

Department of Real Estate, Planning and Geoinformatics

# Is there Method in the Madness?

Exploring short-distance relocation processes

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Peggie Rothe



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Exploring short-distance relocation processes

**Peggie Rothe**

A doctoral dissertation completed for the degree of Doctor of Science (Technology) to be defended, with the permission of the Aalto University School of Engineering, at a public examination held at the lecture hall M1 of the school on 27th of November 2015 at 12.

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**Abstract**

This dissertation looks at organisational short-distance relocation, which is a relocation conducted within the same general area and where much of the workforce is retained. It is a significant life event for organisations as the decisions concerning location and office solutions determine the organisation’s future operating environment, with possible effects on workforce productivity and satisfaction, and meeting overall business objectives. Furthermore, the way the workplace change is delivered will affect how it is received by the organisation’s employees.

The aim of this study is to increase knowledge of office occupiers’ relocation process by exploring what goes on inside organisations in short-distance relocation. The study sets out to answer three research questions. The first question addresses the impacts that short-distance relocation can have on the relocating organisation. Through a literature review, financial, social and environmental impacts of relocation were collated, which demonstrated that relocation can on one hand be a risk while also providing an opportunity for change. This suggests that relocation should be approached as a strategic process.

The second question focuses on how organisations manage short-distance relocations. Through a multiple-case study and a mixed methods approach, this is answered from two perspectives: by looking at how relocation is managed internally within the organisation and by exploring the extent to which external resources are needed to provide support. The findings illustrate how unique the processes are even though organisations are undertaking the same activity. Furthermore, common challenges were identified: challenges related to managing the process; challenges related to a lack of substantive knowledge of relocation; and challenges related to managing the organisational change. These suggest that organisations need support in order to ensure more successful outcomes through a more optimal process. However, before relocating, many organisations share the perception that relocation is not a complicated, complex and strategic process and, therefore, the perceived need for support is small. Thus, in order to achieve more optimal processes, services need to be developed and the awareness of these needs to be increased.

The third question seeks to understand how employees as individuals experience short-distance relocation. The findings show that workplace and location change, as well as the actual process, all contribute to employees’ experience. It is also shown that even though employees from the same organisation should be exposed in theory to a similar kind of process, they might still experience it and perceive things differently. It is therefore proposed that employees should not be treated as one homogenous group that is the object of change but as discrete individuals who experience change.

**Keywords** corporate real estate, relocation, management, workplace, change

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**Tekijä**

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**Väitöskirjan nimi**

Organisaatioiden uudelleensijoittumisprosessi – suunniteltua vai sattumaa?

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Tässä väitöskirjassa tutkimuskohteena on organisaatioiden uudelleensijoittumisprosessi. Uudelleensijoittuminen on merkittävä tapahtuma organisaation elinkaaren aikana, sillä sijainti- ja toimitilavalinnassa organisaatiot määrittävät tulevaisuuden toimintaympäristönsä, jolla saattaa olla merkittäviä vaikutuksia työntekijöiden tuottavuuteen, tyytyväisyyteen ja liiketoiminnan tavoitteiden saavuttamiseen. Lisäksi prosessin toteutustavalla on vaikutus siihen, kuinka henkilöstö vastaanottaa muutoksen.

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on lisätä ymmärrystä toimistokäyttäjien uudelleensijoittumisprosessista tarkastelemalla mitä organisaatioiden sisällä tapahtuu prosessin aikana. Tutkimuksessa vastataan kolmeen tutkimuskysymykseen. Ensimmäisessä kysymyksessä tarkastellaan uudelleensijoittumisen vaikutuksia organisaatioon. Kirjallisuuskatsauksen avulla tunnistettiin taloudellisia, sosiaalisia ja ympäristövaikutuksia, jotka osoittavat, että uudelleensijoittuminen voi olla organisaatiolle riski mutta samalla tarjota uudistumisen mahdollisuuden. Tämä vuorostaan viittaa tapahtuman strategiseen merkitykseen.

Toisessa kysymyksessä kysytään, kuinka prosessia johdetaan. Viiden tapaustutkimuksen sekä laadullista ja numeerista aineistoa yhdistävän yhdistelmä tutkimuksen avulla tähän vastataan kahdesta näkökulmasta: tarkastelemalla organisaatioiden sisäisiä johtamiskäytäntöjä sekä selvittämällä organisaatioiden tarvetta ulkopuolisten resurssien tarjoamaan tukeen. Löydökset kuvaavat kuinka yksilöllisiä organisaatioiden uudelleensijoittumistapahtumat ovat, huolimatta siitä, että kyseessä on sama prosessi. Lisäksi tunnistettiin prosessin johtamiseen, substanssiosaamisen puutteeseen sekä organisaatiomuutoksen johtamiseen liittyviä haasteita. Nämä antavat ymmärtää, että organisaatiot tarvitsevat tukea onnistuneen uudelleensijoittumisen takaamiseksi. Kuitenkin harvassa organisaatiossa tunnistetaan riittävän ajoissa prosessin haasteellisuutta ja strategista merkitystä, josta johtuen koettu avun tarve on pieni. Näin ollen uudelleensijoittumisprosessien parantaminen vaatii siihen liittyvien palveluiden kehittämistä ja organisaatioiden tietoisuuden lisäämistä.

Kolmas kysymys tarkastelee työntekijöiden kokemuksia prosessista. Löydökset osoittavat, että työntekijän kokemukseen vaikuttaa niin sijainti- että tilamuutoskin, sekä prosessin toteutus. Lisäksi osoitetaan, että vaikka saman organisaation työntekijät teoriassa altistuvat samalle prosessille, voi yksittäisten työntekijöiden kokemuksissa olla huomattavia eroja. Tästä syystä ehdotetaan, että työntekijöitä ei tulisi tarkastella yhtenäisenä muutoksen kohteena, vaan yksilöinä, jotka kokevat muutoksen.

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*“I can't tell where the journey will end  
But I know where to start”*

- Avicii



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This process might have taken a bit longer than expected, but getting lost is a part of the journey. Now that this leg of the voyage is completed, it's time start enjoying whatever lies ahead.

London, October 28th 2015

Peggie Rothe

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# Appended Papers

This doctoral dissertation consists of a summary and of the following publications, which are referred to in the text by their numerals

- 1.** Christersson, Matti and Rothe, Peggie (2012), “Impacts of organizational relocation: a conceptual framework”, *Journal of Corporate Real Estate*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 226–243.
- 2.** Rothe, Peggie and Heywood, Christopher (2015), “Demystifying the short-distance relocation process: 5 Cases from Finland” *Journal of Corporate Real Estate*, Vol. 17 No.3, pp. 160–177.
- 3.** Rothe, Peggie; Heywood, Christopher; Christersson, Matti and Sarasoja, Anna-Liisa (2015) “Office Relocation Management in Finland – Challenges and Service Opportunities” *Property Management*, Vol. 33 No. 4, pp. 348–366.
- 4.** Rothe, Peggie; Sarasoja, Anna-Liisa and Heywood, Christopher (2015), “Short-distance corporate relocation: the employee experience”, *Facilities*, Vol. 33 No. 1/2, pp. 38–60.

# Author's Contribution

**Publication 1:** “Impacts of organizational relocation: a conceptual framework”

The author of this dissertation participated in initiating the paper and had shared responsibility with the first author for the literature review and writing the discussion and conclusions.

**Publication 2:** “Demystifying the short-distance relocation process: 5 Cases from Finland”

The author of this dissertation was responsible for initiating the paper and had the main responsibility for data collection, analysis and writing the paper.

**Publication 3:** “Office Relocation Management in Finland – Challenges and Service Opportunities”

The author of this dissertation was responsible for initiating the paper and had shared responsibility for data collection and writing the paper. The author was responsible for the analysis.

**Publication 4:** “Short-distance corporate relocation: the employee experience”

The author of this dissertation was responsible for initiating the paper and had the main responsibility for data collection, analysis and writing the paper.



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Personal motivation for the study

I am passionate about the user perspective of the built environment and gaining a greater understanding of the interaction between people and place. What particularly interests me are workplaces that provide people with environments where they can work productively with satisfaction, and thus contribute positively to organisational performance.

In 2009, I was asked to work on a research project around office occupiers' workplace preferences. In this project, we looked at what individual office users want in their work environment, and what organisational decision makers value in office environments. The idea with the latter perspective was to understand what organisations want and would choose when selecting new office premises. Among the project outcomes were findings about which micro-location, building and workplace attributes were more valued by organisations, and which less. But I was left feeling that there was a lot more to it. It felt too black and white. Can we really assume that organisations 'want' something and that the people in charge make rational decisions based on complete knowledge and in the best interest of the organisation? And that when optimal decisions have been made, implementation will be straightforward and will lead to intended and desired outcomes?

Around the same time, I was introduced to strategy research and the difference between the research on strategy content and strategy as a process. In brief, the content school of thought looks at how the content of an organisation's strategy affects performance, and aims to answer questions such as 'which choices lead to success'? However, many strategies fail. Even the 'right' choices (input) do not always automatically lead to the desired outcome and change (output).

The process school of thought, on the other hand, looks at the black box in between: the process by which organisations plan and implement their strategy, which in itself affects how change happens and how well the strategy succeeds. While strategy process research does not evaluate which inputs might lead to desired outputs, it can provide explanations as to why a particular strategy has or has not led to desired results. It does this by increasing the understanding of the process.

Applying this to relocation made me realise how little we really know about relocation as a process, compared to relocation as an input/output equation.

In our previous project, for example, we had examined location decisions but not the actual decision-making, and we had also not addressed how implementation of the process would impact the outcome.

This sparked the idea of a research project that would focus on the *process* of short-distance relocations, which includes a change in the organisation's accommodation and a change in location within the same general area. In preparation for this research, I talked with Finnish landlords and tenant representatives who work closely with occupiers who have embarked on the relocation journey. As it turned out, they did not know much about what was going on within their client organisations during the process. They would typically have one point of contact, but still not genuinely know how the organisations managed the process internally. For them, the organisational process was like a black box.

My personal motivation for this research goes back to my passion and professional mission: I want to change the perception of workplaces as only space, costs and a liability, and replace it with the understanding that it is a strategic asset that has an impact on organisational performance. Furthermore, I want to support the creation of better work environments for individuals and organisations. Organisations that are facing relocation have an excellent opportunity at hand to use the situation as a catalyst for change. This also provides a great opportunity to help improve today's workplaces. However, if we want to influence and support organisations in their relocations and help them create better workplaces for their employees, we must first have an understanding of how they go about relocating and whether there is method in their madness. That is why I started this research journey.

## **1.2 Theoretical background and motivation for the study**

Organisational short-distance relocation, which is here defined as relocation conducted within the same general area (O'Mara, 1999) and where much of the workforce is retained, is a significant life event for organisations. While the geographical change is far less significant in these types of relocations (compared to when organisations relocate the business to, for example, another country), organisations are nonetheless forced to take a stand on many of the factors where Corporate Real Estate Management (CREM) adds value to the organisation (see for example Jensen et al. (2012) and Lindholm and Leväinen (2006)). Decisions concerning location and office solutions have strategic impact as they determine the organisation's future operating environment, with possible effects on productivity, workforce satisfaction, and meeting the overall business objectives (Attwood, 1996; Laframboise et al., 2003; Morgan and Anthony, 2008; Nourse and Roulac, 1993). Furthermore, the way the workplace change is delivered will affect how the change is received by the organisation's employees (Bull and Brown, 2011; Vischer, 2011).

While short-distance office relocations happen frequently, they are an infrequent event for any single organisation. Therefore, few organisations have experience and knowledge of managing relocation, which can be anything but a

straightforward process. This is because a relocation process is a collection of decisions, it includes multiple actors, multiple and conflicting goals, uncertainty, and decisions made with bounded rationality.

Surprisingly little, however, is still known about what really goes on within organisations during a relocation process, which is here defined as the process that starts when the first thought of potential relocation occurs and ends when the organisation has moved and settled into the new space. Relocating organisations are in the literature like 'black boxes', where much of previous research has mainly paid attention to the relationship between input and output – not what happens within the box. Furthermore, previous research has often focused on the outcomes of specific parts of the process, most often either the location and site selection, or the design of the new workplace.

Location and site selection decision-making behaviour is addressed by behavioural location and relocation research, which emerged in the late 1960's. The focus was mainly on location of manufacturing and production facilities, while the interest of office locations developed as late as in the 1990's (Pellenbarg et al., 2002). This research stream looks at relocation as a process that culminates and ends in a location decision, and it often aims to predict and explain where certain organisations are likely to relocate. Studies on office occupiers' relocation have often taken the form of location choice models (Leishman and Watkins, 2004) where the impact of different internal and external factors on location choice has been investigated through many quantitative studies, for example, Brouwer et al. (2004), Frenkel (2001), Leishman et al. (2003), Leishman and Watkins (2004) and Westhead and Batstone (1998). Furthermore, the relative importance of different locations, buildings, and space attributes in decision-making has continued to receive a good deal of attention. Authors have found that factors such as image and prestige of location (Sing et al., 2006), costs (Adnan and Daud, 2010; Elgar and Miller, 2010; Leishman et al., 2012), and suitability and quality of space (Appel-Meulenbroek, 2008; Elgar and Miller, 2010) are among the most important attributes for occupiers, while recent studies have unanimously concluded that, compared to other factors, sustainability is not a driving issue in occupiers' building selection process (Dixon et al., 2009; Leishman et al., 2012; Levy and Peterson, 2013). However, already in 2001, Mariotti and Pen, (2001) called for research that takes the underlying strategy and the organisational structure of the firm into consideration, and suggested that the current practice was "repeating the same lists of location factors".

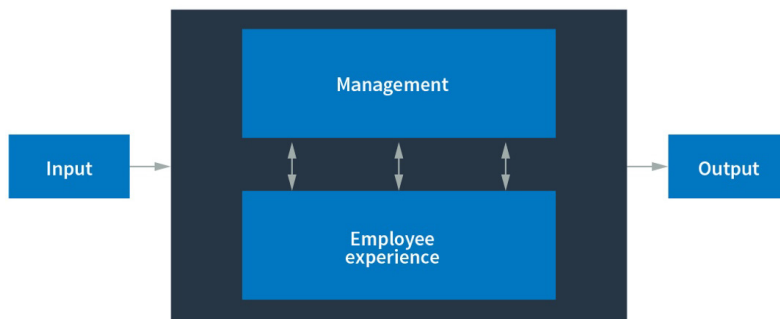
The studies around the design of the new workplace often go hand-in-hand with assessments on changes in the user experience as a result of changing the physical layout and design. For this, various Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) methods exist (Maarleveld et al., 2009; Turpin-Brooks and Viccars, 2006). While documenting changes in user satisfaction and productivity are essential to understand the effects of different workplace concepts and their suitability for different organisations and users, these studies provide little evidence around the process through which the new workplace was achieved, and how employees experienced the change process.

While not as frequently studied as the impact of the physical environment on user experience, a few authors have highlighted the importance of change management actions – such as communication and user participation – on the successful outcome of workplace change (Bull and Brown, 2011; Spreckelmeyer, 1993; Vischer, 2011). This type of research looking at the impact of the implementation is not only scarce, but it also focuses on only one part of the process, namely the workplace change, while neglecting the location change.

So while these streams of location, CREM and workplace research have looked at elements that are related to relocation on both management and employee levels, there is still a gap in the literature that considers what the entire relocation *process* looks like from the perspective of the occupier organisation. To date, the process still remains a ‘black box’.

### 1.3 Research question and scope

The aim of this study is to increase knowledge of occupiers’ relocation process by exploring what goes on inside organisations in short-distance relocation. As identified in the previous section, research around elements related to relocation has looked at the input/output equation on two levels: management and employee. Therefore, it is relevant to also approach the relocation ‘black box’ at both levels (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The study’s approach to the relocation ‘black box’

The study focuses on office occupiers, and thus excludes relocation of manufacturing and production facilities, retail, and logistics facilities. Furthermore, this study is limited to short-distance leasehold relocations.

The research is divided into three research questions. The first research question is:

#### **Q1. What impact does short-distance relocation have on the relocating organisation?**

The research question is answered through an extensive literature review. The literature review supported the notion that relocation is a significant event

with many possible impacts on the relocating organisation. Furthermore, it showed that not much is yet known about how organisations go about managing a relocation. Therefore, the second research question is:

### **Q2. How do organisations manage short-distance relocations?**

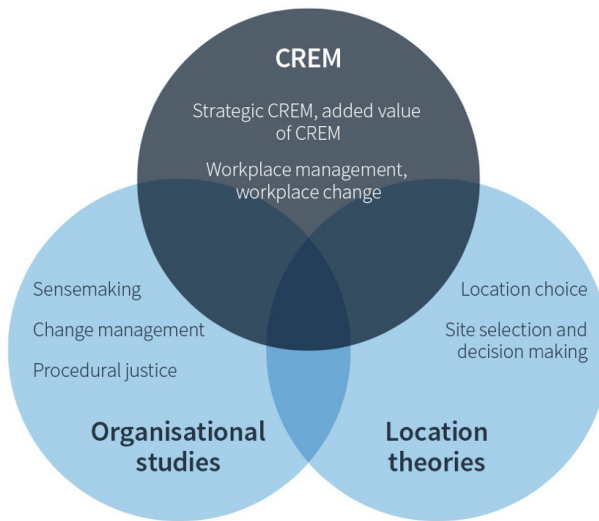
This question is answered from two perspectives. First, by looking at how relocation is managed internally within the relocating organisation. This perspective is explored through a multiple-case study. Second, by exploring to what extent external resources are needed to provide support in the process. 'External' refers to services, support, or advice provided from a resource outside the organisation that is relocating. This external perspective is studied with a mixed-methods approach combining a questionnaire and an interview-based study.

As relocation can have a significant impact on the employees of the organisation and their productivity, satisfaction, and motivation, the final research question shifts the focus on the employees. Achieving optimal processes that result in highly satisfied employees requires a better understanding of how the employees experience what goes on around them. Thus, the third research question is:

### **Q3. How do employees as individuals experience short-distance relocations?**

The third research question seeks to understand how employees as individuals make sense of their organisation's relocation. This is explored through a multiple case study where the experiences of individual employees are scrutinised.

This research is positioned within the CREM research field and has its main foundation in the concepts of strategic CREM and workplace management (Figure 2). However, it also leans on concepts and theories from two other research fields, namely organisational studies and behavioural location theories. Concepts from the discipline of organisational studies are applied to understand the relocation process from the employee perspective, while behavioural location theories provide a background for exploring the process at management level. The relevant theoretical concepts are presented in more detail in the appended papers of this dissertation.



**Figure 2.** Theoretical foundation of the study

## 1.4 Structure of the dissertation

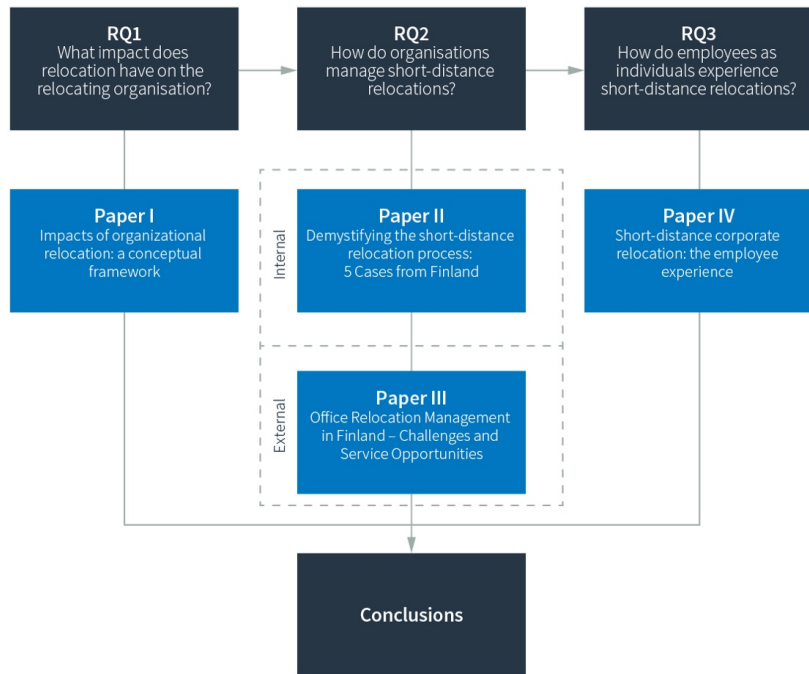
This dissertation consists of four articles published in academic journals, and a summary.

Paper 1 answers the first research question. It explores the impacts of relocation through a literature review and provides a compilation of the financial, social and environmental impacts and consequences that relocation can have.

Papers 2 and 3 contribute to the second research question. Paper 2 describes the relocation process of five case organisations with a focus on how the process was managed internally within the organisations. Paper 3 assesses Finnish organisations' perceived demand for advisory services in relocation, the service experiences of 15 organisations that had already relocated, and identifies challenges that relocating organisations face.

Paper 4 addresses the third research question by providing an insight into how employees as individuals experience and make sense of what happens when their organisation undergoes a relocation process.

The relationship between the research questions and papers is presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Research questions and papers

This summary consists of three sections. The background and motivation of the study, the research questions and the methodology are presented in the first section. This is followed by a summary of the appended papers, which forms the second section. Subsequently, the conclusions, evaluation of the research and suggestions for further research are presented in the third section.

## 1.5 Methodology

The selection of research design should be based on the nature of the research problem while also informed by the worldview assumptions the researcher brings to the study (Creswell, 2009). One of these worldviews is pragmatism, a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies, which emphasises the research problems and uses all methods available to understand the problem. It is not committed to any single system of research philosophy and reality; instead it might draw liberally from both qualitative and quantitative assumptions. Thus, both qualitative and quantitative methods and data are used depending on what provides the best understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2009).

The overall research design of this study follows a mixed methods approach that employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, which

combines the benefits of both methods (Creswell, 2009). The study is, nonetheless, predominantly qualitative. The qualitative approach was selected as the topic has not previously been widely explored and, thus, the nature of the research is exploratory.

The study started with a literature review on relocations and the consequences of relocation on the organisation. The relevancy of the literature findings was then confirmed in a small focus group that consisted of ten Finnish real estate professionals, including four tenant representation consultants, three landlord representatives, two academics and one city representative.

The main part of the research uses a multiple-case study approach, which was considered to be the most appropriate method as the study aims to “describe an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred” (Yin, 2009, p.20) and the method has a distinct advantage over other methods when “[a] ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin, 2009, p. 13).

The multiple-case study approach was used to explore the topics of research questions 2 and 3, and is reported in papers 2 and 4. The study is further complemented by a sequential mixed methods enquiry (Creswell, 2009) that combines a survey and interview-based study. This approach is used to further elaborate on research question 2 and is reported upon in paper 3. The research questions, methods and corresponding papers are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Research questions, methods and corresponding papers

Research question	Discussed in paper(s)	Research methods
1. What impact does short-distance relocation have on the relocating organisation?	I	Literature review (primary) Focus group (secondary)
2. How do organisations manage short-distance relocations?	II III	Multiple-case study Sequential mixed methods (Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews)
3. How do employees as individuals experience short-distance relocations?	IV	Multiple-case study

Next, an overview of how the research methods were applied is presented. More detailed descriptions of the application of the research methods are presented in each of the papers.

### *Multiple-case study*

The multiple-case study comprised five organisations that had relocated within the greater Helsinki Metropolitan Area (HMA) in Finland within the previous eighteen months. The cases were purposefully selected to help understand the problem in a diversity of settings (Creswell, 2009) and were accessed through the research’s collaboration partners. A description of the key facts of the cases is presented in Table 2. The offices that were relocated were all approximately 200 employees or less. This size limitation was selected because relocations of large corporate headquarters happen infrequently in the Finnish market. This would have made it challenging to find participating organisations for the study, but more importantly, studying relocations of small to me-

dium sized offices provides a better insight into a more common type of relocations.

Case studies often combine various sources of data. One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview (Yin, 2009). In this study, the main data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 32 representatives from the five organisations: 15 interviewees were company representatives who were actively involved in the process of relocation, making decisions and executing the relocation of their organisation; 17 were employees who did not have an assigned role in the process. Additionally, written documents, such as memos, emails, and presentations, were received from four of the five cases to supplement the interview data.

All interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The analysis was done using qualitative data analysis software (Atlas.ti). First, the interviews were read through and coded on a thematic basis with related sub-themes. The assigned codes were of descriptive nature which means they included little interpretation (Miles and Huberman, 1994); instead they served the purpose of describing and summarising what the subject had said. The codes were simultaneously arranged into predefined categories that reflected the themes of the interviews.

The categories were:

**Theme 1:** the relocation process and the phases related to it:

- a) Relocation drivers;
- b) Location and facility search criteria; and
- c) Search process.

**Theme 2:** the organisational process in the decision-making and implementation:

- d) Decision-making (location and building);
- e) Decision-making (space planning); and
- f) Organisation involved and their roles.

**Theme 3:** communication and employee participation:

- g) Communication; and
- h) Employee participation.

**Theme 4:** thoughts concerning the outcome:

- i) Employee reactions;
- j) Thoughts concerning the outcome;
- k) Thoughts concerning the process.

Detailed case-descriptions are an important element of case study research (Yin, 2009). Thus, based on the interviews and supporting documents, a description of each case organisation's relocation process was compiled. These case descriptions are presented in paper 2. Subsequently, the focus of the analysis was shifted to cross-case themes, which are discussed in papers 2 and 4.

**Table 2.** Case descriptions

Case	Description	Number of people interviewed	
		Involved	Employee
A	A Finnish organisation relocating its headquarters with approx. 200 employees. Moved approximately 1km within the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (HMA). Decreased the amount of space from approximately 8000sqm to 4000sqm. The old office consisted mainly of private offices, while the new office is mainly open plan. The organisation had a Real Estate director who was in charge of the relocation.	3	4
B	A global organisation consolidating two sites with approximately 110 employees altogether as a result of a Merger and Acquisition (M&A). One of the merging organisations had a relocation process on-going before the M&A was announced. The relocation happened within the HMA and the distance was 4.5km and 7km for the respective organisations. Both organisations had private offices in their old sites (approximately 2600sqm in total), while the new site consisted of mainly open plan (approximately 2000sqm). The organisation did not have any sort of facilities function.	4	3
C	A global organisation with approximately 45 employees at the case site. Moved approximately 5km within the HMA from approximately 500sqm to 900sqm. Both before and after, offices were a combination of open and private space, but the share of people sitting in open space is bigger in the new premises. The organisation did not have any sort of facilities function.	2	4
D	Finnish organisation operating globally relocating its headquarters with 50 employees. Moved approximately 7km within the HMA. The old office was a traditional private office layout while the new office is a combination of open plan and smaller rooms for a few people. The amount of space decreased from approximately 2500sqm to 1200sqm. The organisation did not have a separate facilities function, instead the facilities and human resources were the responsibility of the general counsel who was also in charge of the relocation.	3	3
E	A global organisation with approximately 30 employees stationed at the new site and another 20 working outside the office. Consolidated two locations into one. Moved 15-20km within the HMA to more modern facilities that support all different operations of the organisation. The old spaces consisted of mainly private offices while the new spaces also had some shared offices. The total amount of office space decreased from approximately 900sqm to 600sqm. The organisation did not have any sort of facilities function.	3	3
Total		15	17

### *Sequential mixed methods study*

The sequential mixed methods study in this dissertation combines a questionnaire and an interview-based study, in which the quantitative inquiry preceded the qualitative. The sequence can be explained by an initial opportunity to collect survey data in a large questionnaire used as part of a research project on organisational work environment preferences. At that time, no knowledge was available on the demand for relocation-related services among organisations in Finland and thus, the opportunity was used to assess organisations' perception of their need for support in the event of relocation.

The questionnaire was sent out in two phases. In the first phase, an invitation to respond was sent to 126 people in selected occupant organisations in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (HMA). In this phase the participants included organisations of different size and industry and were selected based on availability, also referred to as a convenience sample (Creswell, 2009), as the contact details were acquired through companies that funded the research. The return rate was 28 per cent with 35 responses, which is in line with average response rates (35.7 per cent) in organisational surveys (Baruch and Holtom, 2008).

Because of the small number of respondents, the sampling was broadened to the entire population – all organisations within the HMA with over 50 employees. In order to motivate the recipients to respond, they were promised an electronic copy of the final survey report. One reminder was sent out. At the end, this increased the amount of responses to 95 with a final return rate of 6.4 per cent.

This response rate is low. However, the data contains no problems related to sampling, as the questionnaire invitation was sent to the entire population (all organisations with over 50 employees in the HMA). Furthermore, the organisations included in the analysis represent the existing organisational demographic in the HMA where the majority of organisations are small or medium sized. In 2009, 99.8 per cent of all enterprises in Finland were SME's and they employed 64 per cent of all personnel (Official Statistics of Finland (OSF), 2009). While these two aspects do help improve the validity of the data, the low response rate should nonetheless be taken into consideration when generalising the results.

The questionnaire was then followed by a qualitative interview study to enable a more in-depth assessment of the subject. Subsequently, 15 organisations that had recently relocated were interviewed in order to better understand why the organisations had or had not used service providers, assess their experiences with the services and their conscious service need, and to identify challenges that organisations faced during the relocation process. The number of interviewed organisations was considered to have reached point of data saturation as no new themes emerged.



## 2. Summaries of the research papers

### 2.1 Paper I: Impacts of organizational relocation: a conceptual framework

The first paper sets out to understand what impacts short-distance relocation can have on the relocating organisation, with the purpose of assembling the economic, social, and environmental impacts of office occupier relocation. This was done through a literature review in which all issues of the ten most relevant journals within the corporate real estate, property, and facilities sector were systematically reviewed. The review resulted in a total of 53 relevant articles.

After the review process, the list of concepts that were identified as impacts in relation to relocation was confirmed in an expert focus group where the experts were first asked to assemble a list of concepts based on their experience and subsequently asked to review and confirm the list that had been compiled based on previous literature. The focus group consisted of ten Finnish real estate professionals including four tenant representation consultants, three landlord representatives, two academics and one city representative.

The relocation impacts were grouped based on the triple bottom line (TBL) perspective of organisational success, introduced by Elkington (1997). TBL was chosen as it takes into account three different aspects of sustainability: profit, people and planet and thus, the analysis aimed to identify the economic, social, and environmental impacts of relocation. In the paper, the social impacts were considered as the ones affecting the employees of the organisation (as a distinction from the impacts on society).

Perhaps the most easily identifiable impacts of relocation are the economic ones, and in particular the direct costs related to the relocation (for example, costs for lease break clause penalties, make-good, costs of fit-out and furniture) as well as changes in long-term liabilities (for example, rents, service charges, maintenance liability). Identified social implications of relocation included several impacts on the relocating organisation's employees, such as negative reactions (stress, fear), changes in the sense of belonging, morale, attitudes towards the organisation, satisfaction, productivity, absenteeism and retention rates. When relocation involves a change in the physical workplace, possible impacts comprise of changes in organisational dynamics and ways of working: collaboration, communication and decision-making can all be influenced by the change in the physical environment. Finally, the literature review

documented various environmental impacts of relocations, which suggest different means for an organisation to change their environmental footprint through the decisions made regarding location.

A summary of the documented impacts and the grouping in regards to the three TBL dimensions is shown in Table 3. The table further shows the relevant references and which of the impacts were also proposed by the focus group. The 'X' indicates a direct connection to the TBL dimension in question, while '(X)' represents a more indirect link, as perceived by the authors of the study. The evidence supports the notion that relocation is a significant event with many possible impacts on the relocating organisation.

**Table 3.** Impacts of office occupiers' short distance relocation

Impact	Triple Bottom Line dimensions			Authors
	Ec.	Soc.	Env.	
<b>(Changed) image, identity and culture</b> - reinforcing (corporate) identity and culture - changed image - re-positioned identity/image - external image - intra-firm identity - greater sense of community - changes in organisational culture	(X)	(X)	(X)	Allard and Barber, 2003; Bradley and Osborne, 1999; Brown et al., 2010; Krumm and Vries, 2003; Morgan and Anthony, 2008; Rasila and Nenonen, 2008; Williams and Harris, 1988a, 1988b; Workshop, 2012
<b>(Changed) Organisational Dynamics and ways of working</b> - supporting/hindering business processes - acceleration of business processes - more effective knowledge transfer - improved communication and collaboration - (better) cross selling - better and accelerated decision-making - reinforcing ways of working - new work practices, flexible working practices - changes in employee behaviour and employees' daily routines	(X)	X		Allard and Barber, 2003; Bradley and Osborne, 1999; Hebert, 2012; Inalhan, 2009; Manning et al., 1999; Morgan and Anthony, 2008; Workshop, 2012
<b>(Changed) productivity</b> - improved productivity - lower level of productivity - work productivity - employee productivity - workplace productivity	X	(X)		Abel, 1993, 1994; Capasso, 2003; Dohner, 1999; Dow and Porter, 2004; Greenhalgh, 2008; Haynes, 2007; Laframboise et al., 2003; Morgan and Anthony, 2008; Morris, 2000; Rasila and Nenonen, 2008; Williams and Harris, 1988a; Workshop, 2012
<b>(Changed) organisational agility</b> - flexibility - greater spatial flexibility - room for growth/space for expansion - the ability to reduce space - location exit strategy	X			Bradley and Osborne, 1999; Dixon et al., 2009; Leishman et al., 2003; Manning et al., 1999; Workshop, 2012
<b>(Changed) commuting</b> - accessibility for employees - changes in personnel commuting time and costs - changed commuting behaviour - increased commutes and commuting distance - private car parking provisions - proximity to key employees		X	X	Archer, 1981; Dabson, 2000; Dow and Porter, 2004; Leishman et al., 2003; Manning et al., 1999; Mazzarol and Choo, 2003; Nunnington and Haynes, 2011; O'Mara, 1999; Rasila and Nenonen, 2008; van de Wetering and Wyatt, 2010; Workshop, 2012
<b>(Changed) accessibility for external stakeholders</b> - linkages (to other offices) - proximity to bulk suppliers - competitor locations and comparative advantages	X			Archer, 1981; Dow and Porter, 2004; Leishman et al., 2003; Manning et al., 1999; Mazzarol and Choo, 2003; Rasila and Nenonen, 2008; Williams and Harris, 1988b; Workshop, 2012

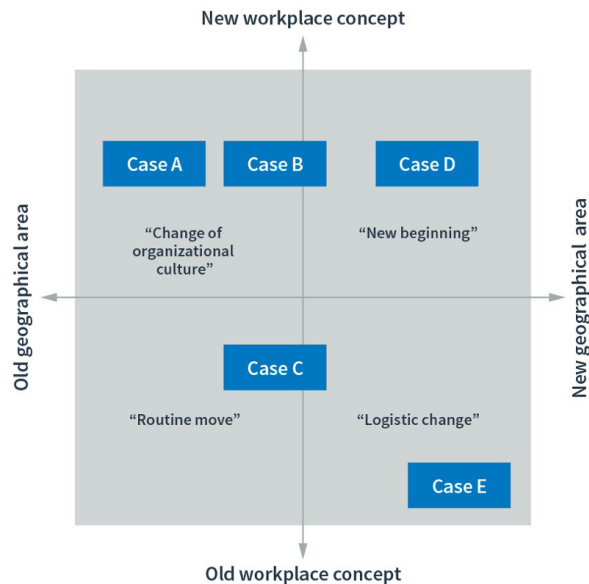
- termination of existing inter-organisational relationships - proximity to clients and strategic partners, customer access				
<b>Employee reactions</b> - negative reactions in employees (resistance, bargaining, anxiety, sadness, depression, confusion, fear, frustration, shock, denial, acceptance, anger, stress, experience of loss and grieving) - rumours within the organisation, pessimism	(X)	X		Austin and Currie, 2003; Bowker, 1989; Capasso, 2003; Harris, 1987; Inalhan, 2009; Kleasen and Foster, 2002; Laframboise et al., 2003; Workshop, 2012
<b>(Changed ) employee satisfaction and well-being</b> - employee satisfaction - employee job satisfaction - impacts on user comfort, indoor air, ergonomics - impacts on user health and well-being - increased or decreased staff morale - erosion of employee morale (due to inadequate facilities) - poor attitude towards organisation	(X)	X		Abel, 1993, 1994; Brown et al., 2010; Bull and Brown, 2011; Dohner, 1999; Dow and Porter, 2004; Greenhalgh, 2008; Inalhan, 2009; Krumm and Vries, 2003; Laframboise et al., 2003; Manning et al., 1999; Melvin, 1993; Morgan and Anthony, 2008; Morris, 2000; Rabianski et al., 2001; Rasila and Nenonen, 2008; Willett and Green, 1997; Workshop, 2012
<b>(Changed) Employee Turnover</b> - reduced employee turnover - employees leaving the company, losing key staff members - improved or decreased retention and recruitment	X	X		Bowker, 1989; Bradley and Osborne, 1999; Dow and Porter, 2004; Greenhalgh, 2008; Inalhan, 2009; Krumm and Vries, 2003; Laframboise et al., 2003; Manning et al., 1999; Morgan and Anthony, 2008; Rabianski, 2007; Rasila and Nenonen, 2008; Williams and Harris, 1988c; Workshop, 2012
<b>(Changed) Environmental footprint and accreditations</b> - CO2 emissions of building use - CO2 emitted from office use - CO2 emitted from transport/commuting (Production and management of waste) - implementation of recycling policy - utilities efficiency - building accreditation and ratings (e.g. EPC, BREEAM, LEED) - effective monitoring of building performance - use of energy, use of water - less ozone layer damaging refrigerant for air-conditioning	(X)	(X)	X	Abel, 1993, 1994; Bell, 1993; Brown et al., 2010; Dixon et al., 2009; Kato et al., 2009; Nunnington and Haynes, 2011; van de Wetering and Wyatt, 2010
<b>Relocation costs</b> - cost of procuring new premises (brokerage costs, legal costs) - break penalty costs - fit-out cost and costs of furniture - moving costs - additional costs due to poor relocation management - dilapidation (costs)		X		Buda, 1999; Dow and Porter, 2004; Ingrey-Counter and Biles, 1994; Manning et al., 1999; McAllister and Tarbert, 1999; McCann and Ward, 2004; Sing and Tang, 2004; Willett and Green, 1997
<b>(Changed) lease attributes</b> - rent, effective rent - services costs, amenities, parking costs - type of lease (gross vs. net) - repairing liabilities, tenant improvements - lease term, rent review type and interval - break clauses, assignment & subletting, permitted use of premises - (unnecessary) costs in rent, lease flexibility - changed landlord		X		Barovick and Steele, 2001; Crosby et al., 2006a, 2006b; Dow and Porter, 2004; McEnroe, 2001; Mooradian and Yang, 2002; Williams and Harris, 1988c; Workshop, 2012
<b>Disruption</b> - cost of business disruption - disruption to business - loss in direct productivity during the change process - potential decline in work products during the move - downtime associated with actual physical move - downtime for employees, time (used for property change)	X	(X)		Allard and Barber, 2003; Austin and Currie, 2003; Bowker, 1989; Capasso, 2003; Hebert, 2012; Laframboise et al., 2003; McAllister and Tarbert, 1999; Willett and Green, 1997; Williams and Harris, 1988b

## **2.2 Paper II: Demystifying the short-distance relocation process: 5 Cases from Finland**

While the first paper confirmed the motivation of the study by capturing the various impacts that relocation can have on the organisation, the purpose of the second paper was to shed a first light on what goes on within organisations as they plan and execute relocation by describing the process in the five case organisations.

The detailed descriptions of the relocation processes illustrated how unique each process can be. Case A described how an extensive change in the organisation and ways of working was achieved with employee engagement. Case B was a good example of how relocation was used to support a merger and acquisition by forming a task group that consisted of employees of both merging organisations, and giving them considerable authority to plan and make decisions about the new space. Case C could have been a straightforward relocation into a larger space, however, a delay in decision-making prolonged the project significantly, and a lack of communication and the moderate change in the work environment (re-allocation of private offices) caused dissatisfaction. Case D used an innovative approach where an employee-based task group was formed to select the location. However, tensions within the task group revealed that not everyone was satisfied with the subsequent level of democracy in the decision-making. Finally, Case E showed how relocation can be executed in a short time with fast decision-making, but in this case with the cost of causing dissatisfaction among employees, especially regarding the choice of location.

The cases also illustrated how, despite all being short-distance, relocations can apply different levels of change with differences in both the locational and the workspace change (Figure 4). Relocation close to the old office and into a similar space, like the one in Case C, can be described as a routine move. When relocating further away but to a similar space, as did Case E, the relocation is more of a logistical change as it will significantly impact employee commutes and their accessibility to the organisation. If the relocation is done within the same area but significant changes are made to the work environment, such as in Cases A and B, a change in the organisational culture is likely at some level. Finally, when an organisation relocates to a new area and simultaneously changes workplace concept, as did Case D, the relocation can be described as a new beginning.

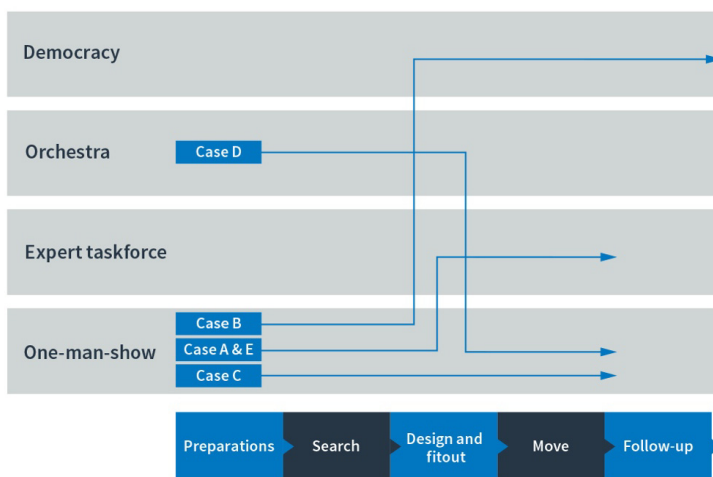


**Figure 4.** Level of change in relocation

Four different ways of arranging internal resources to execute the process were also identified which, based on their characteristics, were named “One-man-show”, “Expert taskforce”, “Orchestra” and “Democracy”. The models vary in the level of employee involvement and the basis on which people are involved in the process. In the first model, labelled “One-man-show”, one or two persons took care of all tasks and decisions themselves. The findings showed that the model allows for an efficient process, but because it is driven by the power of few individuals and decision-making therefore can be subjective, there is a risk of employee resistance. Furthermore, taking care of all tasks alone might become a big burden for only one person. In the model called “Expert taskforce” a project group was established consisting of experts who were selected based on their position in the organisation: for example, the IT- manager is responsible for the IT infrastructure and the communications manager for project communication. The work was therefore shared between several persons and did not burden one person alone and it also meant that someone with a corresponding role in the organisation managed the related tasks in the process. The “Orchestra” was the model where a task group consisting of employee representatives was established and conducted by an expert. In this model the participants are not selected based on their expertise but instead as champions to represent all employees. This model was selected to offer employees the opportunity to be involved in the process as it was thought to support the employees in accepting the change. However, the findings suggest that the model might result in dissatisfaction if the employees feel that they are not given genuine possibilities to influence decisions, despite the invitation to be involved. Lastly, in the “Democracy”, an employee-based task group was established and given authority to plan and make decisions. While this model con-

sists of high level of employee engagement, lack of knowledge and experience might be a risk.

The models were used by the case organisations in different phases of the process to take care of different tasks. As shown in Figure 5, in Cases A and E it was a “One-man-show” in the site search phase after which an “Expert taskforce” was appointed for the workplace design and move phases. Case B also used the “One-man- show” in the space search but then moved to the “Democracy” in the design and fit-out phase. Case C used the “One-man-show” throughout the process while case D, interestingly enough, used the “Orchestra” in the search phase and then moved to the “One-man-show” for the design and fit-out.



**Figure 5.** Resource models adopted in the different process phases

As all relocations are in some way unique, the paper then argues that there is no resourcing model that is right for all. The differences between the models, however, suggest that they are suitable for different purposes. “One-man-show” can be an efficient way to run some or all phases in a routine move. When the change is more significant or in larger organisations where the move is more complex, an “Expert taskforce” might be a suitable choice, combined with appropriate levels of employee engagement as suggested by Bull and Brown (2011) and Vischer (2011). When well managed, “Orchestra” and “Democracy” can be successful ways to create a sense of employee ownership, out of which the first would seem more appropriate when employee involvement is needed to achieve acceptance of an existing plan or when the group of employees does not have enough expertise to be self-managed.

### 2.3 Paper III: Office Relocation Management in Finland – Challenges and Service Opportunities

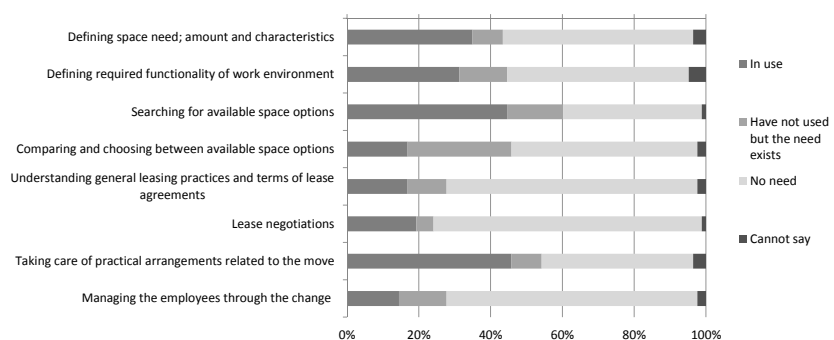
The third paper continues to explore how Finnish organisations manage relocations but shifts the focus on the use of and need for external resources. Here,

‘external’ refers to services, support, or advice provided from a resource outside the organisation that is relocating.

To give some perspective on the role of relocation-related services in relocation, the article first looks at the general awareness of these services. This is done through an online questionnaire, aimed at organisations in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, which assesses organisations’ perceived need for relocation-related services should they be confronted with a need to relocate. In the second, main phase of the paper, experiences of organisations that had recently relocated are explored in an interview study. This part examines how organisations that had recently relocated perceived relocation-related advisory services and identifies challenges faced by these organisations.

The results of the questionnaire showed that a minority of respondents had used external providers for different tasks, and a small proportion indicated that although they had not used the services they had identified the need for such services to exist.

Some tasks, however, were shown to be more prone to using external support than others (Figure 6). The respondents seemed most likely to use professional services in the search for available space options, as 60% had either used or had identified the need to use an external service provider for this task. Furthermore, 54% had externally sourced services for taking care of practical arrangements related to the move. Defining space need (43%), defining required functionality of work environment (45%), and comparing and choosing between available options (46%) were tasks that less than half of the respondents had used service providers for or had acknowledged that they needed help with. However, only 17% of the respondents had actually used external help when comparing and choosing between available options, making this the task with the biggest unfulfilled demand, with 29% of the respondents not having used this kind of service but thinking that they should have. The large number of respondents that had used help in searching for options but not in comparing and choosing between options shows that brokers, as opposed to tenant representatives, dominate the market.



**Figure 6.** The use of external service providers in different relocation tasks (n=83)

The three tasks where the smallest number of respondents considered they needed assistance all related to leasing and change management. Most re-

spondents perceived themselves sufficiently knowledgeable on leasing practices and terms of lease agreements (28% had used or thought they needed assistance) and being able to take care of lease negotiations themselves (24%). Furthermore, only 28% thought they needed help in managing the employees through the change.

The results of the survey showed that the perceived need for services is relatively small, but they do not explain why the perceived need is limited and whether organisations could achieve better relocations if they used external support. Thus, the study continued with a more in-depth exploration of the underlying reasons for the limited demand for services.

In this main part of the study, 15 organisations that had recently relocated were interviewed to better understand why their organisations had or had not used service providers and also to identify challenges that organisations faced during the relocation process, which might indicate an unconscious demand for support in relocation.

The interviews identified two explanations for the limited demand for relocation advisory services. First, many organisations had thought that relocation was not as complicated a process as it turned out to be. However, after relocating, these organisations commonly concluded that next time they would seek assistance for some of the tasks. Second, the findings also showed that the awareness and understanding of relocation-related services was low. For example, many interviewees were completely unaware of the existence of advisory services related to relocation, or did not understand the nature of these kinds of services.

The study then looked at challenges that the organisations had faced in their relocations. The challenges identified were related to three different themes: managing the process; a lack of substantive knowledge of relocations; and managing organisational change.

Challenges related to managing the process included, for example, difficulties in simultaneously taking care of own core tasks, meeting the time schedule due to late project initiation or unrealistic time schedule in the first place, and challenges related to internal communication within the project group. The lack of substantive knowledge of relocation led to difficulties in carrying out (or ignoring) the needs assessment, searching and comparing space options, making decisions concerning space design, and understanding the requirements of the IT infrastructure. Lastly, managing the change process had often proved to be difficult. Many of the organisations had not thought that they needed help in supporting the employees through the process but reported that it had been challenging to manage the employees' reactions and changing the ways of working. Others had not thought about change management efforts at all and were surprised by the employee resistance that had emerged. A summary of all challenges is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of relocation challenges

Theme	Challenge	Details
Managing the process	Resources and organisation	The project took a lot of time and had a negative impact on core tasks Challenging to manage the entire project Challenging to manage the entire chain of subcontractors Lack of overall management; nobody given the responsibility of the entire project
	Time schedule	Late project initiation Unrealistic time schedule Not assigning enough time due to devaluation of project importance
	Communication	Communication within project group Communication with subcontractors
Lack of substantive knowledge of relocation	Needs assessment	Lack of / inadequate assessment of organisational needs Inadequate listing of space requirements Lack of critique of space requirements
	Search and comparison of options	Finding suitable options Comparing options and making decision Wasting time on site visits Broker activities confusing
	Interior design and implementation	Bad decisions concerning layout and furniture Lack of / inadequate understanding of technical requirements and solutions
	IT design and implementation	Managing the risks of IT relocation Determining IT specifications and requirements Managing the IT relocation within time schedule
	Other	Lack of / inadequate understanding of market mechanisms, players, and practices Lack of / inadequate understanding of taxation issues Lack of / inadequate understanding of legal issues Lack of / inadequate understanding of sustainability issues Cost estimation
Managing organisational change	Implementing change	Managing employee short term reactions Managing employee long term attitudes Changing ways of working and operating Communicating employee resistance to top management
	Involving employees	No / limited employee involvement Unsuccessful employee involvement Challenging to manage employee involvement
	Communication	Communication to employees Managing rumours and eliminating incorrect information

To conclude, the questionnaire indicated that the relocation service demand is still relatively small. However, the interviews suggested that organisations that had recently experienced relocation and thus understood that the process can, in fact, be quite complex, looked positively at using advisory services in relocation. A more thorough analysis of the challenges and problems the organisations faced helped identify even more tasks in which many organisations might need assistance due to a lack of experience and knowledge, some of which were not that evident to the relocating organisations. For example, managing employee reactions was a frequent challenge among the organisations studied. At the same time, managing employees through the change was the task for which organisations in the questionnaire would least frequently use external assistance. The interviews also suggested that many organisations do not think they require support in managing employees through the changes that come with relocation.

## 2.4 Paper IV: Short-distance corporate relocation: the employee experience

The fourth paper explores in more detail how individual employees experience relocation. Though ‘only’ a short-distance relocation, employees are still faced with changes in both location (and thus their daily commute) and workplace, and as was shown in the first paper, relocation can potentially have a significant effect on employees, their motivation, satisfaction, and productivity. However, while previous studies have assessed how employees experience different workplace solutions, there are still gaps in previous research regarding employee experiences. First, the literature on relocations is dominated by the above-mentioned concerns with the physical environment and less so with the process of relocation. Thus, there is a lack of research that looks at how employees experience and understand the process rather than the built outcomes. Second, studies that have been conducted in a relocated setting often focus on comparing employees’ experiences of the old office with the new one, while the process of changing location is not given attention. Thus, the purpose of the fourth paper was to increase the understanding of how employees as individuals experience short-distance relocations as a process.

In the analysis, the employees’ understanding and experiences of their organisation’s relocation process were compared to how the process had been described by the persons who had been involved and responsible for carrying out the relocation. Which of the two groups of interviewees provided accounts that were more “true” or closer to “reality” was not of interest as the interest lay in what was experienced individually by the employees and what sense they made of it. In other words, the focus was on the subjective meanings that individuals had developed of their experiences.

The findings showed that few of the employees interviewed had a clear understanding of what had happened “behind the scenes” in their organisation’s relocation process. Many did not know exactly why the organisation had moved, what criteria the search for new premises was based on, how the search had been done, who had carried out the process, how they had done it and why certain decisions had been made. Many questions remained unanswered but as suggested by sensemaking literature (Chaudhry et al., 2009), not getting formal information does not mean that people will not try to understand what is going on.

Once a sensemaking process had been triggered by either a formal message that the organisation was exploring new space options, or an informal cue (such as rumours that the managing director from abroad had paid a visit), rumours spread and people started speculating together with their colleagues. In line with the sensemaking literature (Weick, 1995), making sense of what was going on turned into a social activity. Some employees knew more than others; they might have received information through personal contacts within the organisation or were more active in asking questions.

The study documented how, due to a lack of information, employees used extracted cues and their own reasoning to try and find explanations. This seemed, however, to result in plausible rather than accurate explanations and

to give very straightforward and simplified versions of what had actually happened. The study also showed how a lack of information resulted in a sense of procedural unfairness, which suggests that better communication and explaining not only what will happen but also why it happens could produce increased employee satisfaction.

Furthermore, it was found that employees may project their relocation experience onto their perception of the organisation in general, both in a positive and a negative way. A process without employee participation was mentioned as confirming that employees did not have much to say in the organisation. At the same time, employees who had experienced an engaging process said that the process reflected management's appreciation of the employees and a desire to create employee commitment.

The study supports the notion put forward in the literature that the outcome impacts employees and their satisfaction while the process also plays a vital role in achieving a good relocation experience for employees. Further, it became evident that both the location and the workplace change contribute to the employee experience of relocation, even in short-distance relocations. While previous studies have tended to focus on only one of the two, and change management efforts in practice have tended to address only the workplace change, the study suggests that change management in these types of relocations should give attention to both workplace and location.

Lastly, the study showed that even though employees from the same organisation in theory should be exposed to a similar kind of process, they might still experience it and perceive things differently. Thus, the article concluded that in future research and when managing relocations in practice, employees should not be treated as one object of change but as discrete individuals who experience change.



## 3. Discussion and conclusions

### 3.1 Summary of the results

The aim of this study was to increase knowledge of occupiers' relocation process by exploring what goes on inside organisations in short-distance relocation. The relocation behaviour of organisations was examined in a multiple-case study and a sequential mixed methods approach.

The first research question addressed the importance of relocation as an organisational process. The literature review collated a vast amount of impacts that relocation can have on organisations, which supports the notion that short-distance relocation is a significant event in an organisation's lifetime. This demonstrates that relocation can on one hand be a risk while also providing an opportunity for change, and suggests that relocation should be approached as a strategic process.

The second research question focused on opening the 'black box' and understanding how organisations manage short-distance relocations. First, the findings illustrated the uniqueness of each organisation's process even though each organisation was undertaking the same activity – a short-distance relocation. The processes can also vary in the levels of aspired change: it can vary from a routine move to a new beginning.

The study further identified different challenges that organisations face during the process. These challenges were related to managing the process, a lack of substantive knowledge of relocation, and managing the organisational change. Relocations are not part of organisations' day-to-day business and thus, few organisations will have knowledge and experience of the process. This suggests that organisations need support in order to achieve more successful outcomes through a more optimal process.

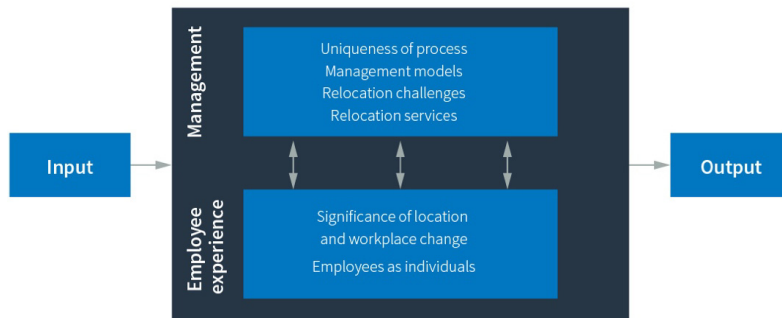
However, before relocating, many organisations share the perception that relocation is not a complicated, complex and strategic process and, therefore, the perceived need for support is small. Further, the awareness of relocation-related services is low. As long as organisational decision makers do not recognise challenges related to relocation management until after relocating, and also remain unaware of the availability of relocation advisory services, organisations will continue struggling through relocation on their own. Thus, to improve relocations, services need to be developed and the awareness of these services needs to be increased.

The third research question looked at how employees as individuals experience short-distance relocations. First, the findings showed that the workplace and location change, and the process, all contribute to employees' experience of relocation. This suggests that to achieve a successful outcome, change management efforts need to focus on both the location and workplace change. Second, the study showed that even though employees from the same organisation in theory should be exposed to a similar kind of process, they might still experience it and perceive things differently. Thus, it is proposed that employees should not be treated as one object of change but as discrete individuals who experience change.

To summarise, it is proposed that short-distance relocation is a strategic process that can be challenging to manage, especially for those organisations that lack the appropriate knowledge and experience. However, while the study showed how the process clearly impacts on employees and that they may even project their relocation experience onto their perception of the organisation in general (both in a positive and a negative way), many organisations fail to recognise the importance of change management efforts and the possibility of seeking external support. Thus, in this respect, it seems that there is some lack of method in the madness. Nonetheless, for those organisations that recognise the strategic value of both the workplace and the process, relocation can act as an excellent catalyst for change.

### 3.2 Contribution of the research

This dissertation is one of the first to look at the process of relocation rather than the outcome. It is also one of the first to assess the entire process instead of distinct parts of it. Thus, it contributes to the understanding of what goes on within organisations during a short-distance relocation process by opening the 'black box' and describing the process on two levels: the management level and the employee experience level (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Contribution of the research on management and employee experience levels

On the management level, the study contributes with descriptions that illustrate how unique each organisation's relocation process might be even though the organisations are undertaking the same activity. It also identifies four dif-

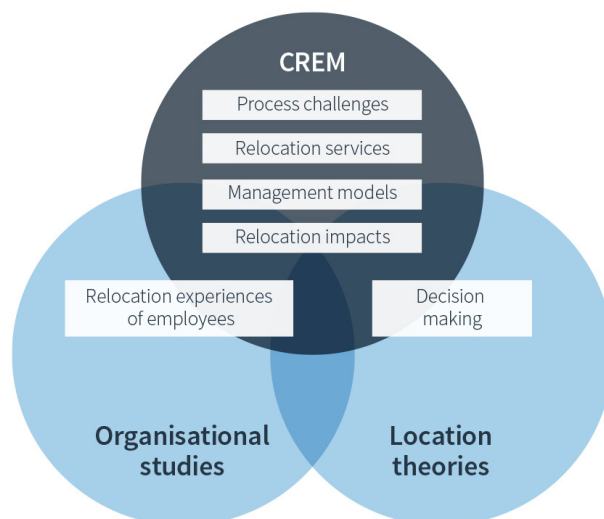
ferent management models that vary according to the level of employee involvement and the basis on which people are involved in the process.

Further, an important contribution to the industry is the identification and documentation of the challenges that relocating organisations might face. This can provide suggestions to organisations on how to manage relocations and it also points towards the development of relocation related services for the Finnish market. The study also provides insights into how the wider business population perceives the relocation process and the need for acquiring additional expertise from advisors that are external to the organisation.

On the employee experience level, this dissertation contributes to the understanding of how employees experience relocation as a process. First, it shows that employees' experiences are impacted not only by the workplace change, but also by the location change and how the process is carried out. Second, it proposes a conceptual shift from treating employees as one homogenous group and an object of change to discrete individuals who experience change.

Lastly, this dissertation furthers the knowledge in the field by showing the strategic impact that relocation has on an organisation. This is important in facilitating a move away from the perception of workplaces as only space, costs and a liability towards an understanding that workplace is a strategic asset that can have a significant impact on organisational performance.

The main theoretical contribution of this dissertation is to the CREM research field. It provides new concepts and insights that can serve as a basis for future research in the discipline (Figure 8). Further, it also contributes to the organisational research by demonstrating how the theories that stem from organisational sciences apply in this specific organisational process. Lastly, it also contributes to the existing behavioural location literature with new knowledge related to location choice.



**Figure 8.** Theoretical contribution of the dissertation

### 3.3 Evaluation of the research

Each appended paper contains its own discussion on the quality of research applicable for the respective study. This section evaluates the quality of the dissertation as a whole.

There are several ways of evaluating the quality of research. Yin (2009) describes a set of four tests that are common to all social science methods: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability.

Construct validity refers to identifying the correct measures for the concepts being studied. Yin (2009) presents using multiple sources of evidence as a tactic to ensure construct validity. In this study, the phenomenon was studied using multiple methods producing different data. Furthermore, in the case studies multiple data sources were used as the data consisted of several interviews in each case, supported by additional documents.

Internal validity only applies to explanatory and causal studies but not for descriptive or exploratory studies and is thus not relevant in the evaluation of this study.

External validity refers to defining the domain to which a study's findings can be generalised (Yin, 2009). As in qualitative research in general, the intent of this research was not to provide statistical generalisation of findings to individuals outside of those under study. Instead, the value lies in the description and the themes developed in context of a specific site (Creswell, 2009). Case studies do, however, rely on analytical generalisation, which focuses on generalising a particular set of findings to broader theory. This does, however, not come automatically but requires replication (Yin, 2009). The analytical generalisation in this study means that the findings provide a base to understand other cases. The multiple-case study approach provided simultaneous replication, all done within the Finnish context. In addition to providing analytical generalisation within this context, the results may offer useful findings also outside this context. For example, the experiences of individuals in relocation are not directly tied to the Finnish context. Furthermore, although organisations facing relocation in other markets might have a different level of awareness of, for example, available services, it can be suggested that some of the relocation challenges are transferable outside of the Finnish context.

Reliability refers to demonstrating that the operations can be repeated, with the same results. The objective is that if a subsequent researcher should follow the exact same procedure, the later researcher should arrive at the same findings and conclusions (Yin, 2009). This requires that the process is as operational as possible and well documented. All material from this study has been saved, organised and archived. This includes the research plan, documents needed for data collection (interview questions and questionnaire), the collected data (interview recordings with transcripts, questionnaire data), and the analysis framework.

### 3.4 Future research

This research has revealed many possible directions for future research. First, the size of the relocating offices were all approximately 200 employees or less. While no differences were discovered in the perceived service needs based on the size of the organisations, examining larger office relocations would provide a new context for the study. It is reasonable to suggest that an increase in the size of the relocating office would also increase the complexity of the process. Therefore, it would be interesting to see whether the size of the organisation and relocating office has an impact on, for example, challenges, applied management approach and how employees experience the process.

Second, the organisations in the qualitative parts of this study were all studied post-relocation. However, further research would benefit from a longitudinal approach where organisations are observed as they go through the process, which might reveal even further details on what goes on within organisations during relocation. A longitudinal observational study would also provide further insights into the role of external advisors and the interaction between the organisation and the external resources, as well as the impact that the external resources have on the process.

In order to explain why outcome differs across workplaces, more research is also needed around how the process impacts the outcome. This could be done by combining studies of the process with quantifications of the achieved levels of change (comparing pre and post settings).

This study showed that employees from the same organisation might experience the process and perceive things differently. It would be beneficial to explore this further to find more explanations as to why this happens. Future research could look at the impact of individual characteristics (for example, personality, role in organisation and previous experiences) and expectations (caused by, for example, perception of organisational culture) on the users' experience.



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Short-distance relocation is a significant life event for organisations, as the decisions concerning location and office solutions have effects on workforce productivity and satisfaction, and meeting overall business objectives. Furthermore, the way the workplace change is delivered will affect how the change is received by the organisation's employees. The aim of this dissertation is to increase knowledge of office occupiers' relocation process by exploring what goes on inside organisations during the process. The dissertation demonstrates that relocation can on one hand be a risk while also providing an opportunity for change. It identifies common challenges that relocating organisations face and gives an insight into how organisations' most valuable asset – the employees – experience the process.



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