

Challenges of measuring the digitalized work life in surveys

Expert Group meeting on MQE, 4-6 October 2017, Geneva

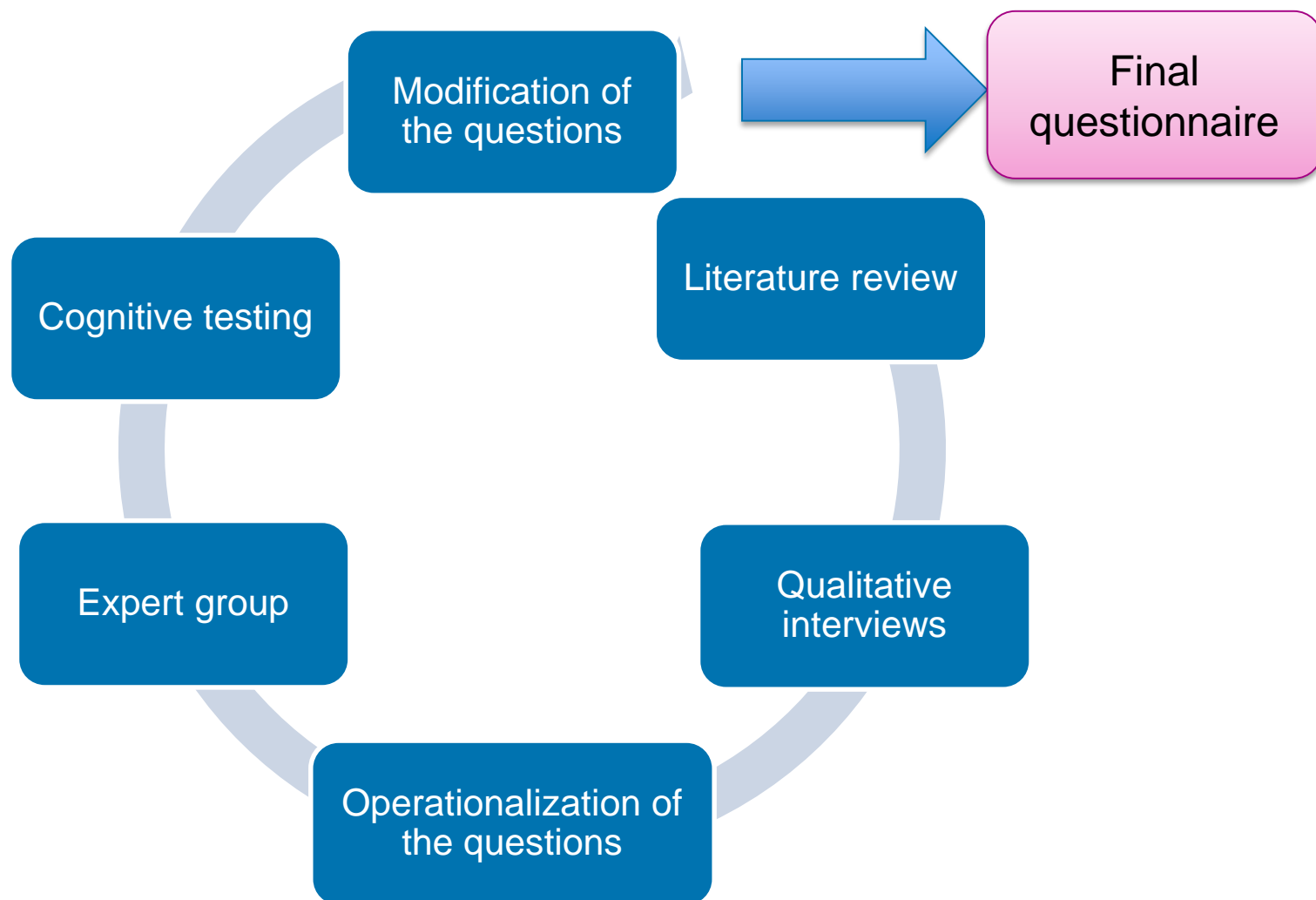
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Finnish Quality of Work Life Surveys

- 1977, 1984, 1990, 1997, 2003, 2008, 2013
- 3 000 – 5 800 respondents per data
 - Employees aged 15 to 64 years, regular working hours at least 10 h/wk
- Response rate 68-91 %
- Face-to-face (appr. 60 min)
- Core questionnaire remains the same => building up time series
- New themes added, old stuff removed/rotated
- **Next FQWLS in 2018**
 - special theme digitalization of the working life
- Provides information on the state of work life for [policymaking](#)
- Provides data and analysis for [research](#), possibility to link survey data to register data
- Provides reliable information on working conditions for [public debate](#)
- Funding of the fieldwork in co-operation with different stakeholders

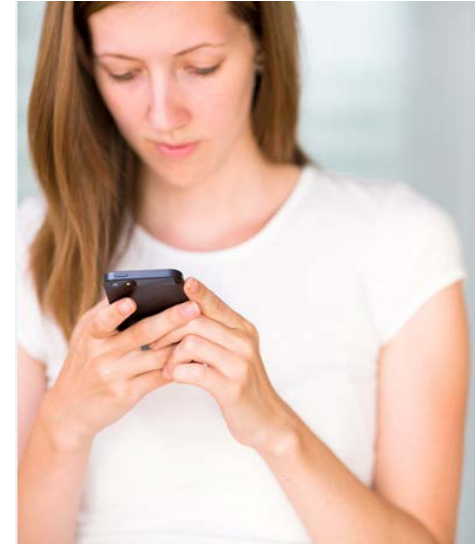
Introducing new themes into FQWLS – the process



Technological change

First Order Effects

- Economic
- Quick
- Practical
- Relatively predictable
- Relatively easy to measure

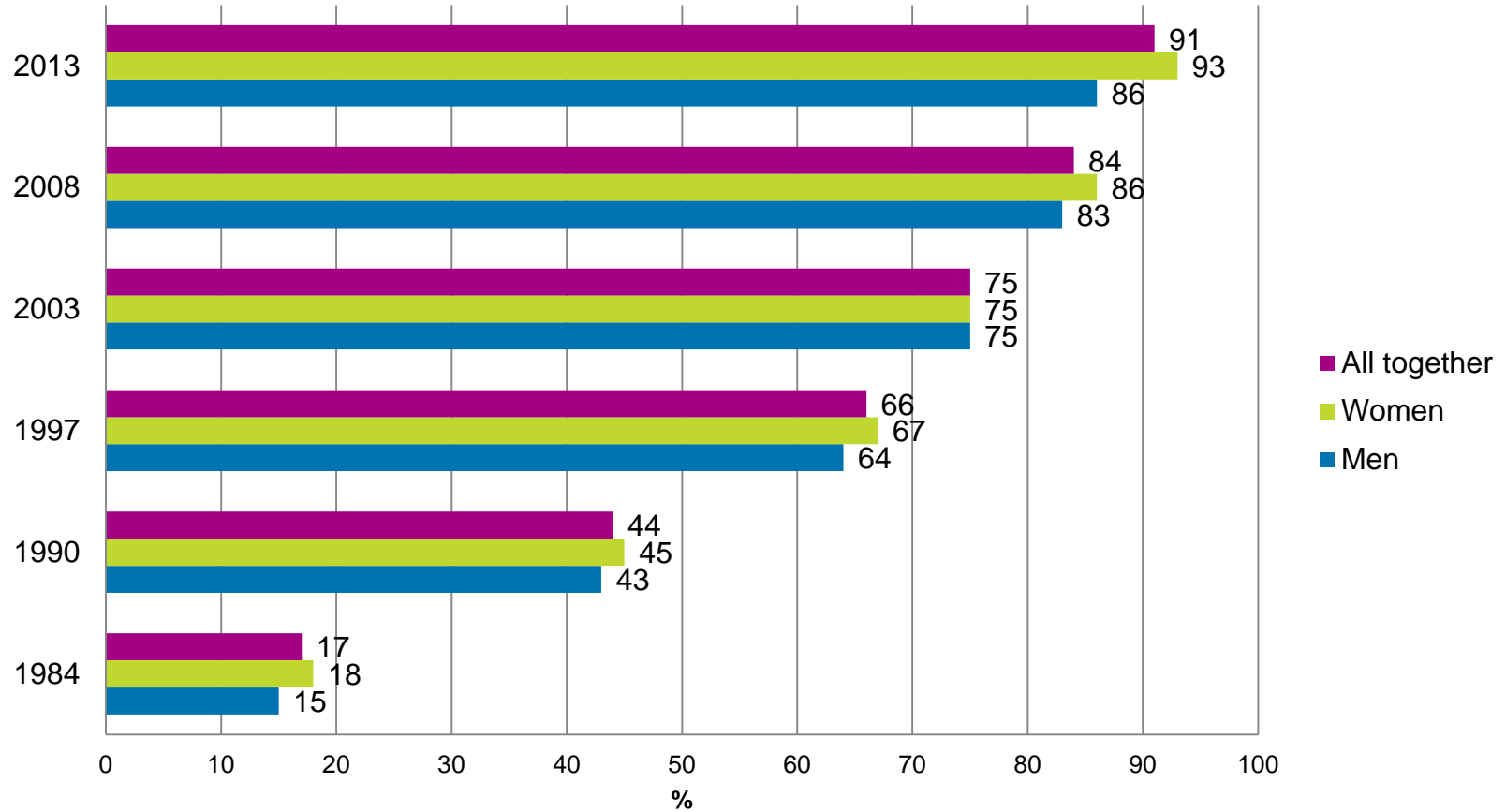


Second Order Effects

- Socio-cultural
- Slow but pervasive
- Critical but not practical
- Hard to predict
- Harder to measure

Share of employees using information technology in their work

FQWLS 1984-2013, Statistics Finland



Affects of the second order & survey research 1/3

- **Changes social relations**
 - in work communities
 - in dealing with customers
 - at home
- With whom we are in interaction
 - Is it a person or a robot/algorithm?
- How we are in interaction
 - Do we communicate via apps, chat, skype etc. or face-to-face?

Affects of the second order & survey research 2/3

- **Changes the use of time**
 - When and where the work is done
 - From factory floor to control rooms at distance
 - From the office to home, cafés... you name it!
- **Changes relations of working time and leisure time**
 - Breaks, interruptions "switch on—switch off" (Whiting 2015)
 - Blurring boundaries
 - In white collar occupations control over working time more and more on employee her/himself

Affects of the second order & survey research 3/3

- **Changes the form of the control**
 - Tightened control
 - Blue-collar workers: measurements of performance
 - White-collar workers: measurements of targets
 - Collects data about the employee
 - Is it possible to resist control anymore?
- **HOW TO OPERATIONALIZE ALL THESE DIMENSIONS OF DIGITAL WORK INTO A SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE?**

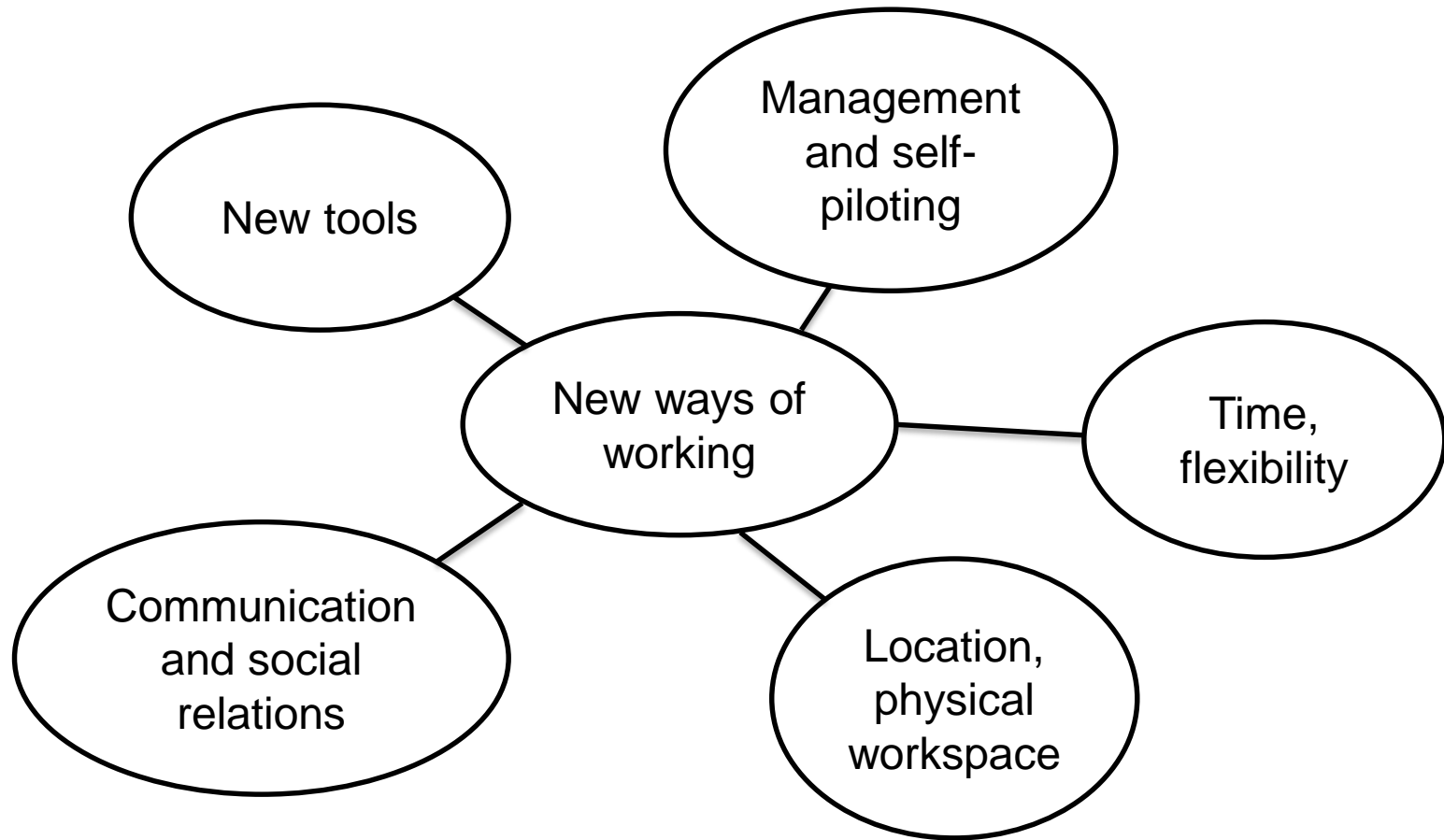
Qualitative pre-interviews

- Summer 2017
- Semi-structured, partly cognitive, partly open-ended questions
- Focused face-to-face interviews (appr. 60 min)
- 16 interviews:
different occupations
F=9, M=7
aged 22 to 58 yrs
- Interviews recorded and transcribed

Structure of the interview 1/2

- 1. How digitalization is understood in general
- 2. Has digitalization changed own work
- 3. Different themes
- 4. General attitude at workplace towards digitalization
- 5. Robotization
- 6. Use of social media at work

Structure of the interview, themes 2/2



Findings

- All the themes were found from interviews, but they are more like "umbrella concepts" for more delicate change
- Main dimensions:
 1. Decrease of face-to-face communication
 2. Information and speed
 3. Self-piloting and control
 4. Trust (on systems and system failures)
 5. Learning and age

1. Decrease of face-to-face communication

- New tools have tremendously changed the communication

"I don't see my students face-to-face at all. My employer lives in Israel. My wage comes from Israel. The headquarters is in Tel Aviv Israel." (Language teacher, 54)

- More applications to use: chat, skype etc.

"It's so easy and it lowers the threshold. You can put whatever questions and comments and the chat is just endless." (Advertising designer, 37)

- Increased risk for misunderstanding

"I have to be really carefull what I write. There is so big chance that the counterpart misconceives it." (Elementary school teacher, 58)

2. Information and speed

- New tools and applications = new feeling of speed

"Before we just sent an email and it took a while to get an answer. – – No we are looking for fast options [chat]. You have to be alert all the time. It's not enough that people reach you via email, it's just way too slow." (Insurance expert, 56)

- Information overload

"There is just too much information. It's hard to keep it all in head. In our profession the knowledge just changes so fast." (Medical doctor, 29)

- The availability of information can change the whole occupation

"All the information is available to customers. So, what is the sellers task in the shop? Seller is not a product advicer anymore." (Seller in a sport shop, 32)

3. Self-piloting and control

- Managing work more and more by oneself. But is it because of digitalization?

"The managers don't even know these things that we are working with. Nowadays people don't expect the expertise from the manager. - - If you don't know something, you turn to your work colleague." (Insurance expert, 56)

- On the other hand: the control and feeling of being controlled

"After every phonecall, the customer receives an inquiry about how did the phonecall go. Every call is appraised." (Insurance expert, 56)

"I trust my employees, but I see their electronic footprint. So, there is no use to talk rubbish to me." (Truckdriver and entrepreneur, 36)

4. Trust on systems and system failures

“We have to think really carefully before we adopt new technology. - - Old devices work better than new ones.” (Factory mechanic, 34)

“When the system goes down, you have so much work to do, but nothing can’t be done, because you don’t have this electronic information. Then there is 10 guys leaning on the wall and smoking.” (Truckdriver and entrepreneur, 36)

“I still have to take all the new contacts and I can’t do anything because of the system failure. It’s really emotionally frustrating, because customers pour their bad mood on me then.” (Insurance expert, 56)

5. Learning and age

- Learning and updating skills

“I have to update my skills all the time. Ten years back things were done a bit differently. Things that I learned at school are just useless.” (Advertising designer, 37)

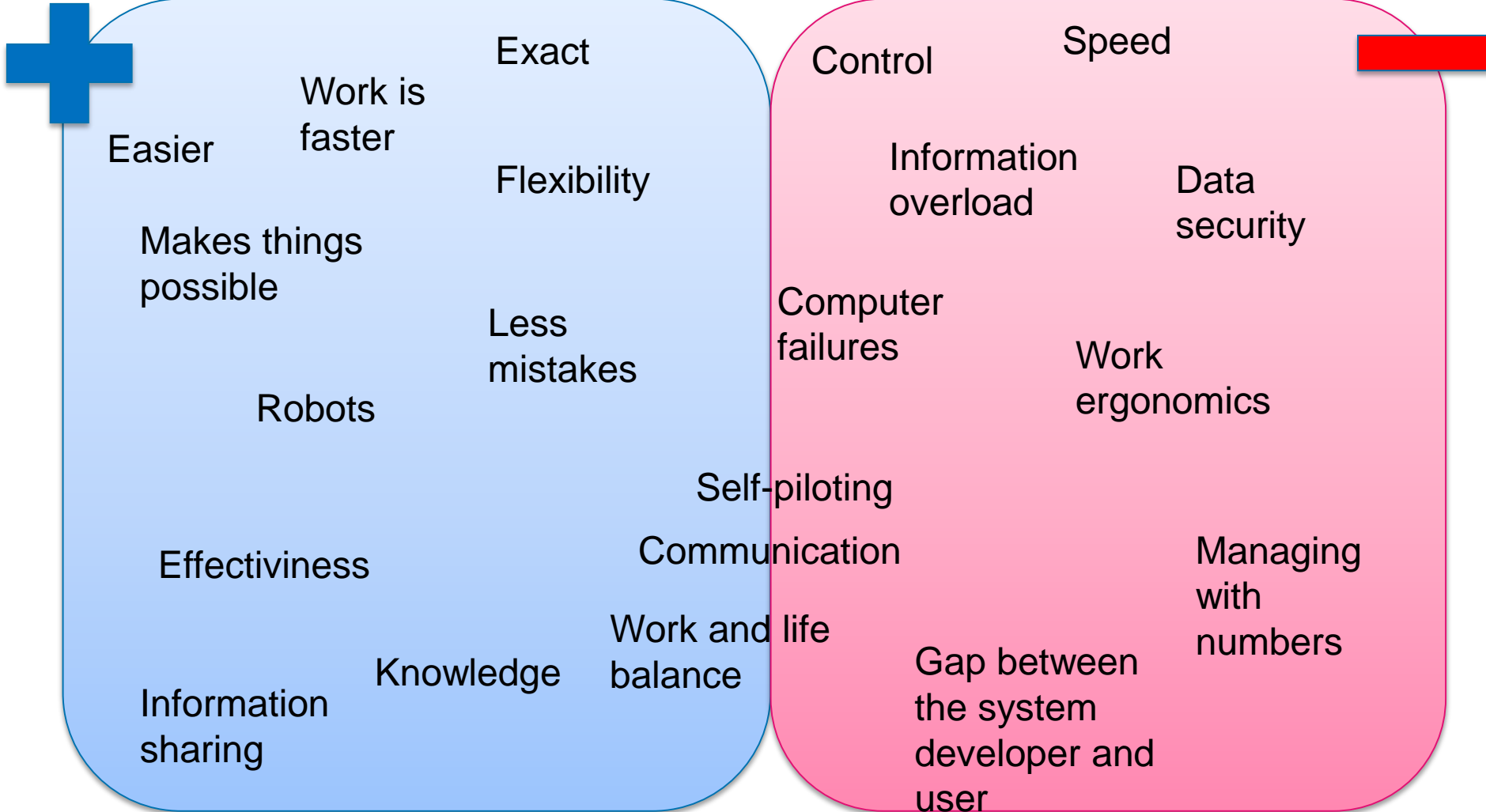
- Age

“Digitalization just means that I have to update my knowledge and I do that on my own account. To manage in my work, I have to do that. I wasn’t born a phone in my hand as my children were.” (Insurance expert, 56)

“[...] using computer isn’t that clear for all [...] It’s like babysitting, we give advice and hold hands.” (Factory mechanic, 34)

“Most of them are old stubborn, who refuse to learn the new systems.” (Logopedist, 45)

Positive and negative things mentioned in the interviews



Conclusions

- Digitalization is a broad concept => need to break it into different pieces to catch the phenomenon
- Digitalization is at significantly different stages at the work places
- Analysis of the interviews and questionnaire development for the upcoming Quality of Work Life Survey 2018 continues through the autumn 2017

Työaika 80-luvulla

Working Time in the Eighties



Thank you!