the fabric of everyday life sometimes appears as a more porous and permeable structure and sometimes denser. In the middle of the alternation of density, negotiations continue about what to maintain and what to change. This research helps to identify and articulate the dimensions of agency and experience in a complex everyday life and encourages to pay attention to how participations, transitions and material conditions guide human actions.

Keywords: agency, conduct of everyday life, multidisciplinary collaboration, participation, remote studies

Tiivistelmä

Tutkimus tarkastelee toimijuudelle avautuvia tiloja ja toimijuutta rajaavia struktuureja kahdessa aikuisuuden oppimisympäristössä: kasvatusalan monialaisessa yhteistyössä ja teknologiavälitty-neessä etäopiskelussa. Tutkimusaineisto muodostuu osallisten oman arjen kuvauksista. Toimi-juus ymmärretään kulttuurihistoriallisen ja subjektitieteellisen psykologiaan nojautuen erityises-ti olosuhteiden ylläpitämisenä ja muuttamisena – suhteutumisena ympäröiviin toimintamahdolli-suuksiin. Läpi tutkimuksen kulkee pohdinta siitä, mitä kasvatuspsykologinen ja psykologinen tieto ja tutkimus voi olla silloin, kun ihminen nähdään ympäristönsä kanssa yhteenkietoutunee-na kokonaisuutena.

Ensimmäinen osatutkimus keskittyy koulun ammattilaisten huolipuheeseen ja osallisuuksien rajapintoihin oppilashuollon monialaisessa yhteistyössä. Toinen osatutkimus tarkastelee aikuis-ten etäopiskelijoiden toimijuutta pohjoisessa, ja kolmannessa keskiössä on kehityksen dynamiik-ka etäopiskelun arjessa. Osatutkimuksille on yhteistä ja erityistä subjektitieteellinen tulokulma osallisuuteen ja toimijuuteen sekä pyrkimys tavoittaa subjektin näkökulma ja kokemus tutkimal-la yhdessä konkreettista arkea ja siinä esiin tulevia toimintaperusteita.

Toimijuudelle avautuva ja rajautuva tila muotoutuu kolmen tason kautta: Ensin konkreettiset paikat, olosuhteet ja osallisuudet muotoilevat sitä, missä ja suhteessa mihin toimijuus toteutuu. Toinen taso avaa tilojen ja rajojen rakentumista vuorovaikutustilanteissa ja arjen käytänteissä. Kolmas taso kuvaa subjektin kokemusta tuosta tilasta, joka hänelle tietyissä ympäristöissä ja käytänteissä muotoutuu. Tutkimuksessa aikuisen arjen kudelma näyttäytyy toisinaan huokoisem-pana ja toisinaan tiheämpänä struktuurina, jonka keskellä käydään neuvotteluja siitä, mitä muut-taa ja mitä säilyttää. Tutkimus auttaa tunnistamaan ja sanoittamaan toiminnan ja kokemuksen ulottuvuuksia kompleksisessa arjessa ja kannustaa kiinnittämään huomiota siihen, miten osalli-suudet, siirtymät ja materiaaliset olosuhteet ohjaavat arkea ja toimintaa.

Asiasanat: arkielämä, etäopiskelu, monialainen yhteistyö, osallisuus, toimijuus

Arjen tasapainoilijoille

Acknowledgements

irrottautua työstä tutkimuksen yhteenveto-osan kirjoittamisen ajaksi. Kunnallisalan kehittämissäätiötä ja Oulun yliopiston tutkijakoulua kiitän matka-avustuksista, jotka ovat mahdollistaneet sekä kansalliseen että kansainväliseen tutkijayhteisöön tutustumisen. Yhteistyön rakentumisella on ollut suuri merkitys tutkimustyölleni. Tutkijakoulu on mahdollistanut monin tavoin jatko-opintojeni etenemisen, kiitos myös siitä. Jemina Nissilää kiitän suomenkielisten tekstien oikoluvusta. Lämmin kiitos avustasi.

Tutkimukseni kotipesä on ollut dosentti Teemu Suorsan luotsaama ryhmä *Monialainen yhteistyö yksilöiden ja yhteisöjen tukena* (MYY). Voisin sanoa, että ryhmän tuki on ollut korvaamatonta, mutta samalla koen, että koko projekti on ollut meidän yhteinen. Kirsi Raetsaari, Susanna Hellsten ja Sirpa Ylimaula, en olisi selvinnyt tästä ilman teitä. Kiitos Suvi Kauppi, ilman sinua jokunen teksti olisi voinut jäädä pöytälaatikkoon. Kiitos eri aikoina tutkimusryhmän mukana kulkeneille antoisista seminaarikerroista. Kiitos myös ohjausalan tutkimuksen verkostolle ja Nordic Baltic ISCAR -tutkijayhteisölle monista kiinnostavista ja innostavista keskusteluista. Olen saanut olla myös osa upeaa tutkijoiden joukkoa tohtoriopintojeni pääaineessa, kasvatuspsykologiassa, psykologian ja kasvatuspsykologian tutkimuskeskuksessa. Kiitos professori Hanni Muukkonen yhteisön rakentamisesta. Kiitos Heli Kiema-Junes yhteisistä vuosista. Kiitos Jutta Karhu tuesta ja avusta erityisesti ensimmäisen artikkelin kanssa. Kiitos Jenni Kunnari, Anni Silvola ja Egle Gedrimiene kaikista keskusteluista ja vertaistuesta.

Työni puolesta olen viime vuosina kuulunut dosentti Outi Ylitapio-Mäntylän johtamaan tutkimusyksikköön. Outi, kiitos työtoveruudesta, kaikesta tuesta, luottamuksesta, kannustuksesta ja ymmärryksestä. Kiitos koko varhaiskasvatuksen koulutuksen työyhteisö, koulutuspalveluiden puolella työskentelevät ja eläkepäiviään viettävät yhteisön jäsenet. On uskomattoman hienoa kokea kuuluvansa tähän työhön ja tähän porukkaan. Kiitos kaikesta yhteistyöstä, yhteisopettajuudesta, tuesta ja kannattelusta. Haaveet väitöskirjaprojektin jälkeisestä elämästä kietoutuvat vahvasti teihin. Kohtaamiset lämmittävät mieltä ja saavat toivomaan, että yhteisiä vuosia on edessä vielä paljon. Erityiskiitos Marjo Mäntyjärvi ja Susanna Kinnunen. Kiitos ystävyydestänne näiden viime vuosien aikana. Olette olleet korvaamaton tuki.

Opiskelijat, ilman teitä koko tätä tutkimusta ei tällaisena edes olisi. Pienet konkreettiset kuvaukset arjesta ovat olleet oikeita helmiä moninaisten ja haastavien teorioiden ja käsitteiden keskellä. Kiitos niistä sekä monista tärkeistä ja kokonaisuutta eteenpäin kuljettaneista kysymyksistänne ja huomioistanne.

Perhe, ystävät ja sukulaiset, kiitos että olette osoittaneet kiinnostustanne tutkimustyötäni kohtaan. Olen onnellinen teistä. Kiitos kaikesta tuesta äiti, isä, Leena ja Veikko. Kiitos Arja.

Linnea, Eedit, Hilda, Nooa ja Inga, tuhannet kiitokset kärsivällisyydestä ja ymmärryksestä. Kiitos myös kaikista uteliaista kysymyksistä ja terävistä (ja turhautuneistakin) huomautuksista. Olette rakkaita. Jaakko, olet sekä sanoilla että teoilla osoittanut päivittäin, että kyllä kaikki järjestyy. Kiitos kotiarjen kannattelusta, tutkimustyöni arvostamisesta ja toisaalta siitä, että olet tuonut muun elämän asioita tutkimuskuplaani. Kiitos aivan kaikesta.

Oulussa, 15.5.2022   Maria Peltola

Abbreviations

ZFM   Zone of free movement
ZPA   Zone of promoted action
ZPD   Zone of proximal development

List of original publications

This thesis is based on the following publications that are referred throughout the text by their Roman numerals:

I   Peltola, M. Suorsa, T. Karhu. J., & Soini, H. (2020). Huoli kytkeytyy osallisuuden rajapintoihin: Ammattilaisen arki oppilashuollon näyttämöillä. *Aikuiskasvatus, 40*(2), 127–138. https://doi.org/10.33336/aik.95453

II   Peltola, M., & Suorsa, T. (2020). University studies in the adjacent tab: Dimensions of students' agency and everyday life in the rural north of Finland. *Education in the North, 27*(2), 92–105. https://doi.org/10.26203/3w82-8n53

III Peltola, M., Suorsa, T., & Silvonen, J. (2021). "I try to remember that this is temporary": Continuous balancing in remote students' everyday life. *Human Arenas*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-021-00247-6

I had the main responsibility in writing the manuscript of each article and conducting different phases of the sub-studies. I collected the research material, which was used in Articles II and III. Research material for Article I was produced in research group.

Contents

1   Introduction

In the first place, there was no researcher—only a teacher and students with their learning diaries and essays. I built my research project on theories and practices that became familiar to me while working as a university teacher. This chapter introduces practical and theoretical standpoints of this thesis, provides a short introduction to the previous studies on agency, and describes how the research project began. Final sub-chapter introduces aims and questions.

1.1   Practical standpoints

In my learning environment, studies hover around in our living room as long as those are unfinished. Assignments are in my mind almost all the time. It helps if I leave home for a while and go for a walk with a friend. This flexibility and studying at home should be good in my situation, but it's been difficult. There is a feeling that whatever I do, I should be doing something else.

To focus better on the lecture, I need two things: my notes and crafts. I need to do something at the same time. During the lecture, crafting keeps my hands moving and gives me the feeling that even if I am "wasting" my time by just sitting, I am still getting something done all the time. I place my phone in another room. I clean and cook during lectures and have peer group discussions while driving to work.

I close the door. I clear the table. We have installed an extra screen for me and organized our guest room as the place for studies. I make schedules and plans and negotiate with others, but something always comes up to disrupt those plans. Quests come in during the evening. With the headphones on, I try to listen to both the child and the lecture, and I can't hear either. I try to reconcile different parts and commitments of my life. I get along with less sleep. I have done so before; I can manage. This is, however, my choice. This is my own time. This is temporary.

The story above contains multiple united samples from university students' descriptions of their everyday life with remote studies. Managing studies could be explored from multiple perspectives, for example, focusing on student's motivation, self-directedness, their ability to concentrate, or how the teacher has built the study structure. The story draws a picture of students' real-life learning environments,

which are something else than instructions and actions on a computer. Being in a particular place ties persons with certain meaning structures, prevailing routines, roles, expectations, and cultures.[1] In addition, there are material components and highly developed technologies, structuring and guiding everyday life and actions. This research explores how agency takes place through formation of spaces and structures of everyday life. Focus is on how persons relate to the surrounding possibilities and restrictions and how they maintain and change conditions in their learning contexts, at work and in studies. *Relating* refers to personal ways of being in relation to something, taking a position, or adopting a personal stance. *Learning contexts and learning environments* refer to practical situations and places, in studies and work, where new developmental and agentive steps take place.

An inspiring question through the research process has been: How to understand a psychological phenomenon when human beings are seen entwined with their environment and living in their human–world relations. The research draws attention to two practical and common phenomena in the field of education and learning. First one is an individualistic picture drawn of adults balancing with demands of everyday life and refining skills and strategies to cope and survive with all. Despite the popular statements like, "You cannot control the conditions, you can only change yourself,"[2] what people really do in their everyday life is many times controlling and changing concrete conditions. Second challenge is a general understanding and the ideal of having freedom and possibility of choice, which is strongly accelerated by the development of modern technology.[3] The research shows how complex and multidimensional freedom can be at the level of adults' everyday life practices.

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[1] At home, in the middle of other parts and relations of life, spending time with studies may seem "my own time." However, a student who lives alone, may feel that studies "hover around" all the time, and you need to leave home to get a break.

[2] General picture is drawn mostly by media, educational advertising, and everyday speech. This statement example and few similar have been collected from education ads arrived via e-mails and social media.

[3] Chimirri and Schraube (2019) write, that human ability to make and create new things forms a paradoxical situation where we can hardly manage in our world and everyday life with all we have created and accomplished. Human capacities like emotion or caring are relatively limited when comparing to the capacity of making and creating new artifacts and systems. "We are faced with a fundamental discrepancy between the world of technology and the human ability to meaningfully conceive it; a divide primarily attributable both to the accelerated pace of technological development, and to the enormous complexity of the things created and their effects" (Chimirri & Schraube, 2019, pp. 49–50).

1.2 Theoretical standpoints

This research is built on the idea that no human being is in no situation separate from the environment[4]. This connectedness, or rather entwining and entanglement, with the environment—surrounding relations and material components—is continuous and should also be considered hen studying psychological phenomenon. This research leans on *the subject-scientific practice*[5] *research*, which focuses on *psychology from the standpoint of the subject* (Holzkamp, 1987, 2013d; Schraube & Højholt, 2016; Osterkamp & Schraube, 2013; Silvonen, 1987; Suorsa, 2014). This approach has its roots in *cultural-historical* (Leontjev, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) and *critical psychology* (e.g., Teo, 2005, 2014; Tolman & Maiers, 1991). This sub-chapter shortly (1) introduces these theoretical approaches, (2) describes where those set the focus when exploring human life, and (3) specifies how this study is situated in relation to these theoretical frames.

Several researchers have been discussing about how to overcome the abstract individualism of psychology and recognize dimensions of human life in its relations—and psychological phenomena as embedded in social practices (González Rey, 2019; Højholt & Kousholt, 2014; Højholt & Schraube, 2016; Holzkamp, 2013a, 2013d; Osterkamp, 2009; Røn Larsen, 2012; Toomela & Valsiner, 2010). Vygotsky (1994) was concerned about the direction in which psychological research had developed, when trying to separate and isolate studied phenomena from its environment. Building on Vygotsky's and Leontjev's work, cultural-historical psychology has developed in multiple directions (see e.g., González Rey, 2019). One of those is subject-scientific psychology followed in this thesis (Holzkamp, 1987, 2013d; Schraube & Højholt, 2016).

Some of the notions made in theoretical debates and research (and specified through this thesis) move close to sociological perspectives[6] as social relations,

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[4] Depending on the context, I use in this thesis both conceptualizations; *human–world relation* and *person–environment relation*. First one is used here as a broader and philosophical expression, while person–environment can be understood as practical and psychological clarification of the first mentioned: Humans live in the world, and they have personal relations to their practical, social, and material environments.

[5] Roth (2005) explains a slightly different concept: *practice* and *praxis*. I, however, have used in this thesis only the word *practice*.

[6] Holzkamp (2013a) describes sociological perspective as follows: "Society appears as a network of expectations to which individuals are exposed, and into which they then have to integrate … the individual's behavior is assumed to be determined by societal conditions" (p. 19). He continues that there is a contradiction which should be noticed: "Human beings are distinguished from all other species as they produce the means and conditions of their own lives, i. e. they do not simply live under conditions, but produce the conditions under which they live" (Holzkamp, 2013a, p. 19). In practice, this chosen

places, and societal frames are under consideration. Subject-scientific approach, however, has underlined that psychology is a science that explores individuals and accepts the challenge to systematically develop theories, concepts, and methodologies that can explore human life and actions with and within their contexts and contents—psychological phenomenon in it's human–world relations.[7] In this thesis, I'm leaning on certain notions of this approach. First, it is common in subject-scientific research that there is a particular practice and context to be developed through the research and together with participants.[8] Second, subjects are already seen as participants and agents in many ways on their scenes of everyday living and in conflictual social practices[9] (Dreier, 1999, 2011; Holzkamp, 2016). Exploring participation can enlighten what ways one's own actions are part of producing common conditions and practices—and possibilities and restrictions for further actions. Third, focus is on subject's own standpoint and experience,[10] which can be grasped through exploring everyday life and groundedness in it. For research methodologies, these notions mean that research participants are supported in becoming *the researchers of their own life* and exploring their relation and connectedness with the world together with *the professional researcher* (Suorsa 2014, pp. 135–136).

Knowledge about everyday life is at the same time both *personal*, revealing something unique about subject's life, and *general*—containing shared parts with others. This notion has strong connection with generalization of new knowledge in research (see Sub-chapters 3.2 and 6.4). Focusing on everyday life in research, turns as Højholt and Schraube (2016, p. 3) state, "The endeavor of isolating 'factors'

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theoretical framework not only acknowledges surrounding societal conditions and power relations as in sociologically oriented research (see e.g., Brunila, 2014; Lanas & Brunila, 2019) but also considers subjects' actions (see e.g., Greeno, 2006, 2011; Engeström, 2008; Engeström & Sannino, 2010).

[7] If the aim in here is at the same time withdraw from abstract individualism and focus on *the subject*— basically all the time—it demands accurate defining of how human life, agency, and personal experience are seen. For more detailed definitions, see Chapter 2.

[8] This has been referred with the name *practice research*. See, for example, Dafermos (2015) and Højholt and Kousholt (2014) for more detailed descriptions about practice research. In the beginning of this research, I was not very well aware of possible problematic practices in the "remote life," which needed to be explored and developed. I came to know those during the research, and theories and concepts had central role in revealing them.

[9] Understanding participation this way turns the focus on exploring, what are those participations and contexts in the life of a particular subject—what is he or she already part of and in what ways. Then, primary question is not really how to get someone to be part of something that someone else sees as important or in ways that are easily recognized or generally accepted and acknowledged.

[10] Also, at a very practical level, standpoint of the subject means that we try to look at the life from the *point* (place) were the person *stands*. More detailed description of this can be found in Chapter 2.

and 'variables' upside down, pointing instead to the need to explore how psychological phenomena and problems are endowed with content and significances precisely out of the contexts they are part of" (see also Dreier, 2021;[11] Stetsenko, 2005).

In addition to subject-scientific approach, this research has been inspired by cultural-historical psychology in general. [12] I have been following topical discussions especially concerning agency, and I have also borrowed certain concepts to be theoretical tools during analyzes (see the third sub-study and Article III). Perspective on the cultural-historical psychology in this research is leaning on Vygotsky's late production (see, e.g., Vygotsky, 1994, 1998; see also González Rey, 2007; Silvonen, 2003). Despite the popularity to embrace the Vygotsky's legacy in educational psychology and, for example, in learning sciences, relation and unity of a person with the environment hasn't got much attention (González Rey, 1999, 2007; Roth & Jornet, 2017). The relation between human and the world is elaborated in this thesis with more detail through *the systemic organism– environment theory* and understood as intertwined and dialectical unity (Järvilehto, 1994, 2009; Roth & Jornet, 2017; Suorsa, 2014, 2019b; see also Vygotsky, 1994). This specific systemic perspective has been developed in a dialog with subject-scientific psychology (Suorsa, 2014). In this research, systemic organism– environment theory is central in defining *the relation*, functionality, and meaning of material components of the environment, when exploring human actions in everyday life. Based on this background, *learning* and *development* are defined as fundamental processes that modify and change person–environment systems and create new possibilities for action (Järvilehto, 1994; 2009).

These perspectives guide methodological choices and set the focus on subject's experience. [13] The experience (*perezihivanie*) is defined as a mediating level

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[11] Dreier (2021, p. 265) notes that "the statistical analysis also demands that variables, and the generalized psychological elements based on them, must be independent of each other and stand in a relation of causal determination to each other."

[12] These discussions can be followed under the name *cultural-historical activity theory* (CHAT). For more detailed exploration of CHAT, see, for example, Langemeyer (2012a), Langemeyer and Nissen (2005), and Stetsenko (2005). Among CHAT, researchers have also focused on developmental work research (Engeström & Sannino, 2010), transformative agency (e.g., Sannino, 2020; Virkkunen, 2006), and relational agency (Edwards, 2007). Focus in my research is on subject's actions and personal grounds for actions, not so much, for example, on cooperation or facing changes as a community or as an organization.

[13] It is central that experience is not defined as an abstract inner phenomenon—placed entirely somewhere inside of us. Instead, it's seen as tightly entwined into everyday life structures, practices, and participations (see Sub-chapter 2.1). This strongly guides the chosen methodology, how to grasp human experience, and sets the focus on exploring everyday life and grounded participation. As human

between a person and an environment (Vygotsky, 1994, 1998) and refers to a personal relation to conditions—*possibilities for action*.[14] The experience "lies between the personality and the environment" and "defines the relation" between[15] them (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 294). The experience is *a prism* that *refracts* (not only reflects) the components of the environment, conditions, and moments faced in everyday life (Veresov & Fleer, 2004; Vygotsky, 1994). This experience of the world can be the actual object of the psychological research and a unit of analysis (e.g., González Rey, 2007; Holzkamp, 2013e; Roth, 2005; Suorsa, 2014, p. 91), and it can be grasped through exploring everyday life and groundedness in it (Dreier, 1999, 2011; Holzkamp, 2016; Schraube & Højholt, 2016; Osterkamp, 2009).

In short, it can be described that from *subject-scientific* perspective, human action is neither free from situational and societal relations nor determined by them (Holzkamp, 2013a; Schraube & Osterkamp, 2013).[16] Entanglement with the environment means that human actions have contents, meanings, and contexts that should be also considered when exploring psychological phenomenon (Holzkamp, 2013e; Osterkamp, 2009; Vygotsky, 1994, 1998). In this research, it is central to see agency as different ways of relating to surrounding conditions, how subjects take new steps toward something and, on the other hand, maintain something else to ensure continuity, belonging, or safety.

1.3   Previous studies and perspectives on agency

This sub-chapter shortly opens up surrounding and nearby research and theoretical perspectives on agency. Later, Chapter 2 sheds light on the theoretical and methodological viewpoints that are central in this thesis.

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being is never fully aware of all the dimensions of participation, experience needs to be explored—whenever possible—together with research participants.

[14] Surrounding conditions—whether those are material components, societal situation, prevailing discourses or historically developed personal meaning structures in everyday practices—are defined as *possibilities for action* (see e.g., Tolman, 1994).

[15] Although the word *between* is used many times in this research, it is not an easy word or simple expression, and it needs to be clarified that there is never really a situation, place, or space which is empty and only "between" something else, like between person and environment. Connectedness to surrounding parts of the environment and situational frames can never been taken off in real life.

[16] Similar positioning can be found also outside of subject-scientific research; see, for example, Honsasalo, Ketokivi and Leppo (2014). Also, Brinkmann (2012) writes: "there are no social structures, institutions or powers that *cause* us to do, think or feel in certain ways. … Only persons act … and they could not do so without a range of enabling conditions that are material … and this whole network of discourses and materialities is, in principle, relevant when one engages in qualitative analyses of social processes." (p. 20)

The basic understanding of agency is that subjects' actions are not merely their reactions to certain practices or conditions (e.g., Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011; see also Schraube, 2013). Lipponen and Kumpulainen (2011) state that subjects should gain a capacity for autonomous action within social relation and be able to control their lives through transformation and refining of social and material conditions. Exploring and understanding agency is seen important both in education (e.g., Hilppö, 2016; Rainio, 2010; Rutanen, 2007) and in work context (e.g., Sannino, 2020; Vanhalakka-Ruoho & Ruponen, 2013). Making a change or confronting changes together with others is central in many resent studies and conceptualizations on agency (Evans, 2007), like in *transformative agency* (e.g., Sannino, 2020; Virkkunen, 2006; see also Stetsenko, 2008) and *relational agency* (Edwards, 2007; Toiviainen, 2019).

Agency in varying practices is entwined with identities, commitments, motivation, goals, and interests (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, & Paloniemi, 2013). Agency is needed for learning and taking new steps, and it contains, for example, asking help from others and giving it (Edwards, 2007, 2010; Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004; Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011; Rainio, 2008). Previous experiences, knowledge, and competencies work as developmental affordances and a resource for agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2013).

Honkasalo, Ketokivi, and Leppo (2014) state that individualistic understanding of agency as only intentional human actions, and it does not cover different forms of agency. Agency does not refer only to notable active actions in particular situation but also other ways of influencing, taking stances, and making decisions in life (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2014), and a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities (Zittoun, 2012; see also Rainio, 2010; Rainio & Hilppö, 2017). Subjects' relation to what they do is formed by practices and discourses, but they also have their bodies in a particular place (Eteläpelto et al., 2013).

Agency is always situated in but not determined by the environment (Evans, 2007). It has a purpose, a context, and a content in a particular situation (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Agency is a process, an ongoing social engagement that is guided by both past experiences and future goals and also contextual circumstances and affordances of the present situation (Evans, 2007; Silbereisen, Best, & Haase, 2007; Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2014). Word *relational* also contains the contextual, situational, and historical perspective (Toiviainen, 2019). Actors have past and imagined future orientations that guide and shape their actions in the present (Evans, 2007). Space for agency is formed by institutions, societal frames, historically formed participations, possibilities, and power relations (Eteläpelto, Heiskanen, & Collin,

2011; Honkasalo, 2013; Toiviainen, 2019; Zittoun, 2008). Honkasalo (2013) has conceptualized waiting, staying, and tolerating as forms of agency, and explored situations were "nothing seems to happen" (p. 42). Different ways of being an agent also include oppositional initiatives and resisting, which can be seen as challenging from some other particular perspectives (Rajala, Kumpulainen, Rainio, Hilppö, & Lipponen, 2016; see also Lanas, 2011; Røn Larsen, 2012).

1.4 Researcher in the process

This sub-chapter provides a description of how this journey began[17] and how I, as a researcher, relate to the surrounding conditions and possibilities. Description also gathers some background information for later reflection of my position as a researcher and for ethical considerations. Important context of my research has been university students' remote studies. This was the context of sub-studies (and Articles) II and III. My history with web-based remote studies began at the Open University at the end of my master studies and after my graduation during 2004–2005. I worked for several years as a tutor-teacher and guided students in their remote studies. Remote studies offered for many adults a possibility to integrate study and work life or start university studies before entering a university. In discussions and assignments, students brought up memories and examples from their own life and work to demonstrate and discuss what they had learned and how they understood theories and concepts. Those stories were the best part of my job and continuously inspired and encouraged me to learn more and develop teaching further—and also theories and concepts.

While other situations changed in my life, being with remote students stayed. This kind of remote work (mostly in web-based learning environments) made it possible to combine different participations and commitments in my life. In the most extraordinary setting, I provided family daycare for a group of children by day and worked as a university teacher in the evening. Everyday life with children gave me inspiration for teaching and being with students provided me a break (and an only hobby) during those years when my own children were young—and modern technology made the situation possible in the first place. Although I was many times stressed out from work, I felt partly same way as some of the students

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[17] In Chapter 5, I write about ethical considerations on the research setting and evaluation of the process. Then I discuss further my position as a researcher and my relation to those same conditions and societal structures that research participants are part of, and why the research is done for in the first place.

did in research material; that time with remote studies was my "own time," not really a job, and I had chosen to use my time that way. When looking back, especially in the light of my research material and findings, I would say that I was balancing, too. Between different participations in life, I was using and stretching my skills to cope with everything—in cooperation with others. I was probably thinking and grounding my everyday actions like some students in this research; that "this is temporary."

I became familiar with cultural-historical psychology during my own studies in an early childhood education program 2001–2004. With peer students, we were part of research projects that took place in Kajaani Teacher Training School, University of Oulu (Bredikyte, 2011; Hakkarainen, Bredikyte, Jakkula, & Munter, 2013; see also Veresov, 2004). We observed children's play and made field notes (Hakkarainen et al., 2013). This is where I saw for the first time how research can be integrated with teaching and students can be part of producing research material.

Later, I started to work as a full-time teacher *at* the university and not remotely at home anymore. At the university I started a new hobby—PhD studies and the research. I came to be part of a research group *multi-professional collaboration supporting individuals and communities* (MIC) at the University of Oulu and continued working with cultural-historical orientation. I combined my work as a university teacher and the research—like most of the colleagues around me and like I had learned 15 years earlier in my own master studies. I ended up exploring those practices (students' everyday life) that I was already part of and adopted those theoretical and methodological orientations which came familiar through my work. With the support of research group, the research work proceeded, although the priority was the work as a teacher.

Finally, in the phase of reporting the findings, COVID-19 situation forced me to go back to the situation where I used to be and where my students and many of the research participants had been earlier—at home with the computer. At the same time, I got a funding (Finnish Work Environment Fund) for writing this compilation part. I left the work for a while and starter a full-time research leave. In the phase where I had already made my analyses and written articles, I had a chance to see and experience "with new eyes" the benefits and challenges of the remote life. Based on my research work, I probably understand now many dimensions and details of remote work and studies. Yet, in complex and technology-mediated everyday life, controlling life conditions remains being continuously challenging.

1.5   Aims and questions

Aim of this research is to explore agency from the standpoint of the subject and produce such knowledge of adults' everyday life and agency, which takes account subject's living in their person–environment relations. The research question is:

> In what ways the dynamics of agency takes place in everyday life, and what is the meaning of space and structures in the process?

The research question includes particular research objects: First this research clarifies in what ways agency is seen in subject-scientific research and sets the focus on maintaining and changing life conditions. Second, it shows how to consider situatedness of human agency through focusing on everyday life practices and groundedness. Third, it uses theoretical tools to specify the relation and dynamics of variable guiding structures in life and personal experience of space for free movement. Fourth, through the thesis continues discussion on what is psychological and educational psychological knowledge (and research) when the focus is on persons living in their human–world relations. This thesis describes and specifies the configuration of person–environment system. It contributes to the previous theoretical discussion concerning human–world relations and also brings up what this unity of person and environment means in everyday practices of adults' learning contexts.

Empirical sub-studies are presented and published in article format. What follows is that the entirety of the phenomena of agency that is divided in parts. Three articles emphasize and focus on different parts of the phenomenon of agency and present different theoretical tools in gaining new understanding. This compilation part has a mission to tie those parts together. To answer the main question of this thesis, I re-read my Articles I–III and parts of the original research material, explored previous theoretical discussions, and read through my own memos along the process concerning especially the relation between structures and space for free movement.

The main question of this thesis, as given above, gathers three dimensions of the entire phenomenon of agency: everyday life, participation, and the dynamics of the development. Each article has its own specific research questions presented in Chapter 4. (1) Everyday life is a starting point in each article (see Articles I–III). (2) The participation is grasped especially in Article I but ends up being central also in Articles II and III. (3) The dynamics of the development in Article III, is explored especially as spaces and structures in everyday practices.

2 Agency from the standpoint of the subject

This chapter introduces with more detail the chosen theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this research. Theoretical concepts highlight and bring up relevant dimensions of multidimensional reality (Suorsa, 2014, p. 69; Holzkamp, 2013c, p. 70). Sub-chapter 2.1 opens the subject-scientific perspective on agency by introducing basic concepts, *the conduct of everyday life* and *grounded participation.* Sub-chapter 2.2 introduces development as a process of the entire person–environment system and opens up how and why zone concepts (Valsiner, 1987) from cultural psychology are utilized to reveal the dynamics of the developmental process and emergence of agency. This research suggests that chosen concepts and perspectives can be adopted for analyzing human agency in its world relations and highlights both social and material elements in everyday practices. All these theoretical underpinnings are used in this research for not only the final analysis in empirical sub-studies but also general discussion of the entire research. Introducing the basic idea of the *standpoint of the subject and conduct of everyday day life* has also been part of production of research material. Figure 1 present, how main concepts are in relation to each other.
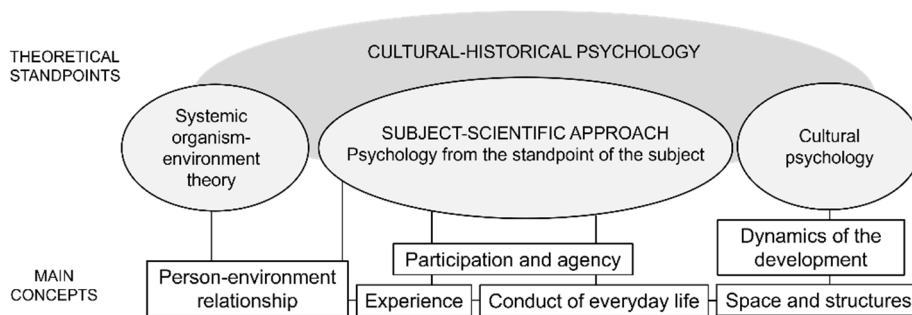
Fig. 1. Main concepts.

2.1 Being an agent on a particular standpoint

Agency is tightly entwined with participations in life, surrounding conditions, and relations (Dreier, 1999; Højholt & Kousholt, 2019; Holzkamp, 2013a). Through the word *standpoint*, we can imagine how any subject *stands* at a particular *point* at a certain moment. Being in the world has concrete material and embodied

dimensions.[18] One has become to that standpoint from somewhere, and that place and situation has developed through previous actions—the present moment has its history (Højholt & Schraube, 2016). Second, subjects are heading somewhere, living toward something. They have aims and goals—imagined, drafted, and desired possible futures (Suorsa, 2014, p. 161). This refers to future perspective. Third, while standing at a particular point, subject is part of a certain *scene of everyday living* (later *life scenes*) and through that the subject is surrounded by multiple conditions (Busch-Jensen & Schraube, 2019; Højholt & Schraube, 2016). This includes material surroundings, like walls, furniture, or technological tools that are constructed with meaningful functions and ideas of the usage (e.g., Valsiner, 2000, p. 120).

Living in a particular life scene means being part of practices, rhythms and routines, and social relations, meaning structures and discursive cultures related to those surrounding conditions (Holzkamp, 2013d; see also Højholt & Schraube, 2016). All these conditions have their own history. In addition to all that, this standpoint has its societal frames, structures that guide who is and can be a participant (and an agent) in a particular situation—and in what ways (see e.g., Zittoun, 2008). How these conditions are central or meaningful can be grasped in research by focusing on the subject's grounds and reasons for action[19] in a particular situation (Holzkamp, 2013e; Suorsa, 2014). Instead of looking at psychical processes situated inside of head, it sets the human–world relations into focus. When conditions change, the entire system changes (Roth & Jornet, 2017; see also Hviid & Zittoun, 2008).

It is important to see how each human being is always participating in some way to gain control over one's life circumstances (Dreier, 1999; Holzkamp, 2016)—albeit contents, objects, or directions of actions may not always be what someone else, from another standpoint, would hope, expect, or prefer. When grasping agency from the standpoint of the subject, it is possible to recognize different ways of being an agent, the dynamics and formation of agency, and from this perspective strengthen agency and widen the possibilities for action (Dreier, 1999). In subject-scientific approach it is central to support subject in realizing how actions can also maintain prevailing conditions and sometimes form a challenge in

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[18] For example, Rosa (2019, p. 47) discusses how we are in a very concrete way *situated* in our world "on our feet."

[19] Reasons for actions are always in the "first person"; reasons from "my" perspective and standpoint. There are always reasons for actions and nonactions (Holzkamp, 2013e). Reason discourse fills the gap between meaning structures and possibilities to act.

developing practices (Holzkamp, 2013e; Suorsa, 2014, p. 126; see also Arnkil, 1991, pp. 123–124).

The conduct of everyday life as a location for agency

Exploring human life from the standpoint of the subject sets the focus toward subject's living their life within material, cultural, social, and societal conditions (Busch-Jensen & Schraube, 2019; Højholt & Schraube, 2016). Concept of *the conduct of everyday life* helps to grasp situated participation of human beings, which also forms and frames a location for agency. The conduct of everyday life refers to subjects' personal ways of being part of their *life scenes* (originally *scenes of everyday living*) and social practices (Dreier, 1999, 2011; Holzkamp, 2016; Suorsa, 2014; 2019a). Different life scenes like home, work, or studies form a current assemblage of participations in person's life (Dreier, 1999). Participation in a particular life scene has also its translocal dimension (Dreier, 1999; Suorsa, 2014, pp. 63–65). *Translocality* means that subjects move within and between their life scenes and participations and need different skills in these movements (Dreier, 2011; Suorsa, 2014, p. 64). These compilations of life scenes transform across time and context and create a person's *life trajectory* (Dreier, 2011). Transitions could refer to many issues on the field of education and learning (Hviid & Zittoun, 2008; Zittoun, 2008), but here it refers to a subject's daily transitions between different life scenes.[20] This notion helped me to pay attention on how students describe transitions between places or tasks and concrete connectedness with places and material conditions.

Conducting everyday life includes routines, rhythms, habits, and actions through which subjects organize and arrange their everyday practices and conditions (Dreier, 1999, 2011; Højholt & Kousholt, 2019; Højholt & Schraube, 2016; Holzkamp, 2013a, 2016). The concept sets human experience into particular context and contents (e.g., Suorsa, 2014, p. 39) and works as a mediating level[21]

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[20] Transitions are meaningful when looking at formation of person–environment systems in everyday practices—when technology-mediated transitions from one place to another happen without moving the actual body anywhere (see Articles II and III).

[21] In subject-scientific framework both (1) the conduct of everyday life and (2) human experience are defined as: "a mediating level" (or category) between human and the world (Holzkamp, 2016; see also Højholt & Schraube, 2016). Experience as "mediating level" can be found from Vygotsky (1994, 1998). Focusing on practices and situational frames in exploring learning, aims to go beyond the abstract and decontextualized understanding of those processes and generalization (Dafermos, 2019; see also Lave & Wenger, 1991). In practice, persons get entangled with the environment, for example, through

between subject and the world (Holzkamp, 2016). The experience formulates the relation between individual and society, and this is where it also "differs from traditional sociological notions, by introducing the conduct of life as a mediating category between subject and societal structures" (Holzkamp, 2016, p. 88).

This leads into seeing an experience as something else than an abstract inner phenomenon (Holzkamp, 2013a). Also, Vygotsky (1994, 1998) describes that the human experience is unique, but at the same time, tightly connected with the world, everyday participations, and practices, and contains shared parts with others. Højholt and Schraube (2016, p. 3) state that the conduct of everyday life "might open a route to overcome the abstract individualism of psychology (and its accompanying wordlessness) that encloses subjects in isolated psychological special functions." It enables grasping the complexity and relational and situational dimensions of psychological phenomenon (Højholt & Schraube, 2016), but does not ignore acting and living subjects or lose it to the sociocultural context (Suorsa, 2014, p. 53).

In addition, subjects have their own history—previous participations during their life trajectories. This situated participation is central in defining and exploring agency, as it is also said to be central in the formation of motives and metamotives (Nissen, 2019; Nissen & Sørensen, 2017; see also Holzkamp, 2013e). Dreier (2011) even prefers using a word *participation* instead of *agency*, because participation— as understood through the conduct of everyday life—already includes central perspectives of agency:

> As embodied beings, persons are always situated in a location from where their perspectives of experience and their activities reach out into the world. What is more, their activities and experiences are part of their relations with others, which depend on and hang together in social practices. … A person's agency is so deeply entrenched in the social practices one lives in, that it is more adequate to talk about persons as participants and about participation than about agency and activity, action, or behavior. (p. 11)

Surrounding conditions are conceptualized in this research as *possibilities for action* (Dreier, 1999; Holzkamp, 2016; Suorsa, 2014). When conducting everyday life, subjects reconcile and organize different participations and possibilities (Holzkamp, 2016). Being a participant in social practices and an agent in one's own

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practices, tools, and everyday rhythms—and also experience contains those components of the environment.

everyday life means that subjects change, maintain, modify, and negotiate various practices in cooperation with others (Dreier, 1999; Suorsa, 2019a). Subject's participation in a certain life scene is also grounded in different ways (Suorsa, 2014, 2018). Forthcoming paragraphs delve into these notions more deeply. In addition to everyday practices, the conduct of everyday life refers to a broader imagination of how we see the world, our action possibilities, what we want with our life, and in what ways everyday practices come meaningful and accomplishable (Højholt & Schraube, 2016).

Created technological artifacts embody power and control and are able to structure and regulate human life (Chimirri & Schraube, 2019; Schraube, 2009; Schraube & Marvakis, 2016; Selwyn, 2019; see also Langemeyer, 2012b). Technological things create possibilities and restrictions—spaces and structures. Artifacts contain actions and agency that has been designed into it.[22] Although human beings by themselves create and design things, many consequences of the cooperation of humans and technology are unpredictable (Chimirri & Schraube, 2019; Schraube, 2009). In our complex and accelerating[23] everyday life, outcomes may be something else than designers have attended. Outcomes and how artifacts change human–world relations can be unplanned and unimagined initially, but apparent and recognizable afterwards (Schraube, 2009). Leaning on Günther Anders, a philosopher of technology, Chimirri and Schraube (2019, pp. 49–50) describe that we have created such a complex world that we can hardly manage with it.

Between maintaining and changing life conditions

Varying developmental contexts of human life are societally and historically structured (Højholt & Kousholt, 2019). Human beings both live under certain life conditions and participate in producing, modifying, and maintaining them (Holzkamp, 2013e; Højholt & Kousholt, 2019; see also Arnkil, 1991, pp. 49, 123–124). They both create and modify their own social relations and transform and recreate themselves through those relations (Schraube, 2009). Zittoun (2012, p. 516) clarifies the fundamentality of the tension between maintaining and changing life

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[22] Simple technologies and artifacts, like self-made table or chair, may contain relatively simple agency, human actions, and intended use. Complicated digital technologies, however, contain multiple layers of actions, designing and cooperation of many specialists.

[23] Rosa (2019) uses the expression *acceleration* of everyday life when describing how everything in modern life is speeding up.

conditions as follows: "It is clear that change occurs only within a constant tension between continuity and change. Our bodies remain 'the same' even if each of the cells of our organism is replaced every year."

Agency refers to subject's ability and capacity to handle, act, transform, and extend control over the condition of one's life scenes and practices (Holzkamp, 2013a, p. 23; Rainio, 2010; Silvonen, 2015). Subjects have need to improve and modify their own life conditions and structures of everyday practices—their possibilities for action (Holzkamp, 2013a; Silvonen, 2015). On the other hand, simultaneously, they need to belong to their communities, particular social discourses, and maintain social relations and familiar life structures[24] (Hviid, 2018; Nissen & Friis, 2020; Røn Larsen, 2012). Both maintaining and changing life conditions are part of learning new and gaining control of life. Balancing between these two stances can be continuous and contradictory processes.

Internalizing the traditions and discursive and practical cultures is central in human life.[25] This will also be brought up later in relation to the dynamics of agency and Valsiner's (1987) zone concepts (see Sub-chapter 2.2). Although agency is usually seen as active actions and a transforming process, this research pays attention to the maintaining as well. Also maintaining life conditions can be an active process (Hviid, 2018). It includes actions or choices to not to act and rhythms, routines, and habits, which are repeated in everyday life (Højholt & Schraube, 2016). Subject-scientific approach highlights that a subject is precisely a *participant* in maintaining and changing life conditions that are also simultaneously produced by other participants and by historically formed structures (Dreier, 2011; Suorsa, 2014, p. 89).[26] A person's actions are not just *reactions* to stimuli, rather surrounding conditions create a *spectrum of possibilities for actions* (Schraube, 2013; see e.g., Järvilehto, 1998a, 2009). People actively and creatively relate and

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[24] Maintaining can be seen meaningful when considering safety in development and learning (e.g., Mälkki & Green, 2016). This perspective is further discussed in Sub-chapter 2.2. This notion relates also to the general question of space, which is discussed in later phase of this thesis.

[25] Describing the same phenomenon as a contradiction of mastery and submission Rainio (2010) writes: "To learn to live in a society requires internalizing the traditions and laws received from those who teach them to us. At the same time, being an agentive member of society means renewing and developing these same laws and traditions. This makes social life and human development inherently and necessarily contradictory and dialectical" (p. 16).

[26] This two-sidedness of human subjectivity and agency has been discussed also in relation to material environment; humans both use artifacts, realize meanings, and create new ones—artifacts and meanings (Schraube & Sørensen, 2013). Artifacts and material environment themselves may contain power relations and social and societal interests and, through different actions (or promoted actions), transform human–world relations (Schraube, 2009).

respond to different demands in their learning context of everyday life (Langemeyer, 2012b).

The relation between maintaining and changing life conditions can be further conceptualized as generalized and restrictive agency (or *action potence)* (Holzkamp, 2013a; Osterkamp, 2009).[27] These refer to two kind of capacity and potence to act, depending on how subject seeks to resolve contradictions in everyday situations.[28] *Restrictive agency* refers to adapting to, accepting, and acting within the prevailing conditions—particular space, freedom, or power relation (Holzkamp, 2013a). In particular situation, subject (or institution) can, for example, maintain conditions which end up being restrictions for agency or change. *Generalized agency* acknowledges that humans have possibility of consciously and in cooperation with others create and refine conditions (Osterkamp, 2013; Silvonen, 2015). Referring to restrictive and generalized agency Suorsa (2019a, p. 3) writes:

> Concepts denote a central contradiction in the lives of western individuals: on the one hand persons are able to consciously participate in maintaining and changing their living conditions in accordance with their own and common interests and needs. On the other hand, they also need to hold on to their current possibilities for this participation, and thus are inclined to ally themselves with current power relations, even if they are far from optimal and equitable, because changing them could endanger the resources they need and that matter to them.

Collaboration, although it doesn't get much attention in this thesis, is both topical in research on agency and a fundamental principle in transformation of the world, learning, and development (Stetsenko, 2008). Collaboration and coagency are important in changing life conditions. Simultaneously, it's notable that communal perspective—belonging to subject's own life scenes and cultures—can help to understand why persons hold on to old routines and habits and why changes happen step by step. Participation forms the key question within practices: Which participations are supported by particular actions and what is maintained in a particular situation?[29] In short, other people are needed both in taking new steps

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[27] The idea of generalized and restrictive agency forms the basis for understanding agency in this research, although I have used (instead of those concepts) here mostly the expression *maintaining and changing life conditions*.

[28] To read more about solving contradictions in life and in relation to learning, see Marvakis (2019).

[29] For example, for a teenager it can be much important to maintain his or her reputation through "bad behavior" than give right answers to teacher's questions. Røn Larsen (2012, p. 131) clarifies that "Participation becomes a key concept, since it gives us the possibility to understand that what is seen as

and maintaining safety while taking those (see e.g., Rainio, 2010, p. 83; Suorsa, 2020).

Agency, experience, and groundedness of participation

In addition to relating to surrounding conditions by maintaining or changing them, subjects have grounds for their actions. Personal participation is defined as (trans)located and positioned adopting a personal stance in a historically formed situation (Dreier, 2008, 2011; Suorsa, 2015a, 2019a; Zittoun, 2008). This personal stance can be seen in relation to generalized and restricted agency (Suorsa, 2019a). Subjects have grounds for their actions and nonactions and reasons for seeing something possible while something else seems impossible (Silvonen, 2015; Suorsa, 2019a). This groundedness of everyday life can be conceptualized as a *reason discourse* and articulating meaning structures (Holzkamp, 2013e, 2016; see also Højholt & Kousholt, 2019). In addition to having practical and embodied relations to the world, subjects also have discursive ones (Eteläpelto et al., 2013).

Agency is always exercised for particular purposes. In principle, it is always possible to identify the subjective functionality of one's experience or actions (Tolman, 1994, pp. 109–112) and their relation to surrounding conditions and common meaning structures (Suorsa, 2015a). Understanding agency, and why human beings do what they do, demands reaching toward the subject's perspective—the standpoint (Silvonen, 2015). If something seems irrational from my own perspective, it simply means that I am not aware of all the aspects of groundedness of one's participation (Suorsa, 2014, p. 90; see also Osterkamp, 2016, p. 172). Participation in a particular life scene is in many ways grounded even before the subject becomes aware of the groundedness (Holzkamp, 1987; Suorsa, 2014, 2020). This relates to the historical dimension of participation introduced above; places and structures contain particular groundedness already when subject enters the life scene for the first time.

As it is possible to become aware of one's own grounds for actions, it is possible to also gain more understanding about multidimensional grounds that places, life scenes, and conditions inevitably already have (Suorsa, 2014, 2015b; see also Holzkamp, 2013e). Seeing personal experience as entwined with

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a problematic action, is often meaningful in relation to the social communities that a child is a part of." Traditional approaches in psychology have been criticized that "individualizing understandings of development, learning and difficulties overshadow the historical, institutional, cultural, and societal context in which the difficulties appear" (Røn Larsen, 2012, p. 131).

surrounding conditions (from material to societal) does not make experience somehow "less" personal, but rather the opposite. Experience is indeed a unique relation to all those surrounding components of environment and possibilities for action, because a person is in any case relating to those conditions in unique and personal way (Holzkamp, 2013a; Vygotsky, 1994).[30]

Focusing on subjective grounds of one's own action in practices of everyday living enables exploring human experience and expands the knowledge of subject and the world (Osterkamp, 2009). This notion is central in defining how to do a research (Holzkamp, 1987; Suorsa, 2015b). On the one hand, one can bring up his or her grounds for actions, for example, when a researcher asks a sufficient question. On the other hand, participation in the scenes of everyday life has always those sides and aspects that the subject is not aware of. The method of identifying this reason discourse of personal participation is called *fabric of grounds* (FOG). It opens up the relation between general meaning structures and personal grounds for action (Holzkamp, 1987, 2016; Suorsa, 2015b).[31] FOG also brings up the ways subjects participates in maintaining and changing their life conditions (Suorsa, 2015a). When using FOG in understanding research participants experience, a researcher focuses on (1) descriptions of particular situation and surrounding conditions, (2) the participant's thoughts, feelings, and actions, and (3) the articulations of grounds and reasons (Raetsaari & Suorsa, 2020; Suorsa, 2015a, 2014).

Exploring subjects related to surrounding conditions reveals how subjects experience surrounding possibilities for action and in what way societal structures form constraints, meanings, and demands in everyday life (Højholt & Kousholt,

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[30] Vygotsky (1998, p. 294) introduces *experience* (*perezhivanie*) as follows: "All experience is always experience of something. There is no experience that would not be experience of something just as there is no act of consciousness that would not be an act of being conscious of something. But every experience is my experience." See also Dafermos and Marvakis (2006) for detailed description how experience, feeling, or impression is *mine*, *yours,* or *his/her* and how those always have their contents and contexts. Vygotsky (1994) writes about the content of experience and at the same time formulates the base for understanding how personal characteristics and components of the environment are entangled: "Perezhivanie is always related to something which is found outside the person … all the personal characteristics and all the environmental characteristics are represented in an emotional experience, perezhivanie, everything selected from the environment and all the factors which are related to our personality and are selected from the personality … which are related to the event in question." (p. 342).

[31] FOG integrates these three, first, processes of *meaning making*, how people actively engage in making sense of varying situations (see e.g., Zittoun & Brinkmann, 2012); second, *reason discourse*, how they form grounds for they action (Holzkamp, 2013e, 2016); and third, how they find themselves as a participant in certain conditions and meaning structures (Suorsa, 2014, 2015a).

2018; Holzkamp, 2013e; Silvonen, 2015; see also Langemeyer, 2012b). As the subjects articulate their meanings and grounds, it is obvious that those contain some parts of the environment and elements that are shared with some others. The connections between one's actions and socially shared meanings is not always clear, but it is possible to gain understanding of them (Suorsa, 2014, p. 42). Yet, this does not form sufficient ground for assuming inner mental world, which would not be in relation to surrounding conditions (Højholt & Schraube, 2016, p. 3; Suorsa, 2014, p. 42).

Besides the subject's experienced possibilities, restrictions, and demands, there are also imagined future worlds. We can move toward widening one's possibilities for action, for example, in counseling and therapy (Dreier, 2008; Suorsa, 2015a) or in learning and development in general (Järvilehto, 2009). Widening horizons and opening new possibilities for action is the central aim in subject-scientific approach (Osterkamp, 2016; Silvonen, 2015). This could also be seen in line with the ability and disposition to imagine possible worlds (Rainio, 2010, p. 16; see also Rainio & Hilppö, 2017). Later, this thesis discusses agency especially as ways of relating to surrounding possibilities for action. Ways of relating can be realized in fabric of grounds, and surrounding possibilities refers to all the conditions in everyday life.

2.2 The dynamics of the development of agency

In this thesis, the development of agency is discussed from the perspective of the person–environment system. Previous sub-chapter described everyday living and agency from the standpoint of the subject to emphasize the situatedness of human life and the meaning of participations and practices. Conducting everyday life and the assemblage of current life scenes and relations forms the context and content of agency and *the social situation of development* (Suorsa, 2018; Veresov, 2004; Veresov & Fleer, 2016; see also González Rey, 1999). But what happens between these components and relations? This sub-chapter proceeds with unwrapping the dynamics of agency by introducing systemic organism–environment theory (Järvilehto, 1994, 2009) and zone concepts developed especially in cultural psychology (Valsiner, 1987, 2009; see also Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Those concepts were used in the third sub-study (see Article III) and in this thesis to demonstrate especially the relation between freedom (space) and guiding structures.

Developing person–environment system

The development of agency is seen in this research as a process of the whole system—person and the environment as a dialectical unity (Roth & Jornet, 2017; Suorsa, 2019b). The conceptualization here is built especially on *the systemic organism–environment theory* (Järvilehto, 1994, 2009). I refer to this theoretical perspective mostly with the name *person–environment relation* or *system*. Järvilehto (1994, 2009) draws on Mead, Spinoza, Dewey, and Bentley, as he develops forward an understanding of organism–environment system (see also Bentley, 1941; Dewey, 1922, 1927; Mead, 1934). Human–world unity has been discussed also in cultural-historical and subject-scientific psychology (Roth & Jornet, 2017; Suorsa, 2019b; Vygotsky, 1994, 1998).[32]

Then what kind of consequences does this have for understanding and exploring agency? In short, it underlines the meaning of *the context* and concretizes what living in human–world relations is in practice. The context is not a passive background for persons, but rather environment forms an intertwined *system* with person. Environment is not just an "objective" background (Järvilehto, 2009) or a setting were everything happens but also a source of development (Roth & Jornet, 2017; Vygotsky, 1994, p. 338). Persons are not only situated in a particular context but also simultaneously constituted by it, and they modify, change, and maintain parts of their contexts in cooperation with others (Højholt & Schraube, 2016). When talking about development, we should talk about this person–environment relation as a dynamic, developing whole (Roth & Jornet, 2017; Suorsa, 2019; see also Palmer, 2004).

An individual (subject) forms a system with certain parts of the environment,[33] for a particular purpose (Dewey, 1922; Järvilehto, 2009). Human actions and, for example, skills inevitably contain parts of the environment and different parts of human body (Dewey, 1927),[34] although we might be used (and taught) to think that

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[32] From this perspective human development is a continuous and dynamic processes located and emerging in human–world relations and within everyday practices. Human beings are tightly, even inseparably, intertwined with the environment and its different parts. In the same way, González Rey (2019) refers to Holzkamp as he describes that human subjectivity is continuously interwoven between the inner resources of individuals and the societal conditions.

[33] It would have been also possible to use concept of *affordance* when referring to component of environment and how subjects engage with them and realize action potency (Pedersen, 2015; Pedersen & Bang, 2016; Schraube, 2013; see also Järvilehto, 2009).

[34] In literature (see e.g., Bentley, 1941; Mead, 1934; Palmer, 2004) different examples have been used in describing the intertwined person–environment system. Is the air part of human or part of the environment? If its part on the environment, isn't it quite mixed with us when we breath? What about

capabilities, for example, are somehow inside of a human head. We become aware of the problematic nature of this system when we try to define and draw the line that separates human from its environment (Järvilehto, 1994, 2009).[35] Although it's been popular in psychological research to separate humans and contexts and control variables, no human being can ever be apart from the environment in real life (Dreier, 2021; Holzkamp, 2016; Røn Larsen, 2012; Silvonen, 1991). Neither it is possible to produce a single action or even a thought without any parts of the environment (see e.g., Vygotsky, 1998, p. 294). In organism–environment theory, a person forms *the functional system* with those components of the environment that are relevant in particular situation, on a particular life scene—and for producing certain results (Järvilehto, 1994, 2009). When persons move between their life scenes, some connections with the environment fade away and become replaced by some others.

This may seem complicated at first, although we are kind of used to it in our everyday life. For example, drawing is not an ability inside of a head. Drawing, in most cases, needs, for example pen, paper, hand, and eyes. Practicing this cooperation of these parts of human body and environment develops this particular skill forward. If we take off, for example, the pen and the paper or cut the entire environment off the picture, what is left of the art of drawing? Further, if a talented artist is no more able to use her hands, but continues drawing anyway, maybe with the help of toes, it is a large developmental process. It includes maybe long process of accepting the change and dealing with the loss, but it also contains changes in the ways of working and demands changes in the environment. Paper is no longer

clothes or glasses, are those part of environment or part of me? What if I put my glasses on the table and I don't see so well anymore? If my aim is to see something, I need my glasses to form a functional system for that particular purpose. Yet, if my aim, my *expected result of action*, is to get some sleep, it is obvious why I put the glasses on the table. From systemic perspective new goals emerge as a result of previous action. Expected results form and organize the person–environment system (Järvilehto, 2009, p. 116). In practice, for example, one can observe what happens to the motivation or expected results of action when we start a new activity or join a shared one—or become a participant of a particular group.
[35] Bentley (1941, p. 3) discusses the distinction of *inner* and *outer* and general assumptions about the role of *skin* in separating persons from their environment: "psyches, minds, personalities, all belong in this class; skin is what holds them *in*." Palmer (2004) continues exploring both Betleys and Deweys writings and discusses further why this distinction between organism and environment matters. My research work has been inspired especially by the idea of continuously changing system and individual's *connectedness* with the components—material object of the environment (Järvilehto, 1998a, 2009). Järvilehto (1994) describes, that system is formed with those parts of the environment which are meaningful and purposeful at a certain moment. See also how Honkasalo (2013) describes agency and human actions: Exploring illness made clear for her that agency is not separate from material environment.

on a table; rather it is on the floor and so on. These tangible changes in the context also help and are part of the process of accepting the new situation. Holzkamp (2016) states that modifying the concrete environment and focusing on routines is central in surviving the crisis and other changes. In life, we maintain what we can, because it saves and secures our resources (Højholt & Schraube, 2016), and we slightly change something else, develop new skills, routines—and those actions always contain elements of the environment.

Learning and development means changes in the relation between the person and the environment (Hedegaard, 2004; Hedegaard, Aronsson, Højholt & Ulvik, 2012). Development is a continuous process, in which we can slightly change directions, but we cannot go back. [36] Development means a change and reorganization of the entire system (Järvilehto, 2009, 1994; Roth & Jornet, 2017; Suorsa, 2019b). To understand actions in a particular situation, those actions need to be seen with the contents and context, which are anchored in societal frames (Hedegaard, 2004; Vygotsky, 1994, pp. 342–343; 1998, pp. 293–295). In research work, this means focusing on person's relation—concrete connectedness—with the world, like participations on life scenes, surrounding conditions and material components. From this perspective, agency refers to different ways of relating to surrounding possibilities for action. In the next sub-chapter, zone-concepts describe the concrete movements and dynamics in everyday practices and how this process of relating to the environment takes place.

Dynamics of the development as zones, spaces, and structures

While the systemic organism–environment theory concentrates primarily and with more detail on psychophysiological research (Järvilehto, 1998b, 1999, 2000), I have used cultural-historical concepts to reveal the different dialectics of everyday life. Aim has been to open up the relation between free movement and different structures guiding and forming the contents of the human agency. In previous research on agency (and learning), the same has been discussed and explored as *paradox of pedagogy*—the contradiction between control and agency (Rainio, 2010; Rainio & Hilppö, 2017). Toward the end of this thesis, I refer to the same

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[36] Once I have learned something new, I am permanently changed (Järvilehto, 1994, 2009). What I have learned or the new skill I have achieved is not separate from surrounding conditions, relations, or further aims. It "reflects to practical activities, changes possibilities for action, ways of thinking and personality" (Järvilehto, 1994, p. 193; 2009, p. 116).

phenomenon with using words space and structures (see Chapter 6). *Structures* point in the direction of more or less structured fabrics of everyday life.

With the help of zone concepts of Valsiner (1987), it is possible to illustrate what those spaces and structures are in everyday practices. Holzkamp (2016) also brings up the concept of *relative autonomy* to refer to certain degrees of freedom that individuals have in relation to the prevailing circumstances (Holzkamp, 2016, p. 88; see also Silvonen, 2015). The third sub-study of this research (reported in Article III) is about the dynamics of development, where theoretical explorations have the focus in gaining understanding of development and dynamics of agency.

While *the zone of proximal development* (ZPD) refers to the distance between the subject's potential and actual psychical development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), other zone concepts illustrate where and how the possible development takes place. The zone theory of Valsiner (1987) clarifies the dynamics of structures and freedom in the everyday practices and relations, and in the development of the whole person–environment system. The theory is based on Kurt Lewin's field theory of boundaries and zones, which originally focuses on child–adult interaction. *The zone of promoted action* (ZPA) refers to the structures, activities, and contents in relation to which the new activity is encouraged or promoted, and the *zone of free movement* (ZFM) represents what the environment allows for the subject (Goos & Bennison, 2019; see also Rutanen, 2007). Although zones originally describe childhood development, I am not the first one to interpret those in research focusing on adults. The theory has been utilized, for example, to understand teacher's learning, development, and identity formation (Goos, 2005; Goos & Bennison, 2019; Rahardi, 2011) and to interpret teaching practices in mathematics teaching (Blanton, Westbrook, & Carter, 2005). Concepts have also been used in exploration of spaces formed for children's agency (Rutanen, 2007).

The ZPD is formed through freedom and structures and is continuously defined by (1) guidance and teaching, (2) surrounding conditions, and (3) the subject's own actions (Valsiner, 1987). First, in original child-rearing and education context, this means, for example, that an adult gives instructions. Second, a particular environment and its surrounding conditions form possibilities and restrictions. Third, children make their own actions or refuse to complete what they are promoted to do. When expressing and creating a ZPA for a child, an adult cannot force development and learning directly to the wanted direction. Developing subject must retain free will and, for example, the possibility to choose and act differently (Valsiner, 1987; see also Holzkamp, 2016). Surrounding structures and zones of promoted action established by adults or other children form the contents,

goals, and structures in the developmental process. As goals and objects emerge in everyday situations, they reveal the difference or contradiction between the potential and the actual state of development (Veresov, 2004).

Outside of zones of promoted activity, there should be a space for free movement (Blanton et al., 2005). In another words, in the middle of different structures, guidance and other guiding conditions, development demands an open space that allows sufficient autonomy and agency (Soini, 2008; Valsiner, 1987; see also El'konin, 2001; Rainio, 2010, p. 89; Vuorisalo, Rutanen, & Raittila, 2015). Valsiner (1987) describes that this space (or ZFM) represents the area of possible actions, availability of facilities, and what is allowed in particular environment. The concept of ZFM highlights that space is not formed just by rules of what is allowed and what is not but also contains material elements and other conditions framing the situation. He continues that a particular situation also has social and cultural frames, expectations created by others, and meaning structures established by the subject and other agents. Previous ZPAs in a subject's history form the internalized understanding of the limits of one's actions. Multiple restrictions and instructions narrow the space for free movement. This refers to a subject's interpretations of discursive cultures, and what is desired or tolerated in a particular environment (Valsiner, 1987). As the ZPA refers to the activities, which are encouraged or promoted, the ZFM represents what a particular environment and relations allow (Goos & Bennison, 2019). During the research process, these zone concepts worked as a theoretical tool for analyzing formation of spaces and structures within everyday practices.

3 The research process

Agency as maintaining and changing life conditions was grasped in the sub-studies from three angles: participation, agency, and dynamics of development. Article I focused on participation and concerns of school professionals. Article II was about remote students' agency in rural north. Article III concentrated on the dynamics of development in remote students' everyday life, especially from the perspective of the person–environment system. The entire process with its phases is described in Figure 2.
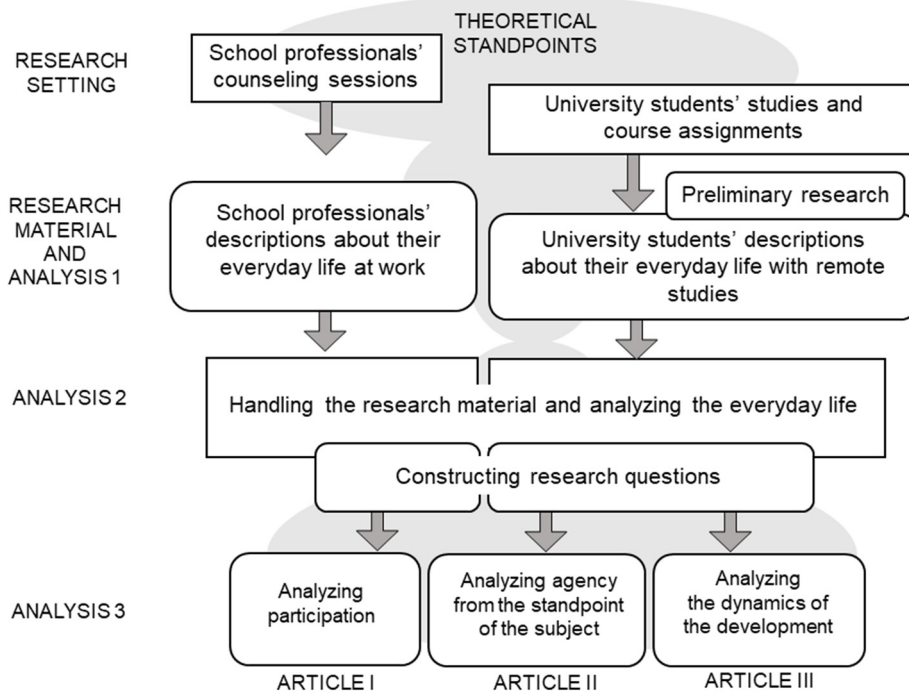
Fig. 2. Research process.

The research contained two research materials, (1) school professionals' description of their everyday life at work, and (2) university students' descriptions of their everyday life with remote studies. All research material was in written form (digital) and was produced as a part of education. Although sub-studies took place during different years, processes had similar phases as the Figure 2 illustrates. Subject-scientific theories and research perspectives inspired the process and

guided methodological choices. The production of research material included the first phase of analysis (Analysis 1), where research participants had their own roles (Suorsa, 2014, pp. 49–50). After that, an overall picture of participant's conduct of everyday life (Analysis 2) was formed with the help of grounded methods (see Sub-chapter 3.2). More specific research questions were made based on these analyses of everyday life and further analyses (Analysis 3) and with the help of chosen theories in each sub-study (see Sub-chapter 3.3).

3.1 Research material and research participants

Research material of school professionals was produced by research group during the education of professionals' counseling skills (Soini & Mäenpää, 2012; Suorsa, 2014, 2019a). While working with this first material concerning professionals' everyday life at work, I started planning a new research project focusing on university student's everyday life. This second research material was produced during university studies with students (from my standpoint during teaching) and preceded by preliminary research.

School professionals

As a teacher and tutor at the University of Oulu, I came to know SOLMU-education—a training program for school professionals' interpersonal skills. The education was developed in a dialog with theory of organism–environment system (Järvilehto, 2009) and in relation with solution-focused practices and subject-scientific theories and concepts (Suorsa, 2014, 2015a, 2019a). When I was starting my PhD studies, I began to work with research material produced in SOLMU-education. At this point research material was ready for further analyses and offered me an opportunity to get to know research work based on systemic and subject-scientific orientations, which I was already partly familiar with from teaching contexts (Suorsa, 2014).

SOLMU-education was part of cooperation with University and city of Oulu in Northern Finland. Focus was to provide education of counseling and interpersonal skills for employees working in the field of pupil welfare in schools. Participants of the education (and the research) worked as classroom teachers, subject teachers, and special educators in the field of basic education and preschool—school psychologists, school social workers, and principals. I use here the name *school professionals* when referring to these participants in SOLMU-

education and in the research. During the education, participants have supervised peer group meetings (6–8 participants in each group), where they take turns in acting as counselor, client, and observer[37] (Suorsa, 2019a). When being in the role of a client, a participant tells a topical, unresolved, and meaningful issue related to his or her own work (Soini, 2012, see Appendix 1). The other participant in counselor's role supports the client by listening and asking questions. Meanwhile others in the same group observe and afterward give feedback concerning the counseling conversation and discuss the client's problem or topical issue.

The research material contained 48 written summaries of 24 school professionals' descriptions of their everyday life at work. Each participant worked two times in a role of the client, telling about one's own work. Sessions were videotaped for both education and research purposes, and participants were informed about the research and asked for written research permissions. The whole education contained seminars concerning counseling skills, and these counseling sessions in peer groups are described above. In addition, there were evaluation days, where participants watched their own videos about counseling conversation in peer group sessions and discussed about the interaction between a client and a counselor and the contents of the sessions.[38]

I started working with this research material in a phase where clients' descriptions of their topical situations and concerns were summarized as fabric of grounds (FOG), including (1) a short description of participant's situation, (2) the participant's thoughts, feelings, and actions in the situation, and (3) the participant's subjective reasons for thinking, feeling, and acting (Suorsa, 2014, 2019a). These summaries were done for evaluation days so that participants were able to read those; comment, make changes or add something. This phase was named the first phase of analysis. A total of 48 summaries formed the research material and I proceeded from this with further analysis (see the first sub-study and Article I).

Preliminary research and university students

While teaching psychology and educational sciences at the university, I was often inspired by students' observations, questions, and examples when they discussed or wrote about theoretical concepts and other contents of their studies. My attention

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[37] This way of training counselling skills is called *consultative method* (Soini & Mäenpää, 2012).
[38] Producing the final research material (the phase where participants analyze their everyday life in counselling discussions, the researcher constructs summaries and participants evaluate those) is named here the first phase of analysis (Analysis 1 in Figure 2).

was directed especially toward real-life examples and how students experienced freedom and guiding structures and how they interpreted different possibilities.[39]

During the year 2016, I asked research permissions from students to gather up their real-life examples from their written assignments. They had a chance to prohibit the use of their assignments, and few did. A total of 49 students in early childhood education and primary teacher education were part of this preliminary research that took place during my work as a university teacher. First, I looked what contexts student's examples kept inside when they described relation between freedom and structures. Second, I gathered all the contents of their examples and observations: what was the written example or description all about. The findings gave a general picture of contexts and contents of student's examples and helped me to plan my next steps for the research. Simultaneously, this gave me a chance to test this kind of research pattern (integrating teaching and research), and handling and analyzing the material.

Contexts in students' descriptions were (1) teacher's work at school and in day care, (2) parenthood and home context, (3) students' everyday life and managing with studies, and (4) adult education and counseling. Contents that they were discussing in relation to freedom and structures, were (1) individual differences in acting or experiencing, (2) following given instructions and limits and giving instructions and setting limits for others, (3) professional development (Peltola, 2016a). Based on these viewpoints, I chose to focus on students' descriptions of their own everyday lives. During next two years, I included an assignment on a particular course I was teaching (Appendix 2). There I asked students, among other assignments, to describe their everyday practices and one normal day or other freely chosen occasion. Those observations and descriptions of everyday life worked both for students learning and as a research material for next sub-studies (see Articles II and III).

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[39] One of the crucial questions along the way was presented by a student who had come to my lecture (on educational psychology) from another course concerning educational sciences: I was explaining how counsellor creates certain space for a client through different ways of acting like presenting open-ended questions and teacher creates spaces through instructions. The student asked: How it was in relation to *paradox of pedagogy*? I was not very familiar with the concept in that point but wanted to learn more.

Remote students and their everyday life

Research material concerning university students' everyday life started to tell about remote studies and home life when one of my courses (this particular one with research aims) ended up being a remote course.[40] Collecting this research material took place during years 2018 and 2019. Written descriptions and discussions of 39 university students (36 female and 3 male students, aged between 22 and 50 years) formed the next research material. This material was used in sub-studies and Articles II and III. All the participants had some reason to study (mostly) at home. They had either chosen remote studies because of long distance or ended up in the remote studying setting at the end of their studies. The whole material included 39 essays and 54 shorter writings from the online discussion area. Students' assignments had lot of other contents and interesting real-life examples too, but only their own everyday life descriptions were chosen for further analysis.

The process of producing research material was built inside of the teaching and remote course structure. I worked as a teacher-researcher in the process. I informed the students about the research work, how anonymity was maintained, and research material handled. Later on, I discussed about my thoughts, preliminary findings, and interpretations with the students. They were free to choose whether they wanted their assignments to be a part of the research material or just part of their course completion requirements. See a more thorough description of the ethical perspectives in Chapter 5.

First, there was shared teaching which also included, among other contents, short introduction to the concepts *the fabric of grounds, the conduct of everyday life*, and *the standpoint of the subject.* For students, the aim was to understand how the personal standpoint is formed through everyday life. The theoretical framework did not direct the content of observations as such, but rather worked like an inspiration and helped to set the focus on concrete conditions, everyday practices, and groundedness in them.

After teaching, students observed their everyday life and discussed their thoughts, findings, and analysis in familiar peer groups. Discussions helped in clarifying concepts and sharing experiences and observations. With the peer group, it was possible to deepen the understanding and specify interpretations and

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[40] This shift from traditional course into remote course happened years before COVID-19 pandemic, and it was related to curriculum reform and general development of accessibility of education. During the remote course on developmental psychology, early childhood education students wrote about their everyday lives when studying at home.

descriptions for final writing process. Discussions brought up the differences in different student's standpoints and offered a good chance to go through why, for example, someone sees something possible while someone else does not. Discussions were organized remotely through web-based learning environment.[41] On the one hand, one topic in discussions was that it would have been great to share experiences and everyday life examples in face-to-face meetings. On the other hand, written discussions in web-based learning environment brought up also those students' experiences who stayed quiet in live-meetings.

After shared group discussions, students wrote their final assignments, including the parts that concerned their own everyday life. These formed the actual research material and also the first phase of analysis conducted by research participants (Analysis 1 in Figure 2). In course feedback, students were grateful for having a chance to analyze their own life for change when their studies mostly concerned children and practices in early childhood context. From the perspective of the course contents and learning outcomes, analyzing their own life seemed to work very well. However, one aim during the course was to understand those concepts also in relations to children.

Following the principles of subject-scientific research (Chimirri, 2015; Suorsa, 2014), students as research participants and partly *co-researchers*, had an active role in analyzing their experiences and bringing up their perspectives. They brought up findings and interpretations concerning everyday life, but they also stated which concepts and contents they found useful and important in their current or future working context as teachers in early childhood education (see also Article II). Students' discussions continued often from their own life toward everyday life in early childhood contexts. For example, understanding the idea of the *standpoint of the subject* in their own life also provided a possibility to understand the same in relation to others.

3.2   Analyzing everyday life

In each sub-study, first step was to form an overall picture of participants' everyday life (Analysis 2 in Figure 2). In this phase of analysis, I did this by using grounded methods (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Silvonen & Keso, 1999) to gain participants' perspectives, as the aim was to do research from the standpoint of the

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[41] Sometimes discussions continued spontaneously even in live meetings and I made notes for myself, but those notes were not included in research material.

subject. This phase can also be conceptualized as *descriptive exploration of everyday life*, in which researcher works at a level of participants' self-understanding (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Suorsa, 2014, p. 48). Theories were building the starting points of research and came along again in later phases of analyses (see gray area in Figure 2).

From the perspective of subject-scientific psychology, grounded participation is central when analyzing agency (Dreier, 1999, 2011; Højholt & Schraube, 2016; Holzkamp, 2016; Osterkamp, 2009). Focusing on everyday routines, rhythms, and concrete conditions makes social embeddedness and groundedness of one's actions more visible (Højholt & Kousholt, 2014). Human experience and psychological phenomena are both unique and general, and this generalization is strongly grounded with the notion that people live their everyday life in a shared world (Roth, 2008; Schraube & Højholt, 2019).

Understanding of participants' own life and standpoints is possible through the analysis of everyday life (Busch-Jensen and Schraube, 2019; Dreier, 1999). Focusing on everyday life and grounded participation guided the formation of research material as participants in both research settings was asked to tell about their own life and focus on concrete practices and descriptions, thoughts, feeling and reasons for their actions. Brinkmann (2012) highlights being as descriptive as possible rather than analytical—concentrate on concrete. With school professionals, this was guided by question formulation in peer group session and with university students, while teaching and giving them assignment.

Research process was leaning on the notion that a subject is not instantly aware of all the dimensions of one's own experience or even dimensions of participation, and that is why we need to explore those together (Suorsa, 2014, pp. 133–134). This includes focusing on everyday life practices and groundedness in them. People are always rooted in their worldly relations and connections to cultural, social, discursive, and material worlds (e.g., Schraube & Højholt, 2019). That is why research should be done *with* them rather than *on* them. This idea of co-research in subject-scientific framework was implemented here only partly. As the research was part of education, educational aims had the priority over research aims and the roles of participants had to be planned from that perspective.

When I had the research material in front of me for the first time, I read all the material. In early phase, I used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, to handle and code larger materials and moved later to work with papers, colors, pens, handwritten memos, and Word documents. The research material was coded sentence by sentence with constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990,

p. 73). These units of analysis formed a category model, including subcategories and main categories (see Appendix 3 and 4). Final names of categories were specified to be in line with theoretical framework, for example, by using words *meanings*, *structures*, *everyday life*, *conditions*, *grounds for actions*, and *participation*. Aim was to recognize general dimensions in participants' everyday life and construct further research questions based on them. Further analyses of research materials were done with the help of theories relevant to each research question (and sub-study). In final analysis and writing articles, I used original materials in Word documents and category models constructed in analyzing everyday life.

School professionals' everyday life

I started working with 48 written summaries of school professionals' everyday life by reading and getting to know the material. General aim was to understand what they are talking about and when they have time and place to share their topical issues and concerns in peer groups. The first research question was: What dimensions of concerns can be found in professionals' peer group discussions? Professionals' concerns are presented in a category model that is published in Article I and English translation of the table is presented in Appendix 3. Counseling discussions in SOLMU-education were built around professionals' topical and meaningful problems and concerns named *concern talk* in short. Finnish word *concern* (*huoli*) has a double meaning. Both *being concerned* (*huolissaan*) and also *taking care of* (*huolehtia*), can be derived from this word. Understanding the research material through subject-scientific framework showed how *being concerned* and *taking care of* is intertwined in everyday participations.

Remote students' everyday life

With second research material, 39 essays and 54 shorter writings, analyses were guided by the same general question about dimensions of everyday life. Overall picture of everyday life included descriptions about conditions and practices in their studies and home life, like routines, actions, and events. In some parts of the material, students wrote on a more general level about their life scenes and participations, thoughts, priorities, and experienced contradictions. Other parts of the material offered more detailed descriptions about routines and actions during a typical (or one particular) day. Those also included students' grounds for their

actions. Peer group discussions had a central role in promoting for articulating groundedness.

Coding material, as presented earlier, formed a category model of remote students' everyday life. Examples of the formation of categories can be found in Appendix 4. Main and subcategories were compared with theoretical framework to specify final category names. This overall picture of dimensions of everyday life worked as a basis for two articles. Article II focused on remote students' agency in rural areas. The research question was: What is agency like in the everyday life of students in the rural north? Article III reconceptualized developmental processes in remote student's everyday life from the person–environment perspective. The research question was: How do remote students relate to their possibilities for action in their everyday life?

3.3   Analyzing participation, agency, and development

The final phase of analysis (Analysis 3 in Figure 2) was guided by the research questions constructed while analyzing everyday life. On the one hand, theories and concepts to use in final analyses were chosen on the basis of these particular questions. On the other hand, final formation of the questions was also based on theories and previous research. Because of the journal article format in reporting empirical research, the big picture of agency was divided into parts, one focusing on participation, second on agency from the standpoint of the subject, and third on developmental perspectives. The conduct of everyday life and grounded participation as basic concepts and theoretical starting points were included in each article. Theoretical standpoints guided me to look at the *ways of relating*[42] in everyday life practices.

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[42] Agency from the standpoint of the subject is embedded in everyday life participations and can be explored in relation to conducting an everyday life across different social practices (e.g., Højholt & Kousholt, 2018). The everyday life with its participations and relations forms the source and *the social situation of development*. In this research, I have conceptualized that in development, the entire person–environments system develops (Roth & Jornet, 2017; Suorsa, 2019). Individual capabilities, for example, self-understanding is not separate from the environment and surrounding conditions, but rather what develops is the inseparable and intertwined person–environment relation. But how to explore agency when the development means development of entire system? Agency here is seen as personal ways of taking stances and relating to surrounding conditions—in the middle of grounded participations in everyday life.

School professionals' participation

After framing the overall picture of the topics and dimensions of school professionals' everyday life at work based on counseling discussions, I chose to focus next especially on their grounded participation. With help of coauthors of the first article, I constructed the second research question: what does "concern talk" tell about the everyday work of professionals (see Article I). We compared the findings of the previous question, the original research material, and theoretical understanding about everyday life. Based on the theoretical framework, attention was paid to descriptions of participation, everyday life routines, and changes, goals, grounds, and possibilities for action. We searched for similarities and repetitions and analyzed whether there could be an essence of concern talk, regardless of which the theme is addressed in the discussion[43].

Remote students' agency

When analyzing agency (see Article II) in a student's everyday life in the rural north, overall picture of the students' everyday lives was compared with the theory on agency. Theoretical framework included the dimensions of agency recognized from both previous studies and in subject-scientific theories. These theories and concepts highlighted three main aspects of agency while doing research from the standpoint of the subject. Analyses were made with the help of these three dimensions.

To complete the analyses, research material and theory were read carefully simultaneously multiple times. The aim was to recognize meaningful aspects of remote students' life in rural north. As the participation is the central concept in the theoretical framework and is essential in understanding agency, it has a significant role in this sub-study also. As the focus was on aspects of rural areas, analyses were made with the research material that was in Article II called *rural data* (17 students living far away from university). This rural data was also, whenever necessary, compared with *urban data* (rest of the students living closer to university).

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[43] In addition, I analyzed what professionals saw possible in their current situation (Peltola, 2016b), but this phase was not included in the same article. Focusing on the possible, however, was part of the orientation toward the dynamics of agency.

Development in remote students' everyday life

Again, during the phase of gathering and analyzing the research material and everyday life, the research questions was constructed based on what seemed important and meaningful. This third sub-study focused on the dynamics of development, exploring how agency and development take place in everyday practices. The specific research question was: How do remote students relate to their possibilities for action in their everyday life? In this Article III, focus was also in clarifying the development of agency when the development is seen as a dynamic process of the entire person–environment system. Zone concepts (see Sub-chapter 2.2) were adopted to reveal the dynamics of concrete situations in remote students' everyday life.

It was essential to understand, conceptualize, and look at the environment as possibilities for action and formation of developmental steps as ways of relating to these surrounding conditions and possibilities for actions. Zone-concepts used in this phase helped to recognize especially the role of structures and freedom in development. This perspective, relation between freedom and structure, is central in exploring agency (Rainio, 2010).

The central aspects of remote students' everyday life were identified being overlapping participations, changing transitions, and paradox of possibilities (see Sub-chapter 3.2). These formed *the social situation of development* for students. Aim was to find out with more detail about what happens in those particular situations and in what way development takes or does not take place in them. All the way, the aim was to understand the development as a process of the whole person–environment system. We focused on the students relating to different conditions and multiple possibilities for action. We used the ZPA and ZFM concepts (Valsiner, 1987) to reveal and illustrate the role of structures and freedom in the development. The analysis was made by reading and comparing theory together with category model of everyday life and original research material. We aimed to recognize the students' descriptions of space, structures, and grounds. Findings unfolded as four different ways of relating to possibilities for action (see Sub-chapter 4.3 and Article III).

4   The articles

This chapter presents an overview of the three original articles of this thesis. The first one explores concern talk among school professionals. The second article tells about university students' agency and everyday life in remote studies, and the third one explores the dynamics of the development in the remote learning context. The articles focus on different dimensions or the phenomenon of agency. The first one focuses on the conduct of everyday life and participation, the second one on agency from the standpoint of the subject, and the third one concentrates on the dynamics of development. Table 1 provides an overview of the aims and main contents. Appendix 5 presents a larger summary of the articles in table format (material, questions, methods, and main findings).

I had the main responsibility in conducting the research and writing the manuscript of each article. The role of the coauthors was to discuss about analyses, conceptualizations, and subject-scientific approach and to comment the manuscripts and help in finalizing it. Research material for the first article was produced before I entered to the research group.

Table 1. Aims and questions in the articles.

Article	Aim	Question
I	To explore school professionals' *concern talk* and their everyday life at work.	What dimensions of concerns can be found in professionals' peer group discussions? What does concern talk tell about the everyday work of professionals?
II	To explore remote students' everyday life and agency from the standpoint of the subject.	What is agency like in the everyday life of students in the rural north?
III	To explore the dynamics of the development in remote students' everyday life.	How do remote students relate to their possibilities for action in their everyday life?

4.1   Article I: Concern talk and boundaries of participation

The first article focuses on school professionals' concern talk and participation in their everyday life at work. It was written by me, Teemu Suorsa, Jutta Karhu, and Hannu Soini. Research material contained 48 summaries of the professionals' everyday life at work. The analysis of the research material was first guided by the research question: *What dimensions of concerns can be found in professionals' peer*

group discussions? Professionals talked about resources, division of labor, work-related well-being, customers' concerns, and interaction in the work community. The second research question was: *What does concern tell about the everyday work of professionals?* For this, we compared the result of previous question, the original research material, and basic concepts presented in theoretical background.

The main result was that all the themes of the professionals' concern talk were in some way connected to the interfaces of participation (1). Multidisciplinary collaboration produces a constant reflection on the limits of one's own involvement, participations, expertise, and official job description and actual work contents. At the same time, knowledge concerning the involvement of others and their participations and engagements is a prerequisite for the appropriate performance of many tasks and the defining and structuring of one's own job. Other dimensions of everyday life were related to changes (2), varying grounds for actions (3), contradictions related to one's own goals (4), and interpretation of the possibilities for action (5).

Relating to the changes referred to balancing between maintaining prevailing conditions and going toward something new. Too big, dramatic, or rapid changes easily create resistance, while excessive compliance and maintaining old hardly changes anything (see e.g., Eriksson & Arnkil, 2012). Although development of work and school practices may have good intentions, continuous chances can also contain a risk of overload (Pietarinen, Soini, & Pyhältö, 2008). Professionals' interpretation of the possibilities for action was in relation to general conditions and possibilities, but it took personal shape according to subjects' participations and goals in current situation. Balancing between possibilities for action and agency seemed central in varying practices. In particular situations, subject can stick to the current situation or contribute to the reshaping of the situation through one's own actions—take steps toward something new.

The findings help to identify work-related contradictions and needs for the development and to understand the everyday life and multiprofessional and multidisciplinary collaboration in pupil welfare. The subject-scientific perspective slightly changes the definition of participation and sees each person as already a participant in their life scenes. This sets focus on identifying the possibilities and results of the activity that he or she is already producing and supporting in realizing possible alternatives in different situations. In practice, the agents' own understanding of the formation of situations can be increased by opening the dynamics of everyday life, ways of acting, current changes and all the participant's everyday participations as well as the related grounds for actions.

4.2 Article II: University studies in the adjacent tab and dimensions of students' agency

Second article was written by me and Teemu Suorsa. This article focused on agency from the standpoint of the subject and in the context of remote studies in rural north of Finland. The aim was to deepen the understanding of university students' agency in the age of modern technology—in a situation were studying mostly happens at home. Research question was: *What is agency like in the everyday life of students in the rural north?* Constructing the research question was based on the first analysis of the students' everyday life (see Sub-chapter 3.2). To form the theoretical framework for this sub-study, we compiled an overall modeling of agency from the standpoint of the subject based on subject-scientific research. Research material contained 39 university students' descriptions of their everyday life during remote studies.

The research question was answered by analyzing research material through the theoretical modeling of agency. In findings, we presented three ways in which the agency was pursued. First one was articulating participation and engagement. This included the overlapping of life scenes, engagements, and participations; the paradox of flexibility; combining all the life issues; and the transformation of transitions. The transformation of transitions meant that previous transitions were compensated with transitions from one tab or file to another. Multiple possibilities and flexibility in studies (through technology) created a paradox. Flexible ways of studying were important, but they were still challenging in practice. Second, dimension of agency was organizing the conditions and dealing with the possibilities and restrictions. This kept inside balancing with competing demands, relating to the Arctic weather and nature, handling unexpected events, and doing something else at the same time while studying. Third, dimension of agency was mapping meanings, aims, and grounds. Being at home had particular meanings for students and others around them. The students highlighted the meaning that their studying had for their community. In addition, the uniqueness of the situation increased motivation and pressure.

4.3 Article III: Continuous balancing and dynamics of development

In the third article, I with coauthors Teemu Suorsa and Jussi Silvonen, continued working with the same research material as in Article II—university students' descriptions of their everyday life during remote studies. The aim was to reveal the

dynamics of development in remote students' everyday life as a part of the larger phenomenon of agency. Again, based on the analysis gaining an overview of the students' everyday life (see Sub-chapter 3.2), we constructed a new research question. The question was: *How do remote students relate to their possibilities for action in their everyday life?* We defined students' everyday life as *a social situation of development* and kept in mind what we had discovered in earlier phases while forming an overview of the remote students' everyday life. Findings of this first analysis indicated that central to the everyday life and social situation of the development in remote studies was (1) overlapping of life scenes, which led to overlapping of participations and engagements, (2) transformation of transitions, and (3) the paradox of possibilities and flexibility. Based on this, we went forward and focused students' relating to those surrounding possibilities.

As continuous and lifelong learning becomes a part of the human life, it inevitably connects to other aspects of life as well. "Distance" learning takes place in a particular place and situation—like at home, at a certain time, in a particular culture and in the middle of other grounded participations and actions. New opportunities to study, regardless of time and place, challenge the processes of student attachment and progress of studies. The student's responsibility to structure his or her own everyday life grows. At the same time, however, being distant solves the challenges of reconciling different parts of life in general. The multidimensionality of space and freedom comes clearer when looking at the dynamics of a student's everyday life.

The development was defined as a process where the whole person–environment system develops through continuous reorganization (see Sub-chapter 2.2). Cultural-historical concepts were chosen to reveal the dynamics in the development and especially the relation and meaning of space and structure in that process. We drafted a model of remote student's ZPD, with the help of zone concepts of Valsiner (1987)—ZFM and ZPA. In everyday situations, students' different ways of relating to diverse action possibilities were (1) balancing, (2) floating, (3) paralyzing, and (4) redefining. All of those included typical grounds for actions. The model illustrated how new developmental steps can be formed in relation to the surrounding requirements, meaning structures and relations. Development requires both a promoting structure and space for free movement. In a particular situation, subject can stick to the current situation and experience or contribute to the change of prevailing conditions.

5   Ethical considerations and evaluating the process

Phases of the research process and handling of the research material has been guided by the research ethics guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012) and *situated ethical* considerations for qualitative researchers (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Kousholt & Juhl, 2021). Ethical guidelines and standardized procedures provide an important foundation for ethical reflections. However, qualitative researcher faces multiple ethical dilemmas and contradictions for which there may not be clear guidelines or right answers (Kousholt & Juhl, 2021). Ethical considerations of this research process include reflecting my position as a researcher. These are presented here under five subtitles. Some of the notions concern only the research process with university students and relate to the school professionals only partly. [44] Each article has gone through peer review process, and in this way has been under evaluation of community of researchers.

Who is doing what and why?

In different parts of the process, it is important to consider the meaning and purpose and also the impact of the research (Brinkmann, 2012; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Hilppö, Chimirri, and Rajala (2019) promote to evaluate who the research is done for and in what ways do our research efforts have impact. It is not rare to find yourself wondering during the process that, "Why am I doing this and who is this for? Is this research for my own learning, challenging myself or developing career, or just having something of my own—a meaningful hobby? Or am I doing this for the University or research group or larger research community, or maybe for belonging to those groups?" I'm quite sure that the research participants would have managed quite well even without my research intentions planted among the teaching. Still there were several questions—and questions participants brought up—that I wanted to find answers for. Even when I tried to focus only on teaching, deeper and bigger (theoretical) questions just kept arising back.

During the process, researchers must evaluate how they relate to the same or similar circumstances, societal structures, and everyday life practices, in which research participants live in and research work takes place (Silvonen, 2015; see also

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[44] To see the detailed description about the perspectives concerning the process and material conducted with school professionals, see Suorsa (2014).

Hilppö et al., 2019). This also includes power relations. My own relations to research contexts, like blended and remote learning settings, were introduced in Sub-chapter 1.4, but here I take a more detailed look into the power relations in the research setting. The most important notion concerning the power relations is the teacher–student relationship (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005, pp. 163–165).[45] Power relations are included in next three sub-chapters—located in the question of research permission, research design and setting, and finally in interpretations and reporting findings.

Permissions and anonymity

One part of the research ethics is informing research participants about the research and asking for permission (Brinkmann, 2012). When a researcher is in close collaboration with research participants, researcher may face ethical dilemmas also in relation to research permission (Kousholt & Juhl, 2021). With students, I had a chance to discuss about the research and permissions even during the courses where I was collecting the material. Permissions concerned the whole course assignment, because interesting everyday life examples could come up anywhere. It was important to describe with more detail and discuss along the way about the anonymity and express that they can prohibit the use of their writings or some parts of it at any time, and it's not a problem.[46]

Still, as I know from the long experience as a teacher, all the students may not remember all the instructions and issues given in the first lecture or don't follow shared discussions. Someone may skip those specific lectures or read the instructions in a rush. When the course continues, the students may also forget which instruction (or research permission) relates to which course. Or when doing the peer conversation task, they may not remember that those are also part of the process and research material.[47] These varying everyday situations remind that a researcher must continuously evaluate and reflect ethical questions (Hilppö et al., 2019; Kousholt & Juhl, 2021). Also, their thoughts and presumptions concerning

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[45] In professional data, partly same power relations can be found in trainee–trainer relationship between school professionals and researcher, as research was part of the adult education context.

[46] To help them to understand what the research was about, I told examples from previous years: How I learned something or had and new idea when I was reading students essays and learning diaries. But back then, I did not have a chance to use it in research, because I did not have the research permission.

[47] One practical dilemma: Hopefully participants are able to concentrate on task and don't think about the research too much, and simultaneously, it's problematic if they forget that their thoughts, what they discuss and write, end up being research material.

scientific research may differ. I saw asking permission more as a continuing part of the process [48] and kept telling examples from previous years and primary findings every now and then, so that they had the possibility to remember (and also deny) the participation. This aspect is further evaluated in subsequent sub-chapters. During the years (including preliminary research phase), few students denied the use of their assignment or some part of it.

Especially in the phase of reporting findings and writing articles, it was necessary to evaluate again how the identity of the subjects can be disguised. I'm personally the link between reported and published findings and the student's that have participated in both teaching and research process. So, if I'm somewhere (in public) telling about my work (as a teacher) with specific group of students and specific education programs and somewhere else about research done with (some anonymous) student's, it is possible to connect that information. Although it is not possible to identify individual student, it is possible to track which groups have been involved. This increased the need to discuss with the participants themselves about the findings and researcher's interpretations (see, e.g., Riessman, 2008, pp 197–198). The most sensitive information, for example, concerning some student's exhaustion and tiredness were left out from this research and published in different context in cooperation with students. Students were able to form together the very final expressions and influence on how everything was interpreted, presented, and written—and they also knew where everything was published.[49]

Later in the publication processes of this thesis and articles, I have carefully evaluated which data examples are both necessary and safe to bring up. I've paid a lot of attention into it now, in the phase, where participants are no longer influencing the final interpretations and expressions. In addition to those possibly sensitive contents described above, many other sensitive topics were also left out (like tensions in close relationships). Many of those were included in more general-level conceptualizations with the help of theoretical background and concepts (like only named generally *meanings*, *premises*, *expectations*, and *negotiations*) and brought up without detailed examples from the research material. Also, the availability of the publication (see e.g., Josselson, 2007) and chosen language

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[48] Another dilemma: When giving the permission in the beginning, the student does not really know what kind of experiences, thoughts, and feelings he or she is telling and writing in the end, in course assignments.

[49] Despite all the consideration and being careful and sensitive, it does not take the power relations (between students and teacher and between different students) away (Brinkmann, 2012).

influences the possibilities that, for example, relatives or peer students can recognize the research participants from the research material samples.

Evaluating the design and the setting

In addition to permissions, anonymity, and purposes, Brinkmann and Kvale (2017) bring up the ethical considerations concerning the whole design of the process and the research setting (see also Silvonen, 2015). Transparency can be promoted through describing methodological choices and how interpretations were made (Riessman, 2008, p. 195). This research was part of the teaching, and teaching had primacy over research. Participants had to do the tasks and assignments to accomplish the course. (Albeit they had, as mentioned before, the possibility to deny the usage of their assignments for research purposes—in any phase of the process.) Shared conversations in peer groups were part of the process, and conversations had influence on the students' own writing. Through that part of the research (and course) design, those students who denied the usage of their assignments might have also had influence on the process and the production of the knowledge. For example, it is possible—at least in theory—that someone shares her own experience or example which ends up being part of the data, but the example is strongly inspired by another participant's question or own example which is not part of the research material (because of the lack of the permission to use it). Also, in larger picture, it was possible to see the influence of the peer group in the individual's writing.

Although I did my best in informing students, I'm quite sure that not all students have the same kind of idea about the research project and the usage of the material collected, just the way their knowledge about the findings and interpretations differs. Like in teaching situations and studying overall, some students engaged in the process more than others. In later phase, some students took part in the process, for example, by evaluating the findings even after the course and after their graduation. From research perspective, students' inputs made with sometimes a minimum amount of effort were also valuable. It was impossible to know before the final analyses which examples or stories of everyday life bring something valuable or new to the entirety. Forming overall pictures instead of counting something (how many times something was mentioned or how many students made something) made it possible, that active or not, students had more equal possibilities to influence to the research process.

One way of giving more possibilities to influence was the difference in the methods of teaching and at the same time in producing research material: (1) live and written discussions with group and (2) individual writings that only teacher-researcher read. When discussing contents and topics in web-based learning environments, everyone participated, even the students who did not finish the course and final written assignment in the end. We had few live group discussions, but in main role there were web-based written discussions that also allowed those students to share their perspectives, who in live conversation mainly stayed quiet.

The researcher creates a specific space for participants (Hilppö et al., 2019). In interview research, for example, the place and questions form and modify the space for participants. In this research setting, the teaching and its contents also had a role in shaping that space and student's interpretations of *what should be written in assignments*. Based on teaching, peer group conversations—and also other previous courses, theories, and assignments—each participant had different ideas (and sometimes doubts or concerns) about proper and expected contents to put into their writings. Peer group had important role in shaping those ideas or assumptions. Other participants' everyday life descriptions and examples not only inspired and helped others but also guided their interpretations about proper observations.[50]

Everydayness and usefulness from participant's standpoint

The structure of the process promoted to focus concrete conditions, rhythms, routines, and actual events during on typical day and grounds for actions (*conduct of everyday life*). Research participants' descriptions about their life would have had in any case relations with actual and previous course contents, their studies, and peer conversations in a different setting. In this research process, I chose to make those relations more visible. First, that was done by teaching about the conduct of everyday life and what standpoint means, then helping them (with support, peer group and planed assignments) to recognize relations, structures, their personal grounds, and meanings in everyday life. In a larger picture, this also highlighted the understanding of human experience (Holzkamp, 2016). Even if we were chasing a pure individual internal experience, without any connections with the environment, would it be possible to find one (Holzkamp, 2013a; Vygotsky,

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[50] With school professionals' same phenomenon was possible when they chose, what issues they bring up, when it is their own turn to tell about their work life. It is possible that other previous conversations inspired and promoted choices.

1994)? Or if we tried in research to separate the inner experience from components of the environment, what would then be the environment, where the findings are useful?[51] Suorsa (2020) describes that a problem occurs when experience and actions are explained as independent psychological processes and disconnected from the environment: "We end up with something that has been labelled 'the Colgate problem' of psychology: if one squeezes 'subjectivity in context' out, methodically, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to put it back in" (p. 32).

When doing research from the standpoint of the subject, we need to consider the benefits the process can have for participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2017, 2018; Chimirri, 2015; Kousholt & Juhl, 2021). In research material and course feedback, students usually noted the usefulness of the course. I realized that I easily interpreted the feedback like it would mean that they found the research process and participating into it useful and important. Of course, that was not the message. Nevertheless, I tried my best in choosing course assignments which were purposeful for (1) learning outcomes of the course, (2) participants themselves, and (3) for research. It was good to know that they felt that they had learned a lot. Despite the variations in the students' enthusiasm for the process and commitment to it, they found contents of lectures, peer group conversations, and the exploration of their everyday life an eye-opening experience. But like said before, the feedback focused on the course, and students would have managed even without my research intensions. I saw it important to make the research plan to fit into the course structure and avoid giving students any volunteer extra tasks to accomplish.[52]

In some cases (course assignments), the students focused on theories and contents of the lectures and literature and chose to write only minimal examples of their own life (to accomplish that part of the assignment too), while in another cases (most cases) students wrote long descriptions about their personal life. Many students discussed that in observing and analyzing one's own everyday life, they got a bit carried away. This probably made the descriptions richer, although many of them were wondering afterward if it all was out of topic. In such situations, the researcher faces new ethical dilemmas as participants become enthusiastic about sharing personal content about their everyday life (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Kousholt & Juhl, 2021). Situated ethics highlight, that researcher's ethical

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[51] This refers to the question of generalization. Schraube & Højholt (2019) write more about the situated generalization of research findings in psychology (see also Busch-Jensen & Schraube, 2019; Valsiner, 2019).

[52] This aim had to balance with the fact that being part of research had to be voluntary.

considerations continue also in new and unpredictable situations that occur during the research process (Kousholt & Juhl, 2021).

In relation to anonymity, I mentioned earlier the language of the publications. Language also has something to do with the benefits the process and the findings for the participants. I decided to publish findings in both languages: Finnish, and English, and in addition, wrote blogposts, made videos, conducted lectures, and gave presentations. I keep evaluating the relation between anonymity and further use of the findings: How can participants use the findings and benefit from the process even afterward and at the same time keep the anonymity of their own and others?[53] Because I was teaching and guiding the students out of this specific course also, I knew more than I was able to say in this research or based on the research material. When reporting the findings, I often had the feeling that I know something or I remember a conversation that would have been meaningful or important for the research and participants, even though those were not included in the research material. Some of the details stay in shadows, but many of them might have been influencing my interpretations and ways of reading the research material.

Making choices and taking directions

The researcher has the power to make the final decisions and interpretations (Josselson, 2007). This means, that I also have to handle the research material and its interpretations and findings in complete trust (Riesmann, 2008). Evaluating the directions taken and decisions made during the process are part of ethical considerations (Kousholt & Juhl, 2021). Are those directions taken along the way, the ones the participants would have done or what they would prefer and see as significant now (see e.g., Riesmann, 2008, p. 199)? Subject-scientific approach highlights that we take seriously the initiatives and perspectives participants bring up and try to see the researched phenomenon from their standpoint (Schraube & Højholt, 2019). Still, a researcher has the responsibility of the process and participants and may have multiple perspectives different from each other. It's important not only to listen, be open, and appreciate but also take care of responsibilities as a researcher.

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[53] The process and also the findings should benefit the participants (e.g., Chimirri, 2015). However, the impact or usefulness depends strongly on how findings are presented out of scientific publications.

Grounded methods, open conversations, and co-research elements [54] in analyzing the findings were all needed for gaining the participants' variable perspectives. Still during the process—and increasingly toward the end of the research—researchers must make many decisions alone or with the help of other researchers and coauthors of articles. When reporting the findings, I inevitably may highlight something while ignore or dismiss something else (Kousholt & Juhl, 2021; Riessman, 2008, pp. 198–199). Brinkmann and Kvale (2005, pp. 164–165) use the wording's asymmetrical power relation and the researcher's monopoly of interpretation. I, as a researcher, seek the aspects that bring something new into the scientific conversation. A researcher does the final choices in relation to scientific conversation, previous research, other researchers' comments, other sub-studies, and the research as a whole. Theoretical commitments have guided me to focus on particular aspects. Based on the theoretical background, I was interested in those parts of the research material (and made the interpretation) that highlight the subject–environment system, relations, and material elements among other surrounding conditions.

Perhaps students, however, would choose something else to highlight as main findings (like how successful students regulate their life and learning compared to not so successful students, or they might take deeper look into students' well-being or tiredness) afterward and after studying some other courses and contents. It is also possible, that after a while or at the time of publication, research participants don't see the same issues significant that seemed important or worth highlighting during the production of research material (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005, p. 82). When the teacher-researcher tells participants about findings (or results), power relations are again obvious (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Josselson, 2007). It is difficult for the student to indicate a different opinion or even ask questions if research findings are already conceptualized to a more theoretical level. When involving students in later phase, it has been important to pay attention to the way of speaking and presenting findings. Instead of scientific concepts and expression, I must in a way seek again the everyday level of word choices (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009)—same kind of wording there was in the research material.[55]

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[54] This means the phases where participants were making observations, analyzing their own life, and evaluating and discussing findings.

[55] This is called a phase of descriptive exploration of everyday life in which a researcher works at a level of participants self-understanding (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Suorsa, 2014, p. 48; see Sub-chapter 3.2).

6   Findings and discussion: Space for agency

Aim of this thesis was to explore agency from the standpoint of the subject and seek ways of considering humans living in their world relations and in the middle of everyday social practices. Research question was*: In what ways the dynamics of agency takes place in everyday life, and what is the meaning of space and structures in the process?* For this compilation part, I read articles, my memos, some of the original research material and continued exploring theories. In this research, agency is seen through relating to—maintaining and changing—surrounding conditions. In everyday life, variable structures form spaces for agency. This formation happens through three levels that are presented through next sub-chapters: (1) place and participations, (2) practices, and (3) experience. Figure 3 presents those altogether. Theoretical model presented here can be considered as a theoretical tool for analyzing some of the dimensions of human actions and everyday situations. Later, Sub-chapter 6.4 discusses the relations between findings and similar conceptualizations. Chapter 7 introduces concluding remarks, presents limitations of the research, and places it on the field of educational psychology.

First level (see Figure 3) and Sub-chapter 6.1 sum up, based on articles and theoretical background, how agency takes place in everyday relations. When looking at the phenomenon from the standpoint of the subject, there is a place, the context—a compilation of particular life scenes and participations (Level 1). This means relations and conditions that the subject is a part of. Second (Level 2), those relations tie the subject with certain social practices, rhythms, actions and transitions, roles, objects and expected results of activity (see Sub-chapter 6.2). Second sub-chapter introduces how spaces for agency are created in those everyday practices. Third sub-chapter focuses on the subject's own experience about the space for one's agency (Level 3). This refers to multiple meaning structures and ways of seeing surrounding possibilities and restrictions.

Figure includes two movements: (1) continuous balancing between maintaining and changing life conditions and (2) dynamic relation between structures and space for free movement. Each level (1–3) contains different structures for agency. As the space for agency is formed through three levels, agency and human actions (and nonactions) modify those levels mutually, like societal frames, everyday practices, or personal and shared interpretations. Changing conditions often needs collaboration and help from others.
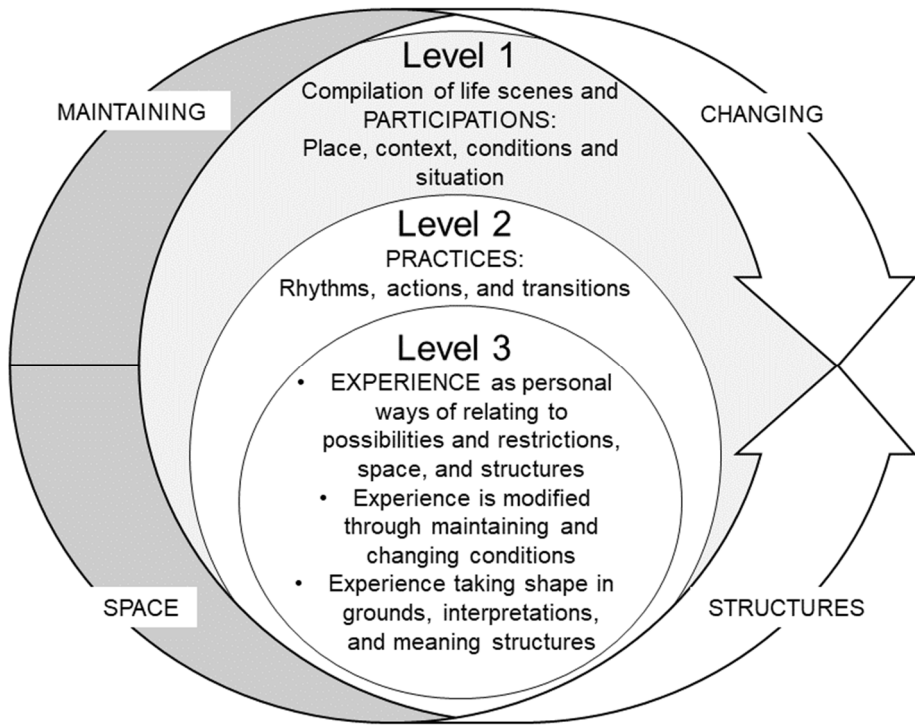
Fig. 3. Main findings.

Theoretical standpoints of this research remind that freedom has multiple dimensions and layers—starting from societal and historical frames and proceeding toward material and social relations. When referring to freedom, I use the word *space*. It includes the denotation of physical space, the place, whereas *freedom* does not have a similar connotation. (In Finnish, a word *tila,* contains both of those meanings, place, and space.) The word *structures*[56] aims to build an image of

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[56] Holzkamp (2013e, p. 265) discusses thoroughly the use of a word *structure*. To avoid confusion, *societal structures* are discussed here under the expression of *societal frames* (e.g., Zittoun, 2008).

texture[57] in the fabrics[58] of everyday living. A fabric can have layers and levels, and it can be formed by porous and permeable or dense patterns—an alternation of structures and spaces.

6.1   Agency takes place in everyday relations

Agency takes place in the middle of everyday participations, life scenes, and surrounding conditions. Through considering personal participation—what is the subject part of in his or her life—agency gets its contents and the context.[59] From subject-scientific perspective, subjects are already in many ways participants on their life scenes (e.g., Dreier, 1999, 2003). As emphasized in cultural-historical tradition, surrounding system, historical context, and conditions create specific demands on the subject (Zittoun, 2014). Person's life trajectory goes through variable settings and contexts, and these form the setting for development, learning, new steps, and changes (Hedegaard et al., 2012; Valsiner, 2000; Vygotsky, 1998). Focus can be set on recognizing in what ways a particular subject is a participant and an agent in maintaining, changing, and producing one's own life conditions.

In the first sub-study with school professionals, all the themes of the professionals' concern talk were in some way connected to the participation (see Article I). Findings emphasized the boundaries of participation—involvements and engagements, areas of expertise, official job descriptions, and actual work contents.[60] From the theoretical perspective of this research, material components,

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[57] A word *texture* in relation to everyday practices, rhythms, activities, meanings, and culturally patterned ways of being a part of certain activities that have been used, for example, by Hodgetts, Rua, King, and Te Whetu (2015) as they describe homeless Maori men with their gardening activities. Hodgetts and Stolte (2013) also use an expression *shared fabric of social life*. This also refers the special purpose of ordinary practices: maintaining life conditions and belonging to one's own life scenes and cultures.

[58] The word *fabric* referring to the conduct of everyday life can be found, for example, from Højholt and Schraube (2016), and see also Chimirri, Klitmøller and Hviid (2015). *Fabric of grounds* refers to *reason discourse* (see Sub-chapter 2.1 and Chapter 3).

[59] This situatedness, central in subject-scientific approach, has been brought up also in other conceptualizations of agency (see e.g., Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Sub-chapter 1.3).

[60] Boundaries and interfaces of participation and expertise have also been in focus in previous research on agency, expertise, and multidisciplinary cooperation (see e.g., Daniels, Edwards, Engeström, Gallagher, & Ludvigsen, 2013; Edwards, 2010, 2011, 2017; Hedegaard, 2017). It is not essential to merge or fade the boundaries of expertise and cooperation, but to work in these boundary spaces and to cross the boundaries of one's own expertise and previous participations (Edwards, Lunt & Stamou, 2010; Mälkki, 2011, 2020; see e.g., Huhtasalo, 2019). Multidisciplinary collaboration not only produce a constant reflection on the boundaries of subject's own participations but also demands knowledge about colleagues and others' participations—which are continuously changing (see Article I).

like walls, border fences, furniture, tools and in general material places and distances between them, also form spaces for agency.[61] Remote students' everyday life also revealed a technology-mediated perspective on participation (see Articles II and III) and being in a particular place and context. Modern technology[62] and new flexible ways of studying created a situation where student's life scenes and participations were overlapping. If in traditional setting in studies, transition from one place to another organizes life and engagements, in remote life, everything happens under the same roof. Transitions as such are discussed in next sub-chapter within practices. Although it could be placed in here too (Level 1). However, in remote learning context especially, being a part of remote studies changed the transitions and practices (Level 2; see Sub-chapter 6.2). Later on, transitions, for example, from home to library were used for organizing studying conditions and for modifying experience about studies (Level 3; see Sub-chapter 6.3).

As the participations change, so do the surrounding conditions along, it changes the entire person–environment system, those relations the subject was living in. Based on Level 1, the central question is: What are those participations and life scenes of which the particular subject is part and which form the context and content for one's agency?[63] This is meaningful for subjects themselves, because it opens up the resources of engagements, demands and, expectations faced in life.

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[61] Dewey (1922, 1927) and later Järvilehto (1994) indicate that the environment really is not an environment as such but formed by different components and parts (which create the functional system with a human).

[62] Technological artifacts have influence on participation: Walls can separate groups or individuals, video conference enables people around the globe to be part of same discussion. As the technology develops, it's not always possible to control in what ways, for example, a particular device guides participation (Schraube, 2013, 2020). Bad connection can drop out someone out of video conference, broken car ends a journey or Bluetooth headphones set you suddenly in the middle of other family member's phone call. In remote students' everyday life technologies, in the first place, made it possible to study—especially in a situation where students live far from the university. Whenever it was possible to listen lectures or be a part of group work through a cell phone (instead of computer), a student was able to combine studying and, for example, long-distance driving or going for a walk. Sometimes being a part of a group work or lecture was suddenly stopped, because of a disconnection or problem with devices. In such a situation, technology takes control over students learning situation (Schraube & Marvakis, 2016). In a larger picture, having a particular kind of device (or application) has a power to enable or prevent participation. In students' everyday life also other parts of material environment structured human actions. Students mentioned in their descriptions for example size of the apartments, walls, doors, tables, and many others. Same way technology can modify relations also in work life. A program or device which were supposed to help in particular task also starts to organize and structure professionals' actions and choices.

[63] Quite often though, it seems to be more interesting to figure out how to get someone to be part of something in a way that is recognizable for those whom it counts.

6.2   Everyday practices form the space for agency

Through the compilation of life scenes and participations, several practices provide a texture and structure to human life. Participation in a particular life scene binds the subject to certain social practices. Simultaneously, subjects repeat and maintain those practices for belonging; being a part of certain community, culture, or group; and ensuring the continuity and psychological safety.[64] At this level (Level 2), practices form a space for agency.[65] Rhythm, habits, and demands form more or less structured space for free movement. School professionals described how they had to make particular decisions within certain demands, historically formed practices, limitations, or lack of certain resources (see Article I). Students tried to fit together rhythms and practices within their overlapping life scenes: studies and home life (see Articles II and III). In both contexts, it was important to maintain many conditions and ensure continuity of other parts of life (or work), despite of changes happening on one life scene.

From the very beginning of this research, I grabbed the idea that in everyday practices persons create different kind of spaces and structures for themselves and each other (e.g., El'konin, 2001; Soini, 2008; Valsiner, 1987).[66] This refers, for example, to rules, roles, rhythms, expectations, discourses, and cultures. Variable structures form the open space for agency—for someone's actions, choices, or new developmental steps. Theoretical discussions most often acknowledge that both are needed for human agency and development: structures and space.

Findings in sub-studies indicated that a subject's relation to surrounding conditions had a practical level, like organizing places and schedules. Participants

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[64] Certain practices are one way of creating psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999; see also Suorsa, 2021). However, like specified in next sub-chapter, environment and practices are individually experienced (Dafermos & Marvakis, 2006; Mälkki & Green, 2016).

[65] Also, research settings in sub-studies created a particular space for participant to describe and analyze one's own life. In practice, presented questions and surrounding conditions structured and guided the process (Soini, 2012; see also Vanhalakka-Ruoho & Ruponen, 2013).

[66] Previous research describes mostly adults' actions in creating developmental spaces for children (Holzkamp, 2016; El'konin, 2001; Valsiner, 1987; see also Blanton et al., 2005). Adult's actions and nonactions create a space for a child's own action and agency. Space left for the developing child from an adult's perspective or for a student from institutional perspective, can be grounded in different ways. Parents form structures based on their knowledge and previous events (Valsiner, 1987), emphasizing, for example, security in particular situation. School professionals form structures and ground their decisions based on many rules, contents, and aims. For example, it is not possible to let children play in a dangerous place or forbidden area, even though it would support their agency and development of new skills. How spaces for participation, action, and agency are formed within practices and in relation to societal frames and material condition can be found also in sociologically oriented research (Löw 2008, 2016; see also Rutanen, 2007; Vuorisalo, Rutanen & Raittila, 2015).

both became part of certain practices and contributed to the reshaping of the situation through their actions, and that way they created structures and spaces for their agency (see especially Articles II and III). It is important to keep in mind, that agenthood, does not refer only active and notable (and socially expected and suitable) actions,[67] but agency also means, for example, deciding not to act, choosing to be quiet, or refusing to do something.[68]

Behind variable surrounding conditions, there are previous actions that have formed certain possibilities and restrictions for subjects, built places, rules, or societies. Articles II and III brought up the role of highly developed technology in creating different spaces and possibilities for actions (see e.g., Schraube & Marvakis, 2016; Schraube, 2009). Within surrounding conditions, people keep creating new conditions for further actions, although it is not often conscious or intentional. Further on, one's agentive actions create space or sometimes restrictions for someone else's actions. The space for agency can this way be narrow or wider, sometimes highly structured and sometimes nonexistent (Valsiner, 1987). For example, teacher's instructions construct the boundaries of the space (see e.g., Vuorisalo et al., 2015). Created space is easily filled with *something*.[69] That is why it's important to pay attention to structures for that sense also, because they create and clear the spaces[70] (instead of just limiting it).

Spaces formed for agency within practices and in actual interactional situation has already got attention in previous research (Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2010; Kumpulainen & Rajala, 2017; Rajala et al., 2016; Rainio, 2010). Research material of this thesis did not give a possibility to analyze actual interactional situations in the same way that videos or researcher's own observations might have enabled. In this research—and in subject-scientific research in general—it is, however, central

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[67] Eteläpelto, Heiskanen and Collin (2011) write about places and spaces for acting differently and discuss about changes in work life and possibilities for agency in adulthood in general.

[68] That's why expression *takin stances* and especially *relating* to surrounding conditions (see Articles II and III) are used here to describe agency in everyday practices (see e.g., Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Suorsa, 2015a).

[69] Hyyppä (2016) describes a challenge in human conversation (but also in life in general) that space always attends to fill up with something. Space created between variable structures can also be filled with something unplanned, like listening to someone else and being open for other's invitations (Kinnunen, 2015). It can be important to recognize what kind of structures create possibilities and spaces for particular actions and events in everyday life. Certain space can also create possibilities for acting against expectations (e.g., Rutanen, 2007, p. 194) or it can be "filled" with waiting, staying, and tolerating (Honkasalo, 2008, 2013).

[70] Structures like that can be, for example, an appointment in the calendar or material structures like walls, doors, and furniture and also rhythms and routines in our life.

to focus on how research participant themselves see the world and relate to it (through their everyday practices, experience, and grounds for action).

Articles II and III revealed a central contradiction between created possibilities (like flexibility) in everyday life and emergence of agency. This can be understood when we look at everyday situations through structures and spaces. Flexibility and multiple possibilities to make choices ended up being a challenge at the level of practices.[71] Chasing for different opportunities and combining parts and scenes, which should in theory fit together, filled daily life. In a remote students' life, modern technology changed, for example, transitions between home life and studies. From the perspective of person–environment system, transition from one place, or a life scene, to another means that the connectedness with some particular parts of the environment ends or fades away[72] and new functional system is formed in another place with some other conditions and parts of environment.[73] Modern technology changes this formation of functional systems when it is possible to be a part of different conversations, meetings, and engagements at the same time. Still, there is only one human body balancing between these all.

It is possible to see space for agency from the perspective and standpoint of the one who is creating it for someone else. For example, teacher sees that the instruction she has given offers more or less freedom for students' agency. Or in a counseling situation, the counselor regulates the space by forming open-ended or structured question and shorter or longer quiet moments. (This could be called with

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[71] The relation between actions, structures, and freedom (or space) is previously conceptualized in different ways. One of those is *paradox of pedagogy*. Kivelä (2004, p. 29) describes two continuous dilemmas as a paradox of pedagogy. First, human being is educated for their freedom, which each human being already potentially has. Simultaneously, free subject is an outcome of guidance and education. This raises a question how to combine control and freedom. Second, the aim should be a better society, but at the same time, a child needs to be supported and guided to become a part of the existing one (Kivelä, 2004). Rainio (2010) describes, that although in western cultures and in everyday discussions freedom and possibility to make autonomous decisions is usually seen as a desire or a default, freedom is complex.

[72] Some parts, however, are moving along. Discussion with a friend continues via telephone, but a task that was under completion earlier is also carried in thoughts. Reading a book alone or painting a picture is also social. Thoughts and feelings are unique, but not "individual" in that sense, that it could be seen as separated from surrounding world. Vygotsky (1971, p. 249) describes in his late production as follows "Art is the social within us, and even if its action is performed by a single individual, it does not mean that its essence is individual. It is quite naive and inappropriate to take the social to be collective, as with a large crowd of persons. The social also exists where there is only one person with his individual experiences and tribulations."

[73] This is understood as a formation of functional systems according to expected results of action (Järvilehto, 1994). From this perspective, transitions have central meaning, for example, for ability to concentrate or emergence of motives as new person–environment systems are organized according to expected results in particular environment among particular participations.

the expression *the practice of open space*.) Yet, despite all good intentions (it is not obvious) is the created open space, optimal for someone's agency. How does the one, whose agency we are interested in, see the space for free movement and those possibilities for action, which we have created. This is also sometimes painful and frustrating perspective for a teacher, a parent, a team leader, or a supervisor—or anyone how aims to contribute to the emergence of others agency.

Central question at Level 2 is: What kind of structures and spaces are formed in the middle of practices of everyday living? Next sub-chapter introduces Level 3: *experience*, and it sums up the perspective taken in this research: How to look at the space from the subject's own standpoint and how to understand experience in human–world relations.

6.3 Experienced space in the development and emergence of agency

Experience of the space is crucial for the development in general and for agency. This particular thought catches a teacher, a parent, or an employer after creating particular spaces and structures through practices and conditions: How is it working out from a student's, a child's, or an employee's perspective? Experience is a mediating level that is situated "between" a person and the environment (world). It defines the relations and meaning of particular parts of the environment, particular practices, or a new possibility formed for a subject (Silvonen, 2003; Vygotsky, 1998, p. 294). The experience is unique, and it's my own, but it's not separate from the environment (Holzkamp, 2013a; Vygotsky, 1994, pp. 342–343). Personal experience also has shared parts with others who are living in the same world and society, within same practices.[74]

Based on articles, it was possible to recognize three dimensions concerning the third level: *experience*. First, participants related to the surrounding environment and practices in their personal ways. This refers to structures and spaces someone else (or institution) has created for them. School professionals, for example, experienced given rules, prevalent practices, or meeting policy (issues on Level 2) in different ways. Students experienced surrounding possibilities, like flexibility of deadlines, in variable ways. They, for example, experienced that there was too

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[74] It is maybe easy to think that our thoughts and knowledge are inside of our heads and parts of them drop out when we open our mount or write them on a paper. The experience is often thought in the same way, as something purely individual, situated inside of us.

much freedom or lack of space, or something seemed impossible. Interpretation of the possibilities and restriction for action was in relation to general conditions and possibilities, [75] but it took a personal shape according to subjects' other participations and goals in current situation. The paradox of possibilities and flexibility was central in understanding relation of space and structure and illustrates the paradox of pedagogy: Both space and structures are needed.

Second, subjects modified their environment (conditions) to change their experience—maintain some conditions and change something else. For example, a student organized her table for orientation toward studies, settled a meeting with a peer student to get support, or shortened breaks between studying days to manipulate motivation. Holzkamp (e.g., 2013e, 2016) notes that psychic is not separate from what people do, how they organize their environment, and modify conditions.[76]

Third, the experience of space was surrounded and bounded by different grounds for action, meaning structures, and internalized demands and ideals: What and how to be and act. (In traditional concepts, this could be described *inner* demands in contrast to demands coming from *outside*.) This dimension was drawn from the zone theory of Valsiner (1987) but elaborated forward to concern adults' agency (from the standpoint of the subject). People aim to not only merge the actual and observable demands of a particular situation but also internalized previous ones—demands and expectations they have learned during their life. In school professionals' descriptions (see Article I), boundaries and space for professionals' own action and decisions were guided by official job descriptions and actual contents of the work, which were not always in line with each other (Levels 1 and 2). However, in addition, there were experience of demands which should be filled—like ideas of how work should be done or what kind of conversation is acceptable in coffee room. One example described how being a "nice person" and a part of work community was in conflict with the acknowledged right ways of acting and for example taking care of obligation of confidentiality. This way—in addition to practices, rhythms, or official rules (in level 2)—experience of demands and expectations structured the space for agency.

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[75] Same conditions are not similar to different persons. This is well-acknowledged and broadly discussed both in cultural-historical approach as in social sciences (e.g., Sen, 1985), and conditions also change through development, same environment looks different (as possibilities for action) when capabilities develop (e.g., Vygotsky, 1994).

[76] In a larger picture, someone starts to clean when she is stressed out, goes for a walk to "clear her head," or a child concentrates on packing to promote herself toward a transition toward a new environment.

University students were mapping meanings and grounds that had become essential and topical in their actual learning environment—home. Being at home had particular meanings for students and others around them. Family members expected that meal should be ready and home duties done, as the other adult was studying at home all days.[77] Research material in Articles II and III revealed variable experienced structures for agency, highlighting what students felt acceptable, desirable, and right way to do or be. For example, actions that were expected and promoted by teachers and study structure sometimes seemed passive and not suitable at home. Development of digital learning aims to solve a problem, how to keep a student activated and concentrated, while some students try to fit together contradictory demands in their home learning environment.[78]

Some students described how "just sitting" in front of computer looks passive and lazy. Many students felt they should at least do something else at the same time, or they had bad conscience or felt uncomfortable to sit still while others have home issues to take care of (see Article II). It's notable, what engagements and bonds come with the physical place. In home context, studies were often "my own thing" which was competing with other issues in life. Defining this all only as disturbance or a matter of concentration cuts of many important meaning structures.[79] Instead, it could be acknowledged how the experience is connected to the environment and how transitions and changes in concrete conditions also modify the experience. The surrounding conditions are general possibilities for action and subjects relate to those in their personal ways.

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[77] In another kind of research setting, it would have been possible and interesting to learn about a student's family members' actual thoughts (premises and grounds) and not only student's interpretations. However, settling for "only interpretations" works when the aim is to understand why participant does what he or she does and for what grounds. For that sense, the meaning structures and interpretations are more important than the fact that probably the interpretation of spouses' thoughts, for example, might be partly wrong. Saying out loud (or writing) interpretations in peer group also helps in taking another look and possibly modifying the original meaning structure. This kind of discussion was going on about relatives stopping by suddenly and what they might think about a mother who is "only sitting" in front of computer, while children watch TV and home duties are not done (see also Chapter 7).

[78] Holzkamp (2016) realized during his work and research among university students that students learning activities were truly mediated through their conduct of everyday life.

[79] For example, a student may have to ignore issues which he or she sees more valuable or important in life, like taking care of well-being or listening what children try to tell when you can't hear them because of a lecture and headphones (see Article II). Building on Dewey, Järvilehto (1994) notes that environment is not "*disturbing*" the individual but rather offers possibilities for reorganization of the system according to expected result of action. Deliberately build transitions (from home to library) were sometimes needed to structure optimal space for studies (see Level 2 and Article III).

If the space in particular situation is almost nonexistent (see Article III), the practical question is: What should be changed? Do we concentrate on refining our skills to cope with the situation and maybe *think positive*, or do we get some help with the situation? Yet, if we get help, is it for, (1) supporting our balancing with the situation, (2) changing our ways of making interpretations and reading the situation (which is one of the structures[80] too), or (3) is it for modifying and changing conditions.

6.4   Discussion on the findings

This sub-chapter discusses the main findings in relation to previous conceptualizations of space for agency. Based on previous research on agency, it is possible to estimate that the spaces formed through practices (Level 2) have been quite well-acknowledged and explored. This refers to interactional events and actions in particular observed moment and setting. Some of the previous research on agency have also highlighted material elements in the formation of agency (see e.g., Honkasalo, 2008, 2013; Honkasalo et al., 2014), as it was central also in this thesis. However, the research material did not offer a chance to explore exact events, what really happened—who said what and how someone responded (see e.g., Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2010; Kumpulainen & Rajala, 2017; Rajala et al., 2016; Rainio, 2010). In the large field of psychology and educational psychology, it is common to cut off or ignore dimensions of a participant's personal life and possible meaning structures. This can be done intentionally for more accurate explorations on the phenomenon, like the characteristics of social interaction during a particular time period (see e.g., Isohätälä, 2020, p. 65).

Although theoretical framework comes from the field of psychology, many notions of this research remain sociological understanding of humans living in their relations.[81] Subject-scientific approach focuses on subjects' relation with surrounding conditions and possibilities for action. Although situational and societal frames are central, those are explored from subjects' standpoint. The focus is on the conduct of everyday life and subjective reasons for action—the experience

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[80] Seeing experienced demand as a one kind of structures is based on Valsiner's idea of ZPA and ZFM (1987). Boundaries of free movement contained interpretations of the situation and meaning structures formed during previous events. For example, adult modifies the ZFM based on previous situations and impression of child's skills. Same way it can be seen that an adult uses different meaning structures to guide one's own space for agency.

[81] Closely similar conceptualizations go with names relational, contextual, and narrative understanding of agency (see e.g., Toiviainen, 2019) often leaning on sociology.

as a mediating level between person and the environment (Holzkamp, 2013e). This way, the space for agency is seen to be formed by multiple layers—from situational and material structures to practices and experienced and internalized demands.

Especially studies leaning on sociology and exploring agency or participation conceptualize the formation of space in the similar way (see e.g., Löw, 2008, 2016; Mäkinen, 2016; Toiviainen, 2019)—consider situational perspective, societal and discursive frames, and also material elements.[82] In history, sociological approach has been criticized for ignoring a subject as an agent—with multiple meaning structures—and focusing on determinant societal and discursive frames (Holzkamp, 2013e; Osterkamp & Schraube, 2013). This contradiction, however, is many times difficult to find in current empirical research (especially concerning agency or participation). In addition, relation between humans and structures is often carefully defined and the intentions to keep "in mind the dangers of arguing in deterministic terms" acknowledged (Löw, 2008). It is possible to conclude that critical and subject-scientific psychology moves closer to sociological approaches when it focuses on situational and contextual dimensions of human actions like societal structures. However, at the same time, sociological approaches begin to look at human actions instead of focusing only on determining structures (Arnkil, 1991, pp. 123–124). One of the most difficult questions along the way have been about the relation between sociology and psychology and how to see individual actions and subjectivity (e.g., Holzkamp, 2013a; Stetsenko, 2005; Tolman, 1994, pp. 105–117).[83] Similar notions concerning psychological research and human–

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[82] Honkasalo, Ketokivi, and Leppo (2014) describe individualistic understanding of agency problematic: For example, when exploring illness, it is difficult to ignore medical technologies, assistive devices, medicines, and other people in the formation of agency. Maintaining patient's agency requires concrete and material support. In many ways, similar conceptualizations of spaces formed for agency can also be in early childhood education research, where space is often explored by observing actions in particular context (Vuorisalo, Rutanen & Raittila, 2015).

[83] Helpful in understanding the relation between this psychological approach and sociological perspectives has also been Erik Arnkil's synthesis and comparison of the work of Anthony Giddens from the field of sociology and Leontjev and Holzkamp from the field of the psychology. Arnkil (1991, p. 93) writes that "Giddens seeks the subject in social theory and applies it through the concept of action. In his production, he is approaching the field of psychology … without knowing the psychological theories of action." He continues that Leontjev places the subject into its connections and considers situational frames of subject's actions (which have been often ignored in psychological research). Holzkamp focuses on human actions which maintain continuity and certain structures and practices (Arnkil, 1991, pp. 14, 49; Holzkamp, 2013e). Arnkil (1991) also sees that, without knowing about each other, both Giddens and Holzkamp end up realizing how human actions maintain prevailing conditions and form also challenge in developing practices (pp. 123–124).

world relations have also been made in general among socio-historical or cultural-historical approaches.[84]

Why not sociology then?[85] This study does not extend to more accurate consideration of societal frames and structures or discourses and power relations—even though those peek behind the reason discourse (grounds) and structure the space and practices in many ways. Research material in this thesis would not have offered many possibilities to such an exploration.[86] The research aims to wander the field of psychological and educational psychology and focus on developmental issues and psychic phenomenon within person–environment relations. In the end, the question is also about the purpose of the study: Whether to conduct only an empirical study or also hold on to the idea of developing psychological research, methodologies, and understanding.

When conducting a research, we can collect large data with carefully planned and structured questionnaires and find out something. We can observe and analyze a particular situation and get accurate information on current interaction. Or, we might see that if we arrange a suitable, peaceful time and place and ask open-ended questions, the research participant can reveal his or her personal experience. These ways can be helpful and give us useful and significant knowledge. However, in this research, I have searched a different way. As emphasized in the beginning of this thesis, theoretical standpoints suggest that human experience can be grasped through exploring everyday life and groundedness in it. Subject-scientific approach and theories give guidelines and standpoints for exploring adults' life (Holzkamp, 2016; Roth & Jornet, 2017, p. 247; Schraube & Højholt, 2016). However, several research on the field—that have been inspiring for this research—concentrate on children, their participation, agency, or development (e.g., Chimirri, 2015; Højholt, 2008; Juhl, 2015, 2019; Kousholt, 2008, 2016; Røn Larsen, 2012; Røn Larsen & Stanek, 2015).[87] Adopted framework and this aim to seek the standpoint of the

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[84] For example, Rutanen (2007, p. 5) brings up in the beginning of her doctoral thesis that both psychological and sociological approaches can consider humans living in their complex contexts.

[85] This was personally a big question for me as a teacher, as I was working with sociologically oriented colleagues at the university and at the same time, I was a PhD Student in educational psychology and focusing on psychological phenomena. It was a big relief along the way that others in critical psychology and subject-scientific research have discussed this relation between sociology and psychology for a long time (Osterkamp & Schraube, 2013; Holzkamp, 2013e).

[86] Sociology, however, would be helpful in opening those societal structures and power relations together with educational psychology and psychology (Suorsa 2014).

[87] In the same way many other researcher—relevant for this thesis and building on cultural-historical (or socio-cultural) theories—have been exploring children's lives (e.g., Hakkarainen, 2010; Hedegaard, 2002; Hedegaard & Fleer, 2008; Hilppö, 2016; Rainio, 2010; Valsiner, 1987, 2000; Veresov, 2004).

subject in the research guided methodological choices and ethical considerations. Framework promoted to focus on grounded participation within everyday life practices.

Even though the research does not follow the traditional psychological ways of seeking generalization of results, generalization is possible through considering human–world relations. This idea of situated generalization is described in more detail in subject-scientific and cultural-historical psychology and can be understood as a larger process of human life (Busch-Jensen & Schraube, 2019; Dafermos, 2019; Valsiner, 2015, 2019). Busch-Jensen and Schraube (2019) write:

> It is not just a process within the sciences. It can be found anywhere in human life. Generalization is a process which permeates the entire practice of everyday living … Because we live our everyday life together with others in a shared world, generalization, and the internal relationship between the subjective and objective, the particular and general, are inherent aspects of everyday life: talking, thinking, acting, living. (pp. 1–3)

To enlighten the production of theory and knowledge, Schraube and Højholt (2019) introduce three major approaches to generalization in contemporary psychological research. First, numerical traditions are generalizing through representative samples and quantitative methodology. Second, in postgeneralizing traditions, generalization is not seen as a particular goal at all. Third, Schraube and Højholt present *situated traditions* that highlight the significance of generalization in science. In situated traditions, instead of representative samples, research focus is on subjectivity-in-context, and it is explored mostly by qualitative methodology (Schraube & Højholt, 2019). Valsiner (2015, p. 233) states as follows: "While being led by the uniqueness of each moment in life, we operate through general principles that transcend the uniqueness of any of these moments." From this situated perspective, it is central to emphasize that precisely the uniqueness of subject's life in general and multiple shared and general principles and condition of life crisscross through our everyday lives (Schraube & Højholt, 2019). Revealing and highlighting those relations can contribute to the generalization of research findings.

7 Conclusions

In this thesis, I explored agency within complex practices and technology-mediated everyday life. Agency was conceptualized as ways of relating to surrounding possibilities—maintaining and changing life conditions. Space for agency in everyday life is formed and structured through three levels: 1) participations, 2) practices, and 3) experience. Participation (1) forms a situational frame and includes engagements and places. Practices (2) are dependent on participations in life and contain rhythm, routines, and transitions. (3) Experience includes not only the participant's personal relation with surrounding conditions but also modifying conditions to change prevailing experience. In addition, experience encompasses historically developed internalized demands and expectations that form structures and modify the space. This shows how the dynamics of agency takes place in everyday life, and what the meaning of space and structures in the process is. This research draws a picture of often crowded space for agency—highly structured pattern of the fabric of everyday life.

Gaining control of a complex everyday life

In our complex world, it is challenging to cope and balance with everything we have created (Chimirri & Schraube, 2019; see also Rosa, 2019). Agency is not only something active and observable, rather definitions of agency in subject-scientific research emphasize different ways of taking stances and relating to surrounding possibilities. With continuous development and changes, it is necessary to highlight the other part of human agency also: the need to simultaneously maintain[88] parts of everyday life, conditions, and social relations (see e.g., Holzkamp, 2013b; Hviid, 2018; Røn Larsen, 2012; see also Honkasalo, 2013). Dreier writes (2011, p. 12):

> Due to the complexity of everyday lives, conducting an everyday life has become a necessity. Persons strive to get what needs to be, and what is most important to them, done. They must make their everyday life hang together so that it does not fall apart due to their diverse activities and commitments in many social contexts and relations. Merely coping with each individual

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[88] Whenever subject's actions seem irrational or foolish, the question to ask could be: What are those conditions the subject is trying to maintain (or change) through those particular actions (or nonactions)?

demand and situation does not suffice. They must cope with living a complex everyday life as a whole.

In an individualistic perspective on human agency, it is popular to highlight the freedom of choices, autonomy, and flexibility. However, as this thesis indicated, a wide spectrum of possibilities to choose and act contains a paradox of freedom. Freedom of choice is desirable by default, but it is still an illusion many times (e.g., Rainio, 2010; Røn Larsen, 2016; see also Sen, 1985). Freedom looks different from different standpoints and in relation to different aims and goals. Our choices within everyday practices are structured, guided, and grounded in many ways. Holzkamp (2013a, p. 25) states: "Freedom exists as long as I move within the limits of what is allowed; as soon as I dump against these limits, I immediately realize that this freedom is rather limited." In learning contexts, flexibility and freedom of choices are many times valuable, but those also put more pressure on the individual.[89]

What follows is another individualistic assumption. When adults' try to cope with life, it is common to think that as we cannot change our conditions, we have to refine our skills, like our flexibility, resilience, and strategies of balancing. Yet, what we really do in our lives is often modifying conditions and changing our person–environment relations. We clean a table, write notes, or go for a walk to organize our thoughts. New skills give new possibilities to be an agent and modify life conditions, but this process of modifying happens in relation to parts of the environment. Although it is common to see only the need for developing individual skills, it is necessary to also look at the surrounding conditions and the person–environment relations. In practice, it is possible to pay attention to participations in subject's life, which he or she already has—material components in psychical processes and transitions modifying engagements. Participations, engagements, and historically formed practices reveal what those issues (and contents) are, that the subject is balancing with.

Agency is a capacity, but quite easily we situate any capacity into our heads, being something inside of a human being, although we know very well in our everyday lives that we need others and many kinds of things around us to gain control over something and managing our life issues. For example, we may need tools, rhythms, rules, or other people. The intertwining of human and environment may not be easy to understand, although our everyday observations often support

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[89] Flexibility and freedom of choice setting pressure to the individuals has been mentioned by many researchers (see e.g., Brunila & Siivonen, 2014; Kinnari, 2020; Rainio, 2010; Romero, 2011; Saari, 2016).

it. Our skills, actions, and experiences contain parts of surrounding material and social environment.

Educational psychology and future research

This research highlighted the entwining and entanglement of persons and parts of the environment. This understanding has crucial consequences for other psychological phenomena on the field of learning and development, like motivation[90] (Holzkamp, 2013a; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Nissen, 2019; Nissen & Sørensen, 2017), concentration [91] (Markard, 1996, pp. 2–3), or self-regulated learning (Vassallo, 2014). In future research, I would see myself not only working with the same theoretical and methodological frame but also moving toward more ethnographically inspired research and exploring only one of few cases at a time. In my own working context, at the university, it continues being relevant to explore phenomena which are topical in educational context.

It can be meaningful for a person to look at surrounding structures from one's own standpoint and the space for agency within different possibilities and demands—as it is presented in this thesis. In addition, it is useful to understand fundamental dynamics of psychological processes intertwined with surrounding environment. However, in a larger picture, collecting and using such a knowledge about personal everyday life for enhancing a student's or an employee's performance is problematic in many ways. Systematic gathering of information easily disconnects participants from the process, how the data is used and for what purposes.

For example, in learning analytics, information concerning everyday life can be seen as personal and private. It is a central ethical issue to concentrate only on events and details in a learning situation, like activities in a web-based learning environment (Selwyn, 2019; Silvola, Gedrimiene, Pursiainen, Rusanen & Muukkonen, 2021; Silvola, Näykki, Kaveri & Muukkonen, 2021). Also, students themselves can feel that they don't want information about their personal life be used for supporting them in studies, rather collected data should concern only the

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[90] Holzkamp (2013a, p. 22): "Motivation, the possibility of pursuing a goal, cannot be dissociated from the goal's content. I can only pursue a goal in a motivated way when I can anticipate that its realization also entails an enhancement of my life possibilities and life quality. … whether I am motivated or not; rather, it is dependent upon the goal's objective features."

[91] Both of those, motivation and concentration, could also be explored on the basis of systemic organism–environment theory (Järvilehto, 1994).

issues happening in actual learning situations (Ifenthaler & Schumacher, 2016). At the same time, modern technology binds studies into students' everyday life. Data collected through learning analytics can contain information about student's last visitation in the web-based learning environment or how long students watch a certain video. In this research, information concerned other actions in real-life learning environments, like making coffee, cleaning table, or listening lectures during a long drive from home to work. It was also notable, that the aim was not to categorize participants or indicate particular types of persons, but rather show different dimensions of human action and agency.

Concluding words

Different approaches of psychology and educational psychology are not in conflict. Although the ways of doing research or the idea of generalization of new knowledge may vary, they rather enlighten different sides and components of a particular phenomenon (e.g., Järvilehto, 1994). Multiple perspectives are also needed for a richer view of human activity. Alongside the idea of person–environment unity, other psychological theory or conceptualization could also be placed. It would be possible to look at certain situation through them both. Persons attach to some parts of the environment and form a functional system according to expected result of action. For example, from the perspective of temperament (Thomas & Chess, 1977; Windle, 1992), this attachment and connection with something can happen faster or slower or person can be spontaneous or hesitate. Temperament can tell that it is easier for someone to approach a new issue (Windle, 1992). However, it cannot open relations, meaning structures, or enlighten contents or contexts. It doesn't tell about internalized patterns of behavior or intentions, prevailing expectations, power relations, or goals and choices either in a particular situation.

Personality traits, for example, are in practice entwined with contents, contexts, and educational (and child rearing) cultures—together with biological basis like genes. Although it's possible in theory and in research to categorize different personality traits, in real life, those are always entangled with contents and cultures. In addition, this entanglement can be layered over decades and generations and mixed with general principles of development, surrounding conditions, and ways of conducting everyday life. Unlike it is usually understood, this situatedness and all the relations form actually the unique, personal dimension of human life,

because we are connected to the world from our standpoints and in our personal ways.

I use an example from the research material to illustrate the perspective presented in this research: Some students discussed the difficulty to concentrate on studies and stick to the study plan in the evening when relatives come for a surprise visit. It might be interesting to explore what kind of role personality traits, temperament or learning strategies have in the formation of the situation and student's action. For example, student's extraversion could lead to prioritization of guests over studies. This research, however, presented few other notions.

First of all, commitments, contents, and meanings guide student's choices (what is going on with studies at the moment, or with relatives). If the student is in the middle of a group work or giving a presentation to others via video connection, the situation is different from the one where student is listening a recorded lecture. Surrounding material and social conditions have their role, too, "the same" situation is significantly different if a student is living alone in a small apartment or in a large house with other family members who can spend time with guests. The whole situation would not even be faced if there were no possibility to study at home—and if there were no ways to communicate that there are relatives waiting behind the door while the student is at the university.

This way current life scenes and participations tie persons with certain practices, rhythms, routines and meaning structures, and demands and expectations. Transitions from one place to another or concrete organizing of surrounding conditions are significant, because they formulate person–environment system. We get the impression of "clearing head" by going for a walk or describe how engagement or motivation changes as we begin to work with something. Transitions connect us into particular issues, while other connections fade away as we move further. Modern technology, however, does its best to keep us all the time connected with "everything" and enables in the first place the overlapping of life scenes (possibility to study or work at home).

Within this complex and technology-mediated everyday life, we try to be agents who can control our own life and modify surrounding conditions. We try to merge in our lives prevailing expectations and our historically developed internalized demands and ideals and modify them all during the process, so that they would fit together. Simultaneously, we need to maintain parts of our lives for feeling safe and for belonging to the communities and cultures that are important to us. Open space for new steps in life emerge within multiple layers and structures as the alternation of density and porosity in the fabrics of everyday life.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Instructions for school professionals' peer group sessions

In Finnish

Ohjausharjoitusten ohjeet asiakkaan, ohjaajan ja havainnoitsijan rooleissa toimiville (Suorsa, 2014, s. 125–126):

1. Ohjausharjoituksessa asiakas kuvaa itselleen ajankohtaista ja henkilökohtaisesti merkityksellistä kysymystä, joka liittyy hänen työhönsä.
2. Ohjaaja saa yleisen ohjeen, jonka mukaan hänen on tärkeää tavoitella ymmärrystä siitä, miten asiakas kokee kuvailemansa tilanteen: mitä hän ajattelee, miltä hänestä tuntuu, kuinka hän on toiminut tässä tilanteessa.
3. Havainnoitsijoita pyydetään havainnoimaan ohjaajan toimintaa sekä vuorovaikutusta ohjaajan ja asiakkaan välillä.

In English

Instructions for counseling sessions for those working in the roles of client, counselor, and observer (Suorsa, 2009, p. 1285):

1. In the role of the client, participants are asked to discuss ongoing, topical, and personally meaningful matters emerging from their work.
2. The counselor listens and helps the client to handle the topic, practicing counseling skills, such as listening and asking specific questions.
3. The observer comments on the interaction between the client and the counselor.

Appendix 2. Instructions for university students

In Finnish

Opintojakson loppuportfoliossa, muiden tehtävien joukossa:

Valitse tarkkailuajanjakso, päivä tai viikko (tai jokin muu) omasta opiskelijan arjestasi. Havainnoi, kirjoita ja kuvaile. Käytä apuna seuraavia luennon käsitteitä ja näkökulmia: Elämisen näyttämöt, osallisuus, historiallisuus ja translokaalisuus, arjen osatekijät (ks. conduct of everyday life).

Luentopäiväkirja ja keskustelu verkko-oppimisympäristössä:

Jos olisit liveluennolla, mistä keskustelisit? Tartu johonkin aiheeseen. Jos asia oli tuttua, mene aiheessa syvemmälle ja pohdi eteenpäin. Jos taas asia oli uusi, jatka niistä ajatuksista, joita heräsi luentoa kuunnellessa. Mitä erityisesti jäit pohtimaan? Tai käytä tilaisuus hyväksi ja pureskele sellaista asiaa jo nyt, jota tarvitset harjoitustehtävissä ja portfoliossa. Kysele muilta, mitä et ymmärtänyt tai kerro mikä tuntui vaikealta, tai mitä uutta oivalsit tai opit. Voit hyödyntää omia esimerkkejä. Muista kommentoida muiden aloituksia!

Luentopäiväkirja = 1 keskustelun aloitus (eli "uusi viesti" jokaisen luennon keskustelualueelle esim. "Luentopäiväkirja 1") + vähintään 1 kommentti (eli vastaus toisen viestiin) jokaiselle keskustelualueelle.

In English

In the final portfolio of the course among other tasks:

Choose an observation day or week or some other time period from your own life. Observe, write, and describe. Use the following lecture concepts and perspectives: life scenes, participation, history and translocality, and conduct of everyday life.

Lecture diary and discussion in an e-learning environment:

On a traditional lecture, what would you discuss? Grab a topic based on lecture video. Choose a familiar content (if there was one) and go deeper into the topic and think ahead, or choose a topic that was new for you and continue with the thoughts that arose while listening to the lecture. Share your own thoughts or take the opportunity and discuss with others the issues you need to discuss now and understand in your assignments and portfolio. Ask others what you didn't understand or tell them what was difficult or what new things you realized or

learned. You can use of your own examples. Remember to leave comment to others as well!

Lecture diary = 1 started new discussion ("new message" for each lecture discussion area) + at least 1 comment (reply to another message) for each discussion area.

Appendix 3. Main categories and subcategories in the first sub-study (school professionals)

Main categories and subcategories in the first sub-study and Article I (Translated into English, with permission, from Article I © Aikuiskasvatus).

1 Resources, changes, and division of labor [23]	2 Coping, well-being, and boundaries [46]	3 Concerns about clients [15]	4 Colleagues' unprofessional behavior [17]	5 Actions, interaction, and culture in the work community [42]
1.1 There are parts of the job that don't belong to me or someone else knows better, or the job involves conflicting requirements [9]	2.1 Others pull in different directions [11]	3.1 Individual life stories to ponder [5]	4.1 The way children are talked about and the "forgetting" of secrecy [5]	5.1 Culture of interaction: either negativity or by keeping quiet about problems [11]
	2.2 Reflecting adequacy and my own boundaries [10]	3.2 More general concern about children's symptoms, violence, family situations, or difficulty in getting support [3]	4.2 Problems of interaction with a particular colleague [5]	5.2 Problems of professional cooperation or lack of common rules of the game [12]
1.2 Lack of resources for others makes my work difficult [5]	2.3 Hopelessness or unawareness [9]		4.3 Highlighting problems in the hope of additional resources or in relation to special school transfers [4]	5.3 Inefficiency of meeting practices [9]
1.3 Current situation being challenging or impossible (from the point of view of resources) [5]	2.3 Concern about own well-being and managing [7]	3.3 Concern for a group of children or a field of work when the adult (professional) changes [3]	4.4 A colleague takes up space or does things that are not agreed upon [3]	5.4 How would I get others involved or make them understand, or how to make my own ideas heard [10]
1.4 Something is missing, or I would need something more like workspace, time, or guidance [4]	2.5 I have to tolerate the current situation; no chance of influence or other unresolved conflict [5]	3.4 Concerns about a child or young person when his situation changes [2]		
	2.6 Difficulty in taking space in interaction or bother others or share work tasks [4]	3.5 Will the customer be heard? [2]		

Appendix 4. Examples of units of meaning and the formation of categories

Examples of units of meaning and subcategories and main categories in forming general picture of remote students' everyday life.

Unit of meaning	Sub-category	Main category
I do crafts while listening to lectures I strive to do housework while listening I need a craft and notes during a lecture (by the computer)	2.4 Doing something at the same time	2.Descriptions of actions
Organizing and prioritizing tasks I always mark everything first on the calendar	2.1 Scheduling and planning studies, setting goals, and creating routines	
Cleaning up the desk Organizing the apartment One bedroom was organized to be a study room	2.6 Concrete organizing and cleaning of place for studies	
When I do something with my hands, I get the feeling that I'm not just wasting my time by sitting in front of computer Handicraft keeps my hands moving and I focus better Simply sitting down looks laziness	3.8 Grounds for one's own ways of acting and meaning structures in relation to them	3. Meanings and grounds
Organizing the environment helps me to orient on studies It is difficult to concentrate in a mess	3.8 Grounds for one's own ways of acting and meaning structures in relation to them	
I study mostly in the evenings, weekends, and holidays I have been on a study leave all the time Studies have filled all evenings	1.1 Parts and environments of everyday life	1. Descriptions of the conditions for the studies
Description of engagements and responsibilities Daily rhythms at home	1.2 Current participations and engagements	
Suddenly it starts to snow, and I need to go to remove the snow Journey was difficult because of the bad weather On sunny days, I would like to go out with friends rather that study inside	1.7 Other conditions like distances and weather, vacation rhythms and environments as spaces, and places for studying	
At home I feel I should be doing something else How it feels to be at home (on a study leave) Meaning for the spouse (e.g., expecting meal to be prepared) Meaning for the child ("why can't I be at home, too" or expecting a parent to be available) Meaning for relatives (It is possible to stop by)	3.7 Meanings of being at home (on a study leave) and students' interpretations of others meaning structures (family members, friends, relatives, child's day care personnel, work community)	3. Meanings and grounds

Appendix 5. Summary of the articles

Article	Focus	Research material	Questions	Analyses	Main findings
I Peltola Suorsa, Karhu, & Soini (2020): [Concern entangled with the boundaries of participation: Everyday working life of school professionals in pupil welfare]	School professionals concern talk and participation	Total of 48 summaries of 24 school professionals' discussions about their everyday life at work.	What dimensions of concerns can be found in professionals' peer group discussions? What does concern talk tell about the everyday work of professionals?	Concern talk was analyzed with grounded methods and then read through with theoretical (subject-scientific) understanding of everyday life.	All the themes of the professionals' concern talk were connected to the interfaces of participation.
II Peltola & Suorsa (2020): University studies in the adjacent tab: dimensions of students' agency and everyday life in the rural north of Finland	Remote students' agency in the rural north of Finland	Written descriptions by 39 remote students about their everyday life when studying at home and focusing especially on 17 students living far away from the university.	What is agency like in the everyday life of students in the rural north?	Forming the overall picture of remote students' everyday life with grounded methods. Recognizing dimensions of agency with the subject-scientific theory.	Three ways in which agency was pursued: (1) Articulating participation and engagement (2) Organizing the conditions and dealing with the possibilities and restrictions (3) Mapping meanings, aims, and grounds
III Peltola, Suorsa & Silvonen (2021): "I try to remember that this is temporary": Continuous balancing in remote students' everyday life	The dynamics of development in remote and hybrid learning contexts in university students' everyday life	Written descriptions by 39 remote students about their everyday life when studying at home.	How do remote students relate to their possibilities for action in their everyday life?	The overall picture of remote students' everyday life as starting point (the social situation of development). Analyzing ways of relating and relation of space and structure with the help of zone-concepts.	Central in everyday life: (1) overlapping of life scenes, (2) transformation of transitions, and (3) the paradox of possibilities and flexibility Ways of relating to surrounding possibilities: (1) balancing (2) floating (3) paralyzing (4) redefining

Original publications

I   Peltola, M. Suorsa, T. Karhu. J., & Soini, H. (2020). Huoli kytkeytyy osallisuuden rajapintoihin: Ammattilaisen arki oppilashuollon näyttämöillä. *Aikuiskasvatus, 40*(2), 127–138. https://doi.org/10.33336/aik.95453

II Peltola, M., & Suorsa, T. (2020). University studies in the adjacent tab: Dimensions of students' agency and everyday life in the rural north of Finland. *Education in the North, 27*(2), 92–105. https://doi.org/10.26203/3w82-8n53

III Peltola, M., Suorsa, T., & Silvonen, J. (2021). "I try to remember that this is temporary": Continuous balancing in remote students' everyday life. *Human Arenas*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-021-00247-6

Reprinted with kind permission from Aikuiskasvatus (I), Education in the North (II), and Human Arenas (III). Article I is followed by the Swedish translation of it.

Original publications (and the Swedish translation of Article I) are not included in the electronic version of the dissertation.

197. Matengu, Marika (2020) Towards just pre-primary education in rural Namibia

198. Nykänen, Helena (2021) Veteen piirretty viiva : opettajien ja rehtoreiden kokemuksia tehostetun tuen toteutumisesta perusopetuksen alakoulussa

199. Sobocinski, Márta (2021) Patterns of adaptive regulation in collaborative learning : a multimodal methodological approach

200. Karjalainen, Satu (2021) Doing joy : performances of joy in children's relations in early childhood and education settings

201. Pellikka, Anne (2021) Pre-service primary school teachers' teacher identity development in the context of science education

202. Koivuniemi, Marika (2021) Student interpretations of their self-regulated learning in individual and collaborative learning situations

203. Kokko, Marjut (2021) Kohti uudenlaista opettajuutta : yhteisopettajuus edistämässä opettajien yhteistyötä ja inkluusiota kouluissa

204. Saari, Maria Helena (2021) Animals as stakeholders in education : towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability

205. Mäenpää, Kati (2021) Motivation regulation and study well-being during nurse education studies

206. Moilanen, Antti (2022) Sivistys ja emansipaatio : sivistävä ja yhteiskuntakriittinen opetus kriittis-konstruktiivisessa didaktiikassa

207. Kekki, Minna-Kerttu (2022) Educational possibilities of media-based public discussion : a phenomenological-philosophical analysis of the givenness of others

208. Kauppi, Veli-Mikko (2022) Education and intelligence : reconstructing John Dewey's theory of intelligence from an educational perspective

209. Keränen, Virve (2022) Moniulotteinen kosketus päiväkodin suhteissa : kertomuksia varhaiskasvatuksen arjesta

210. Petäjäniemi, Maria (2022) (Un)becoming an asylum seeker : nomadic research with men awaiting an asylum decision

211. Nygård, Tuula (2022) "There is a lot to practice" : a nexus analytical study on promoting multiliteracy in health education

212. Mäkäräinen, Marjo-Rita (2022) "Kaikki tarvitsevat ystäviä" : kehitysvammaisten koululaisten ystävyyssuhteet

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