



The future of work is  
here – let's embrace it!

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# 2020 – The world stood still

## 2020

- Lot's of anxiety and uncertainty around the virus
- The majority of people were new to working from home
- The world was “locked down”
- Organisations struggled as operations were reliant on face to face interactions, many manual processes
- Global supply chain interruptions



A man with a beard is seen from the side, sitting at a desk with two laptops. He is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and an orange watch. The desk is cluttered with various items, including a smartphone, a small figurine, and a magazine. In the background, there are white blinds and a yellow lamp. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and a list of research details.

# Research Design

- 29 Semi-structured Interviews
- 4 self-reflections from the authors
- 55 minutes average per interview
- 6 countries represented
- 21 Industries
- Thematic Analysis
- Abductive approach
- Affordance theory

# Loss of ad-hoc face-to-face interactions

**Fewer distractions**


More orchestrated  
and planned  
collaboration

Less ad-hoc  
brainstorming to  
innovate

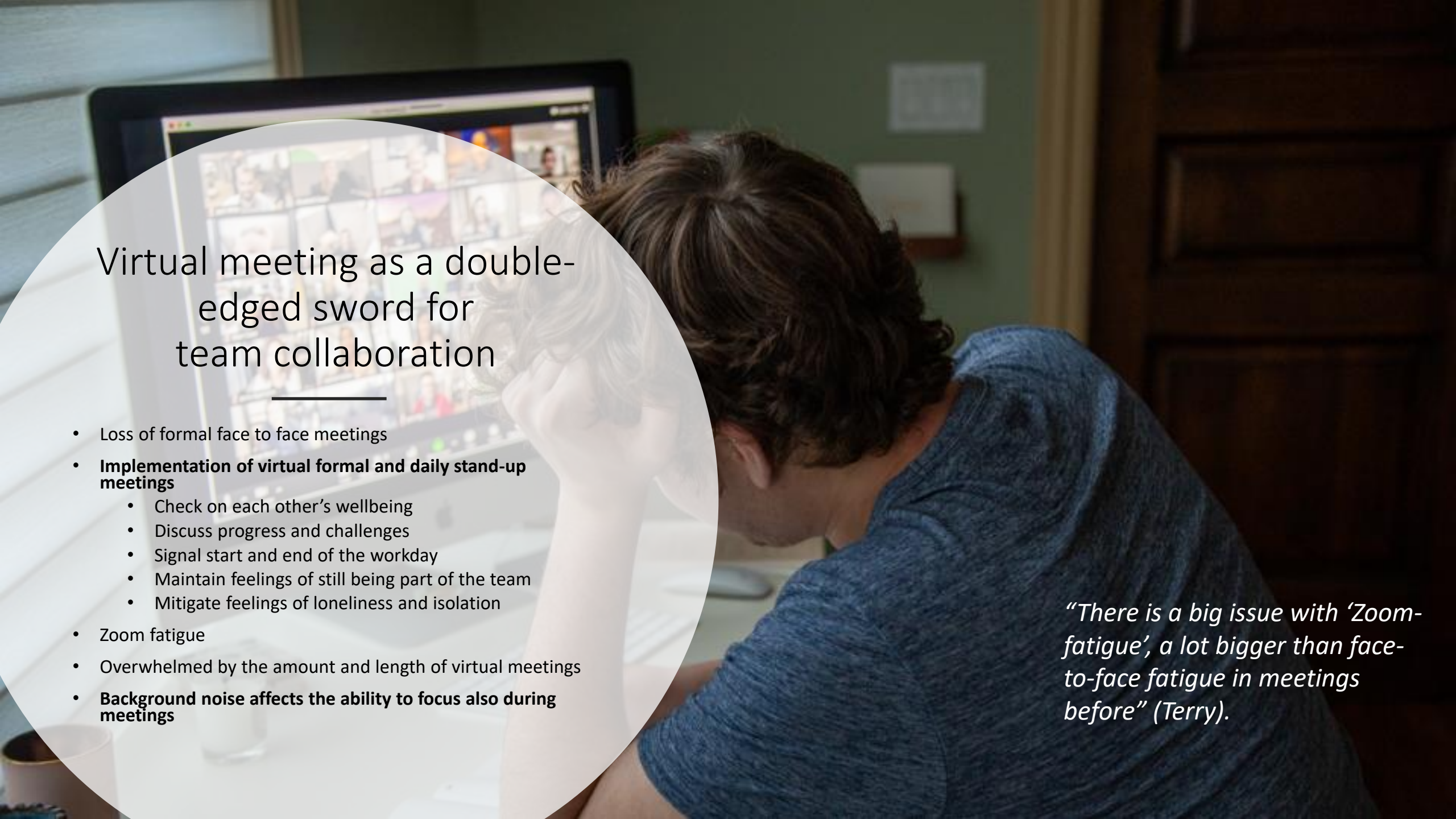
**Impedes  
knowledge sharing**

Lack of  
transparency if  
someone is busy or  
not

Hampers learning  
on the job  
especially for new  
employees



*“because I feel like when you’re next to each other, it’s way quicker. It’s like, ‘Hey, do you think this is okay?’ or like, ‘Can I ask you a question?’ You could see if they are busy. You can see if they’re not busy. You know what I mean? Whereas I’ve just sent an email and then I realised I forgot to ask a question a minute later. I’d have to send another one. Then it just keeps adding up. Obviously, I can’t do that. I can’t constantly ask someone. They told me I can, but I can’t. Before, I used to go to meetings with them just to see what’s going on, just to shadow people. Because I can’t do that, I feel like it’s a barrier between my learning time” (Anna).*

A person with dark hair, wearing a blue t-shirt, is seen from the side, looking at a computer monitor. The monitor displays a virtual meeting with a grid of participants. The scene is set in an office environment with a desk and a window in the background.

## Virtual meeting as a double-edged sword for team collaboration

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- Loss of formal face to face meetings
- **Implementation of virtual formal and daily stand-up meetings**
  - Check on each other's wellbeing
  - Discuss progress and challenges
  - Signal start and end of the workday
  - Maintain feelings of still being part of the team
  - Mitigate feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Zoom fatigue
- Overwhelmed by the amount and length of virtual meetings
- **Background noise affects the ability to focus also during meetings**

*“There is a big issue with ‘Zoom-fatigue’, a lot bigger than face-to-face fatigue in meetings before” (Terry).*

# Socialising and networking through virtual channels

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- Loss of face to face social gatherings e.g. after-work drinks
- Implementation of virtual social networking events
  - Breaking down geographical barriers
  - Getting to know other people from different affiliations
- **Better integration of remote workers – levelling the playing field**
- Awkwardness during online social events – no mix and mingling without breakout rooms
- **Implementing virtual coffee breaks that were previously regarded as non-value adding**

*“And at the end of a team meeting, you might have five minutes, but you never have that. Because people fear it’s unprofessional. People fear it’s not a value-added activity. That time that they have in the office is incredibly precious” (Laura).*



# The world has changed

## 2022

- We have learned a lot about the virus and the different variants
- A very high vaccination rate
- Many freedoms and pre-pandemic life regained
- Organisations went through an accelerated digital transformation process, increasingly automated processes
- War in Ukraine, sanctions for Russia and strict Covid policies in China worsen global supply chain interruptions and contribute to increasing living costs



# Accelerated change in the way we work

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Pre-Covid-19</b>	<b>During Covid-19</b>	<b>Post-Covid-19</b> (after majority of restrictions are lifted)
Choice	Voluntary decision	Enforced	Informed decision – Task-environment fit
Population	Depending on the organisational policies	Significant percentages (e.g., USA 50%) of the working population	Increase in remote work/hybrid work opportunities to attract talent, mitigate burnout and leverage the advantages of both work settings.
Responsibilities	Performing usual professional and private roles	Take on multiple roles, e.g., employee, teacher, cleaner, cook	Performing usual professional and private roles, yet some blurring might occur if more household members work/study from home
Motivations	Fewer distractions, increased flexibility, increased autonomy accommodating private commitments and reduced commuting time	Comply with governmental or organisational restrictions, and to limit the risk of infection, or spreading COVID-19	Saving time due to less commuting, increased ability to focus and increased productivity, saving money, (increased job satisfaction), avoidance of contracting and spreading Covid, more time for private activities like workouts, reducing one's carbon footprint.
Wellbeing	Positive (autonomy and flexibility) and negative (blurred boundaries of work and life) effects on wellbeing	Increased anxiety, stress levels, reduced life satisfaction, exposure to negative news and fear of being infected or infect others around them	Increased feelings of loneliness and being excluded from on-site workers, avoidance of contracting COVID-19 and other diseases like the flu.
Social interactions	Marginalised professionally but with more flexibilities in personal contacts	Social contact is limited to their household or on virtual platforms	Professional and private social interactions are influenced by governmental and organisational recommendations. Professional remote social interactions are facilitated by digital collaboration platforms.



## 3 Key take aways

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- Let's not go back to square 1 – leverage the best of both worlds
- Discuss the most suitable work configuration with your manager and team
- Rethink office space – if downsizing, invest in people's work set-up -> higher satisfaction and productivity








# Thank you for your attention!



Listen

Special Communications

## An affordance perspective of team collaboration and enforced working from home during COVID-19

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