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

Ph.D thesis

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1. Introduction

I have been hearing increasingly more often the following sentences in my environment:

“I’m tired of my job!”

“I’m burnt out...”

“I come back from my 4-day vacation, and I don’t have the slightest idea what I’m doing here!”

“I like what I do, but I don’t like the way I have to do that, and it makes me depressed!”

“If I had money, I would leave this multinational company, and would do something I would really like to!”

“It would surely be much easier if was my own boss, without anybody telling me what to do...”

“All I need is to get out of this hype, and move to a hut on a far-away hill to be alone!”

“I wish I could get out of this rat race!”

“For the moment, having a child, I prefer earning money to self-actualisation.”

What is the message of these complaints? What do these people desire? What do they dislike in their jobs? What are they looking for, and why cannot they find it?

My answer is that they seek self-actualisation at work, but the difficulties they run into in this search leaves them disappointed and bitter.

It is as if it was a standard requirement today to “actualise ourselves” at work, as if it was not appropriate to work solely for money, and finding pleasure, say, in kitchen work at home.

HR departments keep sending employees and managers to training courses and coaching programmes, talent management programmes are cropping up in a growing number, and post-graduate courses are popular too. Not willing to learn and develop is not appropriate these days.

But is this learning and development really equal to self-actualisation? Or is self-actualisation working in a good team? Or is it when I can do what I want? Is it possible at all to reach our full potential in a team, which at times presses us to certain directions?!

So, when individuals find no pleasure in training courses; are not pleased with their jobs, because their bosses always know better how to do it; or are tired of having to stay in the office until 10 at night because of a deadline, so that they even miss the baby bathing – then they start complaining...

It was these voices that drew my attention to the issue of self-actualisation. Today’s important (and fashionable) concepts – such as the future paradigm (Bakacsi, 1999); life-long learning;

work-life balance; the concept of the Learning Organisation; over-socialisation (“brainwash”); criticism of the capitalist social order; individualisation – all seem to be in connection with self-actualisation and self-actualising efforts at work.

But what really is self-actualisation? And even if we find the answer, why is it so hard to achieve at work?

One of the objectives of the present thesis is to specify the over-used concept of self-actualisation, to understand and explain it more precisely, and to define what it does and what it does not mean. With my work I also wish to contribute to knocking down the myths around the issue. Furthermore, It would really make me happy if, through my work, I could “set people free” from the “burden of self-actualisation”.

My other – no less important – objective is to collect the factors that facilitate or impede self-actualisation in an organisational context, with a view to helping the work of employees, managers, HR specialists and consultants.

The above two objectives determine the core question of the first two chapters of the present thesis: “What does self-actualisation mean in an organisational context, and what are the factors that promote or impede actualising efforts?”

I plan to carry out a qualitative research among individuals in creative positions at advertising agency, searching for answers to the following question: “How do advertising creatives live the opportunities and impeding factors of self-actualisation in Hungary at the early years of the 21st century?” Creative work provides opportunities for self-actualisation in an organisational context in many respects. The understanding of the more or less successful self-actualising efforts of advertising creatives is expected to help me examine a myth – namely that creativity is equal to self-actualisation – and study the impeding factors explained in the theoretical section. The other argument for choosing this area and advertising creatives in particular is the significant role advertising agencies play in today’s economy. Their significance is partly explained by the fact that ad agencies are typically small or medium sized enterprises, which sector have been receiving much attention recently. On the other hand, their “products” are important elements of our everyday life, both from the aspects of clients (companies who order ads) and consumers (individuals in society).

I owe thanks to many kind people for supporting me in the completion of my PhD thesis.

First of all, I owe thanks to András Gelei, my supervisor, who provided me with much energy and impulse during our meetings and lectures. He gave me valuable support and confidence throughout my university years, first as my teacher, later as my colleague. He even taught me how to (and how not to) write a PhD thesis.

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Kata

2. The Facilitating and Impeding Factors of Self-Actualisation

*“Those who walk this way
live a committed life.
Listening to their inner voices
they look for the way to their
“Purer Self”.*

*Led by their heart and mind
they do not ignore their true feelings.
They are bearers of love
that becomes wisdom.”
(N.A.)*

In this chapter, as indicated in the Introduction, I will presents self-actualisation theories and analyse them from the aspect of factors that either promote or impede the process.

But what really is self-actualisation? What myths are circulating about it? What are people actually trying to achieve by giving self-actualisation high priority, or by saying that it is impossible to achieve? What hinders them in the process, to what extent do these obstacles stem from the individual and to what extent from the environment where they try to achieve their full potential? In this chapter environment refers to everyday life and society in which individuals live and perform. In the next chapter I will narrow the definition of environment to an organisation or workplace, and also present the factors that hinder the self-actualising efforts of individuals in such environments.

In the course of the discussion of the possibility and impossibility of self-actualisation I will refer to the major figures of humanistic psychology and psychotherapy, because the way this school sees human nature seems the most suitable for summing up the factors that either facilitate or impede self-actualisation.

2.1 Self-Determination and Self-Actualisation

Based on the traditional classification of psychological schools (Atkinson et al., 1999, Carver et al., 1998), the psychological approaches I am about to present belong to phenomenology, in particular to the humanistic school, also known as the third force¹. Compared with earlier

¹ This denomination was to distiguish the school from the two then (in the first half of the 20th century) predominant approaches, namely the psychoanalytical and behaviourist views (Maslow, 2003, Atkinson et al., 1999). The term humanistic was introduced by Abraham Maslow to indicate that the school focused on the whole individual. Thus we can say that all psychological views are humane, but not all are humanistic. (Honti, 1989).

approaches, this view brought a paradigm change in raising the most fundamental questions, focusing on “what obstacles in the individual’s life should be overcome to enable his or her permanent *development*”, rather than on “how the individual should change in order to become *healthy* again”. This permanent development is self-actualisation itself, which can be achieved through eliminating the impeding factors.

In the background of the above question the following humanistic assumptions lie²:

1. *human beings* are good by nature;
2. individuals are inherently *free and autonomous*, thus are able to make personal decisions;
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 a broader sense, it means that the representatives of the humanistic view do not think in the framework of the deviance-normality dichotomy³, but rather 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. It reflects that the researchers who follow the phenomenological approach do not believe in the existence of an objective reality: “Mental objects present themselves in different forms, such as imaginations, fantasies, recollections and perceptions in continuous experience of our personal life story. Phenomenology critically examines these objects in order to establish a solid base for philosophy and science...” (Bonet et al., 2003:12). Consequently, researchers and experts who follow the principles of

² It is no surprise that after World War II the humanistic views emerged in the US, and not in Europe, where the aftermath of the war both in physical and mental sense has remained determinant for a long time. See: Amado, G. – Fauchaux, C. – Laurent, A., 1991.

³ This is also reflected in Rogers’s theory, who regarded his patients as clients, rather than sick people – hence the name of his theory: “client-centred / person-centred therapy”.

phenomenology emphasise that individuals, either consciously or unconsciously, shape their own lives, fates and environment. In their view, this self-determination or free will is our innate ability, which must be utilised (Atkinson et al., 1999: 27, Carver et al., 1998: 373-429). Thus it is the individual's responsibility to create his or her own reality within the broad framework of what (s)he perceives as capability. This, in turn, 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". This approach also highlights that each human experience is unique, and that different events (may) convey different meanings for individuals, thus triggering different mental, emotional or behavioural reactions⁴.

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.

One of the most well-known humanistic psychologists, Abraham Maslow (US), expressed his views as follows: "human beings may be wonderful by their very human and biological nature"; "all individuals are righteous under the surface" (Maslow, 2003:7-8). Rogers, another often-cited humanistic psychologist from the US, expressed his *ars poetica* with these words: "[...] everyone possesses the capability to grow towards more mature stages. [...] We can call it a tendency to develop, an impulse towards self-actualisation or a positive force – this is the major drive of our lives..." (Rogers, 2003:67). As already indicated, this view differs from, for instance, the assumption of Freud, in that it does not aim to unveil the causes of a deviant or pathological behaviour, but rather intends to explore and present the potentials of human well-being, in relation to personality and environment.

It also means that the humanistic movement generally aims to develop the quality of human life through promoting open interpersonal relationships, not only at the level of the individual,

⁴ Apparently, the existentialist thinkers' view is close to the phenomenology. The existentialism criticizes phenomenology for the objectivist point of view, however, its methodology stays the phenomenology (Anzenbacher, 1994).

but also by developing groups and networks (including the incorporated systems and processes). In this sense humanistic psychology not only focuses on individuals, but also highlights the social-cultural context in which individuals live (Honti, 1989).

Maslow and Rogers had different, but not entirely conflicting views on self-actualisation. I will present their, as well as other theoreticians'⁵, thoughts through their views on *what hinders the process of self-actualisation*. I will sort the impeding factors into two groups, depending on whether they stem from the individual or their environment.

2.2 The Individual

2.2.1 Motivation structure of the individual⁶

Somewhat simplified, Abraham Maslow's basic assumption is that self-actualisation can be achieved only after the lower order needs have been satisfied (Maslow, 1943a, 1943b, 1970, 2003, Bakacsi, 1996, Atkinson et al., 1999, Carver et al., 1998, Kolb, N.A., I/1).

Maslow assumes that the extent to which our needs are fulfilled basically determines our behaviour. These needs are innate, genetically coded, thus are present in all individuals in the same form. Consequently, deprivation is as important in the individual's life as satisfaction: as long as someone's basic needs are not satisfied, they cannot pay attention to higher order needs. This is what Maslow (2003) refers to as deficiency-motivated perception. The needs are interrelated according to their relative intensity. Maslow represented these relations in a pyramid, the hierarchy of needs, which is the foundation stone of his theory:

⁵ Despite their relevance, in the present thesis I will not deal with Perls's Gestalt Therapy and Moreno's psychodrama conception.

⁶ In the domain of motivation theories focusing on managers' aspects it is worth reading Angyal's "A Vezetés mesterfogásai" and Bakacsi's "Szervezeti magatartás".

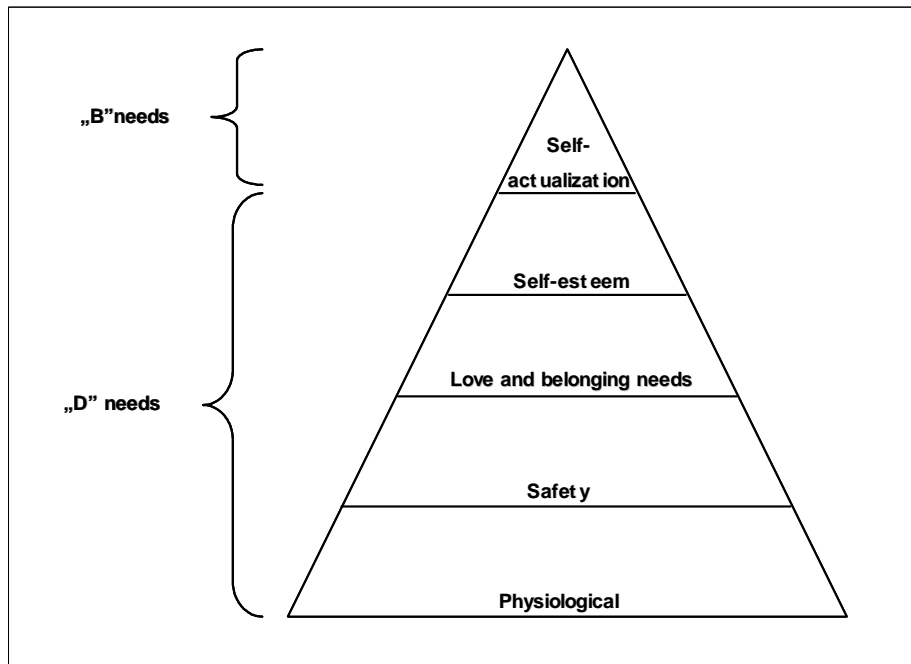


Figure 1: Maslow's pyramid of needs

The basic – “lower order” – needs (*deficit needs* or “*D-needs*”) are “pretentious” and dominant: as long as they are not met, they control, organise, and even determine the individual's behaviour. D-needs include the physical (physiological), safety, relationship (love and belonging) and performance (recognition) needs. Maslow refers to the perception mechanisms that determine the behaviour aiming to fulfil lower needs as “D-thinking” (2003:23). These include the following – not necessarily conscious – processes (Maslow 2003:240):

- a) “Who lacks something, continually seeks to fill the gap;
- b) Their absence makes the individual sick or degraded;
- c) Their satisfaction has a healing effect on deficiency syndromes;
- d) Their regular fulfilment helps preserve health;
- e) Healthy (satisfied) people show no sign of deficiency.”

Maslow presents the highest level needs in the pyramid, i.e. self-actualisation, (*being needs* or *B-needs*) as contrasting with the lower ones (*D-needs*). This higher-order need differs from the others in that

- a) behind this process there is growth-motivated perception (in contrast with the above mentioned deficiency-motivated perception);
- b) it functions in different forms in different individuals (as it aims to fulfil unique personal goals);
- c) it cannot be satisfied, as the more efforts we make to fulfil this need, the stronger it becomes;
- d) it is not driven by the motivation to avoid threats, but rather by excitement and the desire to become a fully functioning person, not by “the joy of satisfaction”, but by “the joy of fulfilment” (Fromm, 1947, cited by Maslow, 2003:99).

Maslow gives several definitions for the concept of self-actualisation: “... the desire to become more and more what we are, and to become everything we are capable of becoming” (1943a:57); “full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc.” (1970:150). It is important to note that the impulse, drive or motivation to change and develop stems exclusively from the individual. It means that Maslow talks about self-exploitation in a *positive* sense, and not in the sense that we have typically been associated with the idea of capitalism since Marx. To put it another way, the result of the exploitation will remain the possession of the individual, and may constitute an object of exchange only if the individual freely decides (according to self-determination) to trade it (cf. Fromm’s thoughts below).

It is also worth taking a look at the needs-pyramid of self-actualising people⁷, for it explains the significance of the pyramid shape presentation. The “biological programme” (F. Várkonyi, 2003:82) “requires the individual” to make maximum efforts to satisfy his or her physiological and safety needs. It is this “demand” that appears in the form of an internal need. However, the higher we get in the hierarchy of needs, that is, the more efforts we make to fulfil higher-order needs, the less energy is left for meeting lower level demands, and the pyramid may become unbalanced. The point is that self-actualisation is possible only if it is not pursued at the cost of lower needs, because in such a case we may harm our biological well-being. By contrast, investing too much energy into our efforts to over-secure the satisfaction of a lower-order need counteracts self-actualisation, as by such efforts we waste the energy required for meeting higher-level needs.

⁷ In presenting my thoughts regarding the subject I will rely on my conversation with Zsuzsa F. Várkonyi (7 October 2005), and her book entitled “Tanulom magam” (F. Várkonyi, 2003:80-84).

To sum it up, the point here is that in Maslow's view self-actualisation is our innate need. Nevertheless, this need is not fundamental, that is, certain conditions must be fulfilled before the individual may turn his or her attention to self-actualisation. The fulfilment of these conditions is primarily *up to the individual*: our organism "demands us" – through our perception and thinking, for example – to satisfy the needs at different levels according to their precedence and to the appropriate extent. This (biological) demand, however, "should be heard". That is, we cannot deal with self-actualisation unless we are aware of the messages our organism sends us through our thinking, emotions and behaviour. This highlights the significance of *personal responsibility, awareness and self-reflection*, which will be discussed in detail later on. Consequently, if we follow our needs appropriately, we can reach self-actualisation, which, as appearing in different forms, is the least generalisable of all needs. However, self-actualising individuals share a few personality traits, suggesting that people draw similar conclusion as they get higher in the hierarchy of needs, which is the subject of the following section.

2.2.2 The personality of the individual

In the course of his work, Maslow introduced a new definition for self-actualisation: "there is an impulse in the individual to integrate his or her personality, to express it spontaneously, to reach completeness, to be creative, good etc. Individuals by nature strive for a more complete existence, which seems to be what most people would identify with values, depth, kindness, bravery, honesty, love, altruism and goodness" (Maslow, 2003:243). The change of Maslow's definitions in time reveals that he saw the need for self-actualisation increasingly valuable.

Having created his theory of the hierarchy of needs, Maslow's attention turned towards self-actualising individuals. Through analyses of autobiographies⁸ he identified personality traits that self-actualising individuals share. As a result of his work, he identified the following traits as conducive to self-actualisation: reality-centredness, problem-centredness, the ability to distinguish intention from result (the intention or process may be the result as well, but is often more important than the result itself). The people he studied liked – or at least had no

⁸ Maslow analysed the autobiography of Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Albert Schweitzer, Benedict Spinoza and Aldous Huxley, among others.

aversion from – loneliness, and tended to have few but true friends, rather than numbers of superficial relationships. They did not strive to meet social expectations and enjoyed their autonomy. They also accepted themselves as well as others as they were, and preferred simplicity and spontaneity. However, they often experienced anxiety and a feeling of guilt, and at times they were cold, absent or overly attentive (I/1, Maslow, 1967).

The following table contrasts the traits of non-self-actualising people with those of self-actualising individuals:

Non-self-actualising individuals	Self-actualising individuals
Rejection of impulses	Acceptance of impulses
Dependence on the environment	Independence from the environment
Interpersonal relationships based on interest	Non interest-based interpersonal relationships
Demanding love (based on demands)	Unselfish love (free of demands)
Self-centredness	Self-transcending
Instrumental change	Personality change

Table 1: Maslow's collection of the traits of non-self-actualising and self-actualising individuals (my presentation based on Maslow 2003: 93-112)

With this study Maslow attached value to the concept of self-actualisation, and named it “the state of Authentic Self” (its attributes will be discussed later). Maslow defines the ultimate characteristics of the self-actualising individual as more efficient perception of the reality and a better contact with it (Maslow, 1970). They may possess this ability because their perception is no longer biased by deficiency needs (*D-needs*), which allows them to maintain a more direct contact with reality, that is, they are in the state of authentic self.

Maslow's research highlights that there are obstacles in the personality – values and beliefs that determine the personality – that may hinder self-actualisation. As a consequence, however, self-actualising efforts may “turn into” personality development and growth. Yet, according to self-determination, this is possible only if the individual him or herself wants to develop, and this fact raises several questions: First, what are the “signs” that make the individual feel that (s)he needs to develop? What does the individual do (and what does not do) for the interpretation of these “signs” (see the section dealing with self-defensive routines)? What do the environment, or in a narrower sense, the individual's workplace and the policies, processes and interpersonal relationships there have to do with this process? How

can the environment support or hinder personality development? The next section aims to answer this latter question.

Another question waiting for answer is whether it is “right” if the individual wants to fulfil this perceived need to develop within an organisation, i.e. at work? Whose interest and whose responsibility is this personality development? Or, from another aspect, can an individual who seeks self-actualisation remain part of an organisation? I will make an attempt to answer these questions in the section that deals with self-actualisation within an organisational environment.

2.3 The individual's environment

This chapter intends to present the environmental factors that work against self-actualisation. Environment now means the general environment of the individual, that is, the systems, processes and interpersonal relationships that surround the individual in his or her everyday life. A workplace is only a part of this environment.

In his psychotherapeutic theory, Rogers describes the characteristics of individuals seeking self-actualisation as follows: *fully functioning persons* are autonomous; open to experience; relate to their experience; are aware that their knowledge of themselves may change over time (1942, 1951). Autonomous individuals always do as they see fit, and use their ability and “right to become what one is meant to become without interference from others” (Rennie, 2004:185). Human beings are born to be fully functioning persons and to strive for harmony and integrity. When obstacles emerge, individuals may overcome them by congruent and honest relationships that are based on trust and empathy.

Rogers's therapeutic theory focuses on the relationship between the helper (therapist) and the client (patient): “How can I form a relationship that this person can use in his development (2003:64)”? He answered this question by developing his client-centred or person-centred, (also known as non-directive) therapy, which he later further extended: he claimed that his conclusions applied not only to therapist-client relationship, but supervisor and subordinate,

teacher and student, parent and child, or husband and wife relationships as well, eventually to all kinds of interpersonal relationships⁹ (see e.g. Rogers, 1998).

To describe the person-centred view, Klein (2002:50) cites the following lines from the last writing of Rogers: “People have vast resources for self-understanding, for altering their self-concepts, attitudes and self-directed behaviour, and the utilisation of this potential can be facilitated by creating an appropriate psychological atmosphere”. By saying this, Rogers also suggests that it is primarily up to the individual to initiate such a change, and (s)he also bears responsibility for it, while the therapist can only be a “midwife at the birth of the new personality” (Rogers, 2003:30).

Now let us examine the difference between Maslow’s views and Rogers’s thoughts, which will be followed by a discussion of the latter:

Maslow	Rogers
Self-actualisation is the highest need, consequently its achievement is possible only after the fulfilment of the more basic needs	Self-actualisation is the fundamental drive of the individual's behaviour
Self-actualisation is a desirable final state	Self-actualisation is a process which can never be completed
Self-actualising individuals share certain personality traits	There are no such things like “self-actualising people”, as self-actualising is a process

Table 2: Maslow’s and Rogers’s conflicting views on self-actualisation (my presentation)

According to Rogers’s assumption all beings strive to realise themselves, that is to sustain and grow their organisms (Rogers, 1980, Carver et al., 1998). This motivating force, which lies behind all conscious or unconscious activities and actions of all beings, is self-actualisation (Rogers, 1980, Carver et al., 1998:377, Atkinson et al., 1999:393). It also suggests that Rogers does not agree with Maslow, who places this need at the top of the pyramid of needs, for in Rogers’s understanding the need to self-actualise is the most fundamental drive in all individuals. Consequently, the aim of development is to overcome the obstacles that hinder self-actualisation.

⁹ “I am convinced that this [the relationship in his therapy he is writing about] is true, either it is my relationship with a client, school-mate, colleague or my family and children. It seems that this hypothesis describes a universal relationship pattern which offers an opportunity for us to develop more creative and autonomous personalities who are more in harmony with their environment”. (Rogers, 2003:71.)

It is also worth examining why Rogers uses the term “self”-actualisation, and what he exactly means by “self”? *Self* is all experience and perception that individuals possess of the world, of their own personality and of their relationship with the world, thus also includes their self-concept (Rogers, N.A.). This definition clearly emphasises subjectivity, the fact that each “self” is unique or, to use another word, *individual*. Rogers’s notion of *self* also includes the above mentioned motivation to develop: “when the *self* is aware of what is going on in the *organism*, it is able to change, grow and develop exactly like its organism does.” (Rogers, N.A.:16). This thought of Rogers in part highlights the self-governing nature and biologically codedness of development, adding that the environment may facilitate or hinder this process. On the other hand, it also suggests that the *self* is not an isolated concept, not a static state, but rather a dynamic and organic process, which is self-actualisation itself. That is, Rogers perceives self-actualisation as a process that the individual, with its whole personality lives, realises, rather than as a desirable final stage.

The development behind self-actualisation is motivated by the gap that the individual experiences between his or her actual self and ideal self. Congruence is achieved if, from the perspective of the personality as a whole, this discrepancy is negligible. If incongruence occurs, the tension it triggers becomes the major drive to develop (Festinger, 1957, Kolb, N.A., Maaloe, 2007). The goal of development is to create congruence in the self-concept of the individual, as without this congruence the individual cannot become a fully functioning person. How can it be done in Rogers’s view?

Rogers based his conclusions on the examination of the individual’s needs: 1. the individual seeks congruence; 2. (s)he strongly needs positive regard and acknowledgement (Rogers, 2003, Kolb, N.A.). Its primary form is *unconditional acceptance*, which covers the acknowledgement of the whole personality without restricting it to certain traits (e.g. “you are a really nice person, even if you see things completely different than I do”). These two needs define the three major conditions of self-actualisation, namely *trust*, *empathy* and *congruence*. These are the necessary and sufficient conditions of successful development. If these valuable qualities are missing from the individual’s environment, self-actualisation cannot be realised (I/3.; I/4.).

2.3.1 Distrust¹⁰

Rogers interprets *trust* as the feeling and expression of unconditional love and acceptance toward the other person, that is, “a warm and accepting attitude, and the acknowledgement of the other person as an autonomous individual” (Rogers, 2003:70). Individuals feel safe if they are accepted by their environment together with all their feelings, thoughts and behaviour. A safe environment allows individuals to turn their attention to self-actualisation, as they do not have to make efforts to defend their views and justify themselves¹¹ (F. Várkonyi, 2003:213-216). A trustful environment strengthens self-confidence, which again is an important factor in development that may enhance the motivation to grow (Case-Selvester, 2002).

2.3.2 Incongruence

Congruence basically means genuineness and honesty, when experiences and their communication are in agreement: “... the way I behave in the external world must be in agreement with what I think and feel deep inside” (I/2.). This makes the environment transparent and clear for the individual, thus allowing him or her to return the trust that was mentioned above. Congruence, or “living without masks” (F. Várkonyi, 2003:14), is also important because in this way the environment shows a good example: it is worth for the individual expressing his or her real self as well.

I find it important to point out that Rogers also laid great emphasis on the emotions experienced in the course development (on the way to becoming a fully functioning person). In his view (Kolb, N.A.), congruence between the actual and the ideal selves can be achieved only if the two selves converge at the levels of thoughts, emotions and behaviour, as well. He observed that in time the individual gradually gets closer to his or her emotions, and interprets his or her experience at emotional level, too. Thus the alignment of thoughts, emotions and behaviour is a fundamental condition of becoming a fully functioning person. This will be discussed in detail in the chapter dealing with self-reflection.

¹⁰ Regarding the economic aspects of the issue of trust and distrust it is worth reading Hámori's book entitled “Érzelemgazdaságtan”.

¹¹ The concept of defensive routines (to be discussed later) closely relates to the subject.

2.3.3 The lack of empathy

*Empathy*¹² is the ability to enter another person's world of experience. It is empathy that allows the environment to feel and determine the individual's emotions: "... I can see individuals and their world the way they see themselves and the world" (Rogers, 2003:70). However, it does not mean that the environment "looses its boundaries": it is important for the helper to understand and feel the individual's experiences, but without losing his or her own boundaries, without which (s)he could not support the individual's development. Bettelheim puts it this way: "When we use our empathy, we are trying to imagine ourselves in another person's situation. Consequently, our own feelings will reveal not only the individual's feelings, but his or her motivations as well. We have to understand the other from the inside, not from the outside, and not like an interested or compassionate person who would try to figure out the other person's motivations rationally" (2003:97). "Being inside" and "being outside" corresponds to awareness and spontaneity. Even though these two concepts seem to contradict each other, they can function concurrently: awareness, in this situation, refers to the requirement that the empathic person, i.e. the environment, should be aware of emotions in general as well as of the feelings that motivate him or her¹³. Spontaneity, in contrast, may occur only if the empathic person accepts the other as equal with him or her from the aspect of the forces triggering emotions.

The importance of an emphatic relationship lies in the fact that it creates an opportunity for the individual to open for his or her own experiences and emotions (Rogers, 2003:159-162), so that they can support his or her development. Furthermore, in time the individual learns to be emphatic with him or herself, that is to be aware of and accept his or her existence, life and all events in it (here awareness appears again). The trust and empathy provided by the environment together result in enhanced self-confidence, that is, healthy self-esteem, which is another distinctive feature of a fully functioning person, as indicated in the section dealing with Rogers's thoughts.

From the foregoing it is clear that empathy implies an intimate relationship (that provides a safe environment in psychological sense) between the individual and the environment. This

¹² Several followers of Rogers also write about the importance of empathy in interpersonal relationships in their theories: Gordon, 1990; Marshall, 1997; and Goleman also highlights it in his emotional intelligence conception (1997, 1998, 2002).

¹³ This highlights the importance of self-knowledge, which will be discussed later on in this chapter.

relationship is one of the major driving forces of development, which ensures a permissive-accepting relationship between the individual and the environment. This is the point where an important question should be raised, namely how such intimate relationships that are based on trust and empathy can be formed in work, i.e. within organisations, where there is a hierarchical system and (either explicit or latent) rivalry?

The concepts of awareness, spontaneity and intimacy also appear in Berne's view on the integrated personality and a realised life, in which he identifies further impeding factors that work against self-actualisation.

2.3.4 The lack of the development of awareness, spontaneity and intimacy skills

Berne interprets the interactions between individuals as transactions¹⁴ which include reactions initiated by one individual as a response to a stimulus from the other and vice versa (1984, Stewart – Joines, 2001, I/5.). Berne uses transactions for the analyses and definition of the individual's autonomy, the achievement of which, in his view, is dependent on there abilities or behaviours: *awareness, spontaneity and intimacy*. These concepts can be described as follows (Stewart – Joines, 2001:273-283):

- Awareness: the ability to receive pure and deep impressions without interpretation, like a newborn;
- Spontaneity: the whole range of feelings, thoughts and attitudes, as well as the capability of free choice among the ego-states;
- Intimacy: a time-structuring method in which individuals express uncensored and authentic feelings and demands toward each other.

Accordingly, an individual is autonomous, and acts autonomously in an interaction, if (s)he have stepped out of his or her Script (Berne, 1997), and uses his or her above mentioned skills “here and now”.

As we can see, Berne uses the concepts of awareness, spontaneity and intimacy in his description of self-actualisation (*integrated personality /realised life*), although understands them differently than what we have seen so far from two aspects: first, he perceives them as skills that can be learned and developed. Second, he uses these key concepts in connection

¹⁴ Regarding Berne' transactional analysis theory see e.g.: Berne, 1984, 1997; Stewart – Joines, 2001, Transactional Analysis in Organizations, 2004.

with interactions between individuals, also suggesting that the concepts of integrated personality and realised life can be understood only in the framework of interpersonal relations – thus highlighting the relation-like nature of autonomy (autonomy as independence from somebody or something).

Thus in part Berne's description of the way to personal autonomy does not contradict with Maslow's views: self-actualisation, that is, realised life / integrated personality is a result, not a process (as, for instance, Rogers says).

However, at one point the two theoreticians' thoughts on self-actualisation diverge: whereas Maslow understands self-actualisation as our innate need, i.e. quasi-ability, Berne claims that for the realisation of an integrated personality personal *skills* are required, that can be *learned* and *improved*. By saying this, Berne also suggests that all people have the potential to become an integrated personality and to achieve a realised life, irrespective of their personality traits.

This view introduces the image of the active individual, who learns and is willing to improve. The theories I will present in the following section are concerned with obstacles to self-actualisation that stem from the individual's attitudes and behaviour.

2.3.5 False goals and intentions

In his *Flow*-theory, Csíkszentmihályi provides “a theory of an optimal human existence” (2001:9). He compares the Flow-experience with happiness, and states that while happiness is dependent on external conditions, Flow is the individual's own experience. “Our mind is filled with experiences that are in harmony with each other; our feelings, desires and thoughts are in complete alignment (2001:71); and “Flow results in an enhanced complexity of our creature and awareness” (2001:76). In Csíkszentmihályi's view the quality of existence is basically defined by how fast individuals achieve their goals; consequently he considers all activities that hinder this process as a waste of time and energy. The experience of Flow is a state of mind where this waste does not exist, allowing the individual to find pleasure in the present and live a contented life. This is because the feeling of joy and satisfaction in the present allows positive feedback, which in turn unleashes energy that can be utilised for achieving one's goals. “These are situations [i.e. the *Flow experience*] in which the individual is free to focus on his or her goals, for there is no disorder to put into order, and no threat either to protect him or herself from.” (2001:71).

It is worth noting that positive feedback, like in Rogers's system, plays an important role in Csíkszentmihályi's theory as well. The difference is that whereas in Rogers's theory positive feedback is required primarily (first) from the environment, Csíkszentmihályi puts emphasis on the positive feedback individuals give themselves (based on their activities).

Csíkszentmihályi refers to the experience of Flow as *autotelic experience* (having itself as its only purpose), and calls the person in this state an *autotelic personality*. He defines the basic components of this state of mind as follows (2001:83-107): 1. challenge-skill balance; 2. merging of action and awareness; 3. clear goals and unambiguous feedback; 4. total concentration on the task at hand; 5. the paradox of control; 6. loss of self-consciousness; 7. sense of transformation of time, time disorientation¹⁵. These components suggest that all individuals are *capable* of and have the *opportunity* of experiencing Flow¹⁶. It is the individual's responsibility to find the opportunities and learn and improve the relevant capabilities. Therefore, the main obstacle has to do with the individual's attitude, rather than his or her capabilities: "As soon as we have reached a goal, we start to look for another one. These are often false objectives: fortune, power, satisfaction or just passion. The problem is that we are focusing on the goal itself, without trying to find pleasure in the efforts we make to reach it." (2001:126).

Maslow's and Csíkszentmihályi's theories thus completely agree in that both see the individual and his or her attitude as the key to self-actualisation. The difference is that Csíkszentmihályi – like Berne – sees the key to experience Flow in learning and improving skills, while Maslow perceives self-actualisation as a capability.

What are the sources of the false goals and intentions discussed by Csíkszentmihályi? They can in part stem from the individual, his or her personality, or from the lack of self-knowledge – this part will be discussed in the chapter dealing with the importance of self-knowledge. Nevertheless, a failure to achieve autotelic experience may also be the consequence of the

¹⁵ About the concept of filled-in time see Sárvári, 1994, 1999.

¹⁶ He defines two special cases as exceptions: 1. at individual level schizophrenic personality and the personality with overly developed self-awareness (2001:128-132); 2. at social level anomia (the absence of rules) and alienation. I will not deal with the former for the present study is not concerned with personality disorders in psychological or psychiatric sense, although they can be regarded as the complete opposite of self-actualisation. The latter (social level) will be discussed in the following subsection in connection with Fromm's theory.

individual “getting lost” in everyday life. In the following section I will present this experience of “being lost” with the help of Fromm’s thoughts.

2.3.6 Being alienated: the lack of love

Fromm, being a humanistic psychotherapist, believed in democratic principles, and criticised the capitalist (patriarchal) social order in which people are “escaping” from freedom, become alienated from each other and from their work, and remain unable to self-actualise and to become autonomous.

Fromm’s view (1979, 1993, 2002, Fromm-Suzuki, 1989) is based on the understanding that economy is a rational organisation of productive individuals, therefore all products and services should be available for all individuals, irrespective of the role they play in the process of production. Furthermore, he also claims that all people have the right to be unconditionally happy, which results from the harmonic development, i.e. self-actualisation, of the individual.

The failure of this process can be seen as the result of the *alienation of the individual from the land and the community*, which took place during the transition from feudalism to capitalism. As a consequence, the feeling of insecurity and fear quickly spread among the members of society, as their work, skills and willingness became goods. It led to a situation when individuals and interpersonal relationships were primarily characterised by possession (*to have*), and their actions and behaviour were motivated by the will to acquire material and intellectual commodities. Consumer society, including the individual, seeks to consume more, driven by the feeling that what (s)he has consumed may not be taken away from him or her. Of course, this belief leads to a consumption spiral, for the individual can only reach satisfaction by further acquisition, possession and consumption.

This desire to have and consume is the opposite of what Fromm sees as an ideal form of existence (*to be*). In this latter the individual is driven by the will to explore and enjoy the beauty of being, which is an experience with no specific purpose. He defines the way to this new order with the standards of matriarchal societies, which will be discussed later.

Fromm’s next assumption is that the relationship between the individual and society is dynamic in nature. One of the driving forces of this relationship is the totality of the instincts

that cause character-differences between people¹⁷. Therefore, society, besides its oppressive power and function, may be creative as well: “the nature, passions and anxieties of the individual stem from the culture” (2002:21). In turn, human instincts also shape society and culture, they are the sources of social processes. This dynamics allows, on the one hand, the enrichment of our understanding of human behaviour and social processes by the adaptation of our instincts to society. On the other hand, in an effort to satisfy our needs and instincts, we constantly change our immediate and broader environment, i.e. society itself, which again supports the development of our understanding.

Fromm (1993) identifies two factors as the sources of the “need” to adapt, namely – with Maslow’s terms – our physiological and relationship needs. Physiological needs – which are vital for survival – can be fulfilled by work and production. The need to belong covers the avoidance of loneliness both in physical and moral sense that is, being in touch with the world around us. Loneliness in physical sense can be avoided by making contacts with other individuals (conversation, meeting etc.). Loneliness in morals sense, however, means the “absence of contact with ideas, patterns and symbols” (2002:25), that is, the absence of contact between our soul and the world. These two constant and unalterable human needs determine the individual’s behaviour, e.g. force him or her to *want* to belong to other individuals and to *want* to cooperate with them.

Nevertheless, this need often urges the individual to conform to specific norms (e.g. to a mission of an organisation, or to certain behaviour patterns). Fromm (1956:153, cited by Brookfield, 2002:107) describes conformity as follows: “I must conform, not to be different, not stick out; I must be ready and willing to change according to the changes in the pattern; I must not ask whether I am right or wrong, but whether I am adjusted, whether I am not “peculiar”, not different”.

This conformity is in stark contrast with self-actualisation. The individual’s – conscious or unconscious – decision to choose adaptation means for society (and the organisation within) that its members are becoming robots without autonomous thinking and feeling. This mechanism functions well because it is beneficial for both parties: the individual feels safe, because others do the same thing that (s)he does; society, or the organisation, also benefits, for the status quo is maintained.

¹⁷ By saying this Fromm contradicts the Freudian view which claims that the instincts and nature of individuals are biologically coded.

To further narrow our focus on organisations and working environment, we may claim that if an individual grows only within the framework of an organisational culture (mission, values etc.), only his work within the organisation becomes more valuable. This may make the individual feel more safe, but, at the same time, increases his embeddedness in the organisation (brainwash), thus reducing his or her value on the labour market.

This dynamics is the source, on the one hand, of the individual's adaptation to social/organisational processes, systems and relations. On the other hand, this dynamics led us to create a patriarchal society – and organisations embedded in it – characterised by a stern super-ego, adaptive love, paternal authority and the will to dominate over smaller people. By contrast, Fromm identifies matriarchal society as a desirable form, in which the individual enjoys the optimistic trust of unconditional love mothers provide, suffers from less feeling of guilt, is controlled by a much less dominant super-ego, and has greater potential to experience love and happiness. In addition, (s)he is more able to turn toward those in need with empathy.

Fromm also claims that the individual, as a member of society, is able – even bound – to change (back) this patriarchal society into a matriarchal order, and it can be done through the *spontaneity of love and creative work, and through becoming one with the world*. If the individual fails to do so, (s)he creates around him or herself a society and social relationships that work against the integrity and freedom of his or her personality.

Fromm defined love as follows (1993:139-171): 1. discipline; 2. concentration; 3. patience; 4. learning above all; 5. self-knowledge; 6. overcoming narcissism; 7. intelligence (the ability to think objectively); 8. humility (emotional behaviour behind intelligence); 9. rational belief; 10. to believe in humanity. Fromm summarises his *ars poetica* as follows (1993:171): “To analyse the characteristics of love is to explore its present absence and to criticise social conditions which are to blame for this absence. To believe in love not only as an exceptional personal but also as a social phenomenon is a rational belief, which is based on the understanding of the true nature of humans”.

Fromm thus puts trust in the individual as well as in organisations and society as collectives of individuals. At the same time, he sees the absence of love and the associated concepts as the core problem, or “illness”, of today’s society and the organisations’ that make up this society.

For Fromm as well self-actualisation is the goal, which can be achieved through the ability to love. Thus the developmental process, i.e. learning, means learning to love, which in his view is not new for society, just sank into oblivion.

The theories discussed so far focused on self-actualisation. They agree that self-actualisation results in a better quality of being and a higher level of self-governance. They also share the assumption that self-actualisation has different forms in each individual, i.e. unique, consequently its major starting-point is subjective experience (including all mental, emotional and behavioural components).

This uniqueness also suggests that *individuals are responsible* for their lives, their self-actualising efforts and for the result of this process. There is no recipe for success. Likewise, there is no one single obstacle to overcome. The impeding factors discussed above may appear individually or in combination – theoreticians do not contradict one another, just put emphasis on different obstacles. As Dewey says: “... the battle is fought here: in ourselves and in our institutions” (Dewey, 1939; cited by Fromm: 2002:16).

Another key factor to successful self-actualisation apart from personal responsibility is a *commitment to change*. Overcoming obstacles is a hard task, as the process may trigger animosity in the environment at individual as well as at social level. Without commitment, the resistance that appears at mental, emotional or behavioural level may easily wreck the process and outwear the individual (primarily in emotional sense, by generating frustration, shame etc.).

The following table gives a summary of the above discussed theories about self-actualisation and its obstacles ¹⁸ in my own representation.

¹⁸ The table will be completed later on with the impeding factors that appear in an organisational environment.

	Keyword	Background	Goal	Major impeding factors	Major promoting factors
Maslow	Pyramid of needs	Humanistic psychology	Self-actualisation	Motivation structure (unfulfilled needs)	Fulfilment of lower order (D-) needs
Rogers	Client-centred therapy	Humanistic psychotherapy	To become a personality	Non-accepting environment	Experience of Trust, Empathy, Congruence
Berne	Transactional analysis	Psychotherapy	To become an Integrated personality/ Realised life	Script ¹⁹	Experience of Awareness, Spontaneity, Intimacy
Csikszentmihályi	Flow	Humanistic psychology	To experience Flow	False goals and intentions (Personality: emotions, thinking)	Accurately defined goals and fulfilment of given tasks
Fromm	The art of love	Critical social theory (based on humanistic principles)	The freedom of the individual Emancipation	Alienation of the individual	The ability and the experience of love

Table 3: Partial summary of self-actualisation theories (own representation)

The factors hindering self-actualisation may stem from the individual, the environment, or may result from the social embeddedness of the individual.

We have not yet touched upon the developmental process and its attributes, i.e. self-actualisation itself – assuming that we understand the concept as a process, not as a result. Self-reflection that is based on experience facilitates self-knowledge, which is vital in the process of self-actualisation. Why and how? This is what the following chapter is concerned with.

2.4 Missing the way to self-knowledge: the lack of self-reflection

I cite again one of Maslow's thoughts on self-actualisation: "... the desire to become more and more what we are, and to become everything we are capable of becoming" (1943a:57). In other words, *self-actualisation is the reduction of the discrepancy between the actual and the ideal self*. The actual self is our self-concept in the present, whereas the ideal self is a desired

¹⁹ For details see: Berne, 1997.

image of ourselves to be achieved in the future. In the course of self-actualisation it is our actual self that changes and becomes more and more similar to our ideal self.

To reduce the discrepancy between the two self-concepts it is crucial to have a precise image of our actual self, and to have a precise definition of our ideal self. The former means an accurate knowledge of ourselves, while the latter covers a clear vision of the future. We have already met the concept of vision in Csíkszentmihályi's theory, and I will also dwell on the subject later, in connection with Senge's conception. This section is about self-knowledge, the last factor facilitating self-actualisation (quite logically, its absence impedes the developmental process).

Self-knowledge is the knowledge of one about oneself; one is aware of:

- his/her ability, capability, knowledge and the lacks of these;
- his/her willingness (motivations, desires) and the lacks of these.

The person having self-knowledge becomes able "to process information about its thoughts and emotions more efficiently" (Miller, Nannaly, Wackman, in: Rudas, N.A.).

Self-knowledge closely relates to most of the factors that impede self-actualisation. A high level of self-knowledge means that the individual

- (1) is aware of his or her unfulfilled needs, and is able to fulfil them, thus proceeding toward self-actualisation;
- (2) may improve his or her awareness, spontaneity and intimacy skills, if (s)he finds it necessary for the realisation of his or her potential;
- (3) may recognise his or her false goals and intentions, thus may get closer to the experience of Flow;
- (4) may realise his or her being alienated, and can cope with it with the help of love.

In the following section I will focus on reflective learning, which is based on experience and facilitates the development of self-knowledge. The models indicated support our understanding in a more complex manner in the order of their presentation. First I will discuss reflection to the individual and its behaviour – which is first cognitive, then also involves

emotions²⁰. The final model of empirical learning is based on the threesome of thoughts, emotions and behaviour. This will be followed by a section on the temporal nature of reflection, which again may be a factor in the development of self-knowledge, thus in self-actualising as well. Finally, by introducing the concepts of critical self-reflection and critical subjectivity, I will point out that it is not enough to reflect on the individual and his or her behaviour: for realising one's ideal self, it is also important to examine his or her social, political (ideological) and cultural environment. The critical attitude in self-reflection differs from those used in the phenomenological approaches we have discussed previously. Whereas phenomenology lays emphasis on the experience of self-reflection, critical self-reflection enables the individual to overcome suppressive ideologies and conventions, and to avoid being driven by false goals, thus letting him to follow his or her own vision. In this sense self-reflection is no longer just a practice, but becomes part of the identity of the individual.

In my view, critical subjectivity is the attitude and behaviour that is most conducive to self-actualising efforts, i.e. the development of self-knowledge, for *self* is not exclusively made up of everyday experiences (personality, family background, behaviour etc.) but also relies on their background, from where the experiences arise. This background is the embeddedness of the individual in society and ideologies (e.g. fashionable views). However, the difficulties of critical subjectivity (see later) drive the individual and his or her efforts to improve self-knowledge toward the easier way (the models presented first). I find it important to present other models as well, for they can also support the development of self-knowledge, although to a lesser extent than critical subjectivity.

In other words, the smaller the range of self-reflection (e.g. fails to review emotions), or the underlying experience (e.g. the individual fails to review his or her environment), the more it is likely that the development of self-knowledge will be damaged – which in turn may form an obstacle to self-actualisation.

It is also worth touching upon one of the environmental characteristics of learning, namely whether it is individual or collective learning. Although this chapter primarily concentrates on self-reflection that the individual practices on him or her won (the first writing on this kind of self-reflection is mostly associated with Dewey (1933)), the improvement of self-knowledge in the framework of a collective process may also be beneficial.

²⁰ Regarding the effects of emotions on our everyday behaviour it is worth reading Forgács' book entitled "Az érzelmek pszichológiája".

The core element of the collective development of self-knowledge is feedback, as feedbacks received from the environment and their acceptance allow the expansion of the so-called open area.

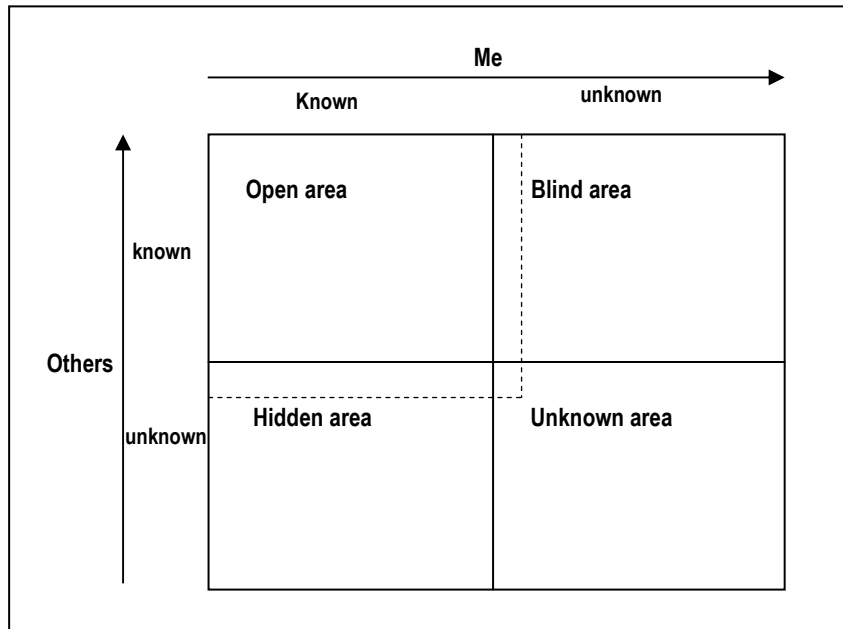


Figure 2: The Johari window (Rudas, 1990:38)

The Johari window demonstrates how feedbacks from other persons increase the individual's awareness of his or her own personality and behaviour (open area), and decrease, on the one hand, the totality of intentionally hidden feelings, thoughts and attitudes (hidden area) and on the other hand the behaviours that the individual is not even aware of (blind area).

Rudas points out (1990) that to increase self-knowledge the following are needed: 1. the individual's active attitude to learning; 2. trust, which is based on two-directional and mutual feedbacks.

In the course of self-actualisation the change of self-concept may increase self-knowledge. This change takes place as a result of learning, thus in the background self-actualisation there is a desire for permanent learning. As Rogers puts it: "one makes a choice – then learns from its consequences" (1961:171).

This perception of learning basically differed from the prevailing learning theories of the period, i.e. behaviourist and cognitive views (I/6.,I/8.,I/9.,I/10.,I/11):

Aspect of comparison	Behaviourist	Cognitive	Humanistic
Point of the learning process	A change in the attitudes and the behaviour	Internal, mental processes (e.g. information processing, memory, perception)	Individual action that aims to fully achieve one's own potentials
Goal of the learning process	Behaviour change toward the desired direction	Improvement of skills and abilities with a view to more efficient learning	Self-actualisation, to become autonomous
Driving force of learning	Environmental stimuli	To create internal cognitive structures	To meet emotional and cognitive needs
Role of the teacher	To arrange the environment in a way that allows the individual to find answers	To structure the contents of the learning process	To facilitate the development of the individual
Major representatives	Thorndike, Pavlov, Watson, Guthrie, Hull, Tolman, Skinner	Koffka, Kohler, Lewin, Piaget, Ausubel, Bruner, Gagne	Maslow, Rogers

Table 4: Comparison of the behaviourist, cognitive and humanistic understanding of learning process based on specific aspects (Merriam–Caffarella, 1999; own representation)

As the table shows, the core element in humanistic learning is the individual, who seeks self-actualisation and autonomy, thus his or her learning process is focused on him or herself and his or her actions (I/7.).

Accordingly, Rogers does not commit himself either to the behaviourist or to the cognitive views, but applies their combination: his learning theory rests on holistic foundations. In his view, the individual is involved in the learning process *as a whole personality*, thus his or her learning may involve stimulus-response (behaviourist) or recognition-effect (cognitive) relations as well. The common ground is that learning satisfies the inherent need of the individual to understand him or herself and the external world.

The best way to increase self-knowledge, I think, is learning by experiential self-reflection, which fits into the conception of self-directed learning (Boyatzis, 2001, Goleman-Boyatzis-McKee, 2003): “Self-directed learning is an intentional change in an aspect of who you are (i.e., the Real) or who you want to be (i.e., the Ideal), or both. Self-directed learning is self-directed change in which you are aware of the change and understand the process of change” (Boyatzis, 2001:10). Further important attributes of self-directed learning:

- the *learning* process is at least as *important* as its result;

- it is a *life-long process* which aims to create “individuals who are capable of living a *joyful, humane and meaningful life*” (Valett, 1977:12);
- it treats the rational and emotional components of behaviour in combination by exploring complex patterns in the *individual’s behaviour; the learner is fully accountable for learning*: “[self-directed learning] a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.” (Knowles, 1975:18);
- thus, a self-directed individual is *pro-active*, that is open to new thoughts, experiments with behaviours, and draws conclusions (Rhee, 2003);
- finally, as the learner is responsible for learning, (s)he defines all attributes of it. Consequently, in the course of the process *the learner learns to learn as well*, so becoming the subject of learning.

As one can see, the process and goals of self-directed learning are similar to those of humanistic learning: individuals learn about themselves and increase their self-knowledge so as to live a better life.

In self-directed learning the starting-point of learning is the individual’s *experience*, while the method of learning is reflection, more precisely *self-reflection*.

The foundations of experiential learning can be associated with Kolb and Fry²¹ (Kolb–Fry, 1975), who developed the experiential learning cycle²².

²¹ Their theories are based on the work of Piaget, Dewey and Lewin. I also wish to mention here that they further developed this theory to define learning styles (see e.g. Boyatzis-Kolb-Mainemelis, 2002). I will not go into details, as this area falls out of the scope of the present study.

²² Of course, this theory has also received criticism: see Boud et al., 1985; Jarvis 1987; Anderson 1988; Tennant 1997.

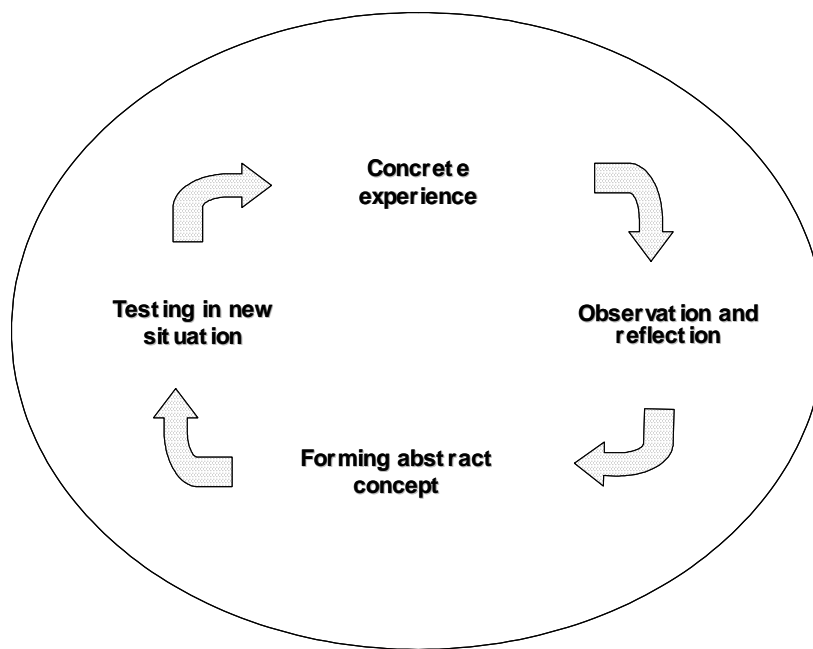


Figure 3: The cycle of experiential learning (Kolb – Fry, 1975)

The individual can enter the learning process at any of the four elements of the cycle: 1. concrete experience; 2. observation and reflection; 3. forming abstract concept; 4. testing in new situation, and then again 1. concrete experience... etc. This experiential learning cycle highlights two things: the importance of “*here and now*” in connection with given thoughts and ideas; and the importance of *feedbacks* with a view to facilitate changes. Thus the model does not require that the understanding of experience should trigger change; nevertheless, this is a condition of completing the cycle.

Jarvis further improved Kolb and Fry’s experiential learning theory (1975), identifying three types of learning: 1. non-learning; 2. non-reflective learning; 3. reflective learning. This distinction implies that not all experience result in learning, and not all opportunity to experience is followed by reflection or self-reflection. However, it also suggests that learning results from the difference between the present situation and previous experience, that is the learning of the individual results from a situation when (s)he encounters an unexpected event (which may be associated either with the context or with the individual) which (s)he is unable to handle. This statement, on the one hand, highlights *context* as a factor that may have a strong influence on learning, and, on the other hand, suggests that learning is often associated with *problem solving*.

Experiential reflective learning is thus a conscious behaviour, which is not pursued for its own sake, but incorporates the motivation to change and develop. However, for its success it is essential that the learner examines not only the experience, but the context as well.

These models define experiential learning primarily as a cognitive process. Even though Kolb mentions (1984) that in the learning process thoughts and emotions interact, the model basically reflects a cognitive approach.

With emotions taken into consideration, Boud et al. (1985) defined the components of self-reflection as follows:

1. Returning to experience (the recall of the event including all thoughts, emotions and actions associated to it; accepting that some memories and experiences may change over time);
2. Attending to feelings (recall of the supporting feelings and the elimination of the disturbing ones; being aware that this may change the experience);
3. Evaluating experience (to review the experience according to the knowledge and objectives of the person, which may also include the setting up of a new frame of reference).

Based on the above list, in the context of learning, reflection is the totality of the *intellectual* and *emotional* actions that may serve as a reference for the person to understand the experience, in order to obtain new interpretations (Boud et al., 1985).

Cinnamond and Zimpher (1990:67) pointed out another deficiency of the above components: “they constrain reflection by turning it into a mental activity that excludes both the behavioural element and dialogue with others involved in the situation”. It means, on the one hand, that the experience-based self-reflection process must take the threesome of thoughts, emotions and actions into consideration, which is allowed by Gibbs’ model:

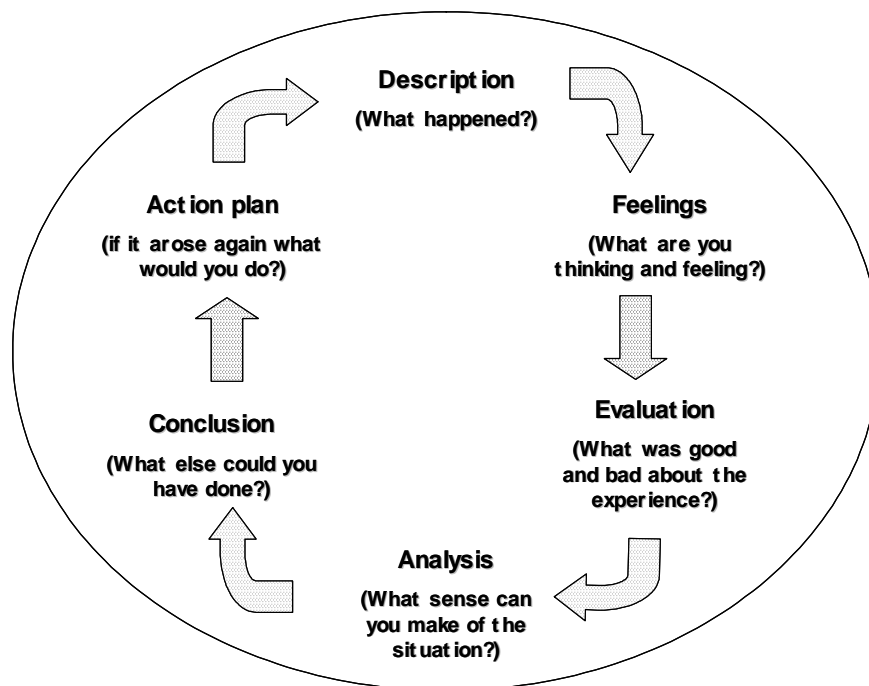


Figure 4: The reflection cycle (Gibbs, 1988)

On the other hand, it highlights another important characteristics of experiential learning, namely that it must be based on *dialogues*. Thus, if an experience emerges from a personal interaction, those involved in the interaction should also be involved in the review of the experience. Subjective experiences and aspects emerging in the course of the dialogue²³ may allow a deeper understanding of the experience, thus facilitating the development of the person's self-knowledge.

Besides taking emotions into consideration, Schön also highlighted the *temporal* characteristics of reflection by introducing the terms of *reflection-on-action* and *reflection-in-action* (1983; 1991, I/13.). His basic premise is that besides examining the phenomena itself (immediately when it occurs), individuals also study the assumptions and beliefs that determine the given action. In the process of reflection-on-action reflection takes place after the completion of the action; by contrast, reflection-in-action refers to the case when reflection takes place during the action. Apart from the temporal difference, the two processes also differ from one another in that while in the first case the experience emerges as a concrete phenomenon (the individual examines the result of a completed action), in the later

²³ Senge also highlights the importance of dialogues in respect of self-actualisation – this will be discussed later on.

process this is not the case. The reason is that during reflection-in-action there is not much time for a conscious definition of the experience, which thus emerges more as an instinctive and spontaneous reaction. The two processes thus also differ in the level of importance they attach to awareness and spontaneity.

Reflection-on-action is considered to be more conducive to self-actualising efforts.

However, reflection-in-action may also highly contribute to the actualising process, as, “with the real time correction of our mistakes reflection-in-action continuously increases the likelihood of successful action, therefore, it increases free and informed choice and enhances individual autonomy” (Gelei, 2002:78). It is important to point out that Schön “allows” the person to be surprised or puzzled in a situation, that is, assumes the presence of the (so-far missing) threesome of emotion, thought and action not only after the action, but in the action as well. In this way, the complexity and novelty of a situation allows “...a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation” (1983: 68).²⁴

This more complex understanding of reflection is based on the belief that true knowledge (*knowing-in-action*) – which is the totality of the beliefs, assumptions and routines that the individual have already obtained and typically use unconsciously (tacit knowledge, unconscious competence) – may come only from experience (Schön, 1983). In this understanding the objective of experience-based reflective learning is to *reveal*, understand and, if necessary, change *unconscious competences*. In this process awareness and spontaneity may help the individual to reveal *the reasons and cause and effect relations*²⁵ *underlying his or her behaviour*.

According to what has been said so far, in the framework of experience-based reflective learning the scope of reflection includes the behaviour of the person and the underlying beliefs, assumptions and values. Then Mezirow – with his transformational learning theory (1985, 1991, Merriam, 2004) – introduced the concept of *critical reflection*: “reflection involves the critique of assumptions about the content or process of problem solving...” (Mezirow, 1991:105); “premise reflection involves us becoming aware of why we perceive, think, feel or act as we do” (Mezirow, 1991:108). Mezirow defines this framework on the

²⁴ Of course, Schön’s views also have received criticism, see Eisner, 1985; 1998; Russell – Munby 1991; Smith 1994; Usher et al. 1997.

²⁵ As the continuation of this train of thought I will deal with Argyris’s double-loop theory in Chapter 3.

basis of Habermas's²⁶ work (1970, 1972, 1974; In: Kember–Leung, 2000): most of our actions are based on ideologies²⁷ and values that stem from our *social, political, economic and cultural* environment, and that we are not aware of.

According to Mezirow the object of reflection may be the content, process or frames of thinking:

Object of reflection	Content	Process	Critical, frames
Question of reflection	"What happened?"	"What am I to do with this experience?"	"What socially constructed assumptions, beliefs and values lie behind the problem/experience?"
Knowledge acquired by reflection	Instrumental	Communicative	Emancipatory

Table 5: Mezirow's (1991) knowledge types by the object of reflection

Therefore, depending on the object of reflection, different knowledge types may be acquired (Mezirow, 1991, Yang, 2003).

Instrumental knowledge is based primarily on empirical-analytical knowledge, thus the testing of hypotheses as a problem solving process can be associated with it. The individual decides to confirm or reject knowledge through data collection and analysis.

Communicative knowledge is based on the fact that a common understanding or consensus about truth is reached through communication or dialogue. Thus the community enforces knowledge, which becomes its norm.

Finally, *emancipatory knowledge* is the knowledge which reveals how the assumptions and norms of a given community developed. Critical reflection questions the frames and context of communicative knowledge, thus this part of knowledge, which also involves emotions, is strongly driven by emotions. It reflects how individuals relate to the world (in its broadest sense) and relationships, how they see them (their reality), how they would like to see them (their ideal self) and how they the gap between the two can be bridged (motivational image).

²⁶ A good summary of Habermas's thoughts in Hungarian: Felkai, 1993.

²⁷ An interpretation of ideology: "Actions and statements that hide social contradictions in behalf of a dominant class or group." (Held, in: Boje, 1999).

It also means that the emancipatory knowledge of individual includes their notion of autonomy, as well as its natural and social frames.

Therefore, by highlighting the emancipatory side of knowledge, Mezirow claims that reflection should, besides the narrow frames of the behaviour, also focus on the context of behaviour (the given social, economic, political and cultural environment, and the ideologies and values generated by it).

In his view it is the knowledge resulting from this latter that may trigger real changes (in Mezirow's paradigm: transformative learning²⁸) in the individual's behaviour; and, I believe, it may also facilitate self-knowledge and self-actualisation.

The experience-based reflective learning theories with phenomenological roots, in contrast with the so far discussed pragmatist approaches (Kreber, 2004), focus on the action when the individual observes, reviews and "encounters" experience (Yorks-Kasl, 2002).

For these theoreticians the object of reflection is the *whole personality* (Heron, 1981, 1996; Reason and Rowan, 1981, Reason, 1994; Torbert, 1981, In: Gelei 2002:76-77). Experience thus is practice and identity at the same time: "...every action and interpretation of the individual reflects his/her own personal past, identity and history. The actual interpretations, actions and their consequences at the same time have a feedback effect on his/her own personal experiences, self-image and identity" (Kolb, N.A., In: Gelei, 2002:75). In this interpretation experience is in connection with the history of the individual, highlighting the difficulty of self-reflection: our experience is what we have learned consciously and unconsciously in the course of our lives, i.e. socialisation.

The interpretation of experience in a broader context results in a different definition of reflection. Given that the object of reflection is the whole personality, and there are different levels of experience, in the case of experience-based reflective learning reflection is no longer a review, but rather a "reflective being-in-the-presence" (Sárvári, 1996), interpenetrating consciousness (Torbert, In: Reason, 1994) or critical subjectivity (Reason and Rowan, 1981, Reason, 1994)" (Gelei, 2002). The author defines the latter as follows (Reason, 1994:327, In: Gelei, 2002:85): "*Critical subjectivity* means that we do not suppress our primary subjective experience, that we accept that our knowing is from a perspective; it also means that we are

²⁸ Mezirow writes about transformative learning: "Transformational learning, however, aims at evoking a new consciousness and self-understanding, and promotes the human experience by thinking, self-expression and action" (1999:246, cited by Bennets, 2003:473).

aware of that perspective and of its bias, and we *articulate* it in our communications. Critical subjectivity involves a self-reflexive attention to the ground on which one is standing...”.

Critical subjectivity is therefore not (only) an action performed by the individual at regular intervals, but an attitude which characterises his or her everyday operations, either at home or in the workplace.

Finally, to return to Fromm’s having-being opposition, I present two different approaches to learning (1979: 37-39). In the course of learning that is driven by the will to have the individual holds on to what (s)he has learned. It is manifested in making notes, memorising (or the individual keeps his or her notes and holds on to them). These individuals do not create new knowledge, they merely store other people’s knowledge. When they encounter new thoughts, they become embarrassed, as they cannot get hold of the new thoughts unless they change their “possession”. By contrast, those people whose approach to learning is based on being are already active in the learning process: they are open to new thoughts, they think them over, question them, even openly express their views to the teacher. They start to change already in the learning process.

2.5 Summary

This chapter dealt with self-actualisation and its major obstacles.

On the bases of what I have presented I understand self-actualisation as follows: *we can talk about self-actualisation when an individual seeks to achieve his or her ideal self through increasing his or her self-knowledge in order to achieve a better life quality.*

There are many factors hindering these efforts which may stem from the individual (personality, motivation structure) as well as from his or her environment (distrust; incongruence; lack of empathy; absence of the development of awareness, spontaneity and intimacy skills; false goals and intentions; lack of love).

Finally, to knock down the mentioned myth about self-actualisation, now I will present a collection of things that, based on the above definition, should *not* be regarded as self-actualisation and I will also explain why.

- *Happiness, joy, being contented*: these moods or emotions may be brought about by, among other things, the experience of self-actualisation, but their presence does not necessarily indicate self-actualisation.
- *Financial well-being*: although one may often hear that “If I had money, I would do what I want”, financial well-being may only be a precondition of self-actualisation (see Maslow). What is more, a stable financial background is not necessarily needed for self-actualisation.
- *Walking a way set by others / realising the ideas of others*: as indicated previously, a precondition of self-actualisation is the presence of a unique, personal vision.
- *Walking one’s own way, but directed by others*: apart from working out a unique vision, it is also important for the individual to achieve his or her goal relying on his or her ideas and plans, even if it means detours sometimes.
- *Self-expression (in communicational sense)*: the expression of one’s needs and desires is in most cases enough only for the individual to identify his or her ideal self. As being one of the most important steps on the road to self-actualisation, it is something to be recognised. However, it is not self-actualisation yet.
- *Creativity on its own*: it is a common misbelief that artists’ works are the results of their self-actualisation. It may be true, but in this case it is the process of creation, rather than creativity used in the process, which can be regarded as self-actualisation (the latter is more of a competence).
- *Acquiring knowledge and information (all that is not related to the self of the individual, e.g. learning languages, acquiring lexical or professional knowledge etc.)*: these activities in most cases are only instruments of self-actualisation. As such, they represent an important step in the process, but are not identical with self-actualising.
- *Skills development (e.g. presentation skills, artistic skills etc.)*: like the activities in the previous point, the development of skills may facilitate self-actualisation, but are not equal with it.
- *Survival (versus development)*: when an individual focuses on survival, (s)he seeks to maintain his or her actual self, and thus is quite far from identifying or achieving self-actualisation.
- *Idleness*: “laziness” is very far from self-actualisation, for idle individuals are only passive observers of the events happening around them. Self-actualisation requires an active attitude which is based on responsibility and commitment.

The next chapter is concerned with self-actualisation in an organisational context – and in a narrower sense, at work – and the analysis of the factors that facilitate or impede the process. Following my train of thought, I will examine

- how a member of an organisation can facilitate or impede his or her own self-actualising efforts;
- how the characteristics of an organisation, or organisational culture as an environment promote or hinder self-actualising;
- how work as an activity and the relation between the organisational member and his or her work affects self-actualisation.

3. Self-actualisation and its Obstacles in Organisational Setting

“Work makes one noble – but it may degrade one as well.”
(Italian proverb, Csíkszentmihályi, 2001:204)

In the present chapter I will use a narrowed definition of environment: the term will refer to organisational environment, i.e. workplace. The reason for this, as provided in the introduction, is that people tend to see their work as the area where they should seek self-actualisation, and also complain most about their failure in these efforts at work. By saying this I also point out that *for me self-actualisation is not only a mental process, but also turns into action, and thus (may) manifest itself at work as well.*

The *Human Relations movement* (and the figure of Mayo) turned up on the scene in the second half of the 19th century, and jumped to the centre of attention in the first half of the 20th century. The movement criticised certain aspects of taylorism, the then prevailing management theory. On the basis of a series of experiments carried out in the Western Electric’s factory in Hawthorne, they claimed that human factor cannot be excluded when designing work organisation and management processes and systems (Kieser, 1995:125-146, Dobák et al., 1996, Balaton, 2005). The “discovery” of humans, more precisely, the individual, in organisations resulted in the emergence of concepts, dilemmas and theories such as:

- the effect of personal values, beliefs, and satisfaction on performance;
- the effect of (in)formal groups in workplaces on the performance of individuals;
- the effect of working conditions, responsibility (e.g. involvement in decision making) and reward (not solely in financial terms but attention as well, for instance) on performance and the level of satisfaction.

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 group of motivation theories involve, for instance, Maslow’s, Herzberg’s, McClelland’s, Hunt’s and Skinner’s theories, and conceptions like the expectancy theory, the goal setting theory or the equity theory (Bakacsi, 1996:84-125; Dent, N.A.). Also this was the time when management theories started to develop (Bakacsi, 1996:183-223): conceptions surpassing Taylor’s classical theory

emerged that were based on management beliefs and traits; later new views appeared in the framework of the decision-centred, personality-centred or even the contingency theories. The *Quality of work life* (QWL) movement, which emerged in Europe in the 1950s, dealt with the relationship between the individual and work. This movement paved the way for the view which sees organisations as socio-technical systems. From this point not only the organisational members were studied but their relationship to work as well. QWL is associated with the tailoring of jobs to individuals, and the development of group working systems (Cummings-Worley, 1993). Owing mainly to Lewin's experiments, organisation development (Varga, 1985-1987, 1986, Varga et al., 1987; Gyulay, 1994; Kieser, 1995:149-162; Bokor, in: Bakacsi 1996:321-323; Bakacsi and Gelei, in: Bakacsi et al. 1999:307-347; Lövey-Nadkarni, 2003) grew by today into an approach, method and technique facilitating a planned change of organisations (Gelei, 2002:114-117; Dent, N.A.).

Thus the "appearance" of the individual in organisational context is the result of the activities of the Human Relations movement²⁹.

The present chapter, similarly to the previous one, is concerned with self-actualisation and its major promoting and impeding factors, but this time with organisational setting in the focus. In this context the term individual refers to an organisational member, i.e. a person in a particular position. Accordingly, when dealing with self-actualisation in an organisational context we must not ignore the role that the individual plays in the organisation. The role, on the one hand, identifies the individual, and on the other hand, it also incorporates the values, expectations and behaviours that result from the individual being a member of an organisation in which (s)he bears a specific position and (typically) interacts with other organisational members³⁰.

In this context self-actualisation has a different meaning, for the concepts of actual self and ideal self are rearticulated by the organisational context, their establishment is basically

²⁹ Learning – both individual and organisational – is one of the evergreen issues in the lives of organisations. About individual learning see Argyris's thoughts, Schein, 1987, Senge, 1998, or the concept of life-long learning. Regarding organisational learning see Argyris – Schön, 1978, 1996, Argyris, 1977, 1982, 1996, Schein, 1987, Garwin, 1993, Edmonson, 1996, Senge, 1998, March 2005, and in Hungarian language literature Branyiczki, 1993, Gelei, 2002. The theory of organisational learning and the concept of Learning Organisation have strong links with each other. The literature dealing with Learning Organisation pays much attention to the various aspects of learning in organisational environment and knowledge accumulation, e.g. the acquisition of knowledge, formulation and modification of routines and error detection and correction (Edmondson-Moingeon, 1995). Besides the perception of the concepts of learning and knowledge, the institutionalisation and the analytical units of knowledge (individual, group or organisational) are also different.

³⁰ These values, norms and expectations are established in the labour contract and the psychological contract. About psychological contracts see e.g. Boyatzis-Skelly, N.A.

affected by the above expectations and interactions (e.g. who defines and through what process what ideal means?)³¹.

The impeding factors I am about to present (indicated by the titles of the sub-sections) take these special features into consideration. I have sorted these factors into two categories: one of them contains the factors that stem from the person being a member, but affect only the individual. The other group involves the systems and processes that are associated with organisational culture and form obstacles to the individual's self-actualising efforts. This latter group also involves the phenomena associated with leadership such as leadership style, as they strongly affect organisational culture (Schein, 1985, 1992).

3.1 The organisational member

3.1.1 The immaturity of the organisational member

Argyris (1966, 1977, in: Klein, 2002:50-52; in: Bakacsi, 1996; I/12.) and Hersey-Blanchard (Blanchard et al., 1998, 1999 1977, in: Klein, 2002:72-74; 1982, in: Bakacsi, 1996; Dent, N.A.) both used the concept of *maturity* for defining a certain level of self-knowledge and autonomy that an individual has achieved.

For Argyris an individual is mature if (s)he takes responsibility for his or her life – in other words, those who believe in self-determination and live their lives accordingly.

Instead of thinking in dichotomy, Hersey-Blanchard (1982) outlined a more compound process: they identified four levels of maturity, depending on the capabilities (knowledge, expertise, the set of skills that enable the individual to complete a specific task) and willingness (self-confidence, commitment and the level of motivation in respect of a specific task) of the individual³². The four levels are as follows:

³¹ The effect of roles on self-actualization can be only premise at this stage of the thesis. However, the research will have a special feature on this topic.

³² Hersey and Blanchard focused on leader-subordinate relationship in their theory regarding personal maturity, and called it situative leadership style (1982).

- *S1*: the individual is neither able nor willing to complete a specific task;
- *S2*: the “enthusiastic” individual (who is willing but not able to);
- *S3*: a “lazy” individual (able but not willing to); and last
- *S4*: the “perfect” individual who is able and willing to complete a specific task; who seeks self-actualisation in an organisational context.

S4 employees are thus “ideal” from the aspect of self-actualisation if they use their abilities and willingness to identify their actual and ideal selves and to reduce the discrepancy between the two in the course of their work.

Csikszentmihályi primarily associates the previously discussed Flow experience with working (2001). He uses the term *autotelic workers* for organisational members who are capable of experiencing Flow in their work. Autotelic workers use their abilities to make both their lives and their environment more enjoyable: “The experience of those who make use of the opportunities offered by their environment and [...] play with them are a great deal more developed and enjoyable than that of those who doom themselves to live within the supposedly unchangeable limits of a deserted reality” (2001:212).

In Csikszentmihályi’s view autotelic personalities are mature individuals, who take responsibility for their actions and seek to improve themselves and their work on the basis of self-determination.

Maturity theories highlight that self-actualisation in an organisational environment may be hindered by the individual. The obstacle may stem from the personality, if the individual does not seek self-actualisation because of the *lack of abilities*. In contrast, the lack of willingness is not resulted solely from personality, i.e. the individual being *under-motivated* (see Maslow’s theory), for being under-motivated may also stem from the environment: it may be that the *characteristics of the organisation do not motivate* the organisational member to seek self-actualisation – these possible features will be discussed in the second part of the chapter.

3.1.2 The absence of the organisational member's personal vision

In describing the organisational operation aiming to develop a Learning Organisation, Senge (1998) often refers to “people with a high level of self-direction”. Self-direction covers personality development and learning. “Its true meaning is that we understand life as a creative work, and observe the events happening to us with a creative attitude, rather than an observer” (1998:159); “Self-direction is a process in which we regularly review and restate our goals and vision” (1998:169).

In Senge's theory (1990, 1998, 2004, Senge-Kleiner-Roberts-Smith, 1994) self-direction refers to more than the above discussed maturity.

The driving force of self-direction is a *creative tension*, which is generated by the discrepancy between the actual and ideal selves. In the course of self-direction individuals use this tension in their efforts to achieve their vision. Creative tension thus, apart from motivating the person to achieve his or her vision, also creates commitment to this process. Individuals may be successful in these efforts only if they have a precise understanding of reality and a clear-cut vision. It is also important that they use both rationality and intuition, are in touch with reality, express empathy in their relationships and are committed to completeness.

In the absence of these factors organisational members are incapable of learning, personality development and thus self-actualisation.

In my view, this thought, which is in line with maturity theories, also points out that organisational members should take responsibility for defining their ideal selves (visions) in an organisational context. This responsibility involves the ability and willingness to define the ideal self, and to make efforts to achieve that state. If an organisational member is *not able or not willing to make efforts to identify his or her ideal self*, his or her ideal self will be shaped by the expectations of the organisation, which (see McGregor's theory X below), takes the individual further from the opportunity for self-actualisation.

3.1.3 The behaviour and learning of the organisational member

Argyris and Schön (1974) claimed that the individuals' behaviour is based on mental maps which are made up of unconscious values and assumptions; these are the assumptions (*theories-in-use*) that relate to the individual and the world around him or her. The contrasting

concept is that of *espoused theories*, which the individual thinks (s)he follows, and these are the values that are expressed in communication in an effort of the individual to make the world believe that (s)he follows those values and principles. The pursue of espoused theories is an unconscious activity.

Argyris claims (1977; 1985; 1991; 1994, Diamond, 1986; Edmonson, 1999; Dent, N.A.; I/12.) that learning, self-reflection and, indirectly, self-actualisation is mainly hindered by *defensive reasoning*. Defensive reasoning, and the *defensive routines*³³ that usually characterise interactions, are dysfunctional, as they hinder the individual's learning. Argyris refers to the dysfunctional espoused theories typically followed by organisations as *Model I*. (1985; 1991):

- *efforts to maintain unilateral control;*
- *maximise winning and minimise losing (strong competitive spirit);*
- *suppression of negative feelings;*
- *rational behaviour, minimise emotionality.*

Individuals follow Model I. behaviours to avoid the feeling of being hurt, avoid risk or appearing incompetent. This is because these behaviours enable *individuals to maintain control over their environment so that they feel themselves and their image of the world around them maintained and safe*. To use Fromm's words, individuals seek *to have the situation* (1979). Thus when individuals learn, they do it without questioning or *reviewing the underlying assumptions behind their behaviour* (theories-in-use). This is what Argyris calls *single-loop learning* (1982).

In contrast, Model II. strategy and the corresponding behaviour may be the driving force of change and development (Argyris, 1985), for this behaviour help individuals reduce the gap between theories-in-use and espoused theories, thus allowing them to act in a genuine manner. This requires that individuals are directed by theories like:

- *sharing control;*
- *win-win attitude;*
- *free expression of feelings;*

³³ Argyris explains individual defensive routines this way: "[Defensive routines] ... prevent human beings from having to experience embarrassment or threat and, at the same time, prevent them from examining the nature and causes of that embarrassment or threat" (1994:81).

- internal commitment;
- relying on valid information;
- free choice based on collected information.

Argyris refers to the Model II. behaviour and theories-in-use as double-loop learning (Argyris, 1977, Schön, 1983). The individual's learning and behavioural change is based on questioning the underlying assumptions behind his or her previous actions (theories-in-use). In this creative and reflective process individuals step out of their frame of thinking (mental map), thus putting themselves in a rather uncertain situation by giving up control over their environment. Instead of to have, they choose *to be* (Fromm, 1979). Argyris calls this process *productive reasoning*, the difficulty of which – mainly at emotional level – he fully admits (1991). Thus double-loop learning and self-reflection is not solely a cognitive process that affects our mental maps, but may also have strong influence on emotions.

Double-loop learning typically occurs when we are not pleased with the result of a given action, so we review the theories-in-use, and, in order to achieve better results, we often change our interpretation of things. In this sense the purpose of self-reflection is to discover new aspects, and the process is typically triggered by a new problem.

To refer to what was said previously, double-loop learning highlights the questioning of assumptions (why did I do what I did?) in respect of self-reflection.

Senge's *mental models* (1998) (also associated with the concept of Learning Organisation) also covers the notion of Argyris's theories-in-use. Mental models may facilitate and accelerate learning if the individual *is aware of them*, and thus is able to change his or her attitude: "Leaders have to learn to be aware of their mental models, for as long as they do not see these models clearly, they cannot change them, as a consequence of which system approach cannot function" (1998:231).

The common starting point of Argyris's and Senge's theories is that the driving force behind organisational members' behaviour is a *taken-for-granted* assumption, which may relate to either interpersonal strategies (Argyris) or cause and effect relations (Senge) (Edmondson, 1996).

In my view this highlights that *neither the actual, nor the ideal self can be defined in the absence of double-loop learning or recognised mental models*. More precisely, the identified self-concepts will be far from being real, thus the reduction of the gap between the two can hardly be successful, for the individual seeks to eliminate problems that do not even exist. In other words, self-actualising pursued without double-loop learning is more of a self-delusion, for it is not based on honesty, genuineness and bravery.

Another important concept is that of creative tension, which highlights the responsibility of the individual. Undoubtedly, the discrepancy between the self-concepts generates a feeling of emotional discomfort (see previously: incongruence). The individual is accountable for *making this discomfort functional, by utilising it in his or her learning process*. Otherwise the feeling of discomfort makes the individual believe that his or her ideal self cannot be achieved, thus strengthening his or her attachment to his or her actual self.

3.2 Work as an activity

3.2.1 The relation between the individual and work

Marx says about working in a capitalist context (1962:48): “... the worker’s activity is not his own activity. It belongs to someone else, while he loses himself. ... [the worker] in his work does not affirm, but rather negates himself; does not feel good, but rather bad; does not freely use his physical and mental energy ... thus the worker feels good out of work and at work he feels bad. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working, he is not at home.”

Marx’s thoughts suggest that at work the worker does not work to fulfil of his or her own needs, but produces for the capitalist, for the owner. In this way, in my view, the individual’s working activity, that is, the result of his or her capabilities and willingness, becomes an object alienated from the worker. I have already touched upon this phenomenon when presenting Fromm’s thoughts. This time I wish to emphasize that the degree to which workers are aware of their work, more precisely the capabilities and willingness they use at work, determines whether or not they can pursue self-actualisation in work. In other words, if organisational members feel detached from their working activities, e.g. they feel they cannot make use of their talent or cannot feel that the result of their work is their own, then they will not be able to pursue self-actualisation in the workplace.

Csikszentmihályi (2001) calls attention to an interesting phenomenon, which he referred to as the *paradox of work*. According to his studies, individuals are less motivated at work than in their free time, even if they experience Flow at work. “The paradox here is that at work people feel they are important and resourceful, which enable them to be happy, creative and satisfied. In their free time they think they have nothing to do and cannot use their talent, thus become depressed, weak and dissatisfied. Yet, people desire to work less and have more free time.” (2001:225). This phenomenon highlights the cultural stereotype that people tend to understand work as a necessary but unpleasant thing, a burden restricting their freedom.

In the light of this paradox the Marxian thought may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. If an organisational member is convinced that work cannot be joyful and merely hinders his or her self-actualising efforts, his or her work will really become a process with which (s)he has nothing to do; the individual becomes alienated from his or her work.

What can be done to make work joyful, and whose responsibility is this? This is the question I will try to answer in the following sub-section.

3.2.2 Characteristics of the work system³⁴

It was Herzberg who first emphasised (1968/1974) that the elimination of dissatisfaction is not what leaders should seek in order to make employees satisfied. The reason is that the opposite of dissatisfaction is not satisfaction, but the absence of dissatisfaction.

In his view, dissatisfaction can be eliminated by the use of so-called hygiene factors such as salary, safe working environment and good working relationships. Satisfaction, however, can be facilitated by so-called motivators, which stem from work. Motivator can be the result, the way to achieving a result, responsibility or the opportunity to develop.

According to Herzberg, the most efficient motivator is vertical job loading, which should take place according to the following principles:

³⁴ Work systems are “(1) tasks (2) applied technology (3) skills and competencies required for carrying out the task (4) management philosophy and style of the leader, and (5) in broader sense, a given combination or system of EEM-principles and practice” (Beer et al., 1985:570; cited by Gelei, in: Bakacsi et al., 1999).

	Principle	Motivators involved
A	Removing some controls while retaining accountability	Responsibility and personal achievement
B	Increasing the accountability of individuals for own work	Responsibility and recognition
C	Giving a person a complete natural unit of work (module, division, area, and so on)	Responsibility, achievement, and recognition
D	Granting additional authority to employees in their activity; job freedom	Responsibility, achievement, and recognition
E	Making periodic reports directly available to the workers themselves rather than to supervisors	Internal recognition
F	Introducing new and more difficult tasks not previously handled	Growth and learning
G	Assigning individuals specific or specialized tasks, enabling them to become experts	Responsibility, growth, and advancement

Table 6: Examples for the principles of vertical job loading by Herzberg (1974:81)

The novelty in Herzberg's thoughts (compared with those of the representatives of the Human Relations movement, i.e. Mayo, Lewin, Argyris and McGregor) was that he saw the relation between the individual and his or her work as the key factor affecting self-actualisation, rather than the individual itself or the processes in his or her environment. He claimed that organisational members take challenges as opportunities, thus do their best to perform well, for this is the way in which they can develop (Dent, N.A.) – and, in my view, pursue self-actualisation.

Csikszentmihályi, besides autotelic personality, also talks about *autotelic jobs* (2001). To be an autotelic personality is not the only way to experience Flow. In his view, the change of a given job offers the same opportunity: “The other option is to change the job itself so that it becomes suitable for helping people with non-autotelic personality get closer to the Flow experience. The more a job resembles a game – by ensuring varied, appropriate and flexible tasks, clear goals and immediate feedbacks – the more enjoyable it is, irrespective of the worker's state of development.” (2001:215).

In his theory, Csikszentmihályi handles the notions of autotelic personality and autotelic job with the same weight, and even highlights the combination of the two. The job needs to be changed, and, at the same time, the organisational member needs to be developed to become an autotelic personality. About the latter he says: “This can be achieved by teaching them how they can recognise their opportunities to act, how to develop their skills and how to set

realistic goals”. In my view, this is equal to increasing self-knowledge, while the former is the conversion of the work system into a challenging one³⁵.

These are the premises to which today’s seemingly evident concepts in relation to work systems – such as job enlargement, enrichment, rotation and empowerment – can be traced back. The following sub-sections will discuss the obstacles to self-actualisation that stem from work systems.

3.2.2.1 Disbelief in the individual

Diamond (1986) argues – from a psychoanalytical approach – that bureaucratic organisations help their members avoid fear that results from conflicts and change. The reason is that bureaucratic systems “believe” in jobs and authority, rather than in individuals, consequently does not provide opportunities for the individuals to change and grow. In other words, organisational processes are made up of authorities, rather than interpersonal relationships. Thus the maturity of organisational members is not only unnecessary, but definitely impedes the operation of a bureaucratic organisation. If in such an organisation developmental efforts appear, they question the processes and systems embedded in the organisation, that is, factors affecting all organisational members and their status quo. Not surprisingly, such efforts are to face severe resistance.

For me it highlights that *if an organisational structure, as well as the organisational processes and systems, relies on jobs and authorities rather than on the organisational members*, individuals may feel that they are only “parts of a machine”. This feeling will not give an impulse to the individuals to perform as well as they can, as they receive no trust or belief.

Thus, in a broad sense, all organisational cultures (including their structures, systems and processes) that channel the message that the organisation’s success does not depend on its members will not encourage the organisational members to connect their visions with that of

³⁵ As Csíkszentmihályi believes that the Flow experience is a desirable state for everyone, he does not deal with the case when the individual is not willing to increase his or her self-knowledge or take on a new job which offers more opportunities (and responsibilities as well).

the organisation, or to capitalise on their creative tension – if it evolves at all in such an environment – within the organisation.

3.2.2.2 The lack of taking personal responsibility

As indicated previously, the presence or absence of personal responsibility strongly affects work activities. The result of the motivation to take personal responsibility is that individuals find pleasure in their work, for they can fulfil their learning and growth needs through work activities. Thus the root of a good performance is the love of work, rather than a good feeling which results from positive working conditions.

Most probably by further developing Herzberg's theory, Hackman–Oldham–Janson–Purdy (1975) introduced the concept of job enrichment. The term refers to change (by a supervisor or the HR department) of a job so that it can serve the individual's growth needs more efficiently³⁶. Its preconditions are as follows: the organisational member (1) should be aware of the importance of his job; (2) should take responsibility for the outcome of his work; (3) should be informed on the result of his work. "If these three critical psychological conditions are met, a positive feeling develops in the individuals in regard of themselves and their work..." (Bakacsi et al., 1999:124).

Referring to their research, the authors also point out that job enrichment is primarily able to fulfil the growth needs of those who have a high level of growth needs. In other words, only individuals with a high level of growth needs can seek self-actualisation at work.

This emphasises one of the impeding factors that stem from the individual, i.e. the organisational member. *Individuals at lower levels of the motivation structure, i.e. immature personalities (irrespective of whether it results from the lack of capabilities or willingness) will not / cannot pursue self-actualisation, even if they find themselves in a working environment which highly facilitates such efforts.* This also applies to empowerment, which will be discussed in the following paragraph.

³⁶ Behind this theory the assumption lies that the growth need of individuals can be increased.

Blanchard et al. (1998) introduced the philosophy of empowerment and a work system which is based on the following principle: “The impulses and knowledge of our colleagues is energy. An empowering management aims to liberate this energy” (1998:29).

In my view, the philosophy of empowerment aims at creating working conditions that allow organisational members to provide their best. In other words, empowerment relies on the self-actualising efforts of the members, i.e. their creative tension.

The preconditions of this energy’s liberation are as follows (Blanchard–Carlos–Randolph, 1998:104; Klein, 2002:117; Lövey. N.A.):

- “Free flow of information;
- Autonomy within clear-cut borders;
- Self-directing teams instead of hierarchical decisions”.

I think that these principles place responsibility on both the leader and the members of the organisation: this responsibility means that the individual should use – and, importantly, not abuse – his or her authority. *A job, and especially the corresponding authority, means power, thus maintaining the boundaries* is crucial to sustain the empowerment work system.

In my view, the philosophy of empowerment requires specific attitudes both from leaders and subordinates. A leader should deliver a supportive attitude (see later, theory Y), while subordinates should present a mature attitude: it includes, apart from having the required skills and knowledge, taking personal responsibility, e.g. the willingness to use skills and knowledge, that is, involvement in the empowerment work system (Bakacsi et al., 1999).

3.2.2.3 The lack of commitment

Nevertheless, the value which is most essential for a functioning empowerment is *internal commitment* (Argyris, 1998). According to the empowerment philosophy, although the leader and the subordinate together set the goal to be achieved, it is the subordinate who defines the required actions and behaviour. Commitment to a shared vision is thus essential for achieving the shared goal and for ensuring that the implemented actions are in line with the organisation’s norms.

The process of collective goal setting is of key importance, as this is where the alignment of the shared vision and the personal vision takes place³⁷. If the subordinate's vision does not match the shared vision, the goals set as well as the actions to be implemented will be defined externally for the subordinate, which is counterproductive to self-actualising efforts.

I believe that, in terms of self-actualising, internal commitment is important not only from the aspect of empowerment: if an individual seeks self-actualisation in an organisational context, (s)he must be committed to the whole organisation, including organisational culture and his or her colleagues.

This highlights the “danger” also pointed out by the representatives of the critical organisation theory: where is the limit? Where does the individual end, and where does the organisation (and society with its ideologies) start? – which is the point where internal commitment becomes blind and turns into self-delusion?³⁸ According to the critical theory (Alvesson–Willmott, 1996; Alvesson–Deetz, 1996), organisational vision is no more than a “rhetoric trick”, the purpose of which is to hide the real goals and values of an organisation. In addition to blanketing real issues, organisational visions may also be used to anchor organisational members to the organisation, as the stage of their work (behaviour) and even their emotions (the good feeling that results from an internal commitment, their everyday joy, anger and fear) is their workplaces.

3.3 Further characteristics of organisations

This chapter is concerned with the impeding factors of self-actualisation that stem from the characteristics of organisations. The personal behaviours appearing in an organisation, as already discussed, are based on assumptions. These assumptions that concentrate in the organisational culture³⁹ also appear in every feature of the organisation from its structure and policies to its rules, applied technologies and mission.

³⁷ In this case I assume that organisational and personal visions can be aligned. However, according to organisation theories with critical approach, this is not possible.

³⁸ I do not want to provide an answer to the question in the present thesis, just wanted to call attention to the importance of the issue and its relevance for self-actualisation.

³⁹ Organisational culture is “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.” (Schein, 1985:9; cited by Bakacsi, in: Bakacsi, 1996).

I will sort the impeding factors into two large groups. The first group contains factors that may be associated with the leader(s) of an organisation. Owing to their role, leaders have a strong influence on organisational structure. The reason for this is, on the one hand, their being in decision making position, and, on the other hand, the fact that their behaviour may serve as a model for other members of the organisation (Schein, 1985; Bakacsi, 1996). The second group collects other factors that stem from the organisation and impede self-actualisation, such as values and the corresponding behaviours, systems and processes.

3.3.1 The leader, the characteristics of leadership⁴⁰

3.3.1.1 The value and beliefs of the leader, leadership style

In his theory X and theory Y McGregor (1960, 1966) pointed out that a *leader's beliefs about* human nature, or in a narrower sense, his or her subordinates, *strongly* affects his or her subordinates' performance⁴¹.

Theory X deals with the leaders' beliefs about subordinates already discussed by traditional management approaches (Dobák, 1996; Bakacsi, 1996; Klein, 2002):

- *individuals are inherently lazy and avoid work;*
- *thus they will work only if leaders force, supervise, control, or even threaten them;*
- *but, as ordinary people dislike responsibility, they do not mind being led, even like it. This is because they are primarily motivated to be safe, not to develop or to achieve success.*

Theory Y, by contrast, assumes that personal goals and organisational goals can be aligned. This is based on the leader's conviction that work may represent a source of pleasure for subordinates, who can even become committed to the organisational goals through their work, especially if (internal or external) benefits are offered by the organisation. This commitment is indicated by the fact that subordinates become self-directing in the course of their work towards achieving the set goals, even seek responsibility, as they want to capitalise on their

⁴⁰ This chapter deals with self-actualisation from the aspect of organisational members. The core question is "How leaders and the features of management hinder the self-actualising efforts of organisational members?", rather than "How leaders could promote their subordinates' self-actualising efforts?".

⁴¹ It is important to emphasise that McGregor's theory basically deals with management attitude; it is not concerned with how the increase of individual performance facilitates the achievement of organisational objectives and personal goals.

creativity. This can actually be a more powerful motivating force than money (Dobák et al., 1996; Bakacsi, 1996; Klein, 2002; Dent, N.A.).

The theory also states that either a manager believes in Theory X or Theory Y, (s)he is right, as his or her belief becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (see Bakacsi, 1996:68-69). In other words, McGregor points out that it is the leader who is accountable for the performance of the subordinates and the success of the organisation, as they mostly depend on the leader's behaviour.

Rogers also distinguishes between two leadership styles (Rogers, 1978, in: Klein, 2002:107, Blanchard–Carlos–Randolph, 1998:10). The leadership style which is based on power and authority is similar to the Theory X style, while the one based on influence has common grounds with the Theory Y leadership style.

Characteristics of a leadership style based on power and control	Characteristics of a leadership style based on influence
Making decisions, instructions	Offering autonomy to individuals and teams
Control over the behaviour of subordinates	Monitoring the individual's work
The adjustment of thoughts and feelings according to the "expectations"	Expression of own thoughts and feelings
Exercising power over individuals and the organisation	Facilitating learning
Governance	Promoting independence
Restriction	Acceptance of innovative ideas
Teaching, education, advising	Transferring full responsibility
Evaluating others	Offering and accepting feedback
Distribution of bonuses	Promoting self-assessment
Assessment of own-performance	Assessment of others' results and development

Table 7: Leadership styles according to Rogers
(Rogers, 1978, in: Klein, 2002:107, Blanchard–Carlos–Randolph, 1998:10)

It is worth noting Maslow's doubts regarding McGregor's theory (Klein, 2002). Maslow claims that Theory X and Y reflect a rather black and white approach to human nature, which is much more colourful in reality. He recommends that a leader should be aware of the subordinates' needs, offer them autonomy and responsibility accordingly, and even support them according to their developmental level.

Thus Theory X, which impedes self-actualisation, is concerned with *leaders who seek to control their subordinates' behaviour* (Bakacsi in: Bakacsi et al., 1999), and for whom

following rules is of primary importance, as their major belief is that rules are the key to success.

I think this type *do not trust in the subordinates' capabilities, and do not believe that they can be developed* – unless this development takes place within the frameworks set by the rules. This may suggest *a lack of self-confidence on the part of the leader, i.e. that (s)he needs to maintain his or her status quo*: (s)he is afraid that if a subordinate diverges from the guidelines set by the leader or the organisation (s)he will no longer be able to control the situation, which may even threaten his or her position.

This deficiency of a leader – it is a deficiency, as it hinders the subordinates' self-actualising efforts – is also pointed out by Cope (2003), through a case study of a small enterprise. In his example the leader impeded the subordinate's work and his actualising efforts – and the successful operation of the company as well – by being afraid to delegate a particular task to the subordinate. This is what the leader said about his recognition: "I think it was this painful process of learning how to delegate. You delegate and then you immediately look for ways in which the person has carried out the task differently and not as well as you might have done" (2003:439). Managerial distrust, due to which leaders try to avoid delegation and tend to constrain their subordinates' autonomy, is one of the major obstacles to the self-actualisation of workers (cf. Rogers).

All in all, I think that strict rules set by a leader, which allow only a very limited autonomy in work for subordinates, work against self-actualisation. This is because in this case organisational expectations are likely to dominate over the individuals' own ones in defining their ideal selves (the stage that the individual wants to achieve through self-actualisation), because of the absence of trust from the part of the leader, which would be important for the subordinate to define his or her own ideal self and to pursue self-actualisation.

3.3.1.2 Managerial communication

It is worth touching upon the issue of managerial communication, which is probably the most conspicuous component of managerial behaviour.

Argyris highlights that managerial communication, as a theory-in-use, often conflicts with espoused values. He cites the example (1994) when a leader tells his subordinates that “I will ensure that all members of the organisation will have the opportunity to maximise on their skills.” The underlying assumption here is that “I know best what you need”. However, by saying this, the leader actually increases his control function, instead of transferring it to his or her subordinates. By this paradoxical behaviour the leader deprives its subordinates of the opportunity to shape their own visions, and then to shape a shared vision⁴², to which they can commit themselves.

Thus when a *leader's* promotion of commitment in his or her *communication* reflects only espoused values, while his or her theory-in-use reflects the opposite, (s)he only *confuses subordinates about the organisation's expectations regarding their behaviour*.

I think that managerial communication may hinder self-actualisation if it *does not take the maturity of organisational members into consideration*. It may hinder the members in identifying their own ideal selves, and may also impede the development of their willingness to take responsibility and to develop commitment. Of course, besides the leader's maturity, a leader-subordinate relationship characterised by mutual trust and respect is also required.

Another typical example of managerial communication mistakes is (Argyris, 1994) when a leader encourages subordinates, or even expects them, to receive future changes happily. By this expectation leaders trigger two behaviours, presented in Model I, in the subordinates: they will tend to suppress their negative feelings and also tend to avoid seeking rationality. Leaders who *provide no opportunity for the subordinates to discuss the natural fears generated by potential changes and other painful feelings (such as grief)* actually ensure that subordinates will become unable to commit themselves to the changes due to their existing and active bad feelings.

⁴² I will deal with importance of shared vision in one of the sub-sections below.

For me this highlights that the today so frequent organisational changes may also hinder self-actualisation. To avoid the actualisation-impeding effect of the fears resulting from changes an opportunity to discuss them openly is need (as already indicated in Model II). Personal visions cannot be based on fears. Indeed, in this case two other components of Model II may also become important: valid information and free choice based on information. In other words, self-actualisation requires the exact knowledge of the actual situation; and the way in which an individual wants to pursue self-actualisation must be defined by the individual alone.

To sum it up, managerial communication may impede self-actualisation if it leaves the organisational member feeling insecure and confused (due to the lack of information or the suppression of feelings etc.), thus hindering the development of so-called negative tension in the individual.

3.3.1.3 Managerial learning

From the aspect of organisational members managerial learning is especially important (Argyris–Schön, 1996, Schein, 1987, 1992, Schön, 1983, Beer-Eisenstaat-Spector, 1990). The reason for this is that, due to their position, leaders have the highest influence on organisational culture; the systems and processes introduced and applied by an organisation, even their change and development depends highly on leaders. This is important for organisational members from two aspects: first, the organisation shaped by the leader⁴³ will be the environment where members will pursue self-actualisation; and second, the leader's behaviour will be a model for the members and affect organisational culture (Kets de Vries, 1991).

Senge claims (1998) that the key question leaders should ask themselves (in the course of their learning) is “how I contributed to the emergence of the present problem?” This managerial question puts *system approach* in the limelight: “System approach is the principle which allows us to see the whole picture with all the interrelations and details within, and enables us to observe the patterns of changes instead of static situations” (1998:78). The

⁴³ Of course, organisational reality is not created solely by the leader, but from the aspect of our subject the emphasis is on the leader's role.

behaviour based on immediate actions aiming at quick success should be replaced by one based on a well thought-through, long-term strategy, which reveals the interrelations within systems. System approach ensures that the leader is aware of cause and effect relations; his or her own role in the system (in the organisation and the environment); and the actual problems. In line with this I think that in the absence of *system approach* a leader cannot create an organisational structure which promotes his or her and the subordinates' self-actualisation.

Argyris identifies success as the major obstacle to managerial learning (1991, 1993): Managers became managers owing to their successes, *thus had no opportunity to learn how to learn from their failures*. They simply did not need to review their behaviour, did not need self-reflection. As a consequence, if they fail, instead of turning their attention toward themselves trying to find the causes (by reviewing their assumptions), a defensive reasoning starts to work and they see their *subordinates and their behaviour as the root of the failure*. In other words, they *displace the experience of failure and are not honest to themselves*.

On the bases of the above, Argyris claims (1993) that managers and their behaviour may be the major impeding factor in their learning, irrespective of their willingness. Thus it is not the motivation to change and develop externally what is important, but the motivation to develop inside, to align theories-in-use and espoused theories, to perform double-loop learning.

For this, according to Argyris, the following are needed (1993):

1. double-loop learning should be based on the solution of the real problem;
2. the competencies and skills needed for solving the problem and perform double-loop learning should be available for the leader and the team;
3. the problem should require a creative and innovative approach instead of routines (which might feel the leader that (s)he cannot solve the problem);
4. the leader's scope of authority should involve the initiation of actions that were devised as part of the solution;
5. the lessons learned in double-loop learning should be applicable later as well.

Thus the leaders' task is (1991:100): "the nuts and bolts of management [...], increasingly consists of guiding and integrating the autonomous but interconnected work of highly skilled people", an important instrument of which is double-loop learning.

In my view, when managers through their own examples “teach” their subordinates that no failure is accepted neither at work, nor in the learning process, they impede the self-actualisation of organisational members. This may manifest itself in a behaviour when they tend to blame someone else for their own mistakes. This is because by teaching the above leaders hinder the utilisation of the creative tension in the individuals: organisational members will be afraid to define neither their actual, nor their ideal selves, and to reduce the discrepancy between the two. The reason is that they will be afraid of making mistakes, and fear the consequences. In other words, *fear* (which may result from the distrust the environment channels toward the individual) may also hinder self-actualisation.

3.3.2 The lack of a shared vision

I have already indicated the utmost importance of personal vision (ideal self) in respect of self-actualisation.

Senge wrote about organisational vision: “A shared vision is more of a giant power born in the people’s hearts. ... It is tangible. People see it as if it was already achieved. Few things in people’s life have such power like a shared vision.” (1998:233).

In the absence of an organisational vision the question may easily arise in organisational members why they should pursue self-actualisation in that particular organisation?⁴⁴ The factor which allows individuals to want and be able to pursue self-actualisation in an organisational context is the alignment of personal visions and the shared vision as part of the organisational structure. Thus the organisational vision, on the one hand, must contain personal visions, and, on the other hand, it also must reflect that it can be achieved only through a concerted effort of the organisational members. In this way the organisational vision, besides setting a clear-cut frame of reference, provides the individuals with the feeling that this is the place where they should seek self-actualization⁴⁵. It also suggests that the influence which a shared vision has on the individuals and teams is as important as (if not more than) the vision’s contents: “... It is not what the vision is, but what the vision does that matters” (Kofman-Senge, 1994:18).

⁴⁴ About social existence it is worth reading Aronson’s “The social animal” and Forgács’s “A társas érintkezés pszichológiája”.

⁴⁵ I have touched upon the (im)possibility of this in relation to the views of critical organisation theories about visions.

3.3.3 Organisational values and behaviours facilitating defensive routines

3.3.3.1 The “lonely wolf”: the lack of dialogues

The changing of the underlying assumptions (*theories-in-use*) (Argyris & Schön, 1974) or mental models (Senge, 1998) behind the behaviour of organisational members may be the key to a successful operation (Edmondson–Moingeon, 1995), and, in my view, the way towards self-actualisation. The point is that individuals should question and review the deeply embedded and taken-for-granted beliefs in the course of operation. However, individuals should be able to review their behaviour not just in their own frame of reference, but in an organisational context as well. It is important because this reflects that the individual belongs to the organisation and wants to pursue self-actualisation within the framework of that organisation. Otherwise the question might arise again, now in this form: “Why should I seek self-actualisation in this organisation? Wouldn’t it be easier on my own?”

In the section dealing with self-reflection I indicated that it may promote the improvement of self-knowledge if the individual, besides practicing self-reflection on his or her own, also involves other members of the organisation in the process. The reason for this is partly that signals from the environment (feedbacks) highly affect the self-concept of the individual (see the Johari window). This is because learning in a given position means opportunity for action only within a “limited scope of authority” (Coopey, 1995). The other reason is that self-reflection is rather demanding in emotional sense, e.g. to become aware of our defensive routines means that we lose control over our environment. Our environment may help us a great deal in coping with this situation. As Senge puts it: “We are our mental models. (...) Thus learning which is able to change mental models is a great challenge. We lose our well-known points of reference. At times it can be frightening to become aware of our precious beliefs and assumptions. It is too hard for an individual. (S)he needs company to cope with it. (S)he needs a community of people who learn with him.” (Senge, 1998:XIV.)

To create a “community of learning people” collective learning is essential (Senge highlighted this in respect of Learning Organisations). “Collective learning is the process of developing harmony and the collective improvement of skills, in order to enable the *members of the group to achieve their goals*” (1998:266; highlighted by me).

Its instrument is the combined and balanced use of dialogue and argument, and the realisation and breaking down of the Argyrian defensive routines (an example for this cited by: Hofmaier, 1990).

Unlike argument, dialogue does not focus on feedback and the conviction of the other, but rather on understanding and the discovery of the involved parties' assumptions (Schein, 1994). In the dialogue process "... the members share the potential excitement of discovering, collectively, ideas that individually none of them might ever have thought of" (Schein, 1994:60). Based on his experience, Fromm describes dialogue and its importance as follows (1979:42): "[The participants] respond spontaneously and productively; they forget about themselves, about the knowledge, the positions they have. Their egos do not stand in their own way... they give birth to new ideas, because they are not holding on to anything".

Dialogues thus help individuals become aware of their mental models on which their behaviours are based. The *absence of dialogues* may lead to the absence of the recognitions that contribute to a more precise knowledge of the actual self.

3.3.3.2 Risk avoidance, fear of humiliation

In Argyris's view, the root of personal defensive routines (e.g. maintaining control, making efforts to maximise gain, minimise loss, hiding emotions) is that in critical situations organisational members are anxious to reduce risk and avoid humiliation (and this is why they deploy defensive reasoning).

Organisations that are characterised by the theories-in-use of Model I. (Argyris refers to these traits as *O-I*, that is *Organisational I*) do not promote the breaking down of defensive routines. In fact, *behaviours and attitudes that inhibit double-loop learning and promote avoidance of personal responsibility become embedded in the O-I organisational culture* (structures and processes) (Argyris-Schön, 1978).

By contrast, O-II (Organisational II.) type organisations, by offering opportunities for double-loop learning, allow conscious dialogues and arguments, in which the individuals can get rid of their defensive routines. That is, this culture is based on honesty and cooperation, which

through double-loop learning promotes taking personal responsibility and the growth of maturity (Gelei, 2005) – and I think self-actualisation in an organisational context as well⁴⁶.

The following table summarises how the discrepancies between the actual and ideal self and the Argyrian concepts of theories-in-use and espoused theory relate to each other, including the effects of O-I. and O-II. organisational features. As a result of self-actualisation the individual's theories-in-use become identical with his or her espoused theories, and his or her actual self becomes equal with his or her ideal self. However, there are some discrepancies between the two (e.g. because of the defensive routines), which can be described as follows:

	Actual self	Ideal self
Espoused theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The discrepancy between the actual self and the espoused theory is a result of the defensive routines ▪ Defensive routines hinder self-actualisation ▪ The discrepancy can be reduced through double-loop learning ▪ Double-loop learning is hindered by O-I. organisational culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As long as the ideal self is pursued only at the level of espoused theories, we can talk about delusion and self-delusion ▪ In an O-I. organisational context self-actualisation may take place only at the level of espoused theories, which promotes self-delusion in the organisational members
Theory-in-use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We talk about a genuine behaviour when the actual self coincides with the theories in use ▪ However, if the individual seeks "only" his or her ideal self, genuine behaviour will lead to dissatisfaction. ▪ Satisfaction can be brought about by self-actualisation, which means that the correspondence of the actual self and the theories-in-use moves toward the correspondence of the ideal self and the espoused theories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The moment when theories-in-use correspond to the ideal self is the moment of self-actualisation (e.g. Flow experience) ▪ This can be achieved through double-loop learning and O-II. type organisational culture

Table 8: Relations between the Argyrian theories-in-use and espoused theories and the process of self-actualisation (own representation, based on András Gelei's thoughts)

⁴⁶ As indicated previously, the representatives of critical organisation theories do not find these processes realistic.

3.3.3.3 The absence of validation, transparency and stewardship

As already indicated, Argyris thinks that double-loop learning may highly contribute to the changing of beliefs and values (discarding of old ones and development of new ones). As long as this change takes place towards the correspondence between the theories-in-use and the espoused theories, the organisational members become more genuine and thus will be able to perform their work more efficiently. This may also apply to team work, including the monitoring of environmental influences, receiving and giving feedbacks and implementing behavioural change.

In his later writings Argyris (1994; T&D, 1999) also points out that double-loop learning as a problem-solving mechanism may function only if the following three conditions are met:

- Validation: thorough scrutiny of the organisational members' claims and ideas;
- Transparency: revealing the underlying cause and effect relations behind the above claims and ideas;
- Stewardship: the commitment which ensures the direction of validation and transparency in the behaviour of organisational members.

Validation, transparency and stewardship together create an organisational culture which allows double-loop learning and the practice of M II. theories-in-use in everyday operations. In their *absence* thus *defensive mechanism and M I. theories-in-use may determine the behaviours in the organisation*, which, as already explained, work against self-actualisation.

3.3.3.4 High level of insecurity

Permanent change around and in an organisation may trigger a feeling of insecurity in the individual.

Argyris points out (1971) that the *stress and anxiety* caused by an *uncertain future* may generate *resistance* initially even in mature organisational members. This resistance is not necessarily conscious, and aims at maintaining the status quo. Thus defensive routines start to operate, since organisational members see the change as depriving them of something (often the control over their environment). This suggests emotional involvement in the process (Diamond, 1986).

High-level and permanent insecurity thus, in my view, does not allow individuals to follow the principles of Model II. It may even encourage the mature members of the organisation to maintain control, and maximise on the gains in the course of change, that is, to let their defensive routines direct them. One of its reasons is that they cannot commit themselves to insecurity. On the other hand, in a changing situation it is difficult to define the way towards our personal vision. Thus the creative tension necessary for self-actualisation cannot emerge, as the change that takes place in the current reality and the corresponding bad feelings (e.g. *worries about the future, sadness and grief because the present has been “lost”*) distract the attention and skills of the individual from making use of this tension in their own development.

Similarly to high-level insecurity, a high level of restraint may also impede self-actualisation.

3.4 Summary

This chapter dealt with the impeding factors of self-actualisation in an organisational context. Finally I present here a table which comprises self-actualisation theories and their details. This will be completed with the thoughts of the authors who studied self-actualisation in an organisational context.

	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
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 9: Summary of self-actualisation theories (own representation)

Similarly to the chapter dealing with self-actualisation, I finish this chapter with the identification of practices that are often associated with the concept of self-actualisation, or are used as synonyms of it, despite they cover different things. This time I did seek to collect concepts that are associated with organisations:

- *Working for goals (vision, mission) not corresponding with our own goals*: in this case the individual focuses his or her energy and abilities on achieving other people's goals. It means that (s)he gets further from his or her ideal self and the experience of self-actualisation.
- *Acceptance of norms and joining organisational cultures that do not correspond with our values*: if the individual follows a path set by someone else, (s)he is not likely to achieve self-actualisation, as on his or her way (s)he will face incongruence and unguineness.

- *Effectiveness*: although self-actualisation may bring about effectiveness, the two concepts are not identical.
- *Efficiency*: similarly to the above point, self-actualisation may bring about efficiency, but the two concepts are different.
- *Successfulness, success*: successes may promote self-actualisation, may be a driving force, while successfulness may be brought about by self-actualisation, but neither of the two terms covers the notion of self-actualisation.
- *Power*: a phenomena that can be interpreted only in an interpersonal relationship, might be a motivation factor, may be a situation which can be used or abused, but does not cover self-actualisation.
- *Leading position, managerial activities*: management or a given management style may represent the ideal self for the individual. However, this is not self-actualisation, especially if we consider that a manager may be led by someone else, which makes him or her vulnerable.
- *Career, promotions*: promotions may generate good feelings, but it is not identical with self-actualisation, as a position alone cannot promote the reduction of the discrepancy between the actual and the ideal self.
- *Generous compensation package*: it may be a precondition for self-actualising (see Maslow), but is not identical with it.

So far I have explained self-actualisation and the factors that facilitate or impede the process, first in general, than in an organisational context.

In the following chapter I will further study the issue through a concrete example (advertising creatives at advertising agencies), and I will further expand the circle of factors that may promote or inhibit self-actualisation.

4. Does the work of creative professionals in advertising agencies represent an example of self-actualisation within an organisational environment?⁴⁷

*„In the advertisement line I am rather a methuselah.
None of the companies would hire for the likes of an old man like me.
Not for not being capable typing on the keyboard,
but, unfortunately, at this age people have already
a set of values that they do not give up.”
(Réz, 2003:155)*

This chapter describes the work of creatives in advertising agencies, my chosen field of research. With this my aim is twofold: on the one hand, to give a comprehensive picture of my would-be field of research and research subjects, and on the other hand, to come up with as many research assumptions as possible.

Why have I set myself the goal of investigating the work of creative professionals in advertising agencies to determine the potentials for, and the obstacles to, individual self-actualisation? In my view, creative professionals working for advertising agencies are “applied artists”, i.e. persons who serve particular clients with their artistic skills and receive payment in return. On this basis, the creative jobs of advertising agency workers – presumably – have the potential for self-actualisation for the following reasons⁴⁸:

- (Good) creative work (among other things) is a form of self-expression of creatives: it reflects the values, beliefs, and tastes of creatives, i.e. their real self;
- (Good) creative work is the result of team work carrying with different kinds of interpersonal interactions;
- These two characteristics of (good) creative work – theoretically – expect creatives to carry out self-reflection in the course of their work and enhance their self-knowledge;
- (Good) creative work is unique, non-conformist, thus it is a single, badly structured assignment, which cannot become a routine;
- For (good) creatives to be able to meet this permanent novelty, they must strive to maximally exploit their abilities on a daily basis.

⁴⁷ In the writing of this chapter I relied heavily on my previous experience with advertising agencies and on conversations with present co-workers at an advertising agency.

⁴⁸ These thoughts emphatically signal *the potential* for self-actualisation and not the fact that individuals working in creative jobs *do* strive to self-actualize.

The following table summarises the reasons for and against this field of research:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Interesting theme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drawing a line of demarcation between creativity and self-actualisation ▪ Creatives as “applied artists” ▪ Applied art (e.g. applied to earning money) vs. self-actualisation <p>Individuals themselves, relationships between individuals and their work, and the relationship between individuals and the organisation can all be investigated.</p> <p>Is a better known field affecting many</p> <p>Familiarity with the jargon. Several close acquaintances can help me get into the field of research.</p>	<p>The equality of creativity and self-actualisation is surrounded by a myth – could prove difficult to handle.</p> <p>“Everybody knows” about advertising, creativity and self-actualisation, hence a huge body of professional as well as lay people’s reactions can be expected in the research</p> <p>An effort can be expected on the part of creatives to maintain a “self-actualizing person’s” image – may prove difficult to handle.</p>

Table 10: Arguments for and against advertising agency creatives as a field and subjects of research

As shown in the table above, the advantages contain personal interest and curiosity, commitment to the research on the one hand, and lots of practical aspects which facilitate the first stages of the research (entry, knowledge of the jargon and of the profession). Among the disadvantages I have listed the assumptions that may make the research and access to real knowledge difficult.

4.1 Advertising and advertising agencies in Hungary

Advertising is not the product of the 20th century, nor is the word denoting the activity of recent origin. The Hungarian word “reklám” goes back to a Latin original with the meaning loud shouting. Advertisements promoting the meeting of demand and supply appeared on Egyptian scrolls as early as 3000 B.C., followed by those appearing on the fields of the Roman Empire, e.g. there were finds found among the ruins of Pompeii suggestive of advertising. In the Middle Ages advertisements were typically oral in nature, due to illiteracy. The 18th century saw the appearance of newspaper advertisements (although there had been advertisements for books via fliers as early as 1472). The first industrial fair was staged in 1798, witnessing the appearance of the first street photos (Hoffmann – Buzási, 2000). As a

result of an explosive growth in consumption, and in general, in the quantity of information, the advertising industry, too, recognised a need for self-limitation, leading to the establishment of advertising ethics, customer protection, and several codes of advertising (Kárász, In: I/16.).

In the Hungary of the pre-transition 1990's the primary function of advertising was to increase demand for the goods produced, thus advertisements focussed on products rather than brands or groups of brands (a real classic from that era even today is the slogan "(buy) shoes from shoe shops). The main concern was not what kind of shoes people should buy, rather, that people should spend their money, e.g., on shoes, as production was under way and it needed customers, too.

In this era, then, brand and brand value were not typical concepts; there were no real differences between products. There were practically no advertising agencies, with MAHIR (Hungarian Advertiser) being the only company to provide advertisements: state-owned products were advertised by a state-owned company.

The "loosening up" of the system was accompanied by an opening up of the market and products made by foreign-owned companies began to appear on the market, offering real novelties to the consumer. It was no longer the case that shoes were available: instead, there was a variety of shoes and people had a choice between Nike, Reebok, or Adidas shoes in addition to the Hungarian Tisza brand ones. Reacting to the opening up of the market, international advertising agencies appeared in Hungary at the end of the 80's. On the one hand, they were hoping to be able to do better, higher quality and more professional advertisements compared with earlier state-run advertisements for the companies going over to private ownership in the course of the privatisation process. On the other hand, they were also counting on their own partners with foreign contracts entering the Hungarian market soon.

The era following the transition and the opening up of the market saw the beginning of brand advertising, which introduced new aspects into communication: it no longer sufficed to say that a new product was good, it also had to be said what made it better than, or different from, its rival products. This is how, in the course of time, the argument that a product is bigger, tastier, more beautiful, more effective, or even environment-friendly or reusable etc. became important.

The same image-campaign is far from being as effective in Hungary as it is in the west. The first and foremost reason for this may be the difference in living standards, as a result of which the Hungarian market tends to be price-sensitive, so less emphasis is laid on brand image communication, or, for that matter, environment-conscious behaviour (with a view to selling the product/service). To do this, it is necessary to reach higher living standards where, in the decision-making process, more subtle reasons can also play a greater role, and the price of the product will no longer be the main concern. These selling reasons (price vs. brand/image) play an important role in the work of advertising agencies, hence this detour.

By now the organisations of the Hungarian advertising industry have formed several groups such as the Hungarian Advertising Association (MRSZ; I/14.), or the Association for Hungarian Communications (MAKSZ; I/15.). MAKSZ-membership is dependent on a number of conditions concerning, e.g., the business scope of the organisations, the quality of the service, ownership and size of the organisation (annual turnover, number of workers, positions filled), what is more, observation of the specified legal and moral norms, codes of ethics, too.

Based on Internet sources, MAKSZ has 23 members registered as ATL agencies⁴⁹ (although the available list was last updated in 2003). The majority are members of foreign-owned international networks but there are also some Hungarian-owned companies with 50 - 100 employees. It is important to note that in Hungary there are numerous companies which call themselves advertising agencies – typically referred to by insiders of the industry as advertising studios as they deal only with one part of the advertisement-making process (from forming the idea to its appearance) rather than with the entire process.

⁴⁹ One needs a password to access information from this homepage on the advertising industry, members, etc. However, I did not have one, so I collected most of my material from the homepage of MAKSZ.

ATL (above-the-line) is called all the classic communication tools (ad in TV, radio, newspaper and billboard); BTL (below-the-line) means all other way of communication, e.g. direct mail.

Strictly speaking, the category ATL agency corresponds to the traditional interpretation of an advertising agency. MAKSZ's list of members also features BTL, media, and online agencies.

The homepage reklamugynoksegek.lap.hu has 97 registered MAKSZ members. This list mixes the companies doing different parts of advertising (ATL, BTL, media, Online).

4.2 Structure of an advertising agency

This subsection focuses on the organisational role of creatives with a view to making their role in the organisation more understandable. This becomes important when it comes to investigating the relationship between individuals and the organisation. In general, an advertising agency can be characterised with the following organigramme:

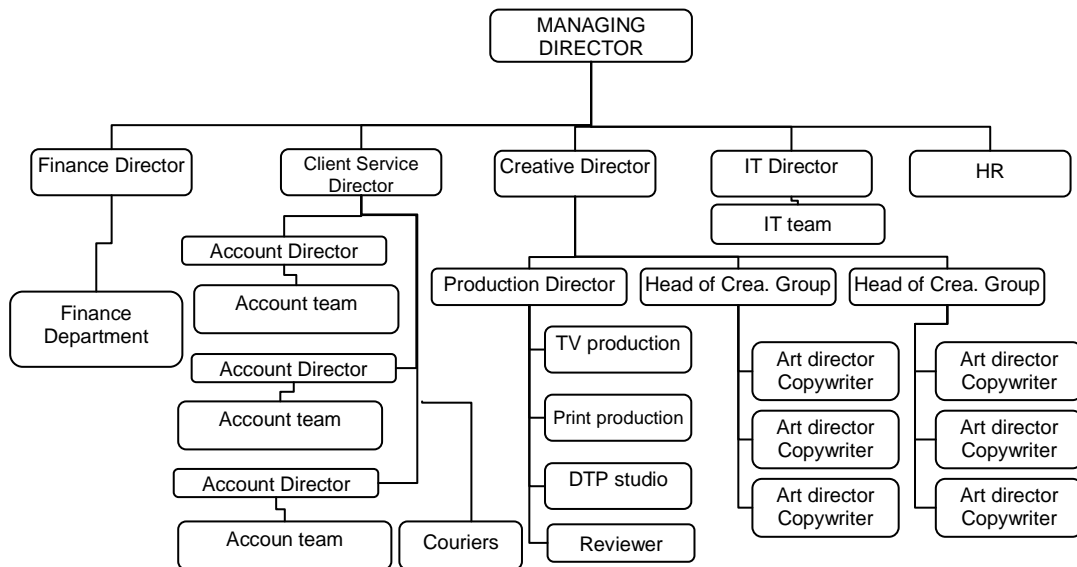


Figure 5: General structure of an advertising agency

An advertising agency typically works as a functional organisation (Dobák et al., 1996). The heads of the background functions (Finances, IT, and HR) as well as the agents of the advertisement-making process (the Client Service Manager and the Creative Manager) report to the Managing Director.

The Client Service Manager is in charge of the account teams, which are lead by the account directors, who are responsible at a managerial level for maintaining contact with individual clients (their work involves securing the profit made in the course of their work with the client as well as conducting, coordinating, and supervising the account team's work under them).

The account team (assistant, junior, executive, and senior) is responsible for keeping contact with the client, for conducting the working process and for coordinating the creatives' work (art director, copywriter, and production head).

The creative manager is in charge of the creative team, which covers several different jobs.⁵⁰ The production section prepares and coordinates the photo sessions, film shootings, and printing jobs. The workers in the different jobs are coordinated by the Creative Group Head, who is in charge of leading, coordinating, and supervising the work of the given client's creatives. The Art Director is responsible for the visual part of the creative work for any given client, and the copywriter is in charge of the textual part of the same work. From now on by "creative professionals/specialists" I will mean the art directors and copywriters supervised by the creative group head.

4.3 Potentials for, and obstacles to, self-actualisation in creatives' work

In what follows I will describe the work of creatives, highlighting the factors which support or hinder self-actualisation. The following figure shows the process of the central workflow of advertisement-making, which takes place between the client, account, and the creative team and whose efforts lead to the creation of the advertising material from the idea (which can come from the client or the agency).

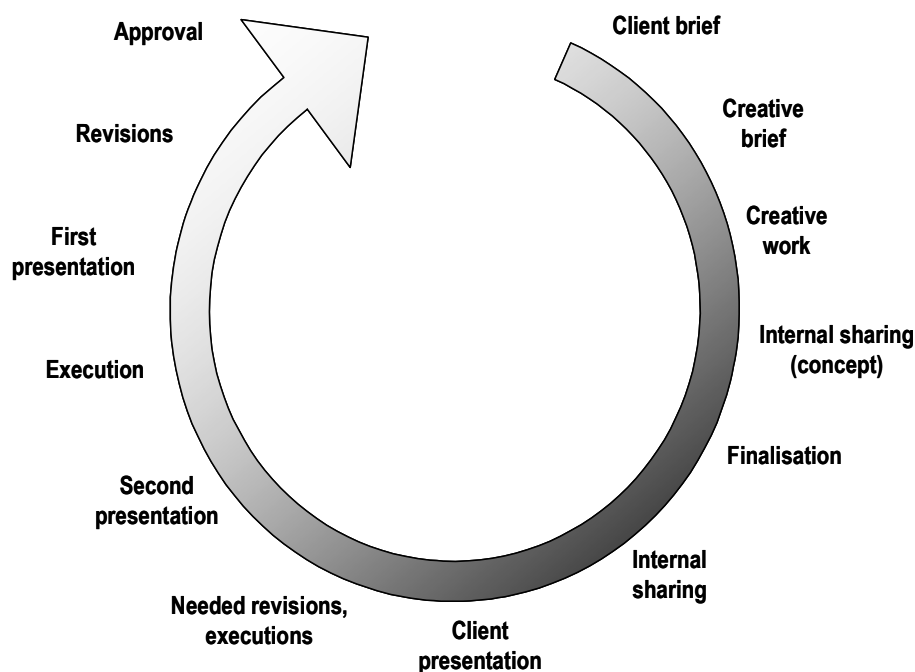


Figure 6: Central workflow of advertisement- making

⁵⁰ For an understanding of the efficient managerial style of a creative manager see Creative Management (1992) by Marsteller.

The client brief is a written document made by the client for the advertising agency in which (s)/he commissions the agency to carry out a given assignment. It also contains guidelines and information on the given assignment. Typically, it is the account that receives the client brief. The creative brief is made by account for the creatives. It contains the summary of the basics of the client brief completed with a few thought-provoking and normative elements. This is the basis on which the creatives first develop the creative idea. Then, when it is accepted by the account and creative managers, the idea is improved and detailed. This material is discussed with the client within the framework of a presentation, where the advertising agency's account is always represented while the creative group head is less often so, only in cases of greater task. On the basis of what has been discussed during the presentation, the creative professionals make necessary modifications, then, following several harmonisation sessions (presentations) with the client, the client accepts the ready material, representing the end of the workflow (the last task of account being to submit the materials in the different media).

4.3.1. Personal factors that promote or hinder self-actualisation

In the previous chapters I have defined four factors stemming from individuals that may make self-actualisation difficult or hinder it. These factors hinder self-actualisation irrespective of the jobs, thus they are likely to hinder the work of creative professionals as well. What concrete meaning do these factors display in the case of creative specialists?

- *Individuals' motivation structure.* To the extent that creatives professionals' attention is focused on fulfilling a lack of needs, i.e., their perception is lack-motivated, as exemplified by the following questions: "Am I going to be given the end-of-year bonus?", "What will the boss say if I knock off earlier today?", or "Why don't account people understand me?", their unsatisfied needs are likely to show up (not necessarily consciously) in their creative work.
- *Individuals' personality and immaturity.* I believe that if creatives have a so-called immature personality/are not autotelic workers, they are not really working in jobs suitable for them. If lack of skills prevents creatives from expressing themselves in their work, a creative job is not a happy choice for them. By the same token, if they won't use their skills "to break free of their shackles deemed unchangeable", then the advertising industry is not the right environment for them, since this industry is based on the desire to

influence people, to get customers to “break free of their shackles deemed unchangeable”. In other words, if creatives are immature, they cannot be congruent in their work.

- *Lack of a personal vision.* If creative professionals working for an advertising agency lack this vision, they cannot channel the tension inside them into their work because they do not know what their purpose would be with a piece of work: would they like to elicit the boss’s satisfaction or an increase in the demand for a specific product/service? If they are not clear on their situation and vision, their creative tension is likely to become the tension that comes from the unclear nature of their situation, which can considerably hinder them in their work and in perfecting it.
- *Lack of specific behaviour and learning.* In the course of their work creative specialists work together with several external and internal clients: other creatives, account people, and, occasionally, with the client, too. For cooperation with these workers to be successful, creative professionals cannot follow the behaviour pattern M. I. described above even if they are afraid of being hurt, they will take risks or, for that matter, appear incompetent with some of their decisions. Mindful of the values of team work, they occasionally have to let go of their desire to control situations and to undertake the process of double-loop learning, together with its happy as well as painful moments.

4.3.2 Factors stemming from creative work that promote or impede self-actualisation

In my view, the factors stemming from work which hinder self-actualisation highlight the object of the advertisement. If the values of the product/service to be advertised stands in flat opposition with the creatives’ values, and beliefs, (a point in case being socially condemned tobacco products), creatives cannot do committed work, even if they like their job. E.g., in a brainstorming session needed to work out an idea, creative specialists who do not trust (believe in) a particular product/service are likely to provide limited contribution to the work since lack of commitment and responsibility keeps individuals at a distance from a particular theme. What is more, in this case, creative professionals may also experience a certain kind of alienation from the object of the work, i.e., work itself, not being tied to their work with any kind of love experience.

As the description above suggests, creative workflow is team work, where it is not only the art director working together with the copywriter but account, and, through account, the client, too, has a considerable influence on the creatives’ work. This is the reason why, when

examining factors exerting their influence on individuals' self-actualisation via creative work, we must also consider factors stemming from the environment.

Distrust, incongruence and lack of empathy experienced by creatives, whether it comes from within the creative group, account, or the client, is bound to restrain creative professionals in performing to the best of their abilities and willingness in their work. When distracted from work by thoughts and questions like, "Well, the client is not likely to approve of this.", or "How can I convince the account that I would prefer to work at the weekend rather than now", they cannot achieve Flow. Generally speaking, we can say that *a lack of a good relationship between creatives and their co-workers* hinders them in their efforts to self-actualise in work.

Sas (2004), too, sees team work as one of the main obstacles to individuals' efforts to fully realise their abilities, since (consciously or unconsciously) the group dynamics processes within the team typically push individuals' behaviour, thus their work, too, towards avoiding extremes. He also finds important the factor stemming from the fact that the energies behind individual initiatives are easily suppressed by negative feelings experienced during team work, such as jealousy and ambition.

Naturally, *imperfection of the workflow* can also impede creatives in self-actualising. This can be exemplified by a client/creative brief which has too general information, or, at the other extreme, too concrete ideas in connection with the material to be made. Creatives can also be restrained in the workflow by observations or requests for modification that have emerged in the course of particular harmonisation sessions whether they come from within the creative group, account, or the client. In connection with this, Sas (2004) names testing as an impeding factor: testing (e.g. questionnaires, focus groups) usually fails those works that (would) produce a perplexing effect on the target group, although, he says, these elicit a visceral reaction in empathic creatives. Naturally, not being able to work at their "own pace", i.e., against tighter deadlines than would be favourable for them also counteracts creatives' self-actualisation. Furthermore, in addition to tight time frames, tight (creative or production) budget frames can also restrain creatives in making the best use of their abilities in their work.

4.3.3 Factors stemming from advertising agencies as organisations that promote or impede self-actualisation

We have discussed the structure of advertising agencies before, but the self-actualising efforts of creatives are affected not only by the structure but also by other systems and processes working within the structure as well as the values, beliefs, and assumptions behind them – in short, organisational structure.

The most conspicuous organisational factors working against creative professionals' self-actualisation is a lack of working conditions that could safeguard creative specialists' self-fulfilment. Such factors are IT background, and, from among the HR system, flexitime, the system of training and improvement incentives and team level discussions.

It seems that the management pays special attention to creatives. The reason for this is that the advertising agencies' performance is measured not only by conventional financial indicators but also by the creative materials made (see next chapter for a more detailed treatment). For instance, the management eases the demand on creatives to conform, be it appearance (e.g. clothes, neatness), behaviour (e.g. afternoon siestas, sitting on tables or feet on tables during discussions, bad language) or more flexible working hours. However, it is not certain that the more lenient managerial style reflects real empathy for, or trust in, them (as environmental factors promoting self-actualisation). Maybe the style simply conceals the thought "that's the way they do it", but there *is no real understanding towards them*.

4.3.4 Factors stemming from the context which promote or impede self-actualisation

By the context mentioned in the title I mean advertising agencies on the one hand, and on the other, the economic, political, cultural, and social environment in which advertising agencies function or creatives work.

Everybody "knows" about advertising since everybody can tell whether a particular advertisement is good or not. This is so because people believe that an advertisement is good if it pleases them. This, of course, is not the case, but it underlines the responsibility of creatives in the advertising industry. Everybody: the target group (and the not targeted one), the client and even the advertising agency, makes judgements on the basis of the creative material. *The reason for this is that the profession is weighed primarily on the basis of the creative materials* backed up by the annual creative awards (Creative Ad Competitions, Golden Blade, Golden Drum).

Legal and ethical norms, and codes of ethics, the results of the self-regulatory activity of the profession, also have an effect on creatives' self-actualising efforts.

Sas (2004) mentions *calls for tender* as another impeding factor related to the profession. The result of the tendering system is a decision based on counter-selection, which runs counter to creative professionals' autonomy. This can be traced back to the following: the jury is skewed towards accepting the more run-of-the mill tenders; the tendency to meet the formal requirements of a tender greatly limits the work, and finally the tenderer's effort not to come up with an outstanding piece but to win the tender.

Important impeding factors can stem from the economic, political, cultural, and social environment, too:

- political system (cf. Hungary before and after the transition);
- political and other lobby activities (cf. the ban on ATL advertising of tobacco products);
- economic situation, living standards (cf. earlier treatment of the concepts of price sensitivity vs. brand advertising);
- socially accepted values and their changes (trends).

4.4 Summary

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 the latest chapter, which is one step closer to practise compared with the previous ones, however, I was unable to keep to my original classification consistently because it was difficult to set apart the above three categories. In addition, I have also defined another group of influencing factors: the broader environment beyond the organisation.

In what follows I will sum up individuals' self-actualisation within an organisational environment and the factors influencing it in a figure based on the example of advertising agency creatives.

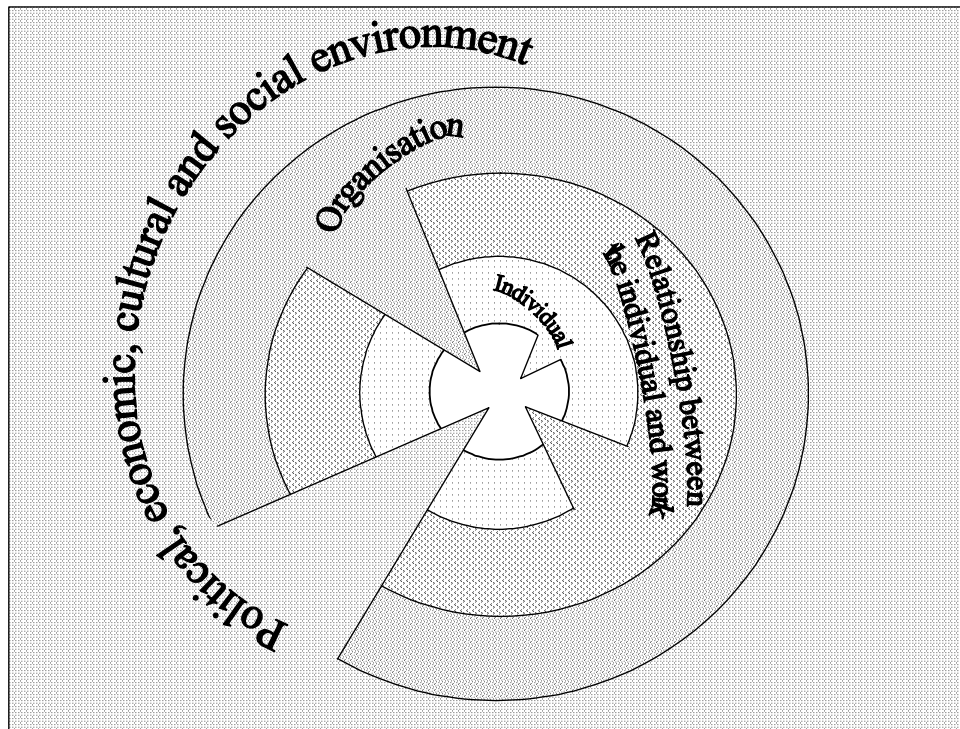


Figure 7: Summary of factors influencing individuals' self-actualisation (own representation)

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).

Moving on the road to perfection, individuals begin to resemble a clear, transparent crystal ball (inside circle). However, the road is not perfect, and there are things that refine the ball and there are also things that scratch it, break off pieces from it, or even contaminate it, so the ball moves along the road with difficulty only, stumbling, rather. The dissertation has offered a primarily theory-based examination of the "factors contaminating" the ball (individuals, the relationship between individuals and work, organisational characteristics, and the political, economic, cultural, and social environment)⁵¹.

⁵¹ There is no doubt that there exist other factors in the process of self-actualisation in addition to the influence of the environment on individuals (influence of individuals on the environment, and the interrelationship between the subsystems of the environment), but they lie outside the scope of this dissertation and I am not going to treat them here.

5. Research frames to understand individuals' self-actualisation in an organisational environment

In this chapter I will describe the details of my research geared towards understanding individual self-actualisation described in the previous chapters. My train of thought is based on Maxwell's interactive model (1996). Interactivity means that the individual elements on my research plan (research objective, theoretical background, research questions, research methodology and validity) do not follow one another in a linear fashion, rather, they make up an integrative whole by individual elements linking to several other elements simultaneously.

Before the description of the research methodology, let me make a mark: before the defense of the thesis draft I conducted a pilot research. Three employees of an international advertising agency (creative director, copywriter and art director) were the subjects of the research. The aim of it was to test the elements of the research plan: (1) research questions; methods of (2) sampling; (3) data acquisition (half-structured interview); (4) data analysis; (5) criteria of validity and (6) behaviour of the researcher. The experiences and the learning points of the pilot research are included in the upcoming presentation of the final research methodology.

First of all I will formulate the main objectives of my research which determine the current nature of my research: what are the reasons behind this research?

The theoretical background to my research is explained in the previous three chapters.

On the basis of my objective and the theoretical background I will formulate my research questions. The broad research question guiding my attention will be broken down, but primarily with a view to identifying my research assumptions. In the case of advertising creatives, it is difficult to formulate the (interview) questions which make the phenomenon of self-actualisation, together with its potentials and obstacles, tangible unless we are familiar with the exact field of research.

In the course of describing the methodology used I will enlarge on the characteristic features of the methods of qualitative/interpretative case study and the details necessary to create that method: sampling, methods of data acquisition, characteristics of data analysis, and the researcher's role. Under the headword "validity", I will touch upon those points of the

research which I will carry out during my research to secure validity, reliability, and generalisability. Finally, I will present the field of the research – the advertising agency – where the research had taken place and the timing of the research.

5.1 Research objectives

Research objectives determine the relevance of the research and comprise the motives and desires behind a particular research. They direct the ideas of the theoretical background and influence the formulation of the research questions. They highlight the importance of the results obtained both from a theoretical and a practical point of view (Maxwell, 1996).

The *personal objective* behind the research indicates commitment to the research and to its methodology (Maxwell, 1996). It is important to be aware of this because the cognitive and emotional charge stemming from commitment is bound to show up in the treatment of the theoretical background (the treatment of the special literature) and in the course of the planning and execution of the research.

The *practical objective* relates to achieving something, while the *research objective* draws attention to understanding a particular phenomenon (Maxwell, 1996). On this basis, I have formed the following objectives for my research:

- *Practical objective: to create useable knowledge (both for university and practical specialists) by identifying the potentials for, and the obstacles to, self-actualisation in work;*
- *Research objective: to understand what are the potentials for, and obstacles to, the self-actualisation of advertising creatives; partial generalisation to other contexts of the factors promoting and impeding self-actualisation:⁵²*
- *Personal objective: to understand my own situation and that of some acquaintances of mine in a working environment; to earn a Ph. D. degree by dealing with a topic which at present I find the most intriguing.*

⁵² This is treated in greater detail under the headwords validity, reliability, and generalisability.

5.2 Research question

The research question is the core element of the research plan, this is what connects the four other elements of the research plan. On the one hand, it determines the contents and topic of the research and it also has a considerable influence on the methodology, too. The research question targets what is to be unravelled by the researcher, what the researcher does *not* know in relation to a particular topic, and what the researcher intends to achieve with his/her research (Maxwell, 1996).

The broadly worded 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?”*

At the same time, it is natural that the previous chapters described as theoretical background influence my research, my own hypotheses and observations. In order for me, the researcher, to see all this clearly, and to want (or not want) to avoid them, I am going to break down my main research question into sub-questions.

1. What personal factors lead creative specialists to choosing “creative” professions and how do these factors provide the possibility of work-related self-actualisation?

This sub-question is tied to the individual-related factors promoting or impeding self-actualisation. To me, a vocation means something different from a profession: a vocation is a profession which fully fits in with the individual’s vision of the future, thus making him/her committed to fulfilling the work related to his vocation.

2. How do these features of the job and the relation between person and job affect creatives’ work-related experience of self-actualisation?

The question concerns how the relationship between individuals and their work (work-related) characteristics affect the potential for self-actualisation? The answers to the question will shed light on what the significant characteristics are for creatives and how they influence their work and their efforts to self-actualise.

3. How do characteristics of, and people working for, an organisation influence creatives’ work-related self-actualisation?

This research sub-question investigates the organisational features which affect individuals' self-actualisation: what are the important features influencing creative professionals' self-actualisation? The features may concern structure, individual systems, processes, but important people (formal and informal managers) and behaviours may also be identified.

4. How do features of the profession affect creatives' work-related self-actualisation?

In this group of questions I intend to find out about features and their effects that stem from creatives' broader environment and have a bearing on the self-actualising process. In addition to revealing the effects of these factors on self-actualisation, I also wish to see whether creative professionals formulate the social responsibility of their job. Finally, some of the myths surrounding creative professions and creative specialists may also be revealed, including the question whether the profession itself provides an opportunity for self-actualisation.

5.3 Research methodology

Research methodology is closely related to research objectives, research questions, and, of course, validity (Maxwell, 1996). The wording of the main research question dealt with just now – „How do they experience...?” – foreshadows qualitative research based on an interpretative approach⁵³. 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). We can arrive at the understanding and the effects using inductive logic (Maxwell, 1996, Easterby-Smith et al. 1991). Another characteristic feature of qualitative research is that the theories and concepts used, or even the research question itself⁵⁴, may change in the process of the research, and that the stages of data acquisition and data analysis coalesce.

⁵³ A thorough understanding of qualitative research and the interpretative approach has been facilitated by successful dissertations written by previous students of this doctoral programme: Bokor, 1999; Gelei, 2002, Topcu, 2005. On the position qualitative research in Hungary see Radácsi, 2003. I wish to extend my thanks to Attila Bokor and László Radácsi for the lessons and experiences of the course Qualitative research methodology, which lead me to committing myself to this methodology.

⁵⁴ Throughout the research the research questions became narrower, more accurate, as the original questions seemed to be too general – hence the interviews and the data analysis process became too complex (for original questions see thesis draft).

Interpretative research philosophy and methodology can be regarded as part of a *qualitative research school* (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). According to the interpretative approach (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, Kindler, 1989, Kovács, 1989, Gioia and Pitre, 1990, Hassard, 1991, Blaikie, 1995, Kieser, 1995, Alvesson–Willmott, 1996, and Gelei, 2002, Maaloe, 2007), the world, being the result of a social construction, is subjective, i.e. reality is brought about, maintained, and changes in the course of interpersonal processes, e.g. communication. In accordance with this, the researcher strives to understand the local meanings and phenomena, conscious of the fact that (s)he him/herself is part of the observed reality. Interpretation is (1) “...to make the behaviour of nature, societies and other people intelligible..., (2) reach a hindsight of why people feel and act like they do...” (Maaloe, 2007:12). To achieve this, researchers with an interpretative approach carry out in-depth analysis of a small sample with a variety of methods – in contrast with the large sample-based hypothesis testing known from quantitative research⁵⁵.

The present research does not focus on testing pre-defined hypotheses, either; hence it is not my intention to set up research hypotheses in the course of my research plan. In contrast, I intend to choose the methodology (methods of data collection and data analysis, validity criteria) as well as I can so that I can provide as thorough an answer as possible.

5.3.1 The methodology of case studies

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 (Creswell, 1998). It is a favoured qualitative methodology which can be used to achieve different goals: to build a theory or to gain a better understanding of the local context (Bryman, 1992, Yin, 1994, Eisenhardt, 1989; In: Gelei, 2002; Marshall-Rossman, 1989). This is due to the fact that case studies make it possible to connect particular events because they pay attention to the interactions between the cases and between the case and its context, respectively (Maaloe, 2003). Stake’s approach goes beyond this when he says that the purpose of a case study is to

⁵⁵ The different level and methods of interpretation see Maaloe, 2007:30-103.

understand a particular case as thoroughly as possible, hence the research question is „What can we learn from a single case?“ (Stake, 1994, In: Denzin and Lincoln 1994:236).

Maaloe agreeing with the latter words, says that the case study research method gives the chance to (2004):

- trace links between discrete happenings;
- how and why a certain chain of events may be released.

In Stake's interpretation, a case is a „bounded system“, bounded by time and place (Creswell, 1998). The selection of case signifies what a researcher finds interesting, or, how (and through what case) (s)he assumes his/her research question can be answered. For Bryman (1992) and Creswell (1998) case has a broader scope of meaning, thus paving the way for a holistic approach. A case is a unit of analysis, hence it can be a place, a programme, a particular behaviour, an activity, or particular individuals – what is more, being inseparable, these units can also be investigated simultaneously. Yin calls the research methodology that treats all these units together *embedded case study* (1994).

5.3.2 The researcher's role

It is necessary to say a few words about the role of the researcher which emerges during the research because, 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. “Do not just look for facts, but be aware, when, where and how you generate them” (Maaloe, 2004). 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). As Maaloe indicates (2004): the researcher should not only look for facts but also be aware, when, when and how (s)he creates them. 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.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data obtained during the research, it is also important that trust should be built between the researcher and the research subjects. This highlights the need for an open and frank attitude on the part of the researcher (e.g. communication) both in the process of the research and in interpreting the results. Of course it is also important that the researcher should not exaggerate his/her “gestures” made to create

trust since this can also produce the feeling of distrust in the other party. In relation to this, I think that for a researcher with a qualitative approach empathy and self-confidence are also important competencies.

In order to build and increase trust, I used the following methods:

- Clarify the role and purpose of the research with the person who has “allowed” the researcher into the field of research (from now on: contact person) and with the research subjects.
- Hand over a draft of the dissertation, first of all to the contact person, to read;
- Confidentiality concerning customers and current projects;
- Handle research subjects’ data confidentially;
- Share the results of the research with the contact person and the research subject.

5.3.3 Sampling and identifying the unit of analysis

The sampling method of qualitative research is planned (Maxwell, 1996), in other words, it is criterion-based (LeCompte – Preissle, 1993), which suggests that, unlike with quantitative research, the researcher looks for samples (cases) with the help of which (s)he can obtain important information in connection with his/her question. This theoretical grounding means the identification of the research subjects, who, based on the researcher’s assumptions, possess important information. The features of qualitative sampling are as follows, and have used during the research (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Bokor, 1999; and Gelei, 2002):

- small sample and embededness in context (as opposed to large sample and disregard for context);
- sample selected in a deliberate, focussed way (as opposed to random sampling);
- theoretically-oriented sample (as opposed to representativity);
- sample emerging gradually, step-by-step (as opposed to pre-defined sample).

Miles-Huberman give a more detailed description of the sampling types, from among which the researcher can choose in the light of his/her strategy. These types are presented in the following table:

Type of sampling	Purpose
Maximum variation	Documents diverse variations and identifies important common patterns
Homogeneous	Focuses, reduces, simplifies, facilitates group interviewing
Critical case	Permits logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases
Theory based	Finding examples of a theoretical construct and thereby elaborate and examine it
Confirming and disconfirming cases	Elaborating initial analysis, seeking exceptions, looking for variation
Snowball or chain	Identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich
Extreme or deviant case	Learning from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest
Typical case	Highlights what is normal or average
Intensity	Information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely
Politically important cases	Attracts desired attention or avoids attracting undesired attention
Random purposeful	Adds credibility to sample when potential purposeful sample is too large
Stratified purposeful	Illustrates subgroups; facilitates comparisons
Criterion	All cases that meet some criterion; useful for quality assurance
Opportunistic	Following new leads; taking advantage of the unexpected
Combination or mixed	Triangulation, flexibility, meets multiple interests and needs
Convenience	Saves time, money, and effort, but at the expense of information and credibility

Table 11: Typology of sampling strategies in qualitative inquiry (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 28; Bokor, 1999, Gelei, 2002) – the types in bold show the sampling strategies employed in my own research

With case study methodology, identifying the case is accompanied by a simultaneous identification of the unit of analysis, too. Accordingly, I name what I regarded as a sample or a unit of analysis during my research.

The objective of my research is to see how advertising creative professionals experience the factors promoting and impeding self-actualisation. Advertising creative specialists as well as their efforts to self-actualisation in their work have already been dealt with.

Thus, the unit of analysis is 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 or projects, 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 (see the workflow of advertising agencies described earlier) are typically organized around these projects. As a result, the particular pieces of work or projects and the

chosen organisation itself constitute a unit of analysis – thus I intended to prepare an embedded case study.

Because the phenomenon of self-actualisation is not unambiguous, it will be important to specify (refine) the following concept(s) with the research subjects:

- What does self-actualisation mean to them? and/ or
- What do they do/feel/think when they are trying to reach self-actualisation?

Since the factors promoting and impeding self-actualisation also constitute part of the research question, within the phenomenon of self-actualisation those critical cases should be investigated when

- The “conventional activity” turns into self-actualisation (promoting factors) or
- Self-actualisation turns into “traditional activity” (impeding factors).

Finally, so that I can examine the above phenomena, it is important that in the research:

- There should be more research subjects taking part;
- The people interviewed should work on different projects.

The following figure “presents” the research subjects. It is partly seen and the analysis will emphasize more that the above mentioned goals were aimed to be reached through the diversity of (1) level of hierarchy; (2) job; (3) client; (4) work experience and (5) period of life.

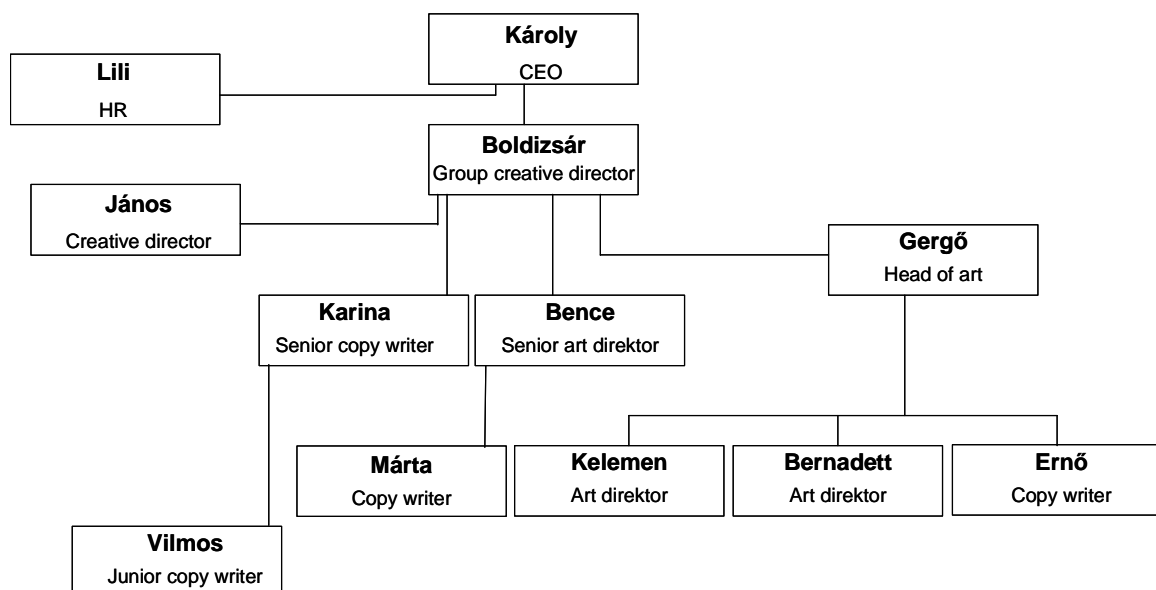


Figure 8: Job and position within the organization strucure of the research subjects (March-June, 2008)

The sampling method has been partly directed by me: at the end of each interview I asked the person to suggest me colleagues who have different experience and a different mentality concerning the topic of the research.

5.3.4 Data acquisition and data analysis

Since the researcher intends to understand the complex phenomenon (unit of analysis and its context), in the course of data acquisition (s)he needs to find adequate and sufficient information to understand it. It is not recommended that (s)he should interpret the phenomena based on too few data, nor should (s)he get lost in too much information – the latter can also significantly increase research time and cost (Marshall-Rossman, 1989).

To do this, it is inevitable for the researcher to carry out field research, too. Also, (s)he should not use only his or her “ears to collect data, but rather, all his/her senses” to enable his or her understanding to embrace the tiny, subtle details as well (Kalnins, 1986)⁵⁶.

In qualitative research the processes of data collection and data analysis do not become separated, rather, they take place in parallel. This iterative process comes to an end when the researcher thinks that new data or new information can no longer contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon – this stage is called “theoretical saturation” (Glaser – Strauss, 1967).

The following table summarizes the main questions which, in my view, facilitate a more in-depth understanding of the factors promoting or impeding creative professionals’ self-actualisation. By thinking these over, we can formulate the data acquisition techniques.

⁵⁶ This brought up e.g. the topic of ergonomy (see later: results of the research).

What would I like to know?	Why is it important to know it?	What type of data provides the answer to this question?	Who can give me this information?
What does self-actualisation mean?	To have an in-depth understanding of his/her attitude to the key concept of the research – as well as its deeper meanings	Interview	All research subjects
How can/does self-actualisation show up in creative professionals' work?	Promotes "graspability" of self-actualisation	Interview Observation	Creative Creative manager HR-people Manager of advertising agency Creative
Does (s)he make efforts to self-actualisation during his/her work? How?	To clarify the relevance of the conversation	Interview Observation+interview	
What does (s)he do/think/feel when trying to reach self-actualisation?	To grasp the experience of self-actualisation	Observation+interview	Creative
Who/what influences his/her work and/or efforts to self-actualise? Why?	To identify factors affecting creative specialists' efforts to self-actualisation	Interview Observations+interview	Creative
What is the particular effect like? Why?	To determine the direction and weight of particular affecting factors	Interview	Creative

Table 12: Questions and answers facilitating data collection and analysis
Based on LeCompte – Preissle (1993), adapted to my own research

It can be seen that the primary means of data acquisition in the research is qualitative interview (Kvale, 1996), but observation and related interview and diary may also prove useful tools of data collection.

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. Half-structured interviews enable the researcher to return to previous research subjects and collect any missing data or information if, in the course of the research, new topics emerge which the researcher deems important. This, of

course, also requires the researcher to revise earlier formulations in the light of the new information (Carter, 1999)⁵⁷.

It is important to note that during the interviews distortions may occur in the answers of those interviewed, either deliberately or when they are relying on their espoused theories.⁵⁸ This again draws attention to the issue of trust, something that the researcher must always make conscious efforts to create and maintain. In addition, the researcher can avoid or reduce interviewees' distortions by a conscious effort to maintain equality and the possibility of free choice, by increasing the perceived relevance of the research and by carrying on open dialogues containing the assumptions, too (Gelei, 2002).

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.

I have intended to use the observation method for data collecting, but the research site has not let me doing so – again, because of confidentiality.

Although the researcher's diary is not mentioned in the table above, I consider it an important tool of data collection and have used it, too. With its help, I have put into words my feelings and thoughts behind my experiences. It has enabled me to filter out and treat as research data all those – recurring – samples (assumptions, beliefs, and impressions) which play a role in the process of the research and to become conscious of the nature of their effect on the results of the research.

If the researcher returns to the field several times during the research, it is important, on the one hand, for him/her to collect new information as change over time may also affect the results. On the other hand, it is also important for him/her to revise previously obtained results in the light of the new information (Carter, 1999). This is indeed important, as it can be seen, the research took place a longer period:

⁵⁷ For details of the half-structured interviews see: Appendix.

⁵⁸ See the "burden of self-actualisation" mentioned earlier and the arguments against the research in Table 9.

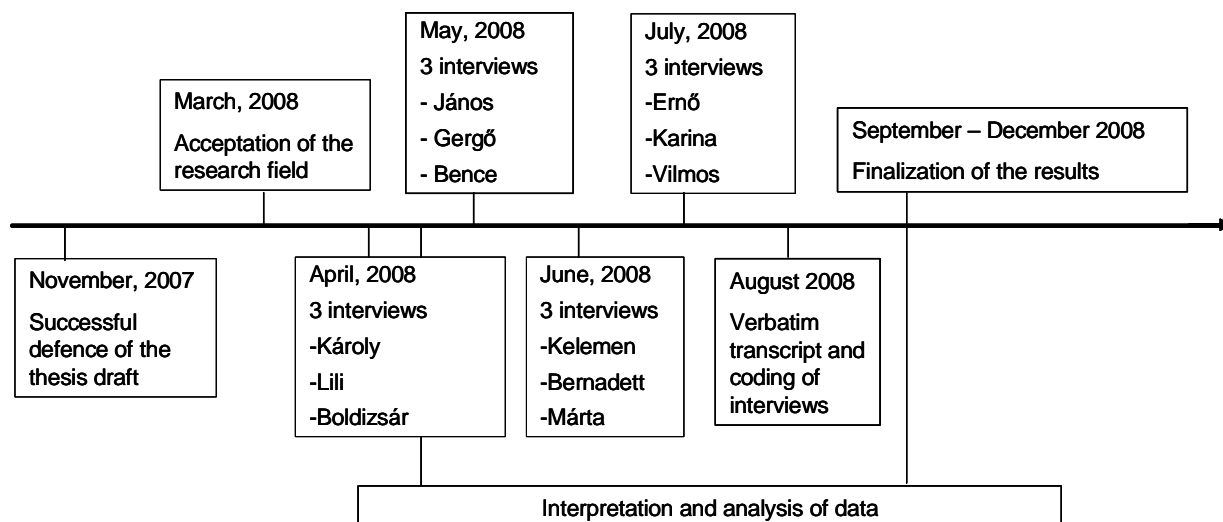


Figure 9: Research's timeline

The data obtained during data collection is first recorded (diktaphone). To ensure the quality of the conclusions, it is important not to lose information in the course of the recording. I used both ways (Gelei, 2002) to do this: verbatim transcript and intensive note-taking

Data analysis means the systematisation of the data collected by samples, categories, and basic units. Interpretation appears as early as systematisation (since the basis for this is the researcher's understanding of the given phenomenon), but it acquires greater emphasis when the researcher assigns meaning and significance to the information, explains the emergent patterns, and the relationship between them.

Interpretation is a continuous and iterative process which starts as early as the data collection stage (Carter, 1999). The first interpretations were done during the interviews through asking questions. Further on, when finalizing the interviews, thinking over the impressions of the interviews and the theory of self-actualization the first coding process meant the second interpretation of the data. Most of these categories remained but some changes were made during the final coding process. Final interpretations were made during the formulation of the research results.

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.

5.3.5 Validity, reliability, and generalisability

With qualitative research, validity, reliability, and generalisability have different meanings compared with quantitative research⁵⁹. This difference is shown in the following table.

	<i>Traditional (positivist) viewpoint</i>	<i>Interpretive/ Qualitative viewpoint</i>
Validity	Does an instrument measure what it is supposed to measure?	Has the researcher gained full access to the knowledge and meanings of informants?
Reliability	Will the measure yield the same results on different occasions (assuming no real change in what is to be measured)?	Will similar observations be made by different researchers on different occasions?
Generalisability	What is the probability that patterns observed in a sample will also be present in the wider population from which the sample is drawn?	How likely is it that ideas and theories generated in one setting will also apply in other settings?

Table 13: Questions of validity, reliability and generalizability (Easterby-Smith et al., 1993: 41; Bokor, 1999; Gelei, 2002)

In addition to being different in meaning, the time of “observing” these criteria will also be different in quantitative and qualitative research: in quantitative research, checking validity, reliability, and generalisability represents the end of data analysis (Bokor, 1999). In contrast, in qualitative research, the researcher must strive to secure these criteria as early as the research process, not only when it comes to formulating results (Kvale, 1994).

Validity can often be regarded as given in qualitative research, since it typically builds on local interpretations. However, the researcher can impair this given if his or her results are not authentic for the research subjects or the reader (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

In what follows I will list techniques used in qualitative research which can help increase validity (external and internal) and secure reliability, and which I have used in my research (Maxwell, 1996, Taylor – Bogdan, 1983; Ely et al, 1993; Huberman – Miles, 1994; Miles – Huberman, 1994, Kvale, 1994, 1996, In: Gelei, 2002:157-159):

- Researcher attitude and practice: researcher’s knowledge and his or her frank, (self)-critical and creative approach;

⁵⁹ On the different interpretations of validity in qualitative research see Creswell, 1998: 200.

- Researcher self-knowledge and critical self-reflection: I have stressed before that it is important for the researcher to be aware of his or her own assumption, thought patterns and possible distortions of his or her perception. To do this, the researcher needs a high degree of self-knowledge and constant self-reflection (research diary can be a good tool);
- Transparent researcher practice and research process means e.g. documenting the research process, detailed description, “dense description” of the revealed interpretations;
- Searching for discrepant data and cases, rival explanations: examining data and cases which could contradict emergent conclusions;
- Triangulation: multiple, independent examination of the same phenomenon, which becomes incorporated in the entire research as a kind of attitude;
- Feedback from colleagues and fellow researchers: from people who know the field and those who don’t;
- Feedback from information providers (member check): people in the organisation give (or do not give) feedback on the results of the research (consensus validation);

As I have mentioned before, great emphasis needs to be placed on the validity of qualitative research already in the research process. With case studies, this can show up in the following (Maaloe, 2003):

Stages in research	Orientation	
	Theoretical	Related to other domains
Creating discrete impressions of what is Synthesizing, searching for wholes and/or creating meaning	Identification of what COMPLETENESS Does the research as a whole cover the experiences and insights of the persons in the field as well as their background? Compilation of data TRANSPARENCY AND TRANSFERABILITY Are the changing circumstances around the fieldwork included has the presentation a form that enable the informants to give their voice as well as other researchers a possibility to explore whether they can follow up upon in their work?	Generation of data DEPENDABILITY Does text fit together on the premises of the informants? Are an account for necessary changes in research desing included? Application of results CONFIRMABIILITY Presentation of the sufficient background to evaluate the usefulness of the study for the informants as well as giving others the possibility to see whether they might transfer and test the results at other domains

Table 14: Standards for good research (Maaloe, 2003: 46)

In qualitative research, the criterion of generalisability can be applied to the field or a group under study (internal generalisability) or outside those (external generalisability) – in fact, the

former is a measure of the strength of qualitative research. To the extent that a researcher uses the results and experience to enrich the theoretical background, (s)he meets the criterion of analytical generalisability (Maxwell, 1996).

Finally, I introduce a few methods (Miles and Huberman, 1994) which I will use in my research to secure generalisability. These

- evaluate the degree of universality of the phenomenon examined and identify the factors restricting generalisation;
- make the degree of the typicality of a particular case/field explicit;
- show to what degree those affected by the research find the results generalisable;
- help the reader form an opinion by increasing the specification of the description.

5.4 Field research at the Advertising Agency

Research for the dissertation was conducted at the Advertising Agency (henceforth referred to simply as advertising agency); the company is the Hungarian subsidiary of a global advertising corporation, and has been present in the Hungarian market since 1988. It has, accordingly, been one of the pioneers of the Hungarian advertising scene (see section 4.1). The company employs approximately one hundred people, working on a total of some twenty brands (both Hungarian and international).

The history of the company in Hungary can be divided into three sections; the first of these chapters was the entry of the company into the Hungarian market.

The acquisition of the international network of the advertising corporation by a financial investor called, however, for new operative strategies and priorities.

*“This change, at the beginning of the ‘90s brought with it an entirely new *modus operandi*. [...] You had to deliver in two areas at the same time: you had to demonstrate your professional qualifications while meeting very strict financial expectations. Ever since, the management has been facing the challenge of reconciling long-term goals and short-term expectations simultaneously.” (Károly)*

The third chapter of the company’s history began in 2005 – after seventeen years, the top manager of the agency retired, handing over his seat to the current managing director and a new management team. The number one priority of the new management was the repositioning of the company in the market; as a result of the steps taken, the number of international clients dropped, but the number of Hungarian partners increased (40-60%). Additionally, the internal operations of the company also saw changes, the result of a review

of organisational solutions within the agency. Today, the company is moving away from the traditional hierarchy, toward a lean operation, project-based approach to work.

“One staff member is responsible for all aspects of a campaign, from start to finish. They take care of administrative duties, but participate in strategic planning as well. [...] We are still at the beginning of this process, so it is not as though we’ve already reached the Promised Land.” (Károly)

“This is not a small advertising agency employing perhaps fifty people. Our processes are seriously regulated; we have, for instance, a project tracking system, put in place at the request of production colleagues. This system monitors the campaign from day one until completion. [...] As a result, we have a sort of group dynamics in place; extreme opinions become subdued, and you can really see who is open to what. Things move along more quickly and are more coordinated. The organisation has become more flexible, and is thus better able to handle critical situations.” (Lili)

The last several years have seen changes also in terms of orders: while previously almost all of the company’s activities (90%) were focused on creating ATL campaigns for the clients, the agency today provides roughly 40% of its services in other (BTL, DM, promotions, CRM, activation, etc.) marketing areas. As the managing director emphasised, dedicated sections were established within the company to deal with these services (so-called “integrated organisational structure” [Károly]). The agency is thus able to present marketing communications solutions to its clients based on professional considerations, and not only subject to finances.

5.4.1 Introducing the Advertising Agency

I wish to present, first of all, a preliminary overview of the advertising agency’s organisational structure and management, as well as the scope of activities which set it apart – later, the discussion of research findings will present a much more detailed picture of the organisation.

The advertising agency has four teams working with clients: one team deals with internationally contracted brands, two work with Hungarian clients and one handles BTL materials, regardless of the nature of the contract.

Three of the four teams have dual management structures, having both a creative director and an account manager. One of the four teams, however, has only one leader; in the case of this team, the creative and the account divisions are co-located physically as well. As the above already shows, there is no flow of creative directors between the various teams (in the case of hiring practices, for instance, this means that applicants are hired to join a specific team, and

not the company in general). When dealing with tenders, it occasionally happens that the group working on the materials to be submitted is composed of members of different teams; the new trend, however, is for a standing “tender team” to work together, representing all four regular company teams (Lili, Gergő).

The most defining member and shaper of the organisational culture is the managing director (Károly). When it comes to establishing and enforcing – or bending – rules, he has the final say.

“The spider in his cobweb, per the classic situation. Central decision-making is the norm in non-formalised situations. [...] Occasionally the CEO alludes to the regulations – but sometimes it is precisely him who finds other solutions. This is only up to his own logic.”
(Lili)

This brings an element of uncertainty to the operations of the company; for the most part, it is still predictable, however, especially after a long learning process (see the research findings). The managing director is, at the same time, highly thought of professionally: “[...] *the CEO keeps track of competitors and knows what personnel changes are going on in the business [...]*” (Lili). In other words, he is focused on more than just financial expectations, and does more than maintain good relations with existing and potential clients. He also supports the processes which help foster these.

One special feature of the organisation is its so-called 360-degree marketing communications activity. This entails the development of multi-channel marketing communications strategies for the particular client brief (e.g. television, city light, DM letters and guerrilla marketing), so that the given marketing messages reach as much of the target audience as possible. Accordingly, the advertising agency distinguishes between integrated and non-integrated clients; the former already utilise 360-degree communications, and the advertising agency’s goal for the latter group is to introduce integration. *“If the client is a ‘silo,’ it is our task to present ways of integrating, while being careful not to enter areas where we could be impinging on the client’s interests”* (Károly). This kind of activity is closely related to the issue of self-actualisation; for more on this subject, see the following section.

Following a review of the research framework of the dissertation (research methodology and field research), the next section will present my findings.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter I have described the research plan with which I wish to learn about self-actualisation in an organisational setting and the factors promoting or impeding it. By using qualitative research based on case studies I intend to back up, or to question, the theories summed up in previous chapters since, whether I like it or not, these concepts will “stick with me” during the process of my research. The specific methodology will help me to better understand the phenomenon of self-actualisation and be able to look behind the data (Daft, 1995). I believe that, due to the qualitative nature of my research and the topic itself, it will be very important for me to continually reflect on my role as a researcher and to experience the research process in its entirety.

6. Research findings: analysing the experience, as well as the impeding or promoting factors, of self-actualisation

This section of the dissertation will present the findings of the research described previously.

The question I was looking for answers to 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?”*

First, I will clarify the concept of self-actualisation: what does the concept mean for the respondents (the creative directors of the advertising agency) and how is it understood generally? An understanding of the concept is necessary for one to be able to clearly experience it; and only by doing so is it possible to recognise factors which promote or impede it.

The findings of my research are presented accordingly. Following an interpretative analysis of the experience of self-actualisation, impeding factors are presented, using the same structure utilised already when examining the relevant literature.

- Impeding factors resulting from the actions – though not necessarily conscious actions – of the individual;
- Impeding factors which can be traced back to the relationship of the individual to his or her work;
- Organisational barriers (organisational processes, systems and other factors);
- Impeding factors resulting from the broader environment (political, economic, cultural and social).

These factors were determined by the creative directors of the advertising agency themselves, based on their own experiences. 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. In other words, when drawing conclusions, I have paid attention to treating the case studies of the advertising professionals as a kind of “surface”: how can these cases be used to come to a

greater *general* understanding of self-actualisation as well as of the factors which act as obstacles or which support it?

6.1 The concept of self-actualisation

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).*”

It is important to emphasise, however, that the *research applies to individual self-actualisation within the realm of organisational structures*.⁶⁰ Accordingly, when I refer to or analyze the concept of self-actualisation henceforth, this caveat is to be used.

Following a discussion of the defining framework, my goal in this section is to fine-tune this definition, and to determine what exactly is understood by individual self-actualisation within an organisational framework. The fine-tuning in this case will mean that I will describe real-life experiences to support the definition, adding a layer of practical experience to the theoretical framework. At the conclusion of the section, a newer and more precise definition will be offered.

So that this definition may indeed be provided, I have collected cases from the respondents during the interviews which serve as evidence of them having experienced a kind of self-actualisation within their organisational structure. First, the expressions used in these descriptions will be presented and examined. Then, I will cover the behavioural aspect of these experiences; finally, an examination will be provided of just what self-actualisation is, and what it is not – in other words, a “cognitive map” of the subject will be offered.

⁶⁰ During the interviews, I encountered cases of self-actualisation which interview subjects experienced outside the organisational framework. I did not pose further questions about these incidents; although they were very interesting, they digressed from the topic and the research questions of this dissertation.

6.1.1 Describing self-actualisation verbally (expressions)

Prior to beginning the interviews, I shared the goal and major questions of the research with the respondents. All of them were surprised when hearing the expression “self-actualisation” used. As the interviews have shown, the reason for this was that this expression 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.

1. 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)

“[...] to make as full use of my potential as possible, to bring out the best in myself and in ourselves.” (Gergő)

“[...] it brings intellectual pleasure.” (Bence)

“[...] inspiration [...]” (János)

“[...] focusing. You shouldn’t daydream; you have to concentrate extremely on something and then get to the bottom of that information.” (Boldizsár)

“[...] I’m on the right track; I have plans and I have goals. If I can realise these, that is good; if I can’t, that is not good.” (Ernő)

2. Self-actualisation as *emotional involvement*:

“Personally, I feel a sense of accomplishment if we achieve our business goals; but I am most satisfied only if there is some sort of value added.” (János)

“I really like producing something nice with my own two hands.” (Vilmos)

“[...] a state of arousal [...] positive stress” (Boldizsár)

“[...] I received the brief, I began working on the project, and the ‘flowers just began to bloom.’” (Kelemen)

“This kind of fulfilment or a sense of completion is, I think, just generally a good feeling [...]” (Gergő)

As a dissenting opinion: “[...] it gets me down.” (Berni)

3. 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)

“This is where I come to find fulfilment.” (Bence)

“[...] it grabbed me after all.” (János)

“[...] I am trying to ‘live myself’ to the fullest.” (Vilmos)

“[...] I try to live my life to the fullest; I try to find the beauty in my work, and I try to find self-actualisation.” (Karina)

“It can give you new wings [...]” (Karina)

“This is where I truly belong.” (Kelemen)

“[...] it lets you fly.” (Ernő)

Differing opinions: “They took advantage of us for these very minor things [...] It’s at times like this you think that, ‘to heck with it – if they don’t value my contributions, I’m certainly not going to give them my best effort!’” (Karina)

“[...] I am not finding self-actualisation – but maybe some little piece of me that was cut off is.” (Márti)

It is clear that both expressions relating to self-actualisation and expressions relating to the lack thereof are *rooted in experience* and are *value-suffused*. All of these have an effect on the individual, and the individual in question experiences these to a great extent.

At the conclusion of each of the interviews, I typically asked the respondent what they would say “the concept of self-actualisation means.” The answers received to this question helped me attain a better understanding of the concept of self-actualisation.

It appears as though one approach to self-actualisation describes the concept as an *experience*:

“I get goose bumps all over; everything becomes brighter, everyone smiles and we feel that the problem is solved. [...] Pure happiness.” (Gergő)

“It’s a state of being somewhere between sleep and awakeness. I’m not quite experiencing a sense of not knowing where I am, but if the phone were to ring or if someone were to enter the office, that really has the effect of bringing me back to reality.” (Boldizsár)

“[...] you think; you have a world you’ve imagined for yourself, where you try to realise your goals.” (Berni)

“It is a good feeling. A very good feeling, when you think of something that just comes to you seemingly out of nowhere. It just pops into your mind and you know it will work.” (Ernő)

The other group of interview subjects, I found, looks upon self-actualisation as a *process* whereby the individual can feel that he or she has become *him- or herself*.

“[...] Self-actualisation is something that makes me feel good at the end. And I feel that I was not forced to give up a part of myself, or of my visions, thoughts and desires. I am finally able to be who I am or who I want to be [...] This is a gradual process; I feel that every project has this kind of process for me [...]” (Karina)

“[...] What I feel is self-actualisation is when something I had planned works out. Sure, this is followed by the next goals set for me, but I feel I am in the right place.” (Vilmos)

Based on these two separate approaches, 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.

These two characteristics will be discussed in greater detail in the following section, which seeks to answer the question: “how does one act if the individual is striving for self-actualisation?”

6.1.2 Capturing self-actualisation in behaviour

The following quotes will be used to underscore the position that the perception of self-actualisation differs not just on the cognitive level, but also as far as behaviour is concerned. Individuals all assign their own specific content to the concept – even though all of the subjects interviewed for this dissertation were creative directors.

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’s my idea”)

“It would be self-actualisation if I could implement every single one of my ideas.” (Márti)

“Ultimately, it will be your idea that is realised – and this is what self-actualisation is about. The question is just how much of a role you are allowed to have in this.” (Gergő)

“It is important that the idea is born out of your mind. What is important is the experience, not whether it is ultimately realised or not.” (Bence)

“[...] 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)

“Yes, it would be a kind of self-actualisation if I were able to come up with the kind of mascot that the Skála Kópé figure was in Hungary years ago.” (Kelemen)

“I come up with my ideas at home: two speakers, turn the music up, lie on my back – and let the ideas stream forth. You’re not actually thinking; you just come up with a thought or two that you jot down – you float free.” (Ernő)

The results of the research indicate that individuals who view self-actualisation in this way tend to “project” themselves into ideas, films or figures/mascots. What this means is that they “objectify” themselves and “create” themselves. *The point of departure for the creative process in their case is their own idea and their own person. For this reason of personal involvement, they become very much attached to the result of the process* (see section 2.3.6).

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.” (Berni)

“[...] We just had a meeting about this yesterday, and we got into quite a debate. [...] Then I chimed in, and described what I would think is the best solution. [...] At times like this, it really feels good that it’s you who is able to solve the problem.” (Karina)

“It was certainly a good challenge for me. You really had to get down to the nitty-gritty of the project, and you had to keep your head on straight, but it ultimately turned out well.” (Karina)

“I really like producing something nice with my own two hands.” (Vilmos)

In my opinion, this kind of interpretation of the concept of self-actualisation also allows the individual to experience a sense of personal involvement; not necessarily in the process of creating, but more in the sense of adding “weight” to a situation. In other words, the individual tries to experience the particular situation – or, if necessary, alter it – so that his or her personal goals or the values held to be important are observed when the situation is over.

What has also become clear is that several individuals viewed *self-actualisation* as something that the *object or realisation of which can change over time*; accordingly, the behaviour associated with its attainment may also undergo changes:

“I always know where I am headed: there is always this small goal out there that I can expect to achieve. Certainly, just how hard I try to achieve that goal depends on the goal itself.” (Vilmos)

“For me, self-actualisation is knowing that I am on the right track, that I have goals and I have plans, and that I am working toward the realisation of those. If I reach it, that is great; if I don’t, I look for new ones.” (Ernő)

“[...] It’s a little different in this position. This is more about the challenge. The former kind of self-actualisation I’ve ‘grown out of.’ This is different now; it’s more complex.” (Kelemen)

In my opinion, the individuals who hold this view look at self-actualisation as a process which is aimed at realizing a goal which in a way embodies the individual. This is not far from the concept of “ideal self,” and which also includes a time-aspect. As the individual changes over his or her lifetime (and experiences different meanings of the ideal self), the efforts at self-actualisation can also take different forms (and, in this way, a previous approach can be “grown out of”).

It is difficult, as an outside observer (either as a researcher or in another capacity), to “detract” from a person’s self-actualisation actions, or to question these. It is impossible to experience a personal value or a personal goal. When I attempted to nonetheless do so during the interviews, I discovered that self-actualisation, too, has a price, and it is not available for all. The following section will cover this issue.

6.1.3 Self-actualisation through compromise

As the previous sections have shown, the creative directors interviewed describe several different kinds of self-actualisation experiences and processes (or at least experiences they associate with self-actualisation). They had, at the same time, 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.*

1. Compromise with the business world: In this regard, the individual reaches a compromise with the environment, 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)

“I don’t look at creating something as a tool of self-expression; I see both verbal copywriting and art direction as a subordinate form. We place our creativity at the service of a company, along with our creative imagination. [...] you have to get a feel for the client’s tastes, and no matter how much I would like to, there are some things I cannot carry through; that’s just who I am, and since they are paying us in the end, what they wish will happen. I’m not saying that this makes me less enthusiastic – I am, after all, still here. But yes, they’re paying, and they thereby obtain the right to say how things need to happen in certain cases. And they will happen that way.” (Karina)

“But I work for them [the client], and I have to accept certain things from them.” (Vilmos)

“Every such creative type of person will generally look for self-actualisation elsewhere as well. There are a lot of great things to be said for advertising – but it will always come down to us working for the client.” (Máti)

The comments above appear to indicate that 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). The question is whether the individual will still strive for self-actualisation even despite this experience. The following example provides both an affirmative and a negative response, both from the same individual, in fact. This duality leads me to believe that even if the individual makes compromises (e.g. provides their creativity in service of a client) that still does not indicate a clear road toward self-actualisation, precisely as a result of this duality of experience.

“There is no definition. You can’t measure this, and you don’t get money (or only a nominal amount) for it – this is the art of it. Advertising has these boundaries, but these boundaries can also liberate you, since we know what the goal is.” (Bence)

“(KB)⁶¹: - Doesn’t that make you frustrated, that you have another notebook full of creative ideas, and nothing will come of it, because all you’re doing is adapting?”

- No. But only because the work is over at this point. And I have here, in this notebook, what gives me intellectual pleasure.

(KB): - But you don’t have to work at an advertising agency for this.

- No, but this is how I make a living.” (Bence)

⁶¹ My questions and comments during the interviews are marked with (KB).

2. Compromise with oneself: Although the business world also figures into this equation, as a framework, the individual chooses to ignore it for some personal reason – perhaps because they look upon it as a given. My observation is that compromise in these cases is reached within the personal set of values of the individual, as a kind of resolution of an internal conflict.

“This is where I come to find self-actualisation. But if I can also find it elsewhere, I won’t pass up that opportunity. I’m full of some amazing ideas, but these are two different things. These ideas are my own, I get to realise them and take them to a gallery. I can’t sell them, I can’t manage them, I can’t make money off of them – so I do something similar. But I will not give up doing what I truly love.” (Bence)

“If you have to think of something very quickly, you are able to rely on experiences and come up with something right away.” (Boldizsár)

“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)

This last quote indicates that compromise could be a result of cognitive dissonance or rather a way to push responsibility to someone else. The question, then, is whether it is really self-actualisation that is seen in the presence of such defensive mechanisms (see section 3.1.3 and 6.2.2.4).

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 learn a lot here; there are plenty of challenges, and we have the boss, of course. There are clients and there are deadlines. It’s a compromise, in a way; but right now, I feel I’m in the right place.” (Ernő)

“There is no definition. You can’t measure this, and you don’t get money (or only a nominal amount) for it – this is the art of it.” Advertising has these boundaries, but these boundaries can also liberate you, since we know what the goal is.” (Bence)

“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 trade-off, however, is not necessarily bad. The framework within which the individual strives for self-actualisation can also have a liberating effect on the individual: it can drive efforts at self-actualisation, by keeping the individual in a kind of “state of readiness.”

I believe 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, it appears that the individual striving for self-actualisation – see the previous section on self-understanding – is able and willing to work the results of their personal reflections of the framework into their self-actualisation efforts (“How and why does this framework effect me?”).*

6.1.4 Summary

My goal, by summarizing the research results in this section, was to come to a more exact understanding of the definition of self-actualisation, attained by examining the relevant literature, and to add details which were mentioned by the interview subjects.

The following points collect what is known thus far about self-actualisation:

- It “involves” the entire personality of the individual (having cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects);
- It can indicate an entire process or just a momentary experience;
- It can be achieved through activities that the individual feels they themselves are present in through their actions (the individual feels that “they are in the right place”);
- The framework within which the efforts at self-actualisation take place has a decisive impact on its opportunities and the way it is experienced.

I have, thus, modified the previous definition according to the following:

Self-actualisation is a process...

it is primarily a process, although it can include certain special moments;

... when the individual is striving to find their “ideal self”...

The “ideal self” expression was not used during the interviews. In most cases, subjects used the word “goal,” referring to a state which they desired and which the individual can reach through standing up for their values and by using their abilities and skills.

The goal, when compared to the idea of the ideal self, indicates a shorter term, and is an expression that can be understood in everyday life. I have decided to keep the expression “ideal self” because the personal goals enunciated are aimed at the individual reaching the personal vision and self-image which they believe is ideal;

... for a better life.

Better quality of life, as a general goal, was also not mentioned. At the same time, certain values and personal visions were described. Although it may be supposed that a better quality of life is a more distant goal, I – for lack of concrete evidence – wish to stay with the more specifically defined concept “personal vision” as the driving force of self-actualisation.

The self-actualisation efforts of the individual in the workplace become manifest in their work (e.g. quality).

This effort can become manifest if the individual acts consciously: through conscious actions, the individual understands the compromise that may become necessary, and by handling that – regardless of whether doing so is simple or difficult – is able to strive for self-actualisation in his or her work.

Accordingly, *individual self-actualisation within the framework of an organisational structure* will henceforth be 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.

6.2 Impeding factors to self-actualisation created by the individual

This section will present a discussion of factors which originate with the individual but act as obstacles to self-actualisation in an organisational setting.

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?*

I have determined, based on a review of the literature, several related factors; the research I conducted was in part aimed at proving their validity, and partly at uncovering further factors which are not mentioned in the theoretical framework.

Following several re-readings and a coding of the interviews, the impeding factors originating with the individual appeared to take shape in a kind of historic framework:

- *The past.* The life story of the individual; in other words, how their ability and willingness (maturity) to engage in the specific profession, organisation and area of responsibility that they had chosen is manifested. Has their work become their vocation; are they “at the right place” in their lives?
- *The present.* The question of identity is part of this; how much is the individual’s personality (cognitive, emotional, behavioural) infused with their profession, the organisation and their area of responsibility. This identity may be further shaped (strengthened or weakened) by the behaviour of the individual (critical subjectivity, an active approach to learning and defensive mechanisms).
- *The future.* What exactly does it mean when an individual is striving for self-actualisation? Does the individual have a personal vision for the future (if yes – what is it?), and how does their real self compare to their ideal self?

In my opinion, the discussion of the process (from one point to another) essentially meshes with the process of self-actualisation (from the understanding of the present toward the future); accordingly, presenting the results in this way also makes it easily understandable.

An understanding of the past provides the answer to the first component of the research question: what abilities and motivational factors drive the individual toward their particular profession? Recognition and an acceptance (image of the present) of these factors, as well their projection to the future, impacts the experience of self-actualisation in the workplace. This provides the answer to the second component of the research question.

6.2.1 The past: when the profession fails to become a vocation

During the interviews, one of the topics which inevitably had to be touched upon was how the individual ended up in the particular profession, at the company and in their specific line of work; even if I did not pose a question related specifically to this, every interview subject covered this, usually in the first one-third of the conversation. This issue was relatively unexpected as far as the initial research plan was concerned; yet proved to be important. It appears that the life stories and professional careers described during these interviews (see section 3.1.1) 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.

“I was preparing for this profession very consciously [...] I always used to like to draw, paint and sculpt – and advertising has also appealed to me. [...] I compiled a portfolio CD and sent it all around the place, including to advertising agencies.” (Gergő)

“I’ve covered every possible step of this profession. I put together my first print ad twenty years ago, in Germany, but already in elementary school I worked on touching up photographs. [...] I lived abroad for seven years; that is where I realised for the first time that advertising graphics and design is a proper course of study. So I signed up. I have been interested in advertising for a long time. [...] I went to the school a year later, then eventually graduated. Alongside my studies I worked odd jobs; at night I would draw for the various printing houses and advertising studios. [...] I came back to Hungary in 1994, and I have been working in advertising ever since, back here.” (János)

My conclusion based on the quotes above is that the individual’s *talents* are not the single skill set required to work in a particular field; his or her *activity and willingness to take the initiative* are also required for the individual to feel that they are, indeed, in the “right place.” Based on the findings of the research, however, the *skill-willingness dimensions* according to Argyris (see also: section 2.4) *need to be revisited*. 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.

It appears that this process helps the individual achieve a state where their profession has already become their vocation, and they feel they are “in the right place.” Accordingly, I supposed that an understanding, an evaluation and the behaviour to be followed when making a decision, are important indicators of maturity – but all this is, essentially, is the self-reflection of the individual.

- There are instances when the path to follow leads to a preservation of the current situation:

“I initially began working at a different advertising agency. I was initially told to come up with the text; when my boss saw my work, he said ‘hmm, that’s good, that’s quite good,’ and I ended up staying there. [...] I thought ‘well, if I really am fit for this job, then that’s great; but let’s see if this is something I really will be able to do in the long term, or perhaps I’ve just been stumbling on the solutions so far. Could I lose that touch next month?’ But this is a good feeling: to understand something as well as I do.” (Márti)

“Perhaps I was not ambitious enough; but I never had any hopes of making creative director. I assessed my own opportunities and tried to look rationally at where I could end up. I never struggled against someone else, and I never tried to appear to be more than who I am.” (Karina)

- There are, however, also instances where leaving a certain situation appears to be a way forward – and the individual must at the same time accept the uncertainty that lies in the new situation:

“[...] I have a degree in sociology, but I could not find work for many months. So I entered the world of multinational companies, working in logistics, but the year and a half I spent doing so did not convince me that I was in the right place. While still at university, I decided I wanted to add another course of study besides sociology. So I started at the College of Foreign Trade, and that is where I first got involved with advertising. [...] I never felt this big artistic calling; I always looked upon advertising and copywriting as a profession. If it comes down to writing a script, you can’t get all artsy with that. Someone either writes well, has a large vocabulary and can spell well – or they can’t and don’t. [...] I don’t see a reason to make this into a myth.” (Vilmos)

“[...] Initially I spent a year and a half working as a beginner copywriter, and then I joined the client side. It was after that that I came back to advertising. This is a learning process. Anything you can, you should grab, including new techniques, from various people. If I, for one, learned that someone is particularly good verbally, then I tried to figure out what makes them so. If someone else was said to have a good imagination, I tried to learn why and how I could adopt that.” (Boldizsár)

“There was one company where I was told not to go out for a smoke, not to make phone calls and not to listen to music. I was sitting in an office all by myself – none of these would have bothered anyone. So I quit, because these were just excuses they were using – they had no problem with my work.” (Ernő)

On the whole, it appears that this kind of professional career review carried a great deal of information: “What is happening to me?” “How do I feel in this particular situation?” “What can or can’t I do to improve the situation?” etc. Answering these questions could, at times, help the individual figure out where they stand professionally.

Generally, it is my opinion based on the above that the individual is able to strive for self-actualisation if *they put their abilities and willingness not only toward the completion of a concrete task, but also toward ensuring that their real self approaches their ideal self for the future*. As long as the individual follows this course in their work as well, he or she can ensure that their work become not “only” their profession, but also their vocation, as well.

6.2.2 The present: the lack or rigidity of identity

Based on my research, I concluded that the concept of identity⁶² can be used to understand the individual's self-image: 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?") was often mentioned. Identity is not just a matter of being able to answer the questions mentioned here; what is also important is that the individual is comfortable with the answers given to these questions. In other words, one's identity indicates how much the role, position and responsibilities they have in the workplace infused their personality (in the case of the interview subjects: do they look upon themselves as creative directors?).

Identity, in this respect, provides the individual with a *certain sense of security*, so that they feel well and they feel that they are in the right place. This comprehensive feeling is important because if it were lacking, the individual's energy (on the level of thoughts, feelings and actions) could be consumed by attempting to place themselves in a certain framework (social, for instance: work responsibilities), and not by working to reach self-actualisation through their work.

When asked to define themselves ("Who am I?" "What characterises me?" "What do I do?"), it was predominantly the term "creative professional" that was used, or a looser or more specific derivative of that – which indicates that their role in the *workplace (responsibilities, position)* is important when defining their identity.

"I'm an applied artist [...]." (Berni)

"My way of thinking, you could say, is creative – I try to come up with new things." (Bence)

"I started as a BTL copywriter, so I don't need to develop new and special skills anymore – this is simply the way I think now. If I had to work on ATL ads, I would have considerable difficulty [...]" (Márti)

"I don't think I can be non-creative. When I look at commercials or at billboards, I don't think about how much, say, that chicken breast would cost. I think about the way it's photographed." (Márti)

"This 'creativity' is like a mode. I can't say I'll turn it off just because I will be walking around town and want to look at ads for what they are advertising – I still look at them and

⁶² By identity, I am referring to Rogers' concept of "self," explained already (see section 2.3); this is composed of the self-image, the ideal self (and denotes the person the individual would like to become) and the organismus (current experiences) (Rogers, 1961). Maslow's concept of identity is also closely related to the discussion thus far: the individual must recognize their needs, thereby understanding their own interests. Identity can be observed when needs and interests are clear for the individual, and the individual is thus conscious of him- or herself and with the motivators of their behaviour (Maslow, 1967).

consider if it's interesting or if it's a good solution, etc. Basically, I absorb everything, 24/7; I collect information, it becomes ingrained in me, and at some point it comes out again." (Bence)

Managers, typically, refer to their roles as leaders when describing their identity:

"I am not one to rule over people, only to do something so that I can boast about it." (Gergő)

"We've got the best team: I have 12 creative directors working for me, and we have external colleagues, as well." (János)

"I think I am the kind of leader who inspires and has empathy for others – and I think the latter is the more important. We try to support the success of each team member." (János)

The research indicates that some of those asked referred to their age⁶³, the number of years spent in the business, and their working experience, as important components of their identities, saying these factors drive their behaviour:

"Being over forty, I think I am slowly beginning to fade. Until that happens, I will try to live my life to the fullest; I try to find the beauty in my work, and I try to find self-actualisation." (Karina)

"I started in the business when I was 24, about five years ago. I think there is a natural maturation process, and I no longer want to spend every minute of my day here." (Márti)

"By being the youngest in the team, and merely by being the youngest, I cause conflicts, I know – but I think this is something that they expect of me [...]" (Kelemen)

The results appear to indicate that the process of going from one point to another is an important element of self-definition; when describing this process, the responsibilities at work, professional experience (number of years) and age play an important role. Only one interview subject disagreed with this categorisation:

"I never liked to take on these roles of being an artist, an intellectual or a trendy person. Certainly, everyone has roles, but these professional roles I never liked. Maybe that makes me greyer, but I don't want to get lost in this game. These things bother me. I try to write and speak well, and I do my job [...]" (Vilmos)

He, however, expressed his identity with the work he does every day, with the skills he uses on the job, and with his relationship to his work (see section 6.3.1). 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. The following grouping provides insight into the two biggest differences:

1. An individual who "lives for their job" tends to identify themselves with the job:

"I often dream about work." (Berni)

⁶³ Alvesson, too, emphasizes (1994) that it is difficult for those working in advertising to follow the latest trends as their age advances.

“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)

“At university, we were taught to always try and be as free as possible within the boundaries. [...] I try to find this in every situation I am in.” (Gergő)

“I know that there is a primary goal of meeting client expectations; this usually boils down to reaching some kind of level of sales, statistically, or something like that. This is a specific, very materialistic business goal. Achieving this is part of a feeling of success. It’s an entirely different question that there is also another, very important, goal out there: whatever it is we’re communicating, it’s got to have some kind of positive message: it’s got to be good, attractive, useful – either for society or for the individual.” (János)

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)

“I’m like a baker. If they ask me for buns, I bake buns; if they ask me for salt sticks, I make those. And I do all of that to the best of my ability.” (Bence)

“Another element is the relationship with the client; that’s work, but that is what we get paid for. For meeting their expectations.” (János)

“I don’t look at creating something as a tool of self-expression; I see both verbal copywriting and art direction as a subordinate form. We place our creativity at the service of a company, along with our creative imagination.” (Karina)

“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 a lot easier to make commercials for things I can identify with. If what we’re advertising is a home loan, with the best rates, very cheap, and if it’s everywhere, and you know that actually, it’s not even true – well, to honestly identify yourself with this is not easy, and you’re never going to be proud of it and say ‘wow, that’s great, and that’s me who did it.’ These, you just do, and that’s it, you forget about them.” (Ernő)

“[...] there are these survivor types, survivor creative directors. They seem to take on anything; they make sure that there are no major problems, but they also don’t care about these things, they don’t worry. They do it because they get paid for it; classic give-and-take types.” (Boldizsár)

It appears, then, that the individual could come to a crossroads in their work: there are situations when they can’t “realise themselves” in their work, and in these cases, they would turn to what I have termed “mercenary” attitudes to fulfil what is expected of them. It appears, however, that the interview subjects were able to set these situations aside fairly clearly, and – although this too is a part of their work – they do not look at these cases as ones contributing to their identity-strengthening, or as self-expressing or self-actualisation.

It is important to make this distinction, as far as this dissertation is concerned, because there apparently can be situations that don’t help the individual’s struggle for self-actualisation. In my opinion, if an individual’s attitude to their work often turns into the “mercenary” approach, it is likely that they are “not in the right place”; 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 (see section 2.4), as that can serve as a fair compass on the road to self-actualisation.

Continuing with the issue of identity, I attempted to discover what factors support its strengthening so much that the individual can strive to achieve self-actualisation. The answer appeared to be Maslow’s *D-needs* (physiological, security, relationship, recognition).

In this respect, Maslow’s reasoning is also closely related to identity (see the footnotes at the beginning of the section): as long as D-needs are met in the specific situation or generally during the individual’s professional career, there is a chance for the individual to pursue B-needs (self-actualisation).

1. If the physiological needs have not yet been fulfilled, the individual has no opportunity to “manifest themselves” in their work:

*“Physically, it’s often actually quite exhausting to work here [...]” (Gergő)
“(B.K.) – Are you a creative director when you just walk down the street?
– Well, that depends. I suppose I am, when I don’t need to ‘recharge.’ If I feel that all I’m doing is producing things without getting any input, then I am more open and curious, and I don’t want to think. I watch my neighbour, for instance [...]” (Berni)
“That’s the stressful part: if you really want to do good and don’t want to let go of the reins, so that something good comes of it, then that’s stressful. Oftentimes the goal is just that, a goal, so that the client is satisfied in the short run.” (Boldizsár)*

2. Security in this case is not about physical safety, but about a routine: in an “unfulfilled” situation (a looming deadline, for instance), the individual oftentimes turns to routine solutions, even if that involves making compromises which affect the quality of work (see section 6.1.3 earlier):

*“There are a lot of situations where you don’t have time to ponder new solutions. You just have to put something on the table, something that has already worked well.” (Gergő)
“If you have to think of something very quickly, you are able to rely on experiences and come up with something right away.” (Boldizsár)*

3. Relationships with colleagues can often make day-to-day life and work itself more pleasant and efficient, and so can contribute to the individual’s basic sense of security:

*“[...] I get along well with my immediate colleagues; we work as a good team, there are no tensions and we get along; we help each other.” (Karina)
“[...] if you have to concentrate on a particular project, it’s better to have more of us there. It’s almost like a ping-pong game, at the end of which something good comes out. Working in a team is so much more effective; you always get a reaction to your ideas, and if others*

don't see something the way you had imagined it that tells you that there is something wrong with that message.” (Ernő)

“The feeling of being involved in something is really one that you experience in a team.” (János)

4. Recognition and positive feedback, it seems, are essential for the individual to feel that they are “in the right place.” Regardless of where this recognition may come from (from inside the organisation or a supervisor, or from outside, from a client or from friends), it serves to strengthen the individual’s sense of security. It serves as reinforcement of the particular behaviour or as recognition of the entire individual – and this is one precondition on the road to self-actualisation (personality shaping) according to Rogers (see also: section 2.3).

Feedback from within the organisation:

“You always appreciate hearing good feedback from your supervisors; and you need this. [...] I’m not sure if you feel the same specifically from the team – but maybe it’s a sense (or the lack) of being accepted by your team. This is what you feel, whether it works or not. It looks like it’s working, and this is important.” (Gergő)

As a dissenting opinion: “That situation was awfully difficult to bear – to have someone who previously looked to me for professional advice now order me around all of a sudden [...] disappointment, a sense of being burned out. I felt that I work hard, try to give more than my best, and then this guy gets appointed, and I don’t [...]” (Gergő)

Feedback from outside the organisation:

“Even after four years you can come up with little things – little sparks – that will surprise the client.” (Karina)

“If all you hear constantly is bad, and you get nothing but negative feedback because ‘nothing works,’ your stress level is going to go up, and that will obviously be to your disadvantage.” (Vilmos)

“What’s important for me is to be able to show my friends that I’m really good at something, that I did something great again. That gives me a lot of satisfaction.” (Kelemen)

The individual’s own recognition of his or her performance, the experience of success and the resulting pride are also factors which contribute to a feeling of security. This, in its function, is no different from external recognition; what may be different is the intensity of these sentiments, as one’s own recognition may be stronger than that coming from others.

“[...] I started looking, and was selected for two other positions – that certainly helped my self-confidence.” (Vilmos)

“It is important that the idea is born out of my mind. What is important is the experience, not whether it is ultimately realised or not.” (Bence)

“If I come up with something, that will never be lost. I’ll do it, I can submit it for the billboard project, and it will go in my portfolio. The creative director can then say ‘yes, that’s certainly a good idea.’” (Ernő)

The train of thought presented above supports Maslow's theory in so far as demonstrating that there are, indeed, D-needs, and that the individual feels when these are satisfied or when they are not; and this has an effect on the individual. Looking at the issue of self-actualisation, it is important to know that the primary function of so-called "*lower needs*" is to provide the individual with security, so that he or she can turn to self-actualisation.

Based on the above, identity appears to be a factor in the present which provides the individual with a sense of security, so that the individual can strive for self-actualisation within an organisational framework. 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 following sections will present the phenomenon when the individual views their profession as something almost "sacred" – in reference to their identity being set in stone – and will discuss three factors as far as the lack of leeway is concerned. These three factors are the following: (1) a lack of critical subjectivity; (2) a passive attitude to learning; and (3) the active presence of defensive mechanisms in daily life.

6.2.2.1 The "sanctity" of the profession

The interviews conducted for this dissertation made it clear that some of the subjects viewed their job as though it were the "be-all and end-all" of what their company does. Certainly, the product produced by the advertising agency is its creative material – in the words of the HR staff member: "*They're the ones who produce our products. [...] It is clear that even if one of our creative director colleagues is allowed to do something, the same does not necessarily apply to me.*" In fact, the organisational structure also carries many characteristics of the "creative director subculture": "*The character of creative work carries over into the entire agency. Take a look, for instance, at how strictly business hours and internal rules are taken. Essentially, it is the creative staff's set of norms that becomes the entire company's set of norms; or, in other words, everyone adjusts to the creative directors' way of working*" (Lili).

In my view, however, the kind of company structure – described by the HR staff member – that places the creative staff in the foreground may result in an excessive strengthening of the

identity described earlier. This could become the first obstacle to the individual's learning and self-actualisation processes.

"What I miss is a major client who wants exactly what I want, and wants it just as much."
(Bence)

"The best solution is not necessarily what is best for me; and the best solution is not necessarily what the client believes to be that. Often, it is a third way, that the client may not even feel all that sure about, but eventually I manage to convince them that indeed, it will work." (Boldizsár)

It is important to note, based on the above, that *the individual must have a kind of humility toward their own identity and toward the identity of others. The organisation must also demonstrate a kind of humility toward each of the subcultures found at the company, so that the groups do not hinder themselves and others as they work to achieve self-actualisation.*

6.2.2.2 The lack of critical subjectivity

The lack of critical subjectivity means (see also: section 2.4) 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). As indicated already, 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.

Only a handful of interviews made reference to what has been described earlier in the dissertation as a position of critical subjectivity with respect to teamwork within the organisation and when fulfilling client demands, or even when it comes to advertising in general:

"Working in a team is so much more effective; you always get a reaction to your ideas, and if others don't see something the way you had imagined it, that tells you that there is something wrong with that message. If you just sit by yourself to come up with something, and then think 'wow, this is the greatest idea in the world ever,' and then you send it on – you end up surprised if others don't get it." (Ernő)

"You have to be able to reach compromises. 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)

"From a certain perspective, this is an objective approach, but in another sense, it is also subjective. What you see, what you read into it; and certainly, you add your own sentiments and your own presuppositions about the product. Everyone interprets it in a different way."
(Karina)

Interview subjects were able to provide only very few examples in support of this approach. *The lack of daily self-reflection, as well as a lack of critical subjectivity, tends to move the individual's identity toward less flexibility;* the individual does not end up in this “state of readiness” which would foster self-actualisation.

6.2.2.3 A passive approach to learning

The individual's approach to learning – active or passive – has a significant impact on the opportunities for the individual's identity to evolve or on its intensity (see also: section 3.1.3). The organisational categories mentioned already once again came to the forefront when discussing this issue during the interviews: work requirements, position and changes to the individual's position:

“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.” (Gergő)

“I'm still fairly junior, so I look to XY for leadership in copywriting. I'm still very much in the learning phase of things [...]” (Vilmos)

“Initially I spent a year and a half working as a beginner copywriter, and then I joined the client side. It was after that that I came back to advertising. [...] This is a learning process. Anything you can, you should grab, including new techniques, from various people.” (Boldizsár)

“If I work with a bad concept, I fail. If the concept is good, you have to get it past the account managers. If I can't reach a compromise with them, I fail. The same with the client: you have to stand up for the creative concept, and if I can't defend it even at the cost of a compromise, I fail. I am successful if I manage to satisfy all three sides. This is the process I face every single day. And yes, I'll admit this did not come to me naturally; this is a learning process for me, so that I may keep improving.” (Kelemen)

As the quotes above show, a continuous learning process has an important role in the daily life of creative staff. I have termed this kind of learning *professional learning*; it appears that interview subjects view this concept as one that is primarily tied to their responsibilities and their profession. As the beginning of the section has already shown, individuals view these societal categories (role, work responsibilities, etc.) as important components of their identities; it appears, then, that this kind of “professional learning” also affects their identity. 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.

6.2.2.4 The presence of defensive mechanisms in daily life

Defensive mechanisms have been introduced in the review of literature as factors impeding learning (see section 3.1.3); as far as their functioning is concerned, they work much the same way as the previous two factors.

The majority of those interviewed demonstrated examples of defensive mechanisms during the interviews, when I enquired about the ethical standards of their profession or about their own roles when it comes to increasing the sale of products viewed critically by society (e.g. tobacco).

“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”. (Ernő)

“I get asked this question often. It goes back to the misunderstanding that advertising is about companies trying to sell their products by deceiving people. [...] But that is not the point! In this day and age, it is next to impossible to sell a product without advertising. There are so many products and services that it’s extremely difficult to choose.” (János)

“The opportunities you have for advertising tobacco are so limited that I don’t think we increase or decrease consumption. People just smoke, period. Tobacco needs advertising so that people are aware of the product. What advertising does in this case is keep consumers’ loyalty, get consumers to switch to new brands and communicate product benefits.” (Vilmos)

It appears that cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) is markedly present in interview subjects’ responses:

- *“If I don’t do it, somebody else will”*: belittling, shifting responsibility
- *“You can hardly sell things today without advertising [...]”*: presenting a personal conviction as a general belief, looking for external justifications.
- *“[...] I don’t think we increase or decrease consumption [...] To keep consumers’ attention [...]”*: self-contradicting thoughts, looking for external justifications.

The individual’s goal with this kind of rationalizing behaviour is to protect themselves from the unpleasant features of the situation – i.e. the individual is practicing self-deception (maintaining a phony identity). Through this behaviour, however, the individual produces an unrealistic present-image for him- or herself, which impedes self-actualisation efforts. The individual then has to decrease the distance not just between their real self and ideal self, but also between their unrealistic self and their realistic self (as a first step).

Defensive mechanisms appeared to be at work in several situations when the interview subjects were talking about their daily work (the end result is the same as in the case of the defensive mechanisms outlined above):

“I don’t share any personal or professional information that could have any kind of negative effect on me. I’m not talking about within the team, but we have a lot of copywriters and art directors – it’s a terrible feeling if you casually mention an idea and then see someone else use it later.” (Ernő)

“It depends on my schedule – if I have time, I try to do it. But there are a lot of people, there is plenty of work; it’s difficult to set aside half an hour to teach someone, to give examples and explain things. I did that before, when I was working for a small agency. I liked it well enough, but it was exhausting. You just can’t do the same here.” (Boldizsár)

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.

A basic question when discussing individual self-actualisation within an organisation, however, is whether an individual’s reliance on defensive mechanisms related to their work (e.g. quotes from Ernő or János) means that they may still realistically look for self-actualisation within their profession; and can they experience a sense of “being in the right place?”⁶⁴

As this section has shown, individuals’ present situation and present-image can be observed in their identity. *It is important for self-actualisation efforts that this self-image have a “healthy flexibility”; in other words, it should provide security, but should not impede self-actualisation as a process of personal change.*

6.2.3 The future: lack of a goal, or meeting obstacles on the way to a 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 (see the definition of self-actualisation above).

⁶⁴ See further discussion in section 6.5.2.

When it appears as a goal, it pertains to the vision for the future of the individual; that will be covered first, below. When it acts as a driving force, or as a road on the way to a particular goal, then it has to be examined just what and how the individual is doing to achieve that goal. That will be discussed in the second half of the section.

6.2.3.1 Personal vision for the future, or the lack of related accessibility-analysis

This reasoning meshes with the kind of personal control based on Senge (see also: section 3.1.2) and discussed already in the theoretical section; my goal with the analysis of the interviews was discovering their appearance in practice.

The answers showed that the recognition of the individual's situation, the organisational framework they find themselves in and their understanding of their profession has an important role in shaping individual goals and vision for the future.

"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 was among the first creative directors here in Hungary; and so now sometimes I feel painfully old already. The field is full of people in their twenties and early thirties [...] to do this over 40, well, it's not quite embarrassing yet, but I don't have a lot left to cover in this field. I definitely keep that in mind when I think about my future." (Karina)

"It's custom-tailored. The field is at the point now when you can think about creating advertisements through self-actualisation." (János)

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. In all of these cases, however, it is necessary to examine the desires of the individual: how do the given circumstances make it possible to reach these goals (*reality check*, see also: Senge et al., 1994)?

In my opinion (see the theory of goal-setting in Bakacsi, 1996), 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.

I hypothesised that winning professional prizes can have an important role in creative

professionals' vision for the future. The interviews conducted have, however, proven this hypothesis incorrect; it is certainly not the case in general, and is not the case even when some individuals acknowledged the importance of such prizes to the profession as a whole:

"All these prizes mean is that a lot of other creative directors think the same as I do. I might have a second prize that I got jointly with someone. I'm happy to have received it, but it's not something I strive for consciously." (Bence)

"These prizes really don't mean a thing to me. I just had to laugh when I saw my name in the paper for having one some prize, because they forgot to tell me about it. I was happy, and it was great; but the only time it really matters is if you're trying to advance in your career." (Ernő)

6.2.3.2 Getting mired on road to individual vision for the future

There can be two reasons for getting stuck: the individual can fail to grab hold of what Senge describes as creative tension (due to a lack of ability or willingness), or the individual may experience low self-understanding, which is manifested as the lack of an ability in the process of achieving a vision for the future (see sections 2.5 and 3.1.2).

This creative tension can be explained either by the profession itself or by the organisation; in the case of the latter, the sources are primarily the co-workers.

"When you're shooting a commercial, you have to go to the studio to select the sounds; you talk to the composer, the cameraman and the lighting technicians. You choose a location, you go out there, you're involved in casting the models and you select props. That's exciting; it's fast-paced, and you meet interesting people. I really like it when you have to get out there to do something; that's the best part, how it all comes together." (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." (Márti)

"There was a fellow here, responsible for strategic planning; there's probably just one or two of them in the country. As one of our seniors, I was able to meet with him. He is around sixty, and has spent twice as much time working in this field as I have. Yet he's completely open to new ideas – I found that extremely inspirational. But this is not typical; on a day-to-day basis, I get most of my inspiration from my team, due to my position." (János)

As the above has shown, the source of the creative tension varies, but it is entirely up to the individual whether they manage to grasp that or not. Self-understanding can help: the individual is able to recognise creative tension, and is able to make use of it as they work toward their personal vision.

"I know why I'm here, I know what I'm doing and I know, more or less, what my competencies are: I need all of these for self-actualisation, to come up with something particularly good." (Karina)

"If I come up with something, that will never be lost. I do it, I submit it for a billboard contest and it goes in my portfolio, etc." (Ernő)

“Call me masochistic, but I like a more strict order to things: if I’m given the goal, the deadline and the budget [...] 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)

“I’ve always been attracted to coming up with something and then seeing a lot of people work on realizing that. You have a sense of responsibility; but you also have a fear about just how it will work out. If it’s my idea that will be realised then it really should be good. And for it to be good, you need a lot of people. And you worry about just how good the team is and just how good the idea is.” (Ernő)

It is also important to discuss, here, what it is that does not lead to creative tension in an individual, as these processes would not steer them toward their vision for the future:

“There are certain tasks which I personally find less interesting. I’ve tried some of these, and I know, for instance, that I don’t really care for writing direct mail letters. I also find some BTL things less interesting, because they are too ‘tried and tested’ and they’re less flexible. There’s little positive stress to those things.” (Boldizsár)

“I’ve done a lot of print materials, but it was never exciting: you just write it, the director inserts it in the layout, it goes to press and that’s it.” (Ernő)

Creative tension is referred to in daily usage as “inspiration” and “positive stress.” I suppose that a recognition of what inspires the individual – and through whom or what this inspiration can be obtained – helps the individual achieve self-understanding (by processing experiences).

Based on the conclusions of this subsection, 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 (primarily as a result of a lack of self-understanding).

6.2.4 Summary

This section is a collection, based on the research conducted, of personal factors which impede an individual’s efforts at self-actualisation.

The results of the research serve to confirm some of the factors listed in the theoretical summary as impeding an individual’s efforts; several other factors also emerged which are new, or were presumed to be less significant previously:

- *The individual's life story, seen as the process through which their work became their profession: personal responsibility on the level of abilities and willingness;*
- *Maslow's D-needs as factors reinforcing identity;*
- *The "sanctity" of the profession, as a factor which hardens the identity, and is thus a hindrance to self-actualisation;*
- *Creative tension serving as inspiration in daily life.*

A train of thought involving the past, the present and the future can help uncover these elements, and can serve to depict, simultaneously, the individual's life story and the process of self-actualisation as one moving from a starting point to a finish.

The research question I posed at the outset of the section was the following: "What personal factors contribute to a creative professional's arrival at viewing their work as a vocation, and to their work providing opportunities for self-actualisation? Why do these factors work this way?" My answer is the following: *An individual's work can become their vocation as a result of a process involving personal responsibility and learning. Experiencing their work as a profession is an important component of individuals' self-actualisation within an organisational structure; to support the process itself, however, a so-called flexible identity can also serve as an important aid.*

6.3 Factors on the job impeding self-actualisation

This section will present factors impeding self-actualisation which originate specifically from the individual's work. 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?*

First, this section will present an overview of the individual's relationship to their work and will then examine their work as a system, through the opinions voiced in the interviews conducted. As this section will show, there are different emphases than were found in the theoretical part. The individual's relationship to their work receives more attention when it comes to behaviour on their part aimed specifically at self-actualisation than to the characteristics of their field of responsibilities. The reason for this appears to be – and evidence will be provided in the section below – that *the individual tends to view the*

characteristics of their work as a “given,” while looking at their own relationship to the job as a changing variable, and believing that the latter may be easier to change than the former.

6.3.1 The individual’s attitude toward their work

In the review of the literature, I defined the individual’s relationship to their work as a factor affecting self-actualisation efforts. This relationship – so that it may be understood and analyzed more easily – was divided into three factors:

- To what extent does the individual feel that the results of their work are their own?
- To what extent, and how, does the individual assume personal responsibility in their work?
- To what extent is the individual committed to their work?

What is common to these three characteristics is also inherent in the concept of a “relationship”: the issue of *objective judgment* vs. *subjective perceptions*.

As far as research methodology is concerned, this approach indicates that as an outside observer or researcher, I cannot question the positive or negative aspects of a given situation. The interview subjects describe personal perceptions; certainly, suppositions can be voiced, but the actual perception cannot be questioned.

This is significant in terms of self-actualisation because that is, above all, subject to the individual: how does the individual behave, and what are the consequences of their actions (does the individual feel that the results of their work are their own; does the individual take responsibility for their actions; are they committed to their work)?

6.3.1.1 When the individual does not feel the result of their work is their own

In the interviews conducted, I always asked subjects to provide concrete examples when they mentioned self-actualisation experiences. In several cases, subjects spoke not only of feeling their work *to be their own*, but also of attaching further emotions and experiences to their work.

- Feeling of pride and joy:

“The DM we did there we always filled with buttons and CDs; it was just a great thing to witness.” (Márti)

“The logo of the event, that I came up with, featured four little heads – a father, a mother and two kids – in a circle. This ended up on all of the product packages and it was on there for a long time. That really was a great experience.” (János)

“It was my idea to draw very basic little shapes in the dots on the packaging of Baba products; and that’s how we came up with the campaign of dots and reasons for grandma and grandpa to like the product. That is still an especially fond memory, and has been for years.” (Karina)

- Feeling of power (as an effect or force):

“There are certain things that are not worth fighting for; but then there is an idea which is so coherent that you want to fight for it to the end. There are battles which are worth fighting.” (Márti)

“I’ve always been attracted to coming up with something and then seeing a lot of people work on realizing that.” (Ernő)

- It is important to recall that “possessing” work has already come up as a concept earlier, when discussing how the individual grasps the concept of self-actualisation.

One example:

“Self-actualisation is being able to reach what I’ve just described. You might have to resolve conflicts and come to compromises to make the client happy and yet also keep your creative ideas; that would be the ideal solution, and the role I have in this is coming up with an idea, standing up for it and reaching a compromise. That’s what self-actualisation is about.” (Kelemen)

Although I have previously introduced Fromm’s idea of possession (to have) as an impediment to self-actualisation (see also: section 2.3.6), the research appears to indicate that it is *important for the individual to feel that the result of their work is their own*. The difference between these two ways of experiencing possession, based on the above, is that while Fromm places possession only in the focus, interview subjects indicated that their *feeling of possession is interconnected with other emotions* (e.g. pride, power).

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*.

6.3.1.2 Failure to assume personal responsibility

Assuming responsibility was emphasised several times in the relevant theories. During the interviews, therefore, I was less interested in seeing whether assuming personal responsibility really is important to the process of self-actualisation; I researched, rather, how and in what shape that is manifested. In other words: “what does a person, who is personally assuming responsibility in the interest of self-actualisation, do?”

Interview subjects mentioned several examples of assuming personal responsibility.

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. In the case of an online site, it is crucial that it be easy to use. In the case of a grocery product, you want to share the information that if ‘you eat this, this will be good for you, and represents x amount of your daily needs compared to other things like exercise, etc.’ It really is important to tell consumers something interesting, as opposed to just advertising a product.” (Kelemen)

“We’ve got a lot of clients, but when I’m working for any one of them, or when I was purely on BLT, I was and am still able to sneak in some variety. That’s important to me, if only so that I don’t get bored with my job.” (Gergő)

It can also be a kind of personal responsibility if the *individual does something in the work process that is also important to them*:

- This could happen toward others or toward the individual themselves:

“There are battles that are worth fighting, but if they tell you not to, then you’ve got to stop. You don’t necessarily have to fight Don Quixote-battles.” (Márti)

“You have to focus on everything; you can’t ever get sloppy with anything or anyone, because that’s when you end up doing massive overtime, sometimes on weekends, too. Within the team, we try to spread the load efficiently so that everyone carries more or less the same amount.” (Gergő)

- This could also work by *observing the individual’s own activities*, even if that leads to internal conflicts:

“I am liable to get a little aggressive and to stick my nose in other people’s business. If I, for instance, see an art director on the project who is hesitating, I tell them to come up with a new idea. [...] This is what can easily lead to internal conflicts, but you’re supposed to solve these with psychology and knowing what tool to resort to.” (Márti)

“It’s important to me that the ad have something special to it: maybe a little humour, and a slightly indirect phrasing. We shouldn’t say that the apple is red, but simply ‘Snow White.’ (Vilmos)

“I don’t think you could do creative work without listening to music and surfing the web in the meantime. You could call this inspiration-gathering.” (Ernő)

Finally, 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.” (Márti)

“Well, the editing – that really was interesting! The editor was a German girl, the director was Swedish and everyone had of course gone home. I sat in the studio with them and we tried to piece together the material without the client even being there. That was quite a

challenge, and was really detailed work. You had to use foreign languages and just really be on top of things” (Karina).

In general, 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.*

6.3.1.3 Failure to commit to one’s work

The individual’s love for their work and their commitment to their job is, as the theoretical summary has already shown, an important – but not exclusive – component of self-actualisation. This condition was also examined during the interviews.

The answers received were rather multi-faceted: some were related to *daily work and to relationships at the office which direct the individual’s attention to daily pleasures rather than long-term satisfaction.* It is my supposition that the former serve to strengthen the individual’s “daily” commitment toward the organisation, while the latter do the same for one’s long-term commitment toward the profession as a whole.

- Just what the kind of work or work processes which support this kind of commitment are depends on the individual; several respondents, however, pointed to *several factors* on the job which they take pleasure in:

“I just love the whole thing, really! Brainstorming is a really exciting process [...] and then implementation is also exciting, whether it’s shooting a commercial, taking photographs or simply working with Photoshop.” (Gergő)

“Coming up with templates, which means that if I find it valuable, I can use it, and then I try to use an exemplary one.” (Bence)

“We put together a school program about milk and consuming dairy products. We compiled a workbook for the kids and a teacher’s manual for their teachers. Putting the manual together was almost entirely up to me, it was all my call. [...] I think it turned out great in the end.” (Karina)

- Working in a *leadership position* was only mentioned by two of the three creative professionals working in such positions, and they had mixed emotions:

“Well, I do have a lot of administrative responsibilities; training courses and clients and such. But whenever I can, I try to get involved in the brainstorming and the Photoshop part of the process [...]” (Gergő)

“There are things, of course, that I don’t care for, especially the overly politicised and administrative parts of the job. [...] It’s one thing to be a creative director, but it’s quite

another to have a team that I need to use to produce something good. It's exciting to have a team, and I know what kinds of personalities are on it. I know what's going to work for some people; I know the psychology of the whole thing, and that has to lead to something good. There are, certainly, plenty of things to pay attention to; human things, political things, professional things – but this is what makes the game so exciting.” (Boldizsár)

- Work performed together with other colleagues can also act as a factor which moves the individual toward commitment.

“In my previous job, I didn't especially care for the briefs, but I did like the brainstorming. [...] I'm not sure the end result will be the best in the world here, but the briefs and the meetings are great.” (Márti)

- A particular organisational process (which may even set the company apart from the competition) may also contribute to an individual's commitment:

“What I really like at this company is that creative directors are also allowed, and encouraged, in fact, to go and meet with clients when we present our work. [...] This is a real opportunity for development.” (Berni)

- Finally, as the research hypotheses have indicated already (see also: section 4.3.2), the brand which the creative professional works with also has an impact on commitment:

“From this perspective, it would be better to work on brands which are closer to my way of thinking and to me personally. The brand also affects how we work, and brand regulations do as well. If we're shooting photographs with the model wearing a bikini, they may specify that the strap has to be up; or they may tell us that we can't turn the project into a viral campaign. These are regulated.” (Kelemen)

Another set of answers is related to the advertising business itself, or to some of its components. If the individual is able to, at least generally, *define what they like in their profession*, it appears *more likely that they are actually “in the right place”* compared to scenarios where commitment is more toward the organisational characteristics (co-workers, brands). This appears to be the case because, on the one hand, these characteristics may work toward retention with the given company, but can also distract the individual from the process of self-actualisation. On the other hand, if the individual decides to leave the company, they may have a difficult time finding their place and role in another organisation.

- The communication channels for which creative professionals develop each campaign may also have different effects on individuals' commitment.

“My favourite channel, which I think is actually close to an art, is guerrilla. There are advertising channels, but because you expect these to spew forth advertising, we have to try and place it where it is unexpected. It's a new media event, with the advertising coming at you where you wouldn't expect it.” (Bence)

“I like whatever is interactive and showy; I like the internet, television, guerrilla campaigns and being out in the street or at events.” (Ernő)

- The ATL and BTL components of advertising are seen differently:

“I really like BTL, but it’s almost like a stepchild in Hungary. [...] It’s a great challenge to have to work, daily, to be able to produce a DM and a banner so that the person who sees them doesn’t throw it away or doesn’t click away immediately. I think that’s a great thing.” (Márta)

“I like both of these; the work is very different, and the challenges are different as well. BTL may be a little more laid-back, at least as far as the tobacco industry is concerned. When we’re doing ATL films and such and you have to get to the shoots, that’s a more fast-paced lifestyle. BTL is a little quieter and there are no earth-shattering news.” (Karina)

“We’ve just won a BTL job for a company, and now of course we’re working on that. But the ultimate goal would be to get their ATL, television and all. In these things, you’re better able to present what you’re capable of, rather than through a sticker on some car.” (Ernő)

- The individual’s perception of the creative profession and the resulting complex image can lead to them feeling that they are “in the right place”:

“[...] you can couple creative work with strategic thinking; in other words, you have to be both a little out of your mind and able to think in a structured way. [...] starting with the brief, all the way to strategic thinking and the last creative bursts from the art directors – I’m fine with all of that, as long we don’t have our hands tied.” (Boldizsár)

“I think that this whole creative work is about trying to find a solution to something which hopefully consumers will find interesting. Creative directors come up with new templates; but everyone knows the building blocks of these. [...] And what’s most important for me is that my work produces tangible results: you can check whether sales increased or not. The same can’t be said of other arts, and that would really bother me there.” (Bence)

It may then be concluded – confirming the theory – that it is exceedingly important for the individual’s self-actualisation to have a generally positive relationship to their work. This positive attitude can take several forms (see the subsections⁶⁵); but what is most important is emotional involvement: *this can release emotions that may then be manifested in the individual’s attitude to their work (assuming responsibility, for instance).*

6.3.2 Characteristics of the job

When discussing the theory, I emphasised work responsibilities among the factors which impede an individual’s self-actualisation and which are related to their job; one of the key concepts to discuss here is “the game.” The concept of the game is used by Csíkszentmihályi (2001), when discussing autotelic work, and is described as the following. Work should

⁶⁵ These three factors, which render the individual’s attitude understandable, are most likely related through causality (e.g. if the individual likes their job, they will assume responsibility for their actions), but these relationships did not become apparent in the interviews; this may, however, be the subject of further research.

include variety, appropriate and flexible tasks, clear goals and immediate feedback (see also: section 3.2.2). I attempted to gain an understanding of the features of this game, with a special focus on clear-cut goals. The goal, in addition to being clear for the individual, should also be within reach (the literature also spells out as much). Finally, I was also looking for examples of whether the work responsibilities of the individual meet their special demands, as this can also be an important supporting factor of self-actualisation.

6.3.2.1 The lack of play

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 – as a member of an organisation – would burn out more quickly.

“[...] I don’t come to the office knowing exactly what I will be doing at 8.05 am, at 12.05 pm and 4.05 pm. There are days when all we do is write scripts, there are brainstorming days and there are days for casting. There is a lot of variety.” (Márta)

“We’re the most affected by 360-degree communication. It’s good because it offers a way out of these commercials which feature nothing but gags. [...]” (Ernő)

“There are always new briefs and new clients, so there are always newer and newer challenges to focus on, and you’re a lot less likely to get bored of that.” (Boldizsár)

“As long as I feel I can still move up, and as long as there is still something to learn with new things in it for me, there’s no way I would feel burned out.” (Gergő)

Two respondents referred to the game specifically and to its noteworthy concept:

“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)

The organisation itself works to provide the opportunities for this game; creative professionals have at their disposal several brainstorming rooms within the building. There are “pods” and a foosball-room (which is where the interviews were conducted). The walls of the foosball-room are decorated with the scores of account vs. creative games. For the creative staff, these opportunities to “recharge,” provided by the company, provide a safe environment for doing mental work and also a kind of freedom.

“If someone had told me two years ago, when I was still working for another company, that creative directors need a play room in order simply to get by, I really would have laughed. Today, I know just how serious this is. This is how they work, and this is a kind of reward for their talent.” (Gál)

“There is a foosball-room and a ‘thinking room’ in the back; that can help. There’s quiet and there’s also a chance to play foosball. Or just think.” (Boldizsár)

“[...] there are these little ‘thinking rooms’ where you can retire. There is also a foosball-room. You can walk out to the shore of the Danube. Creative freedom – you really get it here.” (Ernő)

It is important to note the symbolic significance of the foosball-room: company seniors installed it not for the creative directors to play in, but to improve their quality of work (“produce more and produce better”). Interview subjects who mentioned the foosball-room all did so in a positive context (it “recharges me” or “it helps release stress”). In this case, the goals of the company management and those of the creative staff converge: management provides the opportunity for play, and the staff makes use of that opportunity.

6.3.2.2 When the goal is not within reach

In the theoretical part of the dissertation, I called attention to the reality of the individual reaching their goal, as one of the key factors which support self-actualisation (in addition to clear goals).

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:*

“[...] I write music: we get together with the composer and brainstorm. We try to put our ideas on paper, but not with words, which makes it especially exciting. [...] There are plenty of these details, and at the end, the campaign will be a realisation of your ideas.” (Gergő)

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.*

“Last year, we won some six tenders with my team. [...] We had one last week, too [...]. We’re a growing branch of the agency, so it looks like it will be a substantial project.” (Gergő)

“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. According to the interview subjects, 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).

“It’s another matter, but I think there is also an additional element: whatever it is we’re communicating, it’s got to have some kind of positive message: it’s got to be good, attractive, useful – either for society or for the individual. [...] We do a lot of things for them that we really don’t enjoy doing. Much of our energy is consumed by trying to make the product appear more human and more consumer-friendly. But that doesn’t always work out.” (János)
“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)

Let me also recall the concept of self-actualisation as a means of achieving a goal (ideal self). In this case, there is even greater emphasis on the clarity of the goal and its attainability.

“I always know where I am headed: there is always this small goal out there that I can expect to achieve.” (Vilmos)
“For me, self-actualisation means that I’m on the right track; I have plans and I have goals. If I can realise these, that is good; if I can’t, that is not good.” (Ernő)

Results of the research show that defining a goal clearly is a task that is both the responsibility of the organisation and the responsibility of the individual. Communicating organisational goals is up to the management of the company and a subject of company culture. Seeing – and demonstrating, through their efforts – the individual’s own goals is, however, the responsibility solely of the organisational member.

6.3.2.3 Forgetting about the individual

Taking into consideration the individual when determining their area of responsibilities (see also: section 3.2.2.1) 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).

Younger and more experienced interview subjects both indicated experiencing a kind of liberty simply because their seniors or colleagues pay attention to them and trust them:

“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.” (Márti)
“It’s great that even as a junior staff member I have a client all to myself without anyone watching over my shoulder.” (Vilmos)
“This is a very comfortable situation for me; I don’t need to think about sticking to the budget, I can focus on pursuing ideas and dabbling in various things. At the end, my direct supervisor can filter my work to see what stays and what goes.” (Kelemen)

“Maybe the reason I liked it so much is that I was given free reign; there was a structure to stick to, but I was able to fill it with content. I even included a childhood story of my father’s [...]” (Karina)

Placing trust even in more junior staff members is extremely important (and is something which the supervisor needs to decide, although it can also be a part of the company structure), because this trust and this confidence in oneself is an environmental element (see Rogers’ thoughts in section 2.3) on the road to “becoming a whole personality.” In the same vein, 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 (see, again, Rogers, section 2.3) 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. Some examples:

“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)

“If someone is constantly being driven and has to keep doing the same thing, say, working for the same client for years, that can be one understandable reason for burning out. Here at this company they make a point of moving each person to a different area every year or two, to new positions, so that this feeling of being burned out only occurs later, or does not even occur.” (Gergő)

The trust placed in an individual and related to their job can be examined from the point of view of just how much workplace processes are built on the individual, and how free they make the person feel (see also: section 3.2.2.2, Hackman et al., 1975). *If the entire organisational culture is pervaded by this trust and congruence (manifested in the behaviour of direct supervisors and senior management, as well as in processes and systems, etc.), individuals have the opportunity to achieve self-actualisation.*

6.3.3 Summary

In this section, I examined the factors which impede an individual’s efforts at self-actualisation and which can be traced back to their relationship to their work. Compared to what has been

presented in the summary of the literature, factors which are related to the individual's relationship to their work received more attention in the interviews, whereas work responsibility issues were discussed less.

Three factors were used to describe the individual's attitude; based on those, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The experience of possession (i.e. that the individual views the result of their work as their own) and related sentiments play an important role in the process of self-actualisation.
- Taking personal responsibility pervades the entire issue of self-actualisation; typically, it means that the individual is able to apply their skills actively, regardless of whether those may generate internal or external conflicts.
- The individual's commitment may be directed toward the organisation or toward the profession – the former is more likely to reinforce their efforts at achieving self-actualisation within the given company.

In addition to the individual's attitude, as it has already been pointed out in the research question, the characteristics of the individual's scope of responsibilities also affect their self-actualisation experiences as related to the workplace.

- The opportunity to engage in play(ful behaviour) in the workplace provides variety and excitement (as opposed to boredom and the possibility of burning out), as well as relaxation and freedom (as opposed to monotony and a narrow focus).
- A clear understanding of goals related to the individual's scope of responsibility is extremely important as far as self-actualisation goals are concerned, as these represent the structure which the individual, as a member of the organisation, can "fill with themselves" and can thus achieve self-actualisation.
- Attention focused on the individual as well as the trust placed in him or her is less related to their scope of responsibilities than to their colleagues or supervisors, but this is also an important factor in self-actualisation. Characteristics of the individual's scope of responsibilities, as long as they project some kind of value system (attention, trust), can also affect self-actualisation.

The characteristics of the individual's scope of responsibilities work to support self-actualisation efforts if they are congruently embedded in the organisational culture. In other

words, the organisational culture and the specifics of the scope of responsibilities must project the same values as far as self-actualisation opportunities within the organisation are concerned. In the next section, I will examine further factors related to the organisation (besides the organisational culture), in an effort to provide a greater understanding of factors impeding individual self-actualisation and traced back to the organisation.

6.4 Factors impeding self-actualisation, ascribed to the organisation

In this section, I will examine factors impeding individual self-actualisation which may be traced to the characteristics of 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?*

As it has already been shown in the discussion of the relevant theories, organisational characteristics are most salient in the company's organisational culture (values, systems, processes, etc.). Accordingly, I will first analyze management and leader behaviour as a defining element of organisational culture. This factor affects not only the daily functioning of the company – and, through that, self-actualisation efforts – but also organisational culture as such. Then, I will discuss other aspects of organisational culture less related to leadership but, nonetheless, having an impact on self-actualisation efforts. Finally, I will analyze a factor which falls outside the formal boundaries of the organisation but nonetheless affects daily functions significantly: the client.

6.4.1 Organisational members: leader and team

6.4.1.1 Leader and leadership skills: lack of trust, or leaving it be

As mentioned already, the leader and the leader's behaviour are especially important elements of the organisation's culture. They define and transmit values, systems and processes. According to the relevant theories, trust that the individual feels from their surroundings, or more specifically, the leader's perceptions of the employee's attitude to their work (Y theory) affects the daily life of the employee and also their efforts at self-attainment (see also: sections 2.3.1 and 3.3.1.1).

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)

“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. There are directions and there are guidelines that the management provides, but there is actually much latitude and everyone can interpret these the way they’d like.” (Kelemen)

“Here too, there are serious boundaries. I’m sure these can be crossed, but these boundaries are wide enough so that you feel you can stay inside them and still make the most of yourself.” (Berni)

“Obviously, my supervisor is there when we’re working on important projects like tenders. But he lets me do things my way on more routine or automatic tasks.” (Márti)

The answers above indicate that there is a trust between the leader and the employees, and in some cases this trust may even drive self-actualisation (“to make the most of yourself”). In some cases, this trust is actually the foundation for such efforts (“have to allow it to thrive”).

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 these cases I asked specifically about the difference between these two approaches, but interview subjects tended to regard the situation more as being entrusted with something.

“We’re all adults; you put people in certain positions so that you can leave certain tasks to them, no? Why should big brother then stand over your shoulder all the time? There are, certainly, ways for supervision: if we have a tender, we’ll take the final concept to the managing director, who offers guidance and takes out what he sees fit [...]” (Gergő)

“I think if the management sees me performing well if given free reign over something, they will only get involved if something is amiss. I think that’s trust.” (Gergő)

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.

“When I task my team with something and when I make a decision, I always try to be perfectly democratic. I get the final word, but I try to assess what ideas they may insist on and why; by trying to understand that, I can try to make a fair call in the end.” (Gergő)

“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.

“I think my boss trusts me. The turning point was when I managed to sell a solution to a client that they would never have accepted or dared to do [...] but human factors also figure into the equation – unless you have harmony in thought and in attitude, you can be an awfully good professional, it’ll make little difference. We have this harmony, fortunately. What’s also true is that I would be unable to work without trust. I would constantly be thinking about what my boss will say about something. This way I can work the way I want to.” (Ernő)

“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.” (Berni)

The concept of trust (earning and experiencing it) was present very emphatically in what the interview subjects described, and they tended to underscore these questions when asked about experiences of self-actualisation. As discussed in the theoretical part already, the *leader’s communication and the leader’s learning* are also organisational factors which affect self-actualisation. During my interviews, leaders’ communication was only discussed in the context of communication related to certain situations (e.g. *“our operations are professional, but internal communications and the internal flow of information are just disastrous”* – Vilmos); interview subjects did not provide examples of the type of leader communication discussed in the theoretical part.

Also, the examples given in the context of leader learning applied explicitly to professional learning (e.g. *“I try to match up my colleagues in pairs so they are able to learn from each other”* – Boldizsár), introspective development as a way of learning was never mentioned.

Certainly, this does not mean that these are not important or are irrelevant as far as self-actualisation is concerned. It is possible that in the company’s daily functions *and during self-actualisation efforts these influencing factors are not consciously present (and so cannot be investigated in an interview)*. Unfortunately, due to the constraints of the research, I cannot provide an answer to this question.

6.4.1.2 Lack of team spirit

In the review of literature, little was mentioned about the colleagues of the individual in the workplace. Especially in advertising, however, team work is very important. In my view, it is important to discuss this as a factor affecting self-actualisation because the concept of the team, as a structure, is vital not just in advertising, but in many other organisations as well. Therefore, lessons to be learned from the interviews conducted with creative directors may be applied and may be useful anywhere teamwork is involved.

For creative directors and for the staff of an advertising agency, teamwork comes naturally (see section 4.2). This factor may, in itself, be one that either supports or impedes self-actualisation.

“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)

“Everyone insists on everything all the time here; but they all have to come to a compromise: the copywriter, the art director and the account manager. There are a lot of people who will chip away at anything you come up with. And they either have reasonable explanations for it, or they just claim to know the client better than you do.” (Ernő)

In this section, I will examine how teamwork – if there is a need for teamwork – can impede self-actualisation. I used the expression “lack of team spirit” to describe this concept. What, exactly, does team spirit mean?

- A dependence 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)

“Working in a team is so much more effective; you always get a reaction to your ideas, and if others don’t see something the way you had imagined it, that tells you that there is something wrong with that message.” (Ernő)

“I get along very well with my account manager; we understand each other, we don’t need to go into anything superfluously – we tell it like it is, and that’s great for me.” (Máti)

- An 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)

“This is more than just a professional relationship; it’s more emotional than that. You need a lot of empathy so that you can motivate and help each other even when we’re all tense and tired. [...] And I think we all get a feel for that. And if we see that one of us is swamped, then we’ll ask if we can help, instead of sneaking out earlier.” (Berni)

- 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)

“I’m surrounded by people who know what I’m talking about or what I’d like to see done. It’s one thing to be on the same page professionally; we’re beyond that and know exactly what the other person is talking about. We just glance at each other and all the pieces fall into place.” (Gergő)

“I get inspiration from the team. A lot of inspiration.” (János)

It is clear that *teamwork, for several reasons, involves dependence*. 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 (as the theories presented already also show), *impedes the individual in their efforts at self-actualisation, since their sense of security becomes destabilised and they are lacking in some kind of (D-) needs (see Maslow’s theory earlier and its implications)*.

I believe there are several organisational factors at play as far as self-actualisation is concerned: leaders can help foster the self-actualisation efforts of a team member through trust, and team members can do the same by establishing a partner-like relationship; the key, in both of these cases, is paying attention and providing support.

6.4.2 Organisational culture

In the theoretical summary, the following factors related to organisational culture were pointed out: lack of dialogue, avoiding risk, an exaggerated sense of insecurity and the lack of a common vision for the future. The interviews, however, painted a somewhat different picture, and other issues were emphasised more. These called attention to other organisational factors which serve to impede the individual’s self-actualisation⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ The issues “lack of dialogue,” “avoiding risk” and “accepting uncertainty,” closely related to the defensive mechanism values of the organisational culture, were not mentioned in the interviews. This is most likely to due to the fact that – as indicated already – this research methodology was not particularly geared toward bringing defensive mechanisms to the surface.

The common vision for the future did not come up in the interview conducted with the managing director, only goals were mentioned (e.g. *“To deliver professional results for the clients at the same time as meeting the very strict financial requirements of the parent company.”*) These kinds of goals do make their way into the lower levels of the organisation’s hierarchy on a cognitive level, but they do not directly define organisational members’ efforts at self-actualisation.

6.4.2.1 Lack of transparency

The question of transparency is closely related to the scope of the individual's responsibilities, yet I will discuss it here, in the section on organisational systems, because it is tied especially closely not to a specific area or responsibilities, but to the entire workplace.

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)

“What I saw elsewhere, although it was a smaller agency, was that everyone wanted to have a say in everything. [...] it's better if everyone knows their place and their roles. I like how roles are clearly defined here, we know who the account manager is and who the creative director is. Our operations are not ad-hoc, for this reason; we all do the best we can, and if there is one idea, two others are always bound to follow.” (Vilmos)

Interview subjects described understanding their own scope of responsibilities; this is a basic condition of self-actualisation within an organisation: 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)

“There is a ‘mailman’ type among account managers – they carry the creative materials to the client, but don't know what the background is, and so are unable to sell the material. They then come back and say the concept just doesn't work. And then I'm supposed to try convincing them that, yes, in fact, it does?!” (Bence)

“There are occasions when the client just insists on something to the end; they send us their design plans in a power point file [...] when this happens, I tell the account manager to stop working and ask them to stop passing these things to me.” (Gergő)

6.4.2.2 Failure to experience professionalism

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)

“We’ve got a large database that includes all the campaigns conducted in Hungary. This is such a professional thing to have, and it helps inspire us so that we can produce things that nobody else has done before, is brand new, and that we can be proud of.” (Kelemen)

“It’s one thing for me to have ideas; lots of people have ideas. But here you have the opportunity to then realise what you come up with: you get to work with a professional director, cameraman, photographer and a professional printing house, on professional computers. It’s only natural that I too will give it my all and do the best I can.” (Berni)

These descriptions above call attention to the fact that it makes a difference how a member of the team views – and in some cases, 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 – [...]”. The quotes appear to indicate that this process can be an extremely important factor in support of self-actualisation.

6.4.3 Additional organisational phenomena

During the interviews, several subjects referred to organisational phenomena which are important as they go about their daily work, and which have an effect on their efforts at self-actualisation. These, then, appear to be thoughts which may be specific to the organisation or to the profession, yet may also be important in general.

6.4.3.1 Lack of extraordinary solutions

At this advertising agency, “360-degrees” mean that the company offers clients a 360-degree marketing communications plan (i.e. not just television and print newspapers, but also the internet and fliers are involved, etc.). This 360-degree approach is a service that this particular advertising agency offers, so naturally, this cannot be generalised. At the same time, as the interviews shows, this means much more to the creative staff than simply a service that they are offering.

“The 360-degrees, to me, is an endless storehouse of ideas. I think almost everything belongs to this approach, so there is no danger of burning out. There are a gazillion channels you can use, and they’re never the same. We decide what channels we propose to use.” (Gergő)

“The company is a big supporter of the 360-degree approach. I’m fortunate because this is something I do well.” (Bence)

“360-degrees allows you to have a much more targeted approach in each direction, and can help you sell creative solutions better. In each and every case, we come up with a lot of ideas for these solutions. And this is a great team to be doing this with, because we’re all very different and have different views. We can come up with a variety of ideas and then we can realise them.” (János)

For the creative staff, then, the 360-degree approach is an opportunity to present the client with advertising materials which go beyond the usual and which enable them to showcase their own skills. As far as self-actualisation is concerned, it points out that it is possible to establish a professional or organisational system or process which serves to bring out and activate the self-actualisation of the efforts even more. Finding this is, in part, the responsibility of the profession as a whole and the organisation (or its management), but is also up to the members of the organisation, since each individual has to recognise this and make use of it.

6.4.3.2 Turnover

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.

“Our newest creative director will be the fifth creative director we’ll have had at the company; that’s a lot, even if we all know that there is turnover in the advertising business.” (Gergő)

“We’re picking up international standards, but not appreciating our labour force. If someone does their job well and wants to earn more money, and mentions this, then the management will tell them they are free to leave. We’ve got quite the turnover here; I’ve been here six months, but have read farewell messages from at least thirty colleagues. That really gets you down, and yes, I too have wondered whether they’re right to leave. Where is the appreciation of our work? Who wants to work in a place where they are not appreciated?” (Berni)

“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.

6.4.3.3 Ergonomic considerations: the open office

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)

“It’s good that there are these little ‘thinking rooms’ where you can retire. There is also a foosball-room. You can walk out to the shore of the Danube. Creative freedom – you really get it here. I don’t like the open office layout; I like to turn my music up when I’m working, and I do my best thinking when I’m lying down [...] maybe it opens up my chakras, or something. [...] I often come up with my ideas at home, and then share them with the team the following day.” (Ernő)

“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)

Although interview subjects all opposed this office layout, I will not be examining the pros and cons of such an arrangement. The “phenomenon,” however, is important, as it indicates that the ergonomical design of the organisation (“cohabitation”) can also affect the individual’s efforts at self-actualisation.

6.4.4 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 advertising agency, like all other service sector companies, makes its living by serving clients. During the interviews, subjects referred above all to clients⁶⁷ when asked about

⁶⁷ In his article, Alvesson (1994) calls attention to the fact that advertising agency professionals are seldom able to convince clients of the quality of their work and their know-how; the role of the advertising agency is difficult to delineate and is ambiguous. Alvesson also points out that advertising agency staff speak of the client as “product-oriented” professionals, as opposed to a market- and communication-oriented stance that they would prefer.

factors impeding self-actualisation. That is why I endeavoured to examine this factor as a component of the organisational framework.

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.” (Gergő)

“[...] they pay us, and they use that as justification for making us do certain things their way at times, simply because that’s the way they want it.” (Karina)

“The ideal client? Believes in me, believes in what I do, and there is a relationship of equals. ‘I know what you know, and you know what I know; we need each other, so let’s do this!’” (Berni)

“I personally only experienced this position of ‘you’re the advertising folks, and I pay you, so sell my product, and then let’s see where we are at the end’ once. Instead, it’s more like ‘you’re the advertising folks, I pay you, so let’s see how you would do this, but let’s coordinate, because there are certain things I don’t want, and let’s not even argue about that.’” (Bence)

Interview subjects complained that the relationship between them and their client is not one of partnership (with clear-cut roles), but a relationship between a superior and a subordinate, 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)

“I think this is most apparent in two areas – television campaigns and billboards. Clients tend to fight for their own way much more in these cases than what would be ideal. [...] We do a lot of things for them that we really don’t enjoy doing.” (János)

Certainly, many creative directors have already experienced this situation, and have come up with solutions that allow them to keep what they believe is important in their work:

“In these cases, you have to try what I call a ‘hidden’ public service announcement campaign; what I mean is that you can try and insert some societal value or message without the client realizing it.” (János)

“You can soar, but you have to see what exactly it is that the client wants. The client may want something without knowing exactly what; you have to present them with the buffet table that has all the solutions.” (Bence)

I was interested in finding out whether the creative directors have ever placed themselves in the clients’ shoes, and what they trace this type of behaviour on the part of the client to. In other

words: are they trying to shift responsibility for their lack of opportunities at self-actualisation, or are these statements well-founded and thought through? I believe that the role of the client is little understood by the creative directors; they tend to judge their clients predominantly based on emotions and impressions.

“They make you feel that they really know what they’re doing and that they’re really top of their class; they want you to think that their decisions are conscious ones, but in most cases these are actually very subjective calls.” (Gergő)

“There are eight people on the client side who have to give you the green light; one might say it’s all right, another one may want to change something before approving, and then it gets passed to a third person who wants yet more modifications.” (Ernő)

“Because they’re afraid to try something new.” (Berni)

“A lot depends on these proud clients wanting to see their own ideas realised.” (Kelemen)

“When presenting to the client, we usually describe at least three different concepts. And then the client will pick elements of each that they like, and we have to merge them. That’s how you get these Frankenstein-type monstrosities.” (Máti)

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.

There are examples, however, of the creative directors approving of their relationship with a client; in some cases, these experiences were coupled with a sense of self-actualisation:

“This is a kind of compromise. The client has their say, but in return, they finance my thoughts. That’s not such a bad arrangement, since it will be my ideas that will be realised.” (Gergő)

“[...] they were expecting to have to pay millions to shoot this commercial and to cast actors, etc. And then we came up with this amazingly simple idea; they fell in love with that, and were really happy that we put forward such a cost-effective solution. We were happy, too, and proud that they liked our idea and that it will appear on television.” (Karina)

“It’s really a joy for us to see that the client trusts us and that they look to us for the solutions; it’s even better when we are able to provide that solution [...]” (János)

It is noteworthy that only experiences, emotions and thoughts related to the client evoked the concept of “fighting” among respondents. The client, it looks like, is the most threatening factor in their eyes:

“In reality, the fight a creative director wages with the client is a very quiet one; we mostly just fume, because the client just doesn’t seem to understand sometimes that what they’re saying makes no sense at all.” (Máti)

“We have to fight these battles with them day after day.” (Gergő)

“The challenge is this: to fight my way through the client, the account manager, the budget folks and anything else, and still win. That’s a real accomplishment.” (Gergő)

Even though the client is not formally a part of the organisation, it still affects the efforts of team members at self-actualisation, and acts more as an impeding factor as far as creative professionals are concerned. It is possible that they 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.).

6.4.5 Summary

This section has called attention to the fact that factors which impede individual self-actualisation and which are connected to the organisation may be related to other individuals, organisational values, systems and processes, as well as to the environment found in the organisation. Additionally, the organisation's reach does not end at the door; several other systems (clientele, for instance) also affect self-actualisation.

- Of members of the organisation, managers and the team itself all have an effect on the self-actualisation efforts of the individual. If the individual feels that the management of the company entrusts them with the work (as opposed to “leaving” the work to them) and that they are able to develop partner-like relationships with other members of the team (as opposed to subordination), this experience also works in favour of self-actualisation efforts.
- I have emphasised two values related to organisation culture, based on the interviews, which support self-actualisation efforts: (1) transparency, by providing a level playing field for the individual for self-actualisation; (2) professionalism, which motivates the individual to do the very best job they can in the workplace.
- Motivating novel solutions, turnover and the open office layout are all different organisational “phenomena” which also have an effect on the individual's efforts at self-actualisation. While the presence of expectations requiring novel solutions may serve to activate the efforts of the individual aimed at self-actualisation, turnover creates a sense of insecurity and can impede self-actualisation efforts. The ergonomic design of the office also has an impact on the individual's efforts at self-actualisation.
- Tensions arising in the workplace (e.g. between the client and the service provider) also, generally, impede self-actualisation. In light of the above, all individual behaviour which is aimed at relieving any tension can be considered important (e.g. clarifying roles, understanding the individual's own responsibilities, etc.).

6.5 Factors impeding self-actualisation as laid down by the individual's environment

In my theoretical overview, I defined 'broader environment' as including the economic, political, cultural and social context that the given organisation (in this case, the advertising agency) operates in (see also: section 4.3.4).

When conducting the interviews, I decided not to enquire about opinions of the subjects related to Hungarian political, economic, cultural and social issues as far as their own self-actualisation is concerned. The reason for this approach was that it became apparent that interview subjects would be mentioning factors supporting or impeding their self-actualisation which are evident in their daily life and/or can affect it. The "most distant" factor they mentioned was the Hungarian advertising business as a whole. Because the experiences of these individuals is the focus of this dissertation, I decided to narrow the "broader environment" down to what they view as a broad environment – this being the advertising business.

Factors involved in the individual's efforts at self-actualisation (like turnover, the acceptance of BTL, etc.) and related to the Hungarian advertising business have been discussed already (primarily as factors internal to the organisation and working against self-actualisation); this section will continue the analysis.

As has already been mentioned in the overview of the literature, it is often difficult to define the origins of a factor which has an impeding effect (e.g. organisational or broader environment, and of the latter economic or political reasons, etc.), so I have not tried to classify these more precisely⁶⁸.

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.

⁶⁸ During the interviews, I did not pose questions related to the origins of the impeding factors. I believe doing so would have broken the subjects' train of thought and asking about my own conceptual framework would have altered their explanations.

6.5.1 Characteristics of the profession

Most of the interview subjects discussed their thoughts about their profession without specifically being asked to do so. They brought it up to illustrate how the characteristics of their profession help or impede their daily work. It also appeared, however, that the subjects considered the future of their profession in connection with their own vision for the future. In light of this, I was able to divide analysis of the characteristics of the advertising business into two groups: the present and future state of the profession as the interview subjects see it.

6.5.1.1 The business in today's world

I examined the advertising business from the following perspective: “what characteristics did interview subjects mention that had an impact on their efforts at self-actualisation?” These characteristics, in my opinion, are important because they define the respondents’ daily well-being and work, and provide (or do not provide) an environment where the individual can strive for self-actualisation.

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.” (Gergő)

“There is no constant supervision, a big brother type of feeling; but I don’t know whether this is the case because we’re a good team, or the boss is good, or it’s just typical in this field. I don’t know how it is in other professions, but maybe we’ve just reached a point in Hungary by 2008 that you no longer have to monitor where staff members are through their entry badges.” (Márti)

“Comfortably and relaxed – these two words don’t exist in the advertising business. This is good to know, and this is the environment you have to adjust to make full use of your potential. If you can do it, that’s great; if not, that’s it, you have to go look for other work. But that’s easy to say, I know.” (Bence)

“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).

The other group of characteristics relating to the current state of the advertising business relates to advertisements completed already. Respondents complained about the regulations affecting their industry, making it more difficult to realise their own plans.

“The advertising business in Hungary is still stuck in this era of having to explain things. Unless we explain everything, the message won’t go across. You have to check off all 27 items, and once you’ve done that, then you can start on the advertisement. This really makes it difficult for us to come up with something new [...].” (Bence)

“We’re so proud of these little tricks, as Hungarians. We understand everything very quickly and then find the loopholes. But when it comes to communication, we go to extreme lengths to explain everything. Hungarian advertising is rather educational, and this is pretty boring. Sometimes I can’t even get my ideas to appear in the advertisement, because it may not be educational in this sense.” (Berni)

“Commercials in the 1980s were all funny. You watched them, you laughed at them and then you talked about them at school. Then, we had this laundry detergent revolution, and we adopted something blindly. We’re doing it all too seriously. This is the advertising business in Hungary. That’s the playing field you have to win in!” (Kelemen)

For me, even though I have no reason to doubt their opinion, the issue once again comes down to the question of personal responsibility: who produces the “educational” or “serious” commercials? The same way as in the section on the client, it is worthwhile to call the attention of the creative directors (or generally individuals working toward self-actualisation) to the concept that they can also support a particular situation through their actions or inactions.

The concept of competition has not come up so far, either in the discussion of the literature, or in the analysis thus far, yet it is another factor which affects individual self-actualisation in some way. This came up several times when discussing the entire profession:

“There is some serious competition involved, both internally and externally.” (Kelemen)

“Professional jealousy is very typical in this line of work. This is not a very sincere profession. I don’t share all of my ideas with those not on the team.” (Ernő)

“Since starting work here, I’ve been seeing a trend: deadlines are becoming shorter. This is like a photographer who agrees to do something for 25 thousand HUF, ‘but just this once.’ Next time it will be an expectation. Agencies are involved in some pretty fierce competition, and so they’re willing to take on these jobs for less and less money. This launches a circle where we’re essentially having to do everything ourselves. This is a very bad trend.” (Bence)

Interview subjects do not link competition within their profession to self-actualisation. The fact that it came up, however, raises an important question: does healthy competition exist? If it does, what is the extent of it that still works in support of self-actualisation without also impeding it? In my view, there is a kind of competition which helps achieve a maximum use of

the individual's abilities, and so supports the individual focusing on internal issues. There is also a level, I am sure, which acts as a block; the individual focuses only on external things, and is unable to work toward achieving their ideal-self.

6.5.1.2 The future of the business

Respondents described the future of the advertising business as it relates to marketing communications channels:

"Everyone says that BTL and the internet will take the lead, and printed press will disappear for good. I really like internet-based solutions, and I'm constantly coming up with new ideas for this channel. This comes naturally to me. I am extremely interested in what will happen in twenty years. I hope to have the same kind of natural relationship to the latest advances then." (Márti)

"It's hard to produce anything earth-shattering, because everyone knows that that will be over in five-ten years. Everyone is online now; people go online and read the news. The banners they see there are interactive – they talk to you, they move, etc., and that is new." (Ernő)

"We're no longer talking about the commercials of yesteryear; there has been a paradigm shift. Today, commercials have to be a form of audio-visual communication; anything and everything that the company does toward consumers is an advertisement. You have to live with this if you want to make it big." (János)

In my view, these thoughts related to the future (communications channels) appear to indicate that the individual is looking for their own place among the opportunities provided in this profession in the future. What may be behind this is a kind of yearning for security; the individual wants to feel secure knowing that they are in the right place in this line of work, and that they will have a role in the future. If this idea is proven correct, then this kind of searching for the way ahead can support self-actualisation along the lines of the individual's vision for the future (see section 6.2.3.1).

Creative director professional prizes were mentioned already in connection with the individual's vision for the future. As section 6.2.3.1 has already shown, these professional prizes do not have a significant effect on self-actualisation; yet it is important to note that interview subjects had a rather determined view of these prizes.

"I dislike prizes; in general it's almost impossible to win awards with commercials that are already completed and approved by the client. In most cases there is a brief, then we do the client version, and then we come up with a version that would win a prize." (Gergő)

"Going back to the prizes: I have a second place award, but I only came upon it by accident, no one ever told me. The whole prize-situation is ridiculous, in my opinion." (Márti)

"Everyone wants prizes. It's a form of recognition, and also, if someone has won a prize, it becomes much easier to find a new job. (Berni)

Prizes only call attention to the fact that there can be certain processes and systems (e.g. which call for recognition) in the profession which have however become indifferent and autotelic for industry professionals.

6.5.2 Advertising business ethics

When presenting plans for this research, most of the criticism I encountered was related to the research field proposed: how, I was asked, is it possible to research self-actualisation in a profession as unethical as the advertising business?⁶⁹

This observation led to my examination of the ethics of the industry, and its effects on self-actualisation, in the interviews conducted.

Interview subjects pointed to the primary goal of advertising: to provide information, with the intent to sell.

“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 provides consumers with information. Naturally, advertising is sure to influence, but that’s not the point. The question is always ‘do you know this product?’ If not, they have to provide you with information so you can choose.” (János)

“[...] I see advertising as a source of information. Everyone is welcome to draw their own conclusions from it.” (Karina)

Several interview subjects explained that advertising, in addition to trying to sell something, also has to fill another role; there are different reasons for this, however:

“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)

“When we’re communicating openly in public spaces (or in other ways) to a large number of people, that is a social phenomenon as far as advertising is concerned. There is a responsibility for the advertisement to include some value added.” (Berni)

“This is when you’ve got to try what I call a covert public service announcement campaign. What this means is that without the client knowing about it, we sneak some social value or message into the campaign. This is important so that we don’t end up with only one goal for the advertisement (which might involve deceiving people for a specific purpose, which is actually the reality.” (János)

In my opinion, the majority of respondents understood that the purpose of advertising is the promotion of sales. As some of them acknowledged, advertising does have a side to it which

⁶⁹ I summarized the pros and cons of my choice for field research in table 10; I do not wish to present further arguments.

involves deceiving people and/or convincing them of something. It is most likely due to a desire to lessen these negative feelings that they came up with goals pointing beyond the promotion of sales, such as entertainment.

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.).

“Why, do you know of any profession which has no unethical side to it? Certainly, there are tricks and maybe instances of misinformation, you hear a lot about these and about lawsuits, but I don’t think this is any less ethical than anything else. In today’s Hungarian reality, there are always contradicting views, reasons and reasons to the contrary for everything. And maybe advertising is less critical in this sense than, say, healthcare. Yes, there are tenders, some of which may already have been promised to someone [...]” (Karina)

“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)

An example to the contrary: “We can’t really talk about ethics in the advertising business. There is little here that’s ethical. ‘Your clothes will be ten times whiter’ – we know they won’t be. It’s not an ethical business, but I try not to think about that. [...] If someday I’ll have to bid farewell to advertising, or I just get bored of it, or maybe I just see the unethical side of the business, I won’t despair, and I will not be disappointed.” (Ernő)

This research does not aim at determining whether the advertising business is ethical or not. The issue of ethics, however, once again brings to the forefront the important question of whether the individual may strive for self-actualisation while employing defensive mechanisms at the same time. This question has already come up in section 6.2.2.4: whether an individual’s reliance on defensive mechanisms related to their work means that they may still realistically look for self-actualisation within their profession, and they can experience a sense of “being in the right place.” During the interviews, I found that respondents were able to describe experiences of self-actualisation in their workplace – this is my subjective research impression. Accordingly, I believe that “well-functioning” defensive mechanisms may support efforts and experiences of self-actualisation. Although these mechanisms establish a “pseudo world,” the individual may still experience self-actualisation, because they do not perceive this “pseudo-world.” One analogy: is it possible for a young girl to fall in love with a handsome man who also happens to be a vicious robber? I believe it is – as the real-life example of Bonnie and Clyde shows.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Bonnie and Clyde are famous figures of twentieth-century criminal history; several movies present their story (l/17).

6.5.3 Summary

In this section, I set out to find those professional characteristics which can affect the individual's efforts at self-actualisation. Interview subjects described many pleasant and many difficult moments they have experienced in their jobs.

- In the day to day functioning of the profession, the individual must strive to find a “healthy balance” between, on the one hand, the values of freedom and security, and, on the other hand, in the competition that is a characteristic of the business; this balance must be found so that the individual can focus on self-actualisation. For both of these areas, it would be important to assume responsibility in such a way that would lead the individual to recognition of their own roles in reaching a particular situation.
- Monitoring changes which affect the profession may help the individual find security as far as their own future is concerned (their ideal-self).
- The question of ethics, in relation to self-actualisation, has a different meaning to outsiders than to those working in this business. Thanks to the presence of defensive mechanisms, outsiders tend to view the reality of those working in the industry as a “pseudo reality,” but those involved can strive at self-actualisation within that framework.

I have relied on the assistance of creative directors working at the advertising agency to collect examples of, and obstacles to, individual self-actualisation. The following section will present a summary of the conclusions and will spell out further areas for research.

7. Conclusion and further research fields

This doctoral dissertation has examined individual self-actualisation in an organisational framework, together with factors which work to support or impede it.

In researching the literature, I first compared the relevant theories and concepts of representatives of humanistic psychology, and ordered them according to my own criteria. These theories helped provide a general understanding of self-actualisation and of the broad range of possible impeding factors.

Then, I turned to leadership studies and organisational research theories to provide a deeper and more specialised understanding of individual self-actualisation in an organisational framework, and to examine those impeding factors which appear in an organisational framework. In addition to once again ordering the theories according to the framework I set up earlier, I divided impeding factors into four groups, based on their origins:

1. established – not necessarily consciously – by the individual;
2. may be traced back to the relationship with one's work;
3. organisational barriers (organisational processes, systems and other factors);
4. impeding factors resulting from the broader environment (political, economic, cultural and social).

Following the theoretical summary, I conducted a qualitative study to prepare an interpretative-based case study, which focused on the following question: *“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?”*

The research showed that during the process of self-actualisation, or at a particular moment during that process, the individual experiences total involvement as a result of moving toward the attainment of an “ideal self”, or of just having achieved that state. My conclusion, based on this, is that consciousness is the most important factor in the process of self-actualisation, because oftentimes that can only be achieved within the given framework and as a result of compromise.

The figure below collects the factors which may impede self-actualisation.

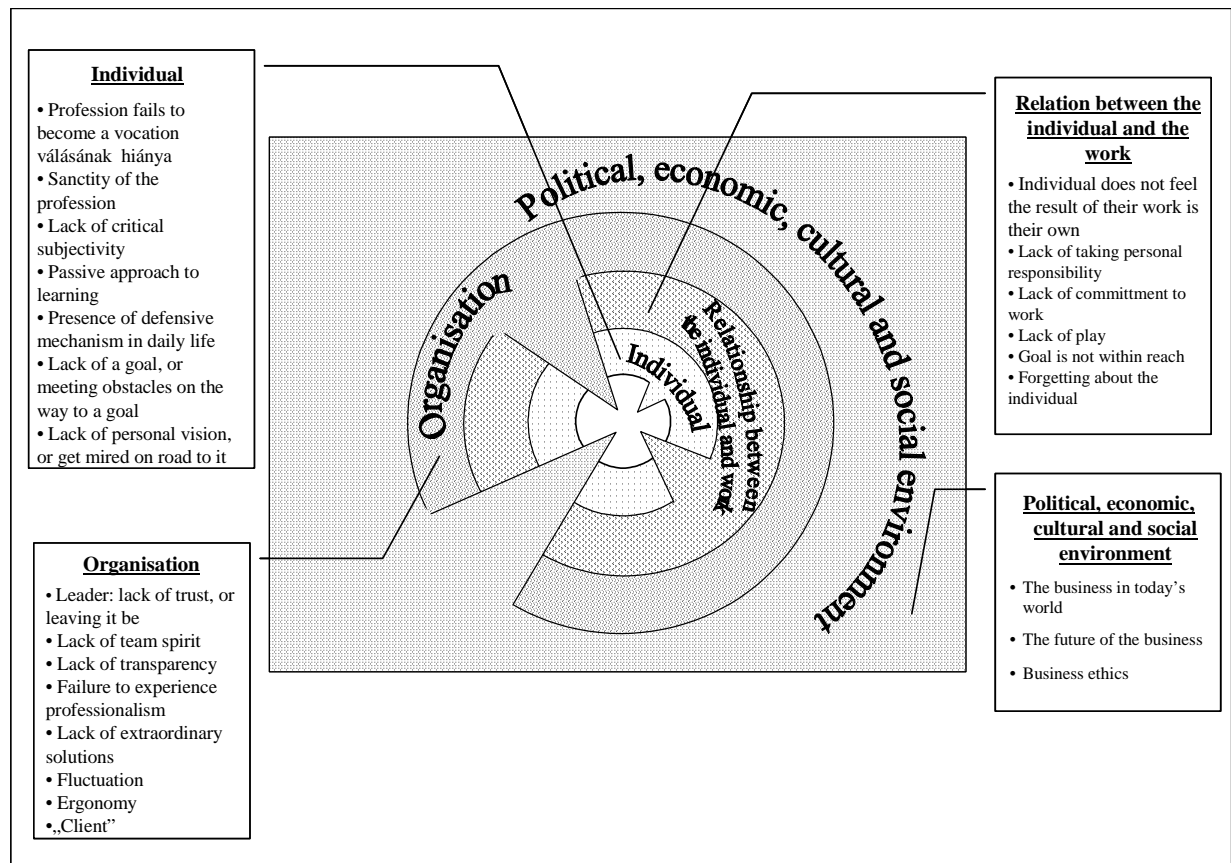


Figure 10.: Impeding factors of self-actualisation in organisational context
– summary of research results

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.

The generalizability of the impeding factors of self-actualization, according to my view can be captured to the level of the above figure: those are possibilities but the strength of the effects

on individual depend on personal experience. The need for further generalizability of the above impeding factors and the findings of other obstacles may catalyze the preparation of newer case studies and researches with the upcoming topics.

- Are there sectors that promote self-actualization more than other (e.g. for-profit vs. non-profit)?
- Are there companies that promote self-actualization more than other (e.g. production vs. service)?
- Are there jobs that promote self-actualization more than other (e.g. paperboy vs. receptionist)?
- Are there positions that promote self-actualization more than other (e.g. CEO vs. assistant)?

For further work in the same field, it would be interesting to examine the literature and connect various different scientific fields. In the following, I will introduce further topics for research, which can contribute to the literature and understanding of self-actualisation. To provide examples, I will pose further research questions.

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.

- “What can the organisation do in the interest of self-actualisation?”
- “Is it the responsibility of the organisation (or does it have the right) to influence – either support or impede – the individual’s efforts at self-actualisation?”
- “How do training courses help or impede individual self-actualisation? What kinds of training courses?”

The same focus on the individual, and my research hypotheses, placed emphasis on individual self-reflection when discussing the literature, hence the devotion of a separate sub-section to this topic. The research has shown that the presence of this concept is not necessarily as conscious as I had supposed. It may also be interesting to narrow the focus and to examine the relationship between self-reflection and self-actualisation. What kind of self-reflection, and

what level and direction, supports self-actualisation (if it is in fact a supporting factor)? How is self-reflection manifested in daily life?

- “What is someone doing when they engage in ‘self-reflection?’”
- “What are the relationships between self-reflection and self-actualisation?”
- “Is self-reflection a precondition of self-actualisation? If it is, what kind of precondition is it?”

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.

- “What kinds of defensive mechanisms can be observed in the self-actualisation efforts of the individual?”
- “What amount of defensive mechanisms, and what type, will still allow the individual to focus on 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.

- “What does the ‘ideal self,’ the attainment of which the individual is striving for in their self-actualisation, mean?”

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. I therefore encourage my readers to think about what a particular impeding factor means to them, how important it is, and what they can do to overcome it.

8. Appendix: Outlines of the Half-structured Interview

Research for the understanding of self-actualization and its promoting and impeding factors⁷¹

Introduction

The goal and course of the interview

How (s)he feels right now?

- What (s)he is up to today (was doing today)?
- How does (s)he feel now at work, what makes him/her enthusiastic, what doesn't?

Carrer

- How did (s)he become crative specialist – how did the expectations come true?
- What positions / clients were his/her job so far? How would (s) define the past years and why? Did (s)he like them, or not – and why?

Share experiences when (s)he felt that the work makes him/her flow – enjoyed extremly the work

- How didi t happen? What kind of experience was it? What did make it great, memorable?
- What was the work about? With whom did (s)he work together? How did the work flow go? What was the organization like at this moment?
- What did enhance / weaken this experience? How and why?
- How long was this experience, how did it end?

If there is not such an experience

- What would (s)he change in his work / organization in order to reach it?

Flow experience - deeper

- What kind of features can be named about such cases? What or who help him/ her to reach such experience?
- What are the obstacles, the impeding factors to have such experience even more often?
- What did (s)he do him/herself in order to have (to avoid?) such an experience?

Feedback: what did I understand?

Did I forget anything to mention, would (s)he like to add something?

Speaking of self-actualization – what does it mean to him/her?

Closing

- Thank you
- Send the thesis draft

⁷¹ The outlines represent the important topics to be covered during the interviews, not the exact questions.

Special topics if left out⁷²:

Individual

- Goals, vision
- Daily learning
- Awards

Job

- Relationship to the brand

Organization

- Relationship to his/her boss / management
- Group work
- Culture: rules (observance, if), situation of creative specialists within the agency
- Open office
- 360 degree given (?) possibilities

Advertising as a business

- Features
- Etics

Paying attention to

- Understanding the phenomena of self-actualization
- Emotions when describing self-actualization
- Body gestures when speaking about self-actualization
- His /her relationship to the phenomena
- About what is (s)he (not) speaking?
- How long does (s)he speak, about what?
- What is important for him/ her and what is for me?

⁷² The topics below are all topics that were in focus. Throughout the interviews the topics were wider or narrower, depending of what was known already from the interviews conducted before, or what seemed to be important/ irrelevant for the interview subject or to me during the interview.

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Interview subject and the date of the interview

Károly (CEO)	April 11, 2008.
Lili (HR)	April 25, 2008.
Boldizsár	April 24, 2008.
Gergő	May 6, 2008.
János	May 6, 2008.
Bence	May 13, 2008.
Márti	June 5, 2008.
Kelemen	June 5, 2008
Berni	June 6, 2008.
Vilmos	July 10, 2008.
Karina	July 10, 2008.
Ernő	July 11, 2008.