



**Management and
Business
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Programme**

Summary of Theses

for

Kata Beck-Bíró

Self-actualisation in Organisational Context and its Promoting and Impeding Factors

Ph.D. dissertation

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**Institute of Management
Department of Organizational Behaviour**

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1. Main Question of the Research and Applied Methodology

Importance of the research on self-actualisation in organisational context and the definition of its promoting and impeding factors is given by thoughts and feelings reflecting the followings: „am I on the right place?“, „in which area should I develop?“, „what should I do in order to feel better in my work place?“ etc. Changes due to the economic crisis, answering these questions might give a new support to the individual in daily life.

In the first part of the summary of theses I present several theories that enable this research. I structure through own defined criteria these theories hence giving direction to the research. Following that the research frames are presented in order to validate the upcoming results and conclusions.

1.1 Self-Determination and Self-Actualization

The thought of self-actualization and its impeding factors can be traced back to phenomenology, in particular to the humanistic school (Atkinson et al, 1999, Carver et al, 1998). This view has focused on “*what obstacles in the individual’s life should be overcome to enable his or her permanent development?*” In the background of the above question the following humanistic assumptions lie: (1) human beings are good by nature; (2) individuals are inherently free and autonomous; (3) development is an innate ability of all individuals, and we have practically unlimited potential to develop; (4) individuals seek self-actualisation, and their development aims at realising their deepest potential; (5) consequently, the task of the therapists is not to heal, but to help and provide support; (6) the reality in which development takes place is defined by the subject of the development. In this sense, the representatives of the humanistic view seek to understand the (both internal and external) factors that work against self-governed development. Self-governed development – both words are important. Self-governed refers to the fact that the phenomenological view highlights personal experience, putting personal experiences in the focus of research and interpretation. This provides the individual with autonomy, freedom and freedom in making decisions (Gelei, 2002). “The autonomy of man is ensured by his/her ability to make sense, i.e. to interpret and give meaning to his personal reality” (Heron, 1981, in: Gelei, 2002:72); relate to the world from the aspect of their own experience and interpretations; and that behind their actions objectives, motives and intentions lie”. The word *development* in the term self-governing development refers directly to the process of self-actualisation: one of the fundamental assumptions of the humanistic approach is that the basic motivation of human beings is *self-actualisation*, which covers development; the efforts to grow and maximise on our capabilities; and eventually, autonomous existence.

1.2 Impeding Factors of Self-actualization in Organizational Context

The basic elements of the humanistic movement correspond to some organization theories: in the second half of the 19th century one started to „discover” the contribution of human factor to the

efficiency of the organization (e.g. Human Relations movement; Kieser, 1995:125-146, Dobák et al., 1996, Balaton, 2005). The movement's activities gave a boost to organisational psychology as a field of science, and resulted in the emergence of various motivation and management theories and the theory and practice of organisation development (Kieser, 1995:146-166). The following table reflects the comparison of the self-actualization theories:

	Keyword	Approach	Goal	Main obstacle	Components of the process
INDIVIDUAL					
Maslow	Hierarchy of needs	Humanistic psychology	Self-actualisation	Motivation structure (unfulfilled needs)	Fulfilling lower-order needs
Rogers	Client-centred therapy	Humanistic psychotherapy	To become a personality	Non-accepting environment	Trust Empathy Congruence
Berne	Transactional analysis	Psychotherapy	Integrated personality/ Whole life	Script	Awareness Spontaneity Intimacy
Csikszentmihályi	Flow	Humanistic psychology	To experience Flow	False goals and intentions (personality: emotions, thinking)	Clear-cut goals and well-defined tasks
Fromm	The art of love	Critical social theory (with humanistic approach)	The individual's freedom Emancipation	Alienation of the individual	The ability to love
	Keyword	Approach	Goal	Main obstacle	Components of the process

	Keyword	Approach	Goal	Main obstacle	Components of the process
ORGANISATION					
Argyris	Single- and double-loop learning Theories-in-use and espoused values	Interpretative-functionalism organisation theory (with humanistic components)	Learning Organisation	Defensive routines of the individual (dysfunctional, defensive interpersonal behaviours)	Double-loop learning Deutero learning
Senge	Fifth discipline Systems thinking	Objectivist-functionalism organisation theory (with system approach elements)	Learning Organisation	Misunderstanding of cause and effect relations Non-experiencing creative tension (false picture of the present / discarding vision)	Systems thinking Personal mastery Mental models Shared vision Team learning
Herzberg	Hygiene factors versus motivators	Objectivist-functionalism	To increase the motivation of subordinates	Non-challenging work Motivation through hygiene factors	Vertical job loading
Hersey-Blanchard	Empowerment	Objectivist-functionalism	To liberate the energy of the subordinates	Strict organisational structure (e.g. lack of taking personal responsibility)	Free flow of information Creating autonomy Self-directing teams

Table 1: Summary of self-actualisation theories (own representation)

In my dissertation I have classified the factors that influence individuals' self-actualisation: first I separated individuals from their environment, then, mindful of the organisation, I formed a third group which characterises the relationship between individuals and work. In addition, I have also defined another group of influencing factors: the broader environment beyond the organisation.

1.3 Research Frames

The research objective has been to understand what are the potentials for, and obstacles to, the self-actualisation of people working in advertising as creatives; partial generalisation to other contexts of the factors promoting and impeding self-actualisation.

The research question is the following: *“How do advertising creatives experience the potentials for, and the limits to, self-actualisation in Hungary, at the beginning of the 21st century, and why?”* This question foreshadows qualitative research based on an interpretative approach. On the one hand, qualitative research makes it possible to gain a thorough understanding of the events or activity. On the other hand, it also allows us to gain information about the effect of the context of this event or activity on the event or activity itself (e.g. Creswell, 1998:16 -18).

In compliance with my research objectives and research questions, my research relies on the methodology of case studies based on qualitative interviews. Case study is research exploring one or more cases involving in-depth data acquisition that stretches over time and feeds from multiple sources of information. A case is a unit of analysis, what is more, being inseparable, these units can also be investigated simultaneously – called embedded case study (Yin, 1994). Based on this, the unit of analysis appears in multi-level: (1) creative specialists' efforts to self-actualisation in their work – however, an effort is difficult to grasp or to investigate. But, since the phenomenon of self-actualisation manifests itself in individual pieces of work of projects, (2) the particular piece of work/project becomes the unit of analysis. This also makes it possible for these projects to become embedded in the everyday life of the organisation; what is more, the activities within the organisation are typically organized around these projects. As a result, the particular pieces of work or projects and (3) the chosen organisation itself constitutes a unit of analysis – thus I intended to prepare an embedded case study.

“Do not just look for facts, but be aware, when, where and how you generate them” (Maaloe, 2004). According to the qualitative and interpretative approaches, the researcher always has a decisive influence on the process of the research as well as on its results. As this influence cannot be filtered out, the researcher must be constantly mindful of the question: „How do I affect the process and the results?” (Maxwell, 1996). It is important for him/her to channel the “data” obtained through self-reflection both into the process and the results. With this attitude (s)he can increase the validity of the research.

With the help of the qualitative interview we can reveal the factors which affect self-actualising efforts. Half-structured interviews offer a large scope to the interviewees' thoughts and reveal their explicit knowledge in connection with a particular topic, at the same time the technique of asking questions can also reveal the implicit parts (feelings, motivation, interpretations), bringing them to the surface. To increase the validity and reliability of the information obtained from interviewees, I asked several research subjects, and asked them for examples to support the given answers (for confidentiality reason, I was asked not to present the given example in the thesis). Doing so, I was able to gain a more precise picture of the given phenomenon.

Two types of coding were used. The first type of coding originated from the expressions, sentences, wider context of self-actualization and the meta-communication signs (Pease, 1999, Pease, A. – Pease, B., 2004) of the interview subjects. The second type of coding was used when analysing the promoting and impeding factors of self-actualization: this time paragraphs were the basic of analysis.

Validity can often be regarded as given in qualitative research, since it typically builds on local interpretations (Kvale, 1994, Maaloe, 2005). However, in order to ensure the quality of the research, I used the following techniques: (1) researcher attitude, self-knowledge and critical self-reflection; (2) transparency; (3) searching for discrepant data and cases, rival explanations; (4) triangulation; (5) validation through consensus (member check) (Gelei, 2002).

Research for the dissertation was conducted at the Advertising Agency; the company is the Hungarian subsidiary of a global advertising corporation, and has been present in the Hungarian market since 1988. The company employs approximately one hundred people, working on a total of some twenty brands (both Hungarian and international). The obstacles to self-actualisation encountered during the interviews can, therefore, primarily be seen as subject to their own circumstances; nonetheless, I have tried to generalise the findings of the research as much as possible.

2. Research Findings

In this part research results are presented. First, self-actualization will be defined: the definition given after the analysis of the theories will become „alive” through the everyday practical experiences. Following that the impeding factors of self-actualization will be shown, according to the structure given in the theoretical part:

- Impeding factors resulting from the individual;
- Impeding factors which can be traced back to the relationship of the individual to his or her work;
- Organisational barriers;
- Impeding factors resulting from the broader environment.

2.1 The Concept of Self-actualization

The section of the dissertation discussing the literature concluded with the following definition – my own – of self-actualisation. “Self-actualisation is a process in the course of which individuals strive to reach their ideal self with a view to a better life. Individuals’ self-actualising efforts at work show up in their work (e.g. in its quality).” The research allows making this definition “alive”.

Expressions describing self-actualization. As the interviews have shown, self-actualization is not used frequently; this is also supported by the fact that it was seldom used during the interviews themselves. This phenomenon prompted me to collect all of the expressions which are used in everyday conversations as approximate synonyms of self-actualisation:

- Self-actualisation as an intellectual activity:; “[...] well, it is food for thought; I don’t know what to call it. Maybe it’s a challenge; or maybe self-actualisation is exactly what we are talking about.” (Gergő); “[...] it brings intellectual pleasure.” (Bence) “[...] inspiration [...]” (János).

- Self-actualisation as emotional involvement: “*I really like producing something nice with my own two hands.*” (Vilmos); “[...] *a state of arousal [...] positive stress*” (Boldizsár).
- Self-actualisation “attracts” the *entire personality* (cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects); the individual is able to “be” him- or herself: “*I really feel good being myself, and I love my job.*” (Gergő; “[...] *it grabbed me after all.*” (János); “[...] *I am trying to ‘live myself’ to the fullest.*” (Vilmos); “*This is where I truly belong.*” (Kelemen).

It is clear that expressions relating to self-actualisation are rooted in experience and are value-suffused. I believe that self-actualisation can be viewed in one of two ways. It is either an experience, several moments of happiness in the “*here and now*” plane. Or it can be felt over a longer time, as a *process which leads to a specific result*. In this case, the process is evaluated at its end (“did self-actualisation occur?”), and the focus is on the “*there and then*” aspect.

Capturing self-actualization in behaviour. One group of the respondents emphasised that a person who is striving for self-actualisation is discovering something *new*, and that the “*possession*” of this then becomes extremely important to them “*It would be self-actualisation if I could implement every single one of my ideas.*” (Márti); “[...] *It is good, because with this terribly simple idea of mine we were able to please the client, and we were able to shoot this great little film.*” (Karina)). What this means is that they “objectify” themselves and “create” themselves. For this reason of personal involvement, they become very much attached to the result of the process. Other subjects tended to believe that an individual who strives for self-actualisation will mobilise the full spectrum of their own values and abilities: “*Whatever it is we’re communicating, it’s got to have some kind of positive message: it’s got to be good, attractive, and useful – either for society or for the individual.*” (János); “*‘Doing good’ is great.*” (Vilmos). In this case, the individual tries to experience the particular situation so that his or her personal goals or the values held to be important are observed when the situation is over.

Self-actualization through compromise. The interviews described a new phenomenon that I have termed (conscious) compromise: what this term means is that the individual places him- or herself inside a specific framework, as this will allow them more opportunities for self-actualisation than situations without such a framework.

- compromise with the business world: In this regard, the individual reaches a compromise through placing his or her self-actualisation efforts in the framework of the business/corporate sector. („*What are we doing? Self-actualisation in the interest of reaching a particular business goal.*” (Boldizsár); *But I work for them [the client], and I have to accept certain things from them*” (Vilmos)). Business life, as a framework, causes frustrations and is seen as a limitation by the individual (causing dissatisfaction related to the nature of their work and its quality, or a kind of general dissonance).
- compromise with oneself: compromise in these cases is reached within the personal set of values of the individual, as a kind of resolution of an internal conflict: “*To work for a tobacco company – that’s going to conflict with self-actualisation right there, because as a private person, I am vehemently*

against smoking. When I came back from maternity leave, I was in a situation, however, where I couldn't say no to this. So I separated my sentiments as a private person and the fact that this is just a job. If I don't do it, somebody else will. It wasn't easy initially!" (Karina)). There are, however, other cases when the same framework has a *liberating effect* on the individual: this is possible when the individual views his or her own personality as one that would be "even more lost" without such a framework: "You can do whatever is necessary for whatever deadline and for whatever price – that's easy; but to do this within a set framework is more exciting and that's what the challenge lies in" (Berni).

Consciously making a compromise – which I have termed self-actualisation trade-off – is an existing phenomenon in this field; this is a new concept not encountered in the professional literature. This self-actualisation trade-off indicates that self-actualisation within an organisational framework is not about the individual doing what they please, either as though there were no framework or by ignoring the existing framework. Rather, thinking over consciously these frameworks ("How and why does this framework effect me?").

Accordingly to the research results, individual self-actualisation within the framework of an organisational structure is understood as the following: **The content of self-actualisation (ideal self, personal vision) is different for everyone; individual situations have to be discussed on a case-by-case basis. During the process of self-actualisation, or at a particular moment during that process, the individual is also to experience total involvement as a result of moving toward the attainment of an "ideal self," or of just having achieved that state. The driving force of self-actualisation is a personal vision for the future; to reach that goal, conscious actions are critical, especially because self-actualisation is often only possible within the given framework, as a result of compromises.**

2.2 Impeding Factors to Self-actualization Created by the Individual

The relevant research question for this section is the following: What personal factors lead creative specialists to choosing "creative" professions and how do these factors provide the possibility of work-related self-actualisation?

The past: when profession fails to become a vocation. It appears that the life stories and professional careers described during these interviews indicate how the individual ended up in their present position (what skills they relied on and what the driving force of their motivation was) In other words, this served as a way for the individual to prove – or disprove – that they are "in the right place" professionally. According to the interviews, the individual's activity and willingness to take the initiative are also required for the individual to feel that they are, indeed, in the "right place." . It cannot

necessarily be assumed that the individual ended up in a particular situation consciously (it could have been the “hand of fate” as well), but it is solely up to the individual to seize that situation and use it to their own advantage.

The present: identity. The concept of identity indicates how much the role, position and responsibilities they have in the workplace infused their personality: a kind of static self-image (“What do I think of myself?”) as well as a kind of behaviour-oriented, dynamic self-image (“What do I do every day?”). If lack of security (based on the identity) the individual’s energy (on the level of thoughts, feelings and actions) could be consumed by attempting to place themselves in a certain framework, and not by working to reach self-actualisation through their work..

As the interviews showed, there may be differences when it comes to skills used on the job and the individual’s attitude to their work: (1) an individual who “lives for their job” tends to identify themselves with the job: *“I often dream about work.”(Berni); “What matters to me in my work is that, for example, instead of writing ‘the apple is red,’ we write Snow White. It should not be something entirely off the ground; it needs to be understandable, but not in-your-face, either. There’s got to be a little twist to it.”(Vilmos); (2) the “mercenary-type”:* *“The goal of the artist is to create something new; the goal of the creative director is to make money, and not even for themselves, but for the client. (Bence); “If they force us to do something and I know that there is no way anything good could come out of it, I still do it; I do as they wish, and then I move on.”(Boldizsár).* It is important to make this distinction: if an individual’s attitude to their work often turns into the “mercenary” approach and if these situations question the individual’s otherwise existing identity (sense of security), their distance from the experience of self-actualisation only increases. That is why it appears prudent for an individual to pay attention to the feeling of “becoming a mercenary” in their workplace, through the use of self-reflection, as that can serve as a fair compass on the road to self-actualisation.

The research conducted calls attention to what I have termed “healthy flexibility” of a person’s identity: this refers to the fact that it is, ideally, not “set in stone,” and exists not inside a set framework, but there is some leeway for the identity (this is, of course, true for all processes involving change).

- The “sanctity” of the profession. Some of the interview subjects viewed their job as though it were the “be-all and end-all” of what their company does. (*“What I miss is a major client who wants exactly what I want, and wants it just as much.” (Bence)*). I think to be important that the individual must have a kind of humility toward their own identity and toward the identity of others, this way not to hinder oneself and others as they work to achieve self-actualisation.
- The lack of critical subjectivity. The lack of critical subjectivity means that the individual fully understands that his or her viewpoint is only one of several possible perspectives (and knows the reasons for their personal viewpoint) this kind of consciousness on the part of the individual tends to support him or her in the process of self-actualisation through maintaining a constant state of “readiness.” The same holds true for one’s identity and for the changes it undergoes: *“You have to be*

able to reach compromise, compromises with account managers and with clients. You have to be able to explain why you think it should be that way – but you also have to be able to admit that others may have equally good ideas, or even better ones.” (Kelemen).

- A passive approach to learning. The organisational categories came to the forefront when discussing the issue of learning during the interviews (work requirements, position etc.). “*I think I was appointed Head of Art at just the right time: I am able to learn new things now that I can use to build on my experiences as art director, which have been starting to become routine tasks*” (Boldizsár). Although professional development is important, I am of the opinion that as far as identity is concerned, this process contributes to a kind of solidifying, as it places strictly professional values and behaviours in the forefront.

- The presence of defensive mechanisms in daily life. The majority of defensive mechanism took place when I enquired about the ethical standards of their profession: “*It’s not an ethical business, but I try not to think about that. You’re always going to buy detergent, simply because you need it. And if I happen to get paid for making sure people buy detergent, then so be it. If I don’t do it, somebody else will*” (Ernö). The defensive mechanisms at work during the interviews are a natural reaction, as they reinforce the individual’s sense of security. Nonetheless, an excessive presence of these mechanisms works against the process of change, and through self-deception has the effect of one’s identity becoming excessively ingrained.

As a summary, it is important for self-actualisation efforts that this self-image has a “healthy flexibility”; in other words, it should provide security, but should not impede self-actualisation as a process of personal change.

Future: the goal. The individual’s future (personal vision for the future) is a key category in the process of self-actualisation: it can appear as a goal, but also as a driving force. The individual’s desires can act as a point of departure for establishing a vision for the future, but so can the organisation’s and the profession’s specifics (“*Sure, I’ll eventually make senior whatever – but you don’t have anyone over 40 working at advertising agencies, so I’m sure there will have to be a change at some point.*”(Vilmos); “*My enthusiasm is still great, and I would say I’m in my prime right now; and I get very exciting things to work on from my seniors. So I want to push ahead as far as I can now, while I still can.*” (Gergő)). I think if an individual understands the *reality of their own vision for the future (the result)*, that can already support their efforts at self-actualisation; in general, the fact that a goal is within reach tends to provide motivation. By the same token, if the individual took the time to *think about the reality content of their own vision for the future (the process)*, that can also work as a motivator, since the individual is committed to participating in reaching that goal.

One reason to get mired on the way to personal vision is that individual fail to grab hold of what Senge describes (1998) as creative tension (due to a lack of ability or willingness). Creative tension is in the every day life „inspiration” or „positive stress”: “*When you’re shooting a commercial, you have to go to the studio to select the sounds; you talk to the composer (...) you’re involved in casting the models*

and you select props. That's exciting; it's fast-paced, and you meet interesting people." (Ernő); "I'm among people who share a kind of intellectual stimulation. Intellectually, you get what you need every day; and you look at, say, twenty links and videos every day, which is interesting." (Márta). The source of the creative tension varies, but it is entirely up to the individual whether they manage to grasp that or not.

I believe that the relationship of the individual to the future plays an important role in the process of self-actualisation: it sets a direction and a target – so defining this concept and making it realistic is key for an individual striving for self-actualisation. It can impede the process of self-actualisation if the individual finds no creative tension to inspire them in their work, or cannot take hold of that.

2.3 Factors on the Job Impeding Self-actualization

I used the following research question to help understand the findings of my study: How do workplace characteristics influence creative professionals' experience of self-actualisation in their jobs?

The individual's attitude toward their work. In the interviews conducted subjects spoke not only of feeling their work *to be their own*, but also of attaching further emotions and experiences to their work (pride, joy, power): "The DM we did there we always filled with buttons and CDs; it was just a great thing to witness." (Márta); "I've always been attracted to coming up with something and then seeing a lot of people work on realizing that." (Ernő). In light of this, it seems plausible that the experience of possession can support an individual's efforts at self-actualisation, as long as it exists not only for itself but is complemented, or "filled," by other feelings and experiences.

Assuming responsibility was emphasised several times in the relevant theories. During the interviews, therefore I researched, how and in what shape that is manifested? The following results can be seen: (1) in certain cases, it is manifested in the result of the work; that is how the individual tries to *present him- or herself*: "What's important for me is that I manage to share some of my values; it could just be some kind of educational message to consumers. [...] I always try to do something that can impart some kind of benefit to the consumer ..." (Kelemen); (2) there were also examples which seemed to indicate that personal responsibility during the working process shows that the individual is working toward "bigger and better things," *moving toward new operations and trying out new skills*: "I've got a couple of these templates, but I try to avoid using them, since it's not good to always be proposing the same idea. Even though they wouldn't notice – but it would just be a bad feeling for myself" (Márta). It may be stated that personal responsibility in the process for self-actualisation can take many forms, but what is common to all of these is that it is a realisation – or an attempt at realisation – in the workplace, or in other relationships, of everything which is important to the individual.

Characteristics of the job. Those asked about the concept of the game tended to highlight *variety*, above all, as the most important feature of their scope of responsibilities. It was also mentioned as one of the key benefits to their jobs. It is seen as a benefit because without it, the individual would burn out more

quickly: *“You’re playing chess with the brief, and you have to solve the puzzle.”* (Berni); *“This is the solution to an intellectual puzzle; they give you certain elements, and then you have to work to make the best of that. It’s a game.”* (Boldizsár).

Working at an advertising agency, in general, provides the individual with the opportunity to see the results of their work (i.e. on a campaign) realised; accordingly, a goal which is closely related to one’s work is truly within reach. What I have termed “organisational goals” goes beyond the above concept, and refers to issues such as acquiring new clients or keeping old ones. In my opinion, the organisation was able to clearly communicate the goals, and they are evident to staff members (e.g. to bid on tenders); they are also apparent in staff members’ way of thinking: *“I know that the primary goal of my work is meeting client expectations; this usually boils down to reaching some kind of level of sales, statistically. This is a specific, very materialistic business goal.”* (János). In addition to the goals of the organisation, the goals of the individual also matter; in fact, they are more important in the process of self-actualisation. However, the attainability of individual goals (which vary considerably from person to person; e.g. “to be useful for society”) is subject less to the organisation than to the client (see the section on the client later). *“I think it is important for everyone that there be something good about their job. What’s important for me is that I manage to share some of my values; it could just be some kind of educational message to consumers. My clients like this approach, so they often accept my ideas.”* (Kelemen).

Taking into consideration the individual when determining their area of responsibilities is important for two reasons; on the one hand, it supports the individual’s commitment toward their work, which is a precondition of self-actualisation. On the other hand, an organisational culture which is centred on the individual supports the individual’s efforts at achieving self-actualisation within the organisation (and not elsewhere). I think, placing trust even in more junior staff members is extremely important, because this trust is an environmental element on the road to “becoming a whole personality” (Rogers, 2003). Further on, I believe that if the staff member is provided this kind of trust at the beginning of their socialisation in the organisation, they are able to turn their attention to learning, developing and attaining their own personal goals. The trust placed in the individual by their direct supervisor is only congruent if the organisational culture also allows for the manifestation of trust in the individual. This is evidenced when a member of the organisation can see and experience this behaviour from senior management, colleagues and in the systems and processes of the company: *“We are always looking for ideas for different things. I can choose any idea, no matter how strange, and there’s a good chance it will get a positive reaction from my co-workers. Mental freedom for me is that we don’t run aground; a brainstorming session can lead anywhere. We obviously need partners for this kind of freedom”* (Márti).

2.4 Factors Impeding Self-actualisation, Ascribed to the Organisation

The following question was asked to help direct the research: How do characteristics of, and people working for, an organisation influence creatives' work-related self-actualisation?

Organisational members: leader and team. During the interviews, I examined primarily, whether employees in the particular environment feel trust from their superiors, and if they do, whether that affects their efforts at self-actualisation.: “*What matters most to me in this free-soaring atmosphere is that I am allowed to work independently, without someone constantly looking over my shoulder. I'm happy with the arrangement here, and as a leader myself, I try to behave the same way*” (Gergő). During the interviews, when subjects spoke of their leader *entrusting* them with certain projects, I often felt that this meant more something like their superior's *leaving something to* them. In *relationships built on trust*, the superior really will give a free hand for members of the organisation to do their job, and will *entrust* them with the work. Additionally – and this is where entrusting differs from leaving something to the staff – the leader is always available for the employee (e.g. to ask questions), also demonstrating the supervisor's support. To this end, however, it is very important for the leader to know exactly what may be entrusted to each employee (see maturity-theories, discussed earlier) and to track employees' work, and provide feedback and even instruction if necessary: “*It gives me a kind of liberty, or a feeling of independence; maybe I can feel like an adult here, and not like a child who is constantly being supervised. The boss is often not even involved in the work, but he can see and hear what I'm working on. We sit very close to each other. And I know I can always ask him questions; he'll answer and even teach me if he sees that I couldn't work my way through something*” (Márti). As far as self-actualisation is concerned, what is most important is for the *member of the organisation to experience the trust of their leader in their daily work*. What this means is that perceived trust is more important than actual trust: “*My supervisor supports me as I move the process forward from the brief to the realisation, and this really makes a difference for me. The fact that he places trust in me helps me be myself*”(Kelemen).

Team work, in the case of an advertising agency is very important (“*This sense of community within the company comes from the line of work we're in. We work primarily in teams and only a fraction of the time by ourselves.*” (János)). However, team spirit means dependence: (1) on each other on the job: “*We involve our account managers in all of the creative processes, and so we have a great working relationship, definitely very fruitful. [...] But we need this kind of relationship to be able to sell the ideas that are important to us. So this allows the various marketing and financial reasons to also be included in the process.*” (János); (2) emotional dependence: “*We really live here, in a way; we work long hours, so eventually we do feel like we're siblings or a family. We pay attention to each others' feelings. We're not here to produce droids.*” (Gergő); (3) an intellectual community, which creates a dependence on each other for development: “*I'm among people who share a kind of intellectual stimulation.*”

Intellectually, you get what you need every day; and you look at, say, twenty links and videos every day, which is interesting” (Márta).

If members of the team do not feel that they are equals, and – for whatever reason – a sense of subordination or superiority develops, team members are likely to be hurt in their work, on an emotional level, or in their opportunities for development. This hurt impedes the individual in their efforts at self-actualisation, since their sense of security becomes destabilised.

Organisational structure. The majority of subjects interviewed mentioned that responsibilities are clearly specified and transparent in the office: *“What I like here is that the roles are all clearly defined. We know what it is that a creative director is responsible for, and the same goes for the account manager. We all know who is allowed to do what, and we work accordingly, there is no tension” (Gergő).* If the individual works within a transparent framework, they understand what is expected of them. Certainly, it is not enough, for self-actualisation, to have transparency only in theory; this division of labour and responsibility also has to be applied in practice. If this is not the case, the individual must expend energy on resolving conflicts that otherwise would not have existed: *“There are times when the creative director gets the account manager to accept their own idea, claiming that it’s not their area of expertise anyway. They visit the client, who sees the creative director and the account manager as two separate entities; yet the account manager still has to stand up for the work done by the creative directors even if they don’t understand it. This is an impossible situation that is bound to foster differences” (János).*

Some respondents felt it important to point out, related to self-actualisation, that their work environment is truly professional: *“I love how I can work together with real pros and a real professional budget, in a professional atmosphere. The way the office is set up, the machines we work on and the software we use [...] Sure, all of these drive me to produce quality work that includes everything that I know and that I would like.” (Gergő).* This calls attention to the fact that it makes a difference how an individual views (and feels) about the organisation and their colleagues. If the individual feels that they are part of a “professional system,” or of a “professional team,” their own self-confidence is strengthened, which can work to start a positive spiral according to the following train of thought: “I belong to a professional team – I need to do the best job I can – then I can be an even more integral member of this professional team – [...]”. This process can be an extremely important factor in support of self-actualisation.

Additional organisational phenomena. The issue of turnover came up several times in the interviews. Interview subjects pointed partly at the profession itself and partly at the organisations as the cause of this turnover: *“I often feel that the management is harried; it may not be their fault, because the international situation is not getting any easier, the pressure is only increasing to produce profit. People are leaving in droves. [...] But is that supposed to inspire me to make the most of my abilities? Come on.” (János); “You don’t want to know how many people have left over these last four years; I very quickly rose to become one of the most stable people here. That meant a lot of responsibility for me all*

of a sudden, and it really made me insecure, maybe I was even a little afraid. [...] It's not a time I look back fondly upon, thinking that I did some great things back then"(Karina). From the perspective of individual self-actualisation, this feeling of "insecurity" and assuming "responsibility all of a sudden" are very important. If the individual sees that a large number of colleagues are leaving the organisation, he or she may ask themselves whether "they're in the right place" and whether "there is something out there which the others noticed, but he or she did not." Such thoughts can lead to a feeling of insecurity, distracting the individual from efforts aimed at self-actualisation. At the same time, the fact that colleagues are leaving the company means that the member of the organisation who is staying behind will be seen as being more experienced and with a good handle on the functioning of the company, leading to a feeling of having to assume responsibility. The weight of this responsibility can lead to anxiety, which is also a factor severely limiting self-actualisation.

Early on in my research, I observed that the advertising agency is located in a very impressive office with high ceilings and an open office floor plan. I did not even have to ask about this feature – interview subjects brought it up themselves: *"I don't really like the open office layout. It looks good, and I like the high ceilings – so our thoughts can soar –, but if someone is on the phone, I always have to hear that. The managing director was a big believer of this concept, but not many others were. We got used to it [...] you can get used to it"* (Gergő); *"When you're really trying to come up with something new, the open office layout is really not conducive to that. But when I'm working on 'usual' things and using templates, it doesn't bother me"* (Boldizsár). The "phenomenon" is important, as it indicates that the ergonomical design of the organisation ("cohabitation") can also affect the individual's efforts at self-actualisation.

Not a part of the organisation, but still key: the client. Factors which are not components of the organisational framework yet nonetheless define the daily functioning of the organisation may also play a part in self-actualisation: one of these is the client. The way clients influence individuals in their efforts at self-actualisation resembles, to a great extent, the obstacles described already: vague areas of responsibility, competences and expectations; the lack of transparency and clear boundaries (e.g. in the case of competences): *"The boundaries between the client and the agency sometimes get blurred when the client, for instance, fails to respect the role of the agency in a particular process; what we have then is a subordinate position and one of superiority – and tension."* (Berni). Interview subjects complained that the relationship between them and their client is not one of partnership (with clear-cut roles), where the subordinate (the creative director) has to adhere to the demands of the client, often going against their own values and competences and pushing themselves into the background: *"The problem is this: an artist gets to put whatever he feels is best into a piece of art. But making a commercial is like painting a fresco to order: the client wants this and that; we struggle back and forth a bit, but if we can't convince him, we do what he wants."* (Bence). It is important to keep in mind that both sides have their reasons and their motivators. In all likelihood, these tensions are due the basic differences in interests between the service provider and the client side; the fact that these cannot be overcome

impedes self-actualisation. According to the results of the research, creatives would not view the client as a “threat” as far as their own efforts at self-actualisation go if they gave more thought to their own roles and attitudes, and would work to make their cooperation with the client more transparent (roles, responsibilities etc.).

2.5 Factors Impeding Self-actualization as Laid Down by the Individual’s Environment

The research question asked here was the following: How do features of the profession affect creatives’ work-related self-actualisation? In addition to the characteristics, I also asked interview subjects about the ethics of their profession, especially as a result of the dilemmas and criticisms encountered when selecting this research field.

Characteristics of the profession. Most of the interview subjects discussed their thoughts about their profession without specifically being asked to do so. One of the key concepts that interview subjects brought up was the adjectives and phenomena that they use to describe their profession: “*At an advertising agency, and especially in a creative division, there is a kind of free thinking which you definitely have to allow to thrive. This is the minimum you need for self-actualisation*” (Berni); “*This is not a field where you can comfortably plan ahead for decades; the whole market is so unstable and everything changes so fast [...] This does not give you a warm sense of security. But it would not be good to be lulled into a sense of security, because that would not be conducive to, let’s say, self-actualisation.*” (Karina). I believe interview subjects live with a dilemma between two values in their workplace: freedom and security. They find freedom important to their work (both intellectually and physically), but they also long for a certain kind of security. Balancing between the two can detract attention from efforts at self-actualisation, and can block it, but it can also provide a kind of dynamism which can in fact help self-actualisation (so that the individual can perform at their maximum).

Advertising business ethics. The answers received in response to questions about the ethics of the profession appear to indicate that the respondents understand the unethical side of their industry, but have initiated a kind of defensive mechanism (e.g. playing something down or rationalizing etc.): “*If someone has a negative opinion of advertising, there is probably good reason for that. There have been plenty of terrible commercials made, but in reality, advertising is just one tool companies use to sell their products.*” (Kelemen); “*Advertising has to entertain; we’re basically trying to convince you to buy something which you either need or don’t need. The least it can do is to be funny!*” (Bence). The answers received in response to questions about the ethics of the profession appear to indicate that the respondents understand the unethical side of their industry, but have initiated a kind of defensive mechanism (e.g. playing something down or rationalizing, etc.): “*The communication of cigarettes has changed so much that there is no longer any room for manipulation. If someone doesn’t smoke, they’re*

simply going to throw away any promotional materials with cigarettes on them. It won't make them smokers" (Vilmos).

3. Conclusion and Further Research Fields

The summary of these shows the results of the research conducted on the field of individual self-actualisation in an organisational framework, together with factors which work to support or impede it. The summary of the impeding factors are represented in the following figure.

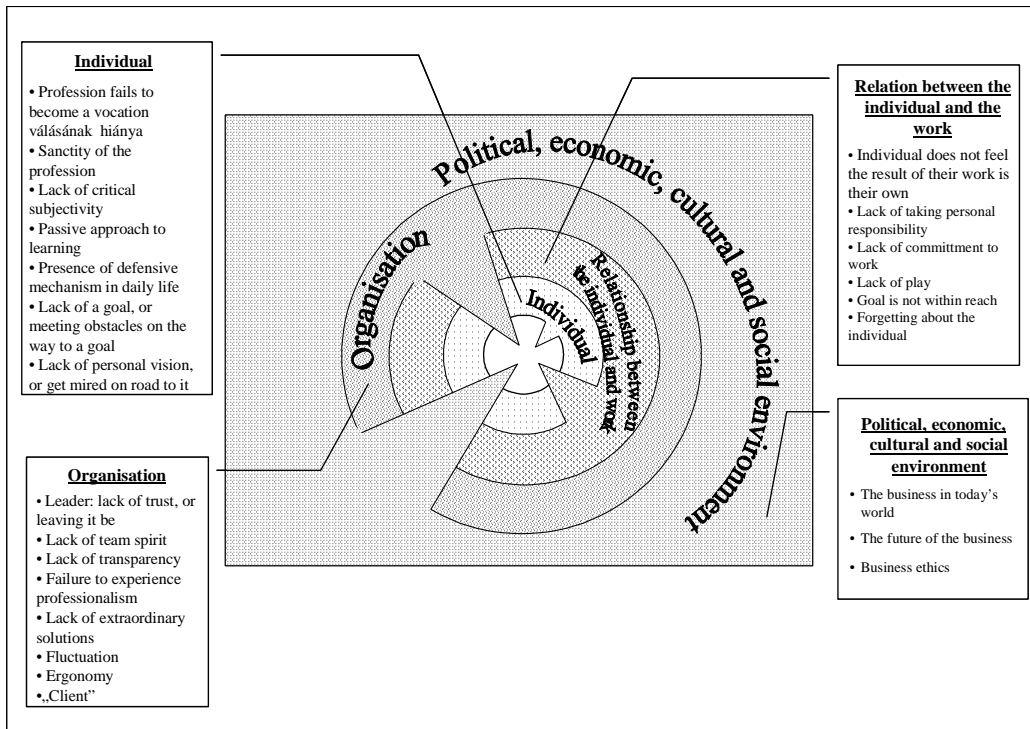


Figure 10.: Impeding factors of self-actualisation in organisational context – summary of research results

Individuals themselves are able to hinder themselves in the process of self-actualisation, if their profession does not become their vocation or their identity becomes “set in stone.”

I separated the individual’s attitude and the workplace characteristics to determine how these factors may impede individual self-actualisation efforts. Although the latter are clearly more pronounced for the individual, work responsibilities characteristics, through their “embeddedness” in the organisation, may also have a serious impact on self-actualisation.

The “visible” components of an organisation (management, co-workers, clients, “walls” – ergonomics) have an impact on individual self-actualisation efforts, just like “invisible” elements (values, processes, systems).

The component of the “broader environment” that applies to self-actualisation is the profession, which works through its general presence in the individual’s life and its potential future, as well as its ethics, to have an impact on the individual’s efforts at self-actualisation.

In the following, I will introduce further topics for research, which can contribute to the literature and understanding of self-actualisation:

- With the aim of generalisability, comparative case studies could be conducted examine different sectors / companies / jobs / positions.
- It is clear that the point of departure in this thesis, both in the empirical as well as in the theoretical part, was the experience of the individual. It would be worthwhile to examine and research this same issue from a broader perspective, on a more macro level (organisational, environmental). For the latter, certainly, humanistic psychology and interpretative theory cannot serve as the point of departure, but by building on other organisational theories (e.g. critical organisational theory) it becomes possible to gain a deeper understanding of the field.
- It was difficult to grasp defensive mechanisms in the research, both in the process as well as in the content of the interviews. Self-actualisation is a value-filled concept (“ideal-self,” goal, etc.). Accordingly, I believe that the individual’s relationship to the concept must surely include defensive mechanisms, which are very difficult to find. Confronting these, however, with self-actualisation may go a long ways toward an understanding of the value of self-actualisation.
- Although the dissertation did not set out to examine the content of self-actualisation, this issue surfaced in the case of several respondents (e.g. social responsibility, entertainment, etc.). An examination of this kind of content could also be interesting, although its danger lies in the fact that each individual will have different goals, as self-actualisation is very specific to the person.
- Finally, it may have become apparent that I used the term “healthy” in several cases (e.g. the individual’s identity having a healthy flexibility) to describe a certain quality. I myself acknowledge that this is a criterion which is very difficult to grasp and to accept. At the same time, the issue itself, and unique features of self-actualisation, mean that it is impossible to establish general rules valid for every case (e.g. when describing impeding factors). This calls attention to the fact that the impeding factors described in the dissertation, and the definition of what “healthy” means, must be custom-tailored to each individual.

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