



# **An integral view on leadership and organizational transformation in public sector organization**

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## **Abstract:**

In the past decade the extent and the complexity of socio-economic challenges the modern societies are facing has grown dramatically. Balancing often on the brink of crisis, these global challenges force organizations to overthink their approaches and look for new ways to respond to external changes. Thus, research on organizational transformation needs to focus on models that provide a big-picture lens, offering holistic and integral solutions to modern challenges. An Integral theory makes an important contribution to the research of organizational transformation by suggesting a metatheoretical AQAL model (all-quadrants, all levels) that integrates four-dimensional perspective of objective, interobjective, subjective and intersubjective reality in its analysis. The AQAL model is a comprehensive view to the reality, accommodating multiple theoretical perspectives and methodological pluralism. Against this backdrop this master thesis aims to explore an Integral Approach, focusing on leadership and organizational transformation in one public sector organization addressing individual or microlevel perspectives. The key questions, which are driving this research are: how do values and worldviews impact organizational transformation in public sector environment? How can organizational capacity to develop an agile response to external changes be improved in public sector organizations? What role leadership plays in the process of public sector transformation? The main findings of this work suggest that organizational capacity to successfully overcome changes is paired with the mind-set of its employees and in particularly leadership. Structural changes introduced due to teleworking and digitalization impact organizations on a deeper level, bringing shifts towards new culture of work, re-definition of processes and strategies, resulting in global shifts in the whole organization. These new practices and emerging new organizational cultures require also new models of leadership and new skill-set for leaders, who will need to meet the task of “walking” the organizations through modern challenges.

Keywords: Organizational transformation, change, AQAL, Integral Theory, Metatheory

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# 1. Introduction

In the past decade the extent and the complexity of socio-economic challenges the modern societies are facing has grown dramatically. Balancing often on the brink of crisis, such as climate change, digital transformation, Covid-19 pandemic, and now the full-scale war on the European continent, these global challenges force organizations to overthink their approaches on look for new ways to respond to external changes.

Public sector organizations are in particularly affected by these changes as they find themselves often being pressured by the citizens' expectation to lead the modernization processes and develop contemporary strategies for how to deal with changing environments. On the one hand, public sector organizations are expected to serve as role models for the society, providing guidance for transformations and change management practices. On the other hand, the need to tackle these challenges simultaneously as well as to adjust to working with these crisis on the long-term, forces public sector organizations to operate at the edge of their own capacities.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a good example of a global challenge, which exacerbated this discrepancy and highlighted the weaknesses of the current system. On the one hand, as the crisis broke out in March 2020, citizens around the globe expected their respective authorities to take the responsibility and provide guidance and strategies for how to tackle the pandemic, minimizing health risks and ensuring operability of the society. On the other hand, public sector organizations were affected by the outbreak of the pandemic and were not prepared for it in the same scale as anyone else. Yet, they needed to act more agile than any other organization and at the same time, be prepared to adapt crisis mode as a long-term strategy.

As I am writing these words, in summer 2022, the Covid-19 pandemic is still ongoing, the war in Ukraine is going in its 6<sup>th</sup> month and the abnormal heatwave brought new temperature records in some of the European countries. All these crisis that we experience today have a tendency to stay long-term with us, impacting organizations on a much deeper level.

Caused by a change in the external environment, the whole concept of working environment is now changing like a domino effect. The disruption of the common working mode due to teleworking or establishment of processes in a digital environment for example, are no longer only changes, which happen exclusively on the structural level in the organization. These structural changes bring also a cultural shift towards new modes of collaboration among employees, new dynamic of doing things, forming thus new norms within the teams and resulting

in changing value systems for the whole organization. As the result, these new practices and emerging new organizational cultures require, in their turn, new models of leadership and new skill-set for leaders, who will need to meet the task of “walking” the organizations through transformational processes. Thus, in contemporary times, when both our organizations and our challenges are complex and interconnected, looking at one element of change inside the organization means often looking at the whole organization, questioning the whole concept of the organization (Naschold, 1996, p. 8).

In one of their first major reviews of theories of organizational transformation back in 1986, Amir Levy and Uri Merry suggested that “*the capacity for an organization to survive in the future would be directly related to its ability to pass through dramatic changes in its purpose, culture, function and worldview*” (Levy&Merry, 1986, p.305 in Edwards. p. 17). The suggestion of Levy and Merry supports the argument that organizational transformation need to look at the nature of transformative changes through a big-picture lens, offering holistic and integral solutions for organizations. This includes not only the analysis of the structural level and efficiency of the processes established, but re-definition of the norms and culture, increasing awareness towards the value-system and the mind-set, which is lived through in the organization. In other words, there is a need for “*contextual consideration and understanding of the microlevel processes of change for individuals*” (Kuipers et al, 2014) and how these subjective microlevel processes impact the so-called “big-picture” in organizations.

An Integral theory makes an important contribution to the research of organizational transformation by suggesting a metatheory that integrates all previous organizational knowledge in an integral, balanced and inclusive framework (Robledo, 2014, p. 534). According to Marco Antonio Robledo an increasing fragmentation of management and organization theory as well as developing a view on the organization from one single paradigm (Gioia & Pietre, 1990 in Robledo 2014, p.354) can be attributed to one of the reasons for why the current challenges are not responded accordingly (Robledo, 2014, p.534). Traditional theory testing and development of middle-range theories is without no doubt valuable for the research on organizational transformation, however incomplete with little to no effort of integration (Robledo, 2014, p.534). Thus, contemporary meta theorists, among others Marc Edwards, Sean Esbjörn-Hargens, Marco Antonio Robledo, Marianne Lewis and Andrew J. Grimes suggest to focus on integration and development of holistic and complex theories and “*advocate for the multiparadigm study of*

*organizations as an alternative to the mainstream dominance of functionalism and the ongoing diversity of postmodernism”* (Lewis & Grimmes, 1999 in Robledo, 2014, p.536).

Over the last decades, Integral theory is gaining an importance in various areas from medicine, psychology, foresight and scenario building, education, studies on climate change etc., making its way with some few, non-academic example of studies on management, leadership and organization (Robledo, 2014, p.537).

Against this backdrop, this master thesis aims to explore an Integral Approach, focusing specifically on leadership and organizational transformation addressing individual or microlevel perspectives. The key questions, which are driving this research are: how do values and worldviews impact organizational transformation in public sector environment? How can organizational capacity to develop an agile response to external changes be improved in public sector organizations? What role leadership plays in the process of public sector transformation?

I will use one public sector organization as an empirical example for this analysis, for which I will provide more context in the next chapter of this work. Following, I will go into a theoretical elaboration about the Integral theory and why has it been selected for this research. Lastly, I will analyze the actual example chosen for this work, outline main results and provide some reflections.

## **2. Setting the context**

In the framework of this research, I will look at the example of The European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA). The organization was founded in 1981 to support national and regional public administration officials across the EU with a deep insights and practical knowledge about EU policies. Although, legally established as a foundation, it has a public mandate and operates as a typical public administration organization, established under the world view paradigm (more about that paradigm later in this work) of the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

40 years after its foundation, the organization is confronted with a variety of challenges: the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the core activities – providing face-to-face trainings to other public administrations was no longer possible. Digital transformation posed another challenge for the organization and its employees, who revealed to have a different level of digital literacy as well as a different understanding how digital processes work. Additionally, the

organization is experiencing a rather high fluctuation of employees – within the last 12 months alone 12 employees left the organization, amounting to almost a third of all employees. A typical “silos” thinking makes it difficult for team building and for integration of new coming employees, to name a few of the challenges.

In the midst of the changing global environment, EIPA has to transform itself, develop agile response mechanism to ensure own survival and re-define itself to transform into a sustainable and resilient organization, serving as a role model for other public sector organizations.

The selection of EIPA as my empirical example for this research was deliberate. The original interest in analyzing transformation processes at EIPA comes through my own connection to the organization as an employee. I joined the organization a year ago, when most of the pandemic restrictions were still in place. My first half a year took place predominantly in teleworking mode and only as of March 2022, the collaboration in an office environment was possible again.

Having said that, in this work I will be analyzing also my personal experiences in the organization, using them as an observation and validation basis to the semi-structured interviews with other employees’ and their experiences, looking for a common patterns that would help me understand the transformational processes at EIPA. Additionally, I will be using my dual function as a researcher and as an employee to establish more interaction between the theory and practice.

As I mentioned in the introduction, this is rather an explorative work that aims to contribute to the scientific community by suggesting a research of microlevel perspectives on transformation and change and elaborating on how Integral theory can be used in the field of organizational transformation, where not much of an academic research was undertaken so far.

### **3. Towards Integral Theory in organizational transformation**

Taking into account my dual role in this research, when working on this chapter, it was important for me to find a way to accommodate various aspects and positions that will build the foundation of this research. At the same time, dealing with a complex issue of organization transformation, which includes a number of complex, subjective and not always visible or straightforward aspects such as behaviour, culture, norms etc., I felt the need to explore more on



integrative approaches, which include all these elements together in one holistic picture. Moreover, exploring the relationship between the theoretical knowledge and reality is one of the key focuses of my work and the theoretical approach should enable this dualism.

In the next section I will elaborate on the key features of the Integral theory and, in particular, to Ken Wilber's AQAL model, which I have decided to use as my theoretical basis for this research. Yet, before moving further, it is useful to make a brief historical outlook of how the focus of research on organizational transformation has changes over time evolving into more complex an integral approaches. Additionally, I will make clarity of definitions, that are used throughout this work and constitutes the core of it. What is change in general and what is organizational change? What is organizational transformation? Is every change a transformation?

### **3.1 Main definitions of change and transformation**

David P. Baker defines change as “*becoming different through some kind of process, whether managed or unmanaged*” (Baker, 2007, p.1). He further elaborates that change is no single action or “event” but rather an ongoing process, which might be perceived as time-limited and finite in terms of moving from one state of play to the other, however it is a continuous process (Baker, 2007, p.1). Change, according to Baker, is brought by some form of a transformation that is either planned and guided or happens in an organic way or through external factors (Baker, 2007, p.2).

Robert Chia analyzed change as something that either occurs in structures (substantive view) or in processes (process view) (Edwards, 2009, p.29). The substantive view considers change as a “*transitory phase which is necessary for bridging various stages of an evolutionary process*” (Chia, 1999, p. 215). In other words, change is something that happens within the structures and is considered to be accomplished once the transition from one structural system to the other has come to an end. The process view sees structures themselves being in a constant flux mode. For process view there is no fixed substance or inert organizational condition that falls under change: “*Everything everywhere is in process and transition is the ultimate fact*” (Chia, 1999, p. 218 in Edwards, p. 28).

Another way of classifying change is by the level of intensity. Researchers outline radical and incremental changes. Further in the text, I will present a brief history or study on organizational

transformation, where I will explain in details the definitions and the context in which these types of changes have appeared.

Lastly, a change can be attributed to an individual, group or the whole system/organization. An organizational change can be defined according to Andrew Van de Ven and Marshall Poole suggestion as “*an empirical observation of differences in form, quality, or state over time in an organizational entity*” (Edwards, 2009, p.28). Based on this definition, change, in the understanding of authors, can be characterized as 1. something observable, 2. an alteration in the same entity over time and 3. affecting organization as whole (Edwards, 2009, p.28).

Combining this last definition with the Baker’s definition of change, it is important to note that another characteristics of change can be added: namely, despite the objective nature of change and the possibility to observe it over time, the way change is perceived or interpreted remains to the subjective interpretation and/or experience of the researcher or a person, who is influenced by the change.

The relationship between objective and subjective nature of change leads Edwards to a definition of change as “*something that is undergone and subjectively experienced as well as objectively observed*”. Edwards points out that the dualism of processual and structural change is reoccurring in the literature (Edwards, 2009, p.29) and suggests that “*theories of change need to accommodate both objective and subjective: that is, substantive structural views as well as dynamic processual views*”. This thought is based on Robert Chia’s elaborations that “*structure and process are not necessarily exclusive of each other and both the “metaphysics of substance/presence” and of “change/process” must be included to develop an integrative account for change and transformation*” (Chia, 1999, p.217 in Edwards p.29).

Now, let’s look into the definition of transformation. Fisher and Torbert define transformation as “*a process so comprehensive – affecting values, role modelling, reward systems, selection criteria, structures and spatial arrangements – that it should be understood as cultural change*” (Fisher & Torbert in Edwards, 2009, p.33).

According to Edwards, organizational transformation “*is a particular type of change that can be distinguished from incremental, translational and other forms of organizational change*”. He outlines that there is no universal definition for what is organizational transformation but several common components can be outlined. These are discontinuity, adaptability, whole-system change, multidimensionality, and multilevel quality (Edwards, 2009, p.29). Thus, one can say that

*“organizational transformation is discontinuous in that it involves a qualitative shift towards a more adaptive form of organizing which includes all levels (micro, meso and macro) and all major operational domains (dimensions) of the organization”* (Edwards, 2009 p.29).

Ferlie et al. have elaborated a list of criteria that are inherent to organizational transformation and according to the authors, only if all these criteria are fulfilled, organizational transformation can be considered completed. The six criteria are:

1. Multiple and interrelated changes across the system as a whole
2. The creation of new organizational forms at a collective level
3. The development of multilayered changes which impact upon the whole system, at unit and individual level
4. The creation of changes in the services provided and in the mode of delivery
5. The reconfiguration of power relationships (especially the formation of new leadership groups)
6. The development of new culture, ideology and organizational meaning (McNulty & Ferlie, 2004, p.1392).

Based on the six criteria proposed by McNulty and Ferlie (2004), organizational transformation is defined here as *“continuous change that involves subjective and objective aspects of the whole multilevel organizational system and which results in a radical multidimensional reconfiguration of culture, systems and structure”* (Edwards, 2009, p. 33).

To sum up: change is a process of some aspect becoming different over time and transformation comprises a number of such aspects or changes happening simultaneously and influencing the organization on various levels. I will come back to this definitions once again in the analytical part of this work to verify that the aspects chosen for my analysis do correspond to the definitions provided here.

### **3.2 Historical outlook into organizational transformation**

Numerous academic fields from organizational management, behavioral studies to psychology and spirituality are occupied with the idea of understanding transformational processes. Overtime, research on organizational transformation became more complex and developed a plurality of theories, frameworks and approaches. In this section, I will outline a brief historical development of organizational transformations based on the Mark Edwards elaborations,

which help to understand how the research on organizational transformation evolved as well as classify the plurality of approaches. Edwards outlined six main phases in the study of organizational transformation:

1. A performative period (1960-1970), where change theories gradually became dissatisfied with the mainstream theories of change
2. A birthing phase (early 1980es) where organizational transformation first emerged as an identifiable set of ideas and methods
3. A growth and identity phase (1980-1990), where organizational transformation became a significant contributor to understanding and explanations of change
4. A diversification phase (mid-1990es to present) where organizational transformation research moved into a variety of applied contexts and appeared under such guises as “strategic management”
5. An integration phase (early 2000 to present), where attempts have been made to connect multiple paradigms and concepts
6. A phase of renewed interest in organizational transformation spurred on by the global financial crisis and other global challenges. (Edwards, 2009, p. 66).

I will elaborate briefly on each of the phases. However, I would like to say a couple of words about a pre-phase of organizational transformation. In 1950-1960es, the early days of academic research on organizational transformation, which was not yet a stand-alone area of academic research, change and transformation were understood through professionalization of processes and structures (Edwards, 2009, p. 59). This was the times, when organizations after the destructions of the World War II have emerged and focused on establishing managerial and professional structures. The scientific management theory was the most widely used approach at that time and focused primarily on planning and management of the processes and increase of productivity and efficiency of industries (Edwards, 2009, p.59). Theorists such as Sheldon L. Messinger, Frederick Taylor and later J. Craige Jenkins published their works elaborating on how change could be achieved through a shift towards professional management structures, changed goals of the organization, which would lead to growth in professionalism of leaders (Edwards, 2009, p.59). This was a period of radical change, which can be characterized as a rapid and radical response to the situation, when the environment demands for an action (Edwards, 2009, p.59).

In the next decade (1960-1970es), influenced by various societal movements and social upheavals, the organizational development approach emerges as the response to the growing moods of social dissatisfaction. Organizational development stems from the behavioral studies and attempted to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of organization through interaction and engagement of employees and teams (Edwards, 2009, p. 60). This was a period of an incremental change, a more steady or “soft” change, which combined the idea of a planned-change but added a perspective from employees/teams in the field, as per Richard Beckhard for example (Beckhard, 1969, p.1). This approach was successful in providing changes on a pinpoint basis (e.g. improving one specific process or focusing on one team in the whole organization) but lacked conceptual and practical capacity to deal with complex situations, which the world was entering into, when the growth of national and international economies in late 1970-es and early 1980es required for new responses (Edwards, 2009, p.61).

The new market-driven changes and technological innovation created a new demand for theories on organizational transformation to support organizations of all types (but primarily businesses) to cope with this rapidly changing environment and financial growth. Theories on large scale organizational transitions, including management processes, corporate culture etc. emerged and focused on strategic changes and the purpose of organizations (Edwards, 2009, p. 61).

Driven by the changed happened in private sector in 1970-80es, a New Public Management (NPM) reform in public administrations started in Anglo-Saxon countries in about the same decade (Schedler & Proeller, 2000, p. 163). Stemming from the business, the NPM approach became a standard international model for public administration reform, focusing on providing a supply-driven concept of theories that led to “NPM toolbox” to the growing demand by governmental institutions (Schedler & Proeller, 2000, p. 163). The scope of challenges the NPM needed to address varied from improving the efficiency of the budget, saving money, fight the loss of legitimacy in or dissatisfaction with public administrations and the overall bureaucracy (Schedler & Proeller, 2000, p. 165). The idea behind NPM as a universal tool for various international context public administrations was that “*NPM offered a variety of instruments of which some, but rarely all, are implemented and used in the different local administrative modernization concepts*” (Schedler & Proeller, 2000, p. 165).

The key distinct feature of NPM is the shift from input to output orientation (Schedler & Proeller, 2000, p. 163). This said, NPM as a useful tool for change of public administration, which

focuses on the external dimension: relationship of public sector organizations with their respective stakeholders (be it politicians, citizens etc.), productivity and efficiency as an institution towards the outside audiences, legitimacy etc. The internal dimension of individual or micro perspective change management and transformation and the corresponding impact to the big picture of the organization was not widely covered by the NPM.

As the world became more globalized and with the emergence of new markets and new countries in the 1990es after the collapse of the Soviet Union, theories of change blossomed. At the same time, the need for more comprehensive approaches to support organizations to go through radical societal changes elevated (Edwards, 2009, p. 62). In search for new approaches, scholars have acknowledged that transformational change frameworks should encompass such aspects as the meaning, emotions, values and spirituality being central to the workplace and at the same time being complementary to objective change factors such as behaviors, systems, technologies, structures and goals (Edwards, 2009, p. 62).

Transformation theory researchers Amir Levy and Uri Merry (1986) introduced three elements: an emphasis on the “spirituality and energy”, “organizational purpose, mission and vision” and a focus on cultural aspects such as values and belief systems and worldviews (in Edwards, 2009, p. 63).

The emphasis on subjective and value based aspects in organizational transformation research and further diversification of theories into different streams (e.g. transformation as a way for holistic growth and relationship building with stakeholders vs. transformation as a strategic approach to increasing effectiveness) paved the way for building metatheories, which combine these diverse elements in attempt to create a more holistic view on what is actually happening to organizations (Edwards, 2009, p. 66).

As of early 2000 the first attempts for harmonizing and integrating theories among the research community started to emerge. In particular, the global financial crisis of 2008 lead to an increased interest in comprehensive approaches for organizational transformation focusing on the values, ethics, human development and psychology of change (Edwards, 2009, p.67).

Integral Theory, developed by Ken Wilber is one of those comprehensive approaches, which aims to “*affords a perspective that allows counselors to situate diverse knowledge approaches, in such a way that they synergically compliment rather than contradict one another*” (Marquis, 2007, p. 164). In the next section, I will elaborate on the Integral Theory in detail.

### 3.2 Integral Theory

The desire of transformation and change management researchers to understand and explain the complexity of the world has driven this academic community to look for coherence in different theories proposed and ways to link and align them in a so called “Metatheory”. In late 1970s, the American philosopher Ken Wilber made his first attempt by combining various studies from psychology, organizational management, leadership to spirituality under one umbrella called Integral theory. He updated his theory four times on the course of the decades up until the current version of it has acquired its supporters in various fields, including medicine, psychology, behavioral studies and studies on leadership and organizational transformation.

Ken Wilber himself defined his Integral theory as “*a way of knowing that helps foster the recognition that disparate aspects of reality [...] are all equally important to any knowledge quest [...] and provides a metatheoretical framework that simultaneously honors the important contributions of a broad spectrum of epistemological outlooks while also acknowledging the parochial limits and misconceptions of those perspectives*” (Wilber, 2005.p 26).

In his analysis of Ken Wilber’s Integral theory, Sean Esbjörn-Hargens described the theory as following: “*Integral theory – is the comprehensive study of reality, which weaves together the significant insights from all the major human disciplines of knowledge, acquisition, including the natural and social sciences as well as the arts and humanities*” (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2010, p.34). According to Esbjörn-Hargens, Integral Theory provides a comprehensive way of integrating the four dimension-perspectives of objectivity, interobjectivity, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity (and their respective levels of complexity) with the major methodological families (e.g., phenomenology, empiricism, structuralism, hermeneutics, systems theory etc.) (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2011, p.3). The key area of interest of the theory is “*the participatory relationship through which multiple ways of knowing the myriad dimensions of reality occurs through various methods of inquiry*” (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2011, p.3).

Gioia and Pietre elaborate further on the idea of a Meta theory making their point that an accommodation of multiple views in the research is not possible without a development of a “*viewpoint beyond that of an individual paradigm*” (in Edwards, 2009, p.68). The authors argue that because a one uniquely correct position does not exist and organizational realities are very

pluralistic, there is a need for a multiple-perspective to “*achieving any sort of comprehensive view*” (in Edwards, 2009, p.68).

Wilber’s Integral Theory in general and the AQAL model (more on that model will be elaborated later in this chapter) in particular “*are helpful resources in realizing a meta perspective – a viewpoint beyond that of an individual paradigm*” as described by Mark Edwards in his book “Organizational Transformation for Sustainability (Edwards, 2009, p.68).

In practice, the Integral theory has been used to develop approaches to personal (and organizational) transformation through exploring physical body, emotional intelligence, cognitive awareness, interpersonal relationships etc. (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2010, p.34). In other words, Integral Theory attempts to look at the phenomenon not only from the objective, measurable perspective but offers space for subjective, personal interpretations of the phenomenon, acknowledging thus an existence of multiple realities in regards to the same phenomenon.

So far, the widest application of Integral Theory can be found in consciousness studies by Ken Wilber himself, as well as such disciplines as philosophy of science, psychology, medicine, spirituality, foresight, education and organizational change. Integral theory is an emerging field in the academic discourse and research (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2009) but has already established three academic peer-reviewed journals: Journal of Integral Theory and Practice, Integral Review and Integral leadership Review as well as post-graduate programs and academic research centers (in US and Canada primarily). Alone in 2019, the University of Calgary in Canada supervised 17 doctoral theses (both EdD and PhD) based on Integral Theory, focusing on research and education and the implementation of Integral Theory in research (Bohac Clarke, 2019).

Although there are some non-academic application of Integral Theory in management and organization theory fields (Robledo, 2014, p. 537) there is an underestimated potential to apply the theory in the field of organizational transformation to close the academic gap. Esbjörn-Hargens states that “*because Integral Theory systematically includes more of reality and interrelates it more thoroughly than any other current approach to assessment and solution building, it has the potential to be more successful in dealing with the complex problems we face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*” (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2010, p.34).

At the core of the Integral Theory is Wilber’s vision of the reality as constructed in “holons”. Each holon represent the whole, but at the same time these wholes are also parts of other



wholes and the process goes on (Tirel, 2018, p. 406). According to Wilber holons can enfold other holons, creating thus sub-holons or be themselves parts of the super-holons, if they are enfolded. Thus, holons can be ranked according to their level of enfoldment, where each level of enfoldment represents a particular level of development (Tirel, 2018, p. 406). Wilber compares this process of enfoldment to a process of evolution, where a species is born, developed and transformed into something new, reaching a new place higher in the hierarchy.

Such level of development is viewed by Wilber as vertical axis. This vertical axes includes various levels of development from archaic, magical and mythical at the very bottom, rational, integral and physic in the middle to subtle, causal and nondual at the very top, as projected in the chart on the right (Tirel, 2018, p.406). This vertical axis combines the so called “spiritual” aspects, which are non-physical and cannot be



Source: researchagte.net

explained through senses but throughout the history of humanity, all these levels of development were or are inherent to human development.

The physical realm of life (everything that can be perceived by senses) on the contrary, happens, according to Wilber, on the horizontal axis. Here, different holons are positioned next to each other, meaning that various holons may occur at the same level of development.

Together, the horizontal and vertical axis build 4 quadrants, which are the basis of the AQAL model, which I will elaborate more on in the section below.

### 3.3 The AQAL model

AQAL is a short acronym for “all quadrants, all levels”, or the more expanded version “all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, all types”. The AQAL model consists of these five basic elements, which provide “*the most basic repeating patterns of reality*”, which occur in each of the four quadrants formed by vertical and horizontal axis (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2010, p.35). In my practical work, I will primarily rely on the All quadrants and all levels – two out of five basic elements of the model. Yet, in this theoretical section, I will elaborate on all five of them.

### 3.3.1 All quadrants

The **quadrants** are distinct by whether they produce an individual or plural perspective or interior or exterior perspectives (Tirel, 2018, p. 407). Every observed phenomenon can be distinguished into individual, group or larger entity (e.g. organization, system etc.) as well as into something that is happening inside the phenomenon itself or influenced externally. The interior aspect, according to Wilber contains everything that has to do with consciousness, awareness, meaning, feeling and values and constitutes thus a subjective world. The exterior dimension is the opposite – an empirical and material aspects that can be objectively observed and put into quantity. This makes this dimension to constitute an objective world, that can be verified and measured independently from an individual or a group.

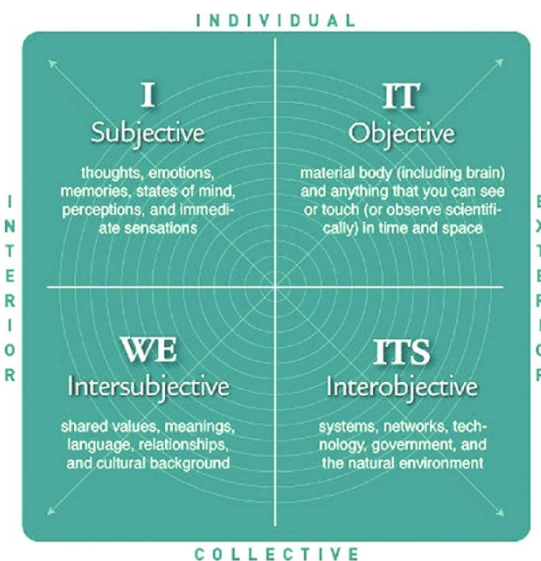
To explain the difference between the dimensions of the quadrants Wilber brings an example of brainwaves, which represent an external world, because brainwaves can be measured. However, the content of the person or group of people, whose brain is measured would be considered as an interior aspect (Wilber in Tirel, 2018, p.407).

Together these four dimensions (individual-plural, interior-exterior) form four irreducible perspectives: subjective, intersubjective, objective, and interobjective. Wilber believes that these four perspectives must be consulted when attempting to fully understand any issue or aspect of the reality (Wilber in Tirel, 2018, p.407).

The four main perspectives (objective/subjective, interobjective/intersubjective) can be further looked at through a perspective of pronouns: I, We, It/Its (see chart below).

This is how Ken Wilber describes the model in Frederik Laloux’s book “Reinventing Organizations”, referring to quadrants as following:

- The interior of an individual is an “I” space (and includes all the subjective thoughts, feelings, emotions, ideas, visions, and experiences that you might have as you introspect).



Source: Integral life<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://integrallife.com/four-quadrants/>

- The interior of a collective “we” space (or intersubjective shared values, semantics, norms, ethics, and understandings that any group has – its “cultures” and “sub-cultures”)
- The exterior of an individual is an “it” space (and includes all the “objective” or “scientific” facts and data, for example, about your individual organism – the limbic system, two lungs, two kidneys etc.. – and includes not only “objective” ingredients but behaviors)
- The exterior of a collective is “its” space (and includes all the interobjective systems, processes, syntax, rules, external relationships, techno-economic modes, ecological systems, social practices etc.) (Wilber in Laloux, 2014, p. xv)

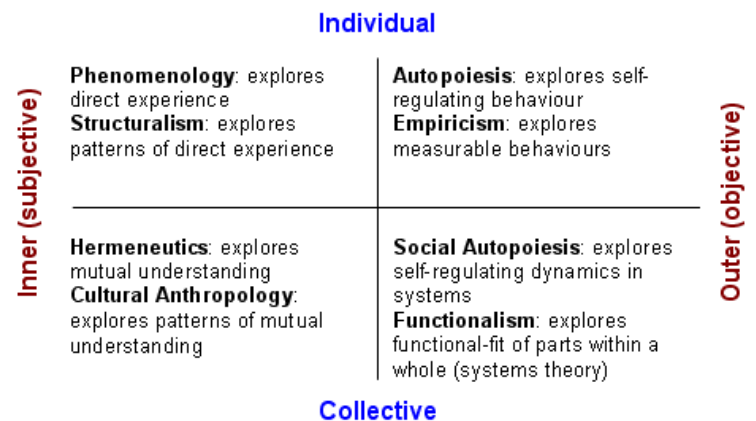
Wilber is convinced that the pronouns “I, We, It/Its” can be used not only when analyzing people but all kind of activities, disciplines, organizations etc. One can analyse a number of aspects using this quadrants approach, including the classical research theories can be viewed from the 4-quadrants perspective. Wilber places them as following:

- phenomenology and structuralism lie in the interior-singular quadrant;
- hermeneutics and cultural antropology can be placed in the interior-plural quadrant;
- empiricism and behaviorism in the exterior-singular quadrant and
- ecology, functionalism and systems theory in the exterior-plural quadrant (Tirel, 2018, p. 407).

What makes the quadrants model valuable and unique in a way is that one cannot explain one of the quadrants through the other or others or reduce one of the quadrants from the model (Laloux, 2014, p. xv). One has to view in all aspects and look for their interconnectedness and dependencies.

### 3.3.2. All states

All **states** are fleeting, temporary aspects of phenomena that can be traced in all four quadrants. All states represent various aspects of human consciousness. Wilber talks about the three natural



states of being awake, dreaming, or deep dreamless sleep, meditative states or peak experiences. Other examples of states include brain states, cultural states, environmental states (e.g. weather and the abnormal heatwaves) etc.

All these states of consciousness are temporary. One person can operate using different states of consciousness depending on different life situations. States of consciousness are crucial for this work, as they will help to look into worldviews and norms from which EIPA is operating on a daily basis.

In his book “Reinventing organizations”, which is based on the principles of Integral Theory, Frederic Laloux raises one of the central questions of the book: “*could it be that our current worldview limits the way we think about organizations? Could we invent a more powerful, more soulful, more meaningful way to work together, if only we change our belief system?*” (Laloux, 2014, p.2). He suggests that organizations as we know them today are “*simply the expression of our current world-view, our current stage of development*” (Laloux, 2014, p.15). This idea implies that organizational transformation is paired with the change of the worldview paradigm, which can be done by identifying the state of consciousness in which organization and people in it operate. This means that if leaders put in place organizational structures, practices, and cultures that make sense to them, that correspond to their worldviews, an organization will also mirror this worldviews and will not be able to evolve beyond its leadership’s stage of development (Laloux, 2014, p. 41).

This is why it is important to start with a brief explanation and classification of different states of consciousness in human development. Frederic Laloux relies on the colorful model of different states of consciousness (which can be also found in Ken Wilber’s works), which can be summarized in the chart and elaborated in detail below.



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tealschool.se/teal/>

### **- Reactive- Infrared Paradigm**

The earliest stage of development of humanity (ca 100k – 50k BC), when humans lived in small bands of family kinships not more than a few dozens of people. This was the key element for this paradigm, as people's capacity to handle complexity in relationships was limited. Thus, people in such state of consciousness perceived themselves as part of the community and did not identify themselves as individuals.

This model required no division of labor to speak of, thus there's nothing like organizational model and no leadership. According to Laloux's analysis only few bands or tribes on Earth remain living under this state of consciousness. In modern environment this type of consciousness is analyzed in the psychology of newborn babies (Laloux, 2014, p.16)

### **- Magic-Magenta paradigm**

This state of human consciousness allows to handle some level of complexity, which resulted primarily in the growth of tribes for up to a few hundreds of people (ca 15k years ago). Humans learned to differentiate themselves physically and emotionally from others, but their mind-state remained very much focused on themselves or egocentric. Because cause and effect connection is poorly understood people's tribes remained living primarily in the present day, with little projection of the past or more importantly the future. This type of consciousness is also characterized by ritualistic behaviors and first level of authority division by following elder or shamans as leaders of the tribes (Laloux, 2014, p.16).

### **- Impulsive-Red paradigm**

This type of consciousness symbolizes the first forms of organizational life (red organizations) and is characterized by the full separation of human ego from others and from the world, which led to a lack of awareness of other people's feelings. This created a strong belief in power and demanding that needs are met through strength and violence. A strong orientation on present ("I want this and I want this now") makes humans in this state of consciousness to see the world by polar opposites: good/bad, strong/weak etc. The causal relationships are understood through rewards and punishment, which fosters the development of slavery as a new phenomenon of human development. This is the first attempt of labor division and development of hierarchical organizational forms (Laloux, 2014, p.17).

In modern times, this paradigm can be seen in hostile environments, combat zones, civil wars, failed states, prisons, or violent inner-city neighborhoods (Laloux, 2014, p.17).

### - **Conformist-Amber paradigm**

This state of consciousness is characterized by emergence of states and civilizations, institutions, bureaucracies and organizes religions. People can grasp linear times (past, present and future) and make projections into the future due to agricultural life-style (farming requires the self-discipline and foresight to keep seeds from this year's harvest to provide for next year's food) (Laloux, 2014, p. 19).

Consciousness in this paradigm develops a deeper understanding of people's feelings and perceptions. "I can identify with my perspective and my role and see it as different from yours. I can also imagine how others view me. My ego and my sense of self-worth are now very much based on other people's opinions" (Laloux, 2014, p. 19). Group norms emerge in this state of consciousness, and the thinking is dominated by whether one has the right appearance, behaviors and thought to fit in. The dualistic thinking of red is still present, but the individual "my way or your way" is replaced with a collective "us or them". The red egocentrism has given way to amber ethnocentrism. The world view is static: there are immutable laws that make for a just world, where things are either right or wrong. People internalize the rules and morality and feel guilt and shame when they go astray. Authority to define what is right and what is wrong is now linked to a role, rather than to a powerful personality (as was the case in red). Amber societies tend to be highly stratified with social classes or caste systems and rigid gender differences as defining features.

According to developmental psychologists a large share of today's adult population in developed societies operate from this paradigm (Laloux, 2014, p. 19).

### - **Achievement-orange paradigm**

In this state of consciousness humans see the world no longer as a fixed universe governed by immutable rules, but as a complex clockwork, whose inner working and natural laws can be investigated and understood (Laloux, 2014. p. 24). The right and wrong thinking is replaced by the understanding that some things work better than others. Effectiveness replaces morals as a yardstick for decision-making (what we call KPIs). The better I understand the way the world operates, the more I can achieve. The goal in life is to get ahead, to succeed in socially acceptable ways, to best play out the cards we are dealt. This belief makes it be the most dominating worldview of most leaders in business and politics, according to Laloux (Laloux, 2014. p. 24).

Orange cognition opened the floodgates of scientific investigation, innovation, and entrepreneurship. It has moved us away from the idea that authority has the right answer and brings

a healthy dose of skepticism regarding revealed truth. This paradigm allows us for the first time to engage in the pursuit of truth regardless of religious dogma and political authority, without having to risk our lives (Laloux, 2014. p. 24). We became capable of questioning and stepping out of the condition we were born in. We are capable of breaking free from the thoughts and behaviors that our gender and our social class would have imposed upon us in earlier times.

Where red perspective was egocentric and Amber's ethnocentric, orange brought about the possibility of a worldcentric perspective. Yet, achievement orange is suspicious of any form of spirituality and transcendence because of a difficulty in believing something that cannot be empirically proven or observed. The worldview at this stage is solidly materialistic – what can be seen or touched is real. This mind-set leads organizations often to an assumption that achieving the next goal will make us more happy. In orange we live in the future, consumed by mental chatter about the things we need to do so as to reach the goals we have set for ourselves. (Laloux, 2014. p. 24).

#### - **Pluralistic-Green paradigm**

This state of consciousness is highly sensitive towards people's feelings and insists that all perspectives deserve equal respect. It seeks fairness, equality, harmony, community, cooperation and consensus. The self, operating from this perspective strives to belong, to foster close and harmonized bonds with everyone.

Laloux suggests that while orange is predominant in business and politics, green is very present in postmodern academic thinking, in nonprofits and among social workers and community activities. For people operating from this perspective relationships are valued above outcomes. E.g. where achievement-orange seeks to make decisions top-down, based on objective facts, expert input and simulations, pluralistic-green strives for bottom-up processes, gathering input from all and trying to bring opposing points of view to eventual consequences. Orange glorifies decisive leadership, while green insists that, leaders should be in service of those they lead (Laloux, 2014, p.30).

#### - **Evolutionary-teal**

“Self-actualizing” level of consciousness includes such characteristics as being authentic, integral or Teal. This is the first state of consciousness, which does not postulate that their worldview is the only valid one, as all the other states so far describe do, including the pluralistic-

green paradigm. People transitioning to the Teal state of consciousness acknowledge the complexity of the world and pluralism of approaches to deal with it.

This is also the state of consciousness, where humans learn to disidentify themselves from their own ego, paving the way for the decision-making based on the internal impulses of the “inner-rightness” and purposefulness. The ultimate goal here is seen through the lens of becoming the truest expression of oneself and to live an authentic selfhood. This paradigm offers a personal and collective unfolding towards the true nature of oneself, focusing on the way the humans are and how can their potential be unfold instead of what weaknesses they have.

The “either-or” thinking is replaced by the “both-and” integrative approach (Laloux, 2014, p.43-46).

### **3.3.3 All levels**

The **levels** in the AQAL model represent a general direction of up and down or the level of complexity. Levels however do not judge in terms of good or bad. They solely represent higher or lower level in the model. Levels tend to unfold in sequence and thus progress through stages. This is why they are often referred to “levels of development” or in some integral theory works they are called “stages of development”. For the sake of consistency, I will stick to the term “levels of development”.

If states of development analyzes above are temporary and can vary, levels of development, according to Wilber are permanent, representing the actual milestones of growth and development or a level of organizational complexity (Wilber, 2005.p.7). Once a particular level of development is achieved, one can access the qualities of that stage. In his book on Integral Theory, Wilber brings an example of a child, who once mastered a language can enjoy using it when talking to other people, read and comprehend the culture of the country that language comes from etc. (Wilber, 2005. p.6).

For my work, I will continue using the categorization of levels of organizational complexity based on the color-code used by Frederic Laloux. Derived from the analyzes on the state of consciousness, Laloux outlined five levels of organizational complexity: red organizations, amber organizations, orange organizations, green organizations and teal organizations. In a nutshell:



### - **Red Organizations**

Can be found today in forms of street gangs and mafias, Today, red organizations borrow the tools and ideas from modernity – organized crime’s use of weaponry and information technology. Main characteristics is: continuous exercise of power in interpersonal relationships. They are well adopted to chaotic environments (civil wars or failed states) but are ill-suited to achieve complex outcomes in stable environments, where planning and strategizing are possible. This makes red organizations be poor in planning and strategizing but highly reactive to new threats and opportunities that they can pursue ruthlessly (Laloux, 2014. p. 18).

### - **Amber organizations**

Organizations can now plan for the medium and long term and they can create organizational structures that are stable and can scale. Amber organizations are still very present today: most government agencies, public schools, religious institutions and the military are run based on the Conformist-Amber principles and practices (Laloux, 2014. p. 19). Amber organizations take a long-term projects. This breakthrough is very much linked to the invention of processes. With processes we can replicate past experiences in the future.

Amber organizations are exceptionally well suited for stable contexts, where the future can be planned based on past experience. They operate in the hidden assumption that there is one right way of doing things and that the world is (or should be) immutable. “what has worked in the past will work in the future”. At the individual level, people operating from this paradigm strive for order and predictability, change is viewed with suspicion. When the context is changing and the way we do things around us is changing, Amber organizations find it hard to accept the need for change. Decisions made at the top are handed down through successive layers of management. Information is often shared on an needed basis (Laloux, 2014. p. 19).

### - **Orange organizations**

People live in the world of possibilities (what is not yet but could be). Leaders often say that change and innovation are not a threat – they are opportunity. Orange organizations are process and project driven (amber are only process driven). Orange organizations retain the pyramid as their basic structure but they drill holes into rigid functional and hierarchical boundaries with project groups, virtual teams, cross-functional initiatives, expert staff functions, and internal consultants, to speed up communication and foster innovation (Laloux, 2014. p. 24).

In orange organizations leadership becomes all about predict and control. Larger parts of the organization must be given room to maneuver and must be empowered and trusted to think and execute. Top management formulates the overall direction and cascades down objectives and milestones to reach the desired outcome. People are driven by material success (performance appraisals, bonus schemes, quality awards...) Where amber relies only on sticks, orange comes with carrots.

Change in orange organizations must be planned and mapped out in blueprints, then carefully implemented according to plan (Laloux, 2014. p. 27).

### - **Green Organizations**

This perspective is uneasy with power and hierarchy “Let’s abolish the hierarchy and give everyone exact same power and make decisions in consensus”. Empowerment is the motto: top and mid-managers are effectively asked to share power and give up some control (Laloux, 2014. p. 30).

Green leaders should not merely be dispassionate problem solvers (like in Orange); they should be servant leaders, listening to their subordinates, empowering them, motivating them, developing them. A strong, shared culture is the glue that keeps empowered organizations from falling apart

In Green organizations, the company culture is paramount. If orange organizations increasingly feel obliged to follow the fad: they define a set of values, post them on office walls and the company web-site, and then ignore them whenever that is more convenient for the bottom line, in Green organizations, where leadership genuinely plays by shared values, you encounter incredibly vibrant cultures (often labeled as “family”) in which employees feel appreciated and empowered to continue (Laloux, 2014. p. 33).

### - **Teal organizations**

From an evolutionary-teal mind-set perspective, organizations are seen as living systems and can be compared to “living organism”. This mind-set brings more wholeness and consciousness, but can be also characterized by more complexity and the ability to deal with this complexity. Change is perceived as a natural occurrence of life and the system operates in a self-organizing mode. Self-management, wholeness and purpose are the key characteristics of organizations operating from a Teal level (Laloux, 2014, p. 56).

To simplify the model, the five levels of complexity of organizations can be also viewed through three main levels that were already mentioned earlier in this work: egocentric (red), ethnocentric (amber and orange) and world-centric (green and teal).

#### **3.3.4. All lines**

All **lines** are relatively independent streams or capacities that proceed through levels of development. Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligence is one example of the study of developmental lines. Gardner understands intelligence as a "*biopsychological potential to process information in certain kinds of ways, in order to solve problems or create products that are valued in one or more cultural settings*" (Gardner, 2011, p.3). He argues that humans have different ways of learning and there is no reason to teach and assess all individuals in the identical way. Instead, the future, good practice should focus on understanding and identifying the intellectual profiles of individuals (Gardner, 2011, p.5). In other words, most people excel normally in a couple of qualities and are not so good with some others. Instead of focusing on the limitations and weaknesses of people, integral theory sees the need of identifying and strengthening the qualities where one excels and thus where one can best offer the world one's deepest gifts (Wilber, 2005, p.10).

Integral Theory generally classifies these lines according to one of three types: cognitive lines (as studied by Jean Piaget, Robert Kegan, Kurt Fischer), self-related lines (e.g. morals, self-identity, needs, etc.) and capacities or talents (e.g. musical capacity, kinesthetic capacity, introspective capacity).

These three types will be the basis of "all lines" of the AQAL model of my work. Yet, it is important to note that since the focus of this work is on leadership and organizational transformation and not purely in psychology and human development per se, I will not be dedicating much attention to this aspect in my work and touch briefly upon some of the aspects, which revealed to be relevant to mention.

#### **3.3.5 All types**

All **types** are horizontal styles available to any developmental level within the quadrants. Examples of types include a typology based on masculine-feminine characteristics, or what is more relevant for my work - the types of leadership. As I am also interested to know what role leadership plays in transformational processes, this work would benefit from including the typology based on

the Full Range Leadership model. Although the model includes seven types of leadership in full, I will limit my analysis with the three main and widely used types of leaders: Laissez-faire, transactional and transformative leadership (Bass and Avolio, in Kirkbride, 2006, p. 23).

**Laissez-faire** is French for "Let them do (what they want)". This style is the least active way of leading people, also considered as non-leader, mainly characterized by an attitude avoiding any responsibility. Decision-making is left to the employees themselves, and no rules are fixed. (Bass and Avolio, in Kirkbride, 2006, p. 25).

In **transactional** leadership, leaders promote compliance by followers through both rewards and punishments (Bass and Avolio, in Kirkbride, 2006, p. 26). In this type of leadership, leaders are not looking to change the future, they aim to keep things the same by identifying clear targets, goals and objectives.

Lastly, **transformative** leadership is a type of leadership, where a leader demonstrates concerns for their followers, works with teams to identify needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of a group, listening to their needs and desires (Bass and Avolio, in Kirkbride, 2006, p. 26).

#### **4. Methodology**

On the level of methodology, it is important to mention, that AQAL, being a basic and key instrument of Integral theory can be also seen as a methodological approach. As a philosophical standpoint it can serve as a "gluing" element of various theories on the level of metatheory. It can also be used as a methodological framework of a research, which allows to combine and analyze internal and external dimensions of reality (Robledo, 2014, p. 538) and develop a new metatheory.

Since the nature of my research is rather practice oriented, in a sense, that I am trying to understand the reality of a particular public sector organization from an integral perspective and not develop a new metatheory regarding public sector transformation, I am relying on AQAL as being my metatheory in itself. For the practical part of this research, I will be using the mix-method of phenomenology and hermeneutics – two of the eight fundamental methodological paradigms of the Integral Methodological Pluralism.

Integral Theory being a theory that looks into multiple perspectives of the phenomena has also developed an Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP) – a methodological approach, which includes eight fundamental and irreducible methodological paradigms for metatheoretical research

(Robledo, 2014, p. 537). The IMP includes phenomenology, structuralism, hermeneutics, semiotics, cognitive science, empiricism, social autopoiesis and system theory - all guided by the principle of non-exclusion, enfoldment and enactment (Wilber, in Robledo, 2014, p.537).

At this point it is important to note that my research will not be fully integrative according to the IMP methodology as I am using only parts of the IMP approach. Unfortunately, I must admit, that the scope of this work as part of the Master level thesis does not allow me to go fully into the integral research. However, I see my work as the first attempt to build and prepare ground for further integrative research on organizational transformation, as part of the post-graduates studies, for example. Yet, more on the limitations of this work and the chosen approach will be elaborated closer to the end of this work. For the moment, I shall focus on further methodological elaborations of my current research.

From the ontological perspective, the aim of this study is to reveal multiple realities that exist at EIPA and thus, my research is based on the idea of interpretivism, which stands in contrast to positivism and holds that reality is subjective, socially constructed, and a composite of multiple perspectives (Collins, 2010, p.42). Knowledge, according to the interpretivism, is dependent on beliefs, values and lived experiences: *“People act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and the acts of the others”* (A. Bryman, p.10). Through the interpretivism lens, the research is inherently shaped by the researcher, who brings their own subjective view of observed phenomenon based on their personal experience. An employment of multiple research methodologies to reflect on different aspects of the phenomena is also possible within the interpretivist studies.

The epistemological nature of this work is based on the social constructivism paradigm. In social constructivism meanings are developed through interaction with others (hence social construction) and through historical and cultural norms that surrounds the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.60). The variety of different subjective experiences lead the researcher to look for the complexity of the views rather than narrow the meanings in few categories (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.60).

In regard to the method, I already mentioned above that I will use a mix-method for this study, which includes hermeneutics, as a practice of interpretation, via placing myself with my pre-understandings towards the topic as well as phenomenology, a practice of interpretation of lived experiences.

In phenomenology experience itself becomes a point of departure (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p.36). The aim here is not to identify the objective truth but to identify specific lived experiences and practices (whether continuous or not), which will help to construct the “world of the phenomenon” and which would explain how and why some experiences at EIPA are the way they are without any further judgement on whether these are good or bad practices. Thus, my field work starts with a brief summary of my own personal experience at EIPA. Additionally, 10 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with EIPA employees to reveal their individual experiences with the organization, its culture, norms and worldviews as well as managerial practices and the overall structure of the organization.

To better understand the phenomenological experiences (of my own and EIPA’s employees) that I gathered, I will turn to the traditional “*Verstehen*” philosophy or hermeneutics with its emphasis on the re-enactment or “*Einführung*” of the meanings (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p.52). Alvesson emphasizes that hermeneutics results in the understanding of underlying meanings, not the explanation of causal connections (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p.52).

Hermeneutics is in particularly relevant for the nature of my research, because its idea of “parts”, which can be understood as part of the “whole” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p.53) correlates with the nature of AQAL framework of Integral Theory, where each quadrant is dependent on each other and the whole meaning of a phenomenon is the result of understanding of all quadrants together. I will be using the AQAL quadrants similarly as the hermeneutical circle, which operates like a spiral, shedding light on new aspects of parts of the phenomenon. A dialectic stance between distancing myself from personal experiences and being familiar with the phenomenon in general (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 62) will be used to strengthen the method and acquire most accurate results. I aim here to look for new understandings towards the same aspects of the phenomenon.

## **5. Data collection**

In the framework of this research I conducted 10 semi-structured qualitative interviews with EIPA employees, which lasted between 45-90 minutes each. Nine out of ten interviews took place in person and one took place via zoom platform. Interviews were pre-recorded with a consent of interviewees and transcribed afterwards via Adobe Premier program. To ensure a trusted and open dialogue, all interview results will be presented anonymously using a gender-neutral language. Thus, instead of pronouns he or she, I will be using the pronouns they or use the wording

colleague or employee. As I am not looking into the gender aspect in this work, I will save some interpretational biases by avoiding using gender specifying pronouns.

The semi-structured interview format was chosen to allow the maximum freedom of the dialogue and at the same time less influence of my pre-understandings from my side as a researcher. In preparation for the interviews, I have divided the questions according to AQAL quadrants (see Annex 1). Thus, in the Upper-left “I” quadrant, I was asking participants to describe their personal experience with the organization, how they feel about their role and how would they describe the overall mood and atmosphere in the organization. In the Lower-Left “We” quadrant, questions related to the organizational culture and norms, value system as well as interaction with and between different teams were asked. In the Upper-Right “It” quadrant, I discussed with participants organizational processes and managerial practices, identifying some examples. Lastly, in the Lower-Right “Its” quadrant, questions related to strategies, decision-making and leadership were discussed. Additionally, across all quadrants, where relevant and necessary, general questions about change, what is it and how it is perceived as well as definitions of leadership were asked to ensure that the interviewer and the interviewee have a common understanding of the terminology.

The outcomes of the interviews were analyzed first by dividing relevant parts of the interviews into the four AQAL quadrants in an Excel file. In the next step, I was looking for common patterns for my interpretations as well as the contradictions in provided answers to the same questions among all the interviewees. In the third step, these common patterns or contradictions were analyzed using the second AQAL element – All levels. Additionally, where relevant and applicable, I used also the other three elements: all states, all lines, all types. Yet the main focus remained at all quadrants-all levels.

My last interview took place with one of the leaders of the organization. This happened already when the main part of the analysis was done, which was a deliberate choice. I used this conversation as an opportunity to validate some of my results but also as a checks and balance for my own interpretations. Once again, in my dual function as an employee of the organization and the author of this work, I placed myself in the risk of having biased interpretations in the end of this work.

## 6. Field work and findings

The four AQAL quadrants build the core of this analysis. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I started my field work with outlining my individual experiences at EIPA, placing them in the upper-left “I” quadrant of AQAL model. Following, I will share my perceptions and outline the results of the analyzes of the interviews with my colleagues.

### 6.1 Quadrant “I” (Individual Interior/Subjective) – individual reflections, thoughts, memories

When reflecting on my personal experience at the organization, I could describe it as isolation. I joined the new working environment in late June 2021, when most of the pandemic restrictions were still in place. Although it was partially already allowed to go to the office, not many colleagues were there as well as not much was happening due to the upcoming summer break.

My onboarding on the first working day was rather short. I remember I was introduced to a colleague for a brief introduction into the working processes in the team and the first words of the colleague were *“Oh, I don’t even know what to tell you. I didn’t know you are starting today”*. I spent my first weeks working mostly from home and trying to find my way in the new online environment, writing mails to people I don’t know and reading their responses without any feeling of what they mean by this or that sentence. It occurred to me for the first time that knowing people in person makes it easier to understand the semantics of some of their phrases or why they use specific linguistic expressions and what is actually hidden behind them. Reading “below the lines” so to say, was not possible for me at that stage.

There were some ad hoc calls with my supervisor and some ad hoc mails with specific tasks I needed to perform, for which I lacked the big picture. It took me around two weeks or so to get access to all the platforms and accounts I needed for my work. This was not set-up in advance. Instead, there was an expectation that I will come with my questions first. Yet, I felt I was trapped in not knowing something that I should know to be able to ask something I don’t know. It was a constant loop of *“Oh, you should have asked that before”* and *“why don’t you explain this to me before I start working on something that turns out to be wrong and then you explain me what you actually wanted me to do?”*

Most of the internal team meetings started with *“Let’s keep it as short as possible”*, which at first, I attributed to some capacity shortages and busy period. Yet, over time, this sentence was repeated from meeting to meeting, leaving a strange feeling in me, that there is no proper time for



discussions and the coordinative team meetings are perceived as a burden and “another meeting” instead of an opportunity to catch up and clarify some pending tasks of the weeks. There was barely any human interaction in these meetings. I was working with a team I barely knew on a human level.

As I was stationed in the communications department in the organization, my assumption was that I would be included in all the organizational communications sent via intranet or per e-Mail to all staff, especially because of the pandemic restrictions. Yet, months passed and my mailbox was rather empty. Occasionally, I got to know about some news via other colleagues, who seemed to be part of some internal mailings or knew where to get their information from. When I asked my direct supervisor to include me into the mailing list of researchers, the response was: “*You are not a researcher, why do you want to be included in the mailing?*”. I was puzzled, as in my view someone working in the field of communications needs to know about the pending and upcoming projects in the organization to know how to better prepare communications activities for them. Instead, I was sent mails upon request in an ad hoc manner, whenever something needed to be done.

At the beginning my workload was dependent on other people with whom I had little to no coordination. In most of the cases the tasks I needed to perform were decided by someone else, without any consultation with me or other colleagues in my department. Soon enough, I understood that my organization was divided into two camps: researchers, whose expertise is unquestionable and the supportive staff, who are there to serve the researchers. To bring an example here, during the preparation of the organizational 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary only a limited amount of guests were invited to participate. As it turned out the employees of the house were not invited. The argument behind this decision was that this is an exclusive event. There were several rounds of discussions of the concept for this event and I felt out of place, when I was suggesting to open up the celebration for all the employees and give them a chance to build an EIPA community and a sense of belonging. Some of my interlocutors in these discussions were sincerely puzzled for why would we need to do that, as this is an exclusive activity for experts only.

I did not expect the organization to be this hierarchical. Sometimes, even some minor suggestions and improvements coming from the supportive staff would be facing a huge resistance from some of the research staff. To finish the story, the top management of the organization did

invite the employees in the end, but the aftertaste of how the event was conceptualized at first place stayed with me for all further activities.

Additionally, internal processes and internal data management were often unclear: both in terms of how do they happen as well as who is responsible for what. It happened to me several times that I was asking person A about something and person A suggested to ask person B, whereas person B insisted that person C should know the answer to my question and person C sent me back to person A. It was also not always straightforward for where to look for some documents and materials, as it turned out that each department and each team had their own way of working and their own way of data management. In some teams, coordination happened via e-Mails, in others a shared folder was introduced. In third teams, neither nor existed and information was shared on a need to know basis.

At the same time, the main message from various organizational agents, be it the leaders, human resource, mid-managers, a strong message that “*we are in the process of transformation*”, “*we are changing*”, “*we are improving our processes/culture etc.*” was conveyed. This motivated me to continue with my work but also inspired me to go on that journey with this Master thesis, as one thing was clear: the leadership was onboard to work on transforming this organization.

With this summary, I wanted to outline some of the fundamental challenges that organization is going through and frame my pre-understanding for the next part of the analysis. I outlined three major levels of change, each of which consists of additional aspects, that will be further discussed in the interviews:

- Structural changes (digitalization and coherence of processes)
- Cultural changes (“silo” thinking, hierarchy of positions, cross-cooperation, learning through sharing)
- Strategic changes (vision, decision-making, communication)

These three levels of change are so comprehensive that one can truly speak about the organizational transformation. The changes EIPA is going through at the moment also correspond to the McNulty & Ferlie’s six criteria of organizational transformation, which I mentioned in the beginning of my theoretical part. Before moving to the next part of the analysis using AQAL model, I wanted once again to reflect on these six criteria and make it clear, that given the complexity of EIPA’s changes on various levels, we can truly say that organization is going

through a transformation and the use of this term is valid and correct in my empirical example. It is crucial because the nature of my work does not focus on one aspect of change only, but looks at the transformation from a holistic perspective.

Now, let's turn to the all quadrants and see how the experiences of my colleagues at EIPA are placed in the AQAL model.

## **6.2 Quadrant “We” (Collective Interior/Subjective) – shared values, norms, culture**

To begin with, EIPA is an international and multicultural research institute, which includes employees from 20 different countries (EIPA Annual Report, 2021). Thus, operating in an intercultural environment is a natural phenomenon for the organization. Despite all the cultural differences on personal level, EIPA has developed some common norms and shared values, which constitute its organizational culture. In this section, I will dwell into them.

On the collective intersubjective “We” level EIPA has a strong foundation to be perceived as a “family” by its employees, which makes EIPA look at the organizational culture through the lens of a green organization.

*“And I would say that I felt a bit more small family. You know, I think that everyone was very, very welcoming. But of course, few people here and there. But in general, I must say that I'm very pleasantly surprised of the amount of great people that I met here that are not necessarily all staying in EIPA but the thing is that EIPA had golden generation. It's a golden generation.”*

*“...But people were committed and they loved the organization. Like that would be their own family in a sense.”*

The “family” paradigm of green organizations, however, has also its pitfalls. Laloux, in his book “Organizational transformation” also refers to the fact that like in every family, there's also a negative side of the story: “Families, as we all know, don't always bring out the better aspects of our nature; more often than we would want, they are mildly or wildly dysfunctional” (Laloux, 2014, p.56). Thus, EIPA's organizational culture can be also characterized through its negative aspect of the “family” paradigm.

*“That it is a family culture. So we have a family culture. I think, I can agree with that. But a family culture also applies that there is a lot of gossiping, which I also, I personally hate it. But at EIPA, because of the situation, I think about the former management, there was a negative atmosphere created that is confirmed by the negative gossiping and that's not easy to deal with it.”*

*“I think you have one chunk of people which have a very huge heart for a lot of dedication, you know... Whereas not just for the job, you know, you have a lot of commitment there but on the other hand, you have also this let's call it this organization of a lot of talking behind the backs, a lot of you know, trying to step in to back, you know, this this nasty culture and, you know, it improved because it was even worse.”*

In some cases, the employees I talked with used even harsh wording “toxic” to describe organizational environment, which most likely can be attributed to the fact that EIPA’s organizational culture has also its sub-cultures and the experiences lived through in various departments across the house may vary. One of the respondents, for example, specifically mentioned the overall negativity of the house but distancing themselves from it by explaining that their individual experience was different.

*“It can be quite toxic. It can... But I don't like starting with that because I had to say as well that my immediate circle was quite positive. You know, I got on very well with my supervisor and I developed enough of a relationship with certain interlocutors, you know”.*

An interesting observation regarding the organizational culture was made by a colleague, who views the culture not from a lens toxic-healthy but from a lens modern-old fashioned. The person made an interesting link between the construction of the organizational culture in connection with the state of mind of the people.

*“Yeah, it's not maybe not toxic, but old fashioned. You know, the old fashioned way of working is as goes along with an old fashioned way of thinking. So if you are starting to work in a modern way with modern systems, you also need to have a modern and modern mindset and an older way of thinking.”*

The old-fashioned thinking, as suggested by my colleague, is attributed to the conformist-amber state of mind in the organization, where a strong sense of “right and wrong” as well as resistance for change prevail. One of the relatively new colleagues in the organization, who joined around three years ago described the organizational culture as shocking.

*“So that's culture is a shock, first of all. You know, it was a complete shock about what I found here. The quality of the organization you know, how people are, let's call it how flexible they were on, not flexible in adapting and adjusting.”*

At the level of values, I was provided with a spectrum of very different characteristics of EIPA, including very negative ones: “*Values? It's a complete joke*” or “*I wouldn't know what the values of EIPA are*”. Among others things like “loyalty”, “quality”, “elitism”, “family”, “service orientation”. Interesting was to note, that among all the answers, there were no common values that would be named by different people.

The discussions I had on values felt for me rather unnatural. As if there would be an emptiness in the words that people said. As if they did not really believe themselves in what they were mentioning. My subjective impression was that the organization is in such a survival mode that there was no time to think and reflect on the common value system. What unites us here? Why do we do what we do here? What is the value behind our work?

My further conversations with leadership have revealed that there is indeed a need for developing a new value system, especially for the newly coming employees.

*“I believe it's like 55% of the people in the organization at the moment have been recruited over the last two years. So that's huge. We reduced the average age by ten years because really this situation where we had this inverted pyramid in terms of security and part of the seniority goes also with age.”*

*“(...) and now we have which we need to we find a new common values for new people joining”.*

I was already mentioning in my own summary of experiences that the organization is working in two major camps: research staff and supporting staff, which has a strong implication on the organizational culture. In my further conversations with colleagues, this observation was

confirmed by other colleagues. Often, without me having the need to ask about it first. It was something that colleagues automatically reflected on when asking how would they describe organizational culture at EIPA?

*“You know, it was completely a shock for me what kind of you know, what kind of hidden, you know, power lines there were and where faculty, you know, acted as kings, you know, they just didn't, they just did what they wanted to do. And they saw, you know, the supporting staff as servants for them to...”*

Another employee brought the same example of EIPA's 40<sup>th</sup> celebration, which I described earlier in my summary, to showcase the hierarchy of positions and the exclusiveness of the mind-state, in which EIPA seems to operate. The classical characteristics of conformist-amber mind-state is the division of “us and them”.

*“But I thought like, that was, you know, this big celebration, this big thing that's happening. None of us were involved. There was a select few group of people that were involved to the point where we were we weren't invited then it was just academic staff that were invited. And at that point I was like, I'm not going. I will turn up on the day and dresses and shit, like, I'm not going if I'm only invited now for bums on seats.”*

The exclusive organizational culture of EIPA impacts also the personal motivation as we can see from the quote above. A sense of resistance inevitably impacts the readiness to cooperate with others, which creates a fruitful ground for development of a silo thinking.

*“I think well, that's my personal seeing at the moment. We are indeed all working on islands”.*

*“There's no culture of community discussion: I personally believe that there should be collisions. Mm hmm. To make something better. Mm hmm. I personally believe that we should be arguing about stuff all the time for the competitive nature. That's for it to make something better”*

Despite the predominantly ethnocentric views or conformist-orange paradigm inside the organization, a shift towards the achievement-amber and thus, the first steps towards a world-

centric view on organizations is already happening at EIPA. In one of the discussions with a person, having also a personal responsibility at EIPA it became evident that the culture is shifting towards cooperation and search for common values, represented in joint achievements.

*“People are not here it's not really teams you know. A lot of individuals doing something. This company really needs, let's call it a team building. Something, you know, more sharing of, you know, really sharing and doing things together and maybe that will and, I think, that's that's also one of the challenges. (...) we see that people are searching for, let's call it, you know, this belonging to the team I can also see it, you know, let's call it achievements and it are being updated by hey, obviously we have challenges we also had some wins because people need also to see wins to get some kind of let's call a comfort and confirmation that we are on the right track.”*

When the organization is ready for its next step in development, it is the task of organizational leadership to “walk” and “guide” through the change. This is now a good moment to evaluate the overall role of the leadership in organizational culture context.

In all the discussions I had with the employees a reference to an unhealthy style of leadership stemming from the past took a big chunk of the conversations. Thus, I feel it needs to be reflected in this work as well.

The organizational culture of today’s EIPA suffers from some managerial practices of the past, which deteriorated the atmosphere and prevented organizational development towards a more coherent and integrated system.

*“We were in management by terror. And so everybody it was I think, their office not communicating. There was a culture of abuse which is not trusting anybody. So walking was the back among the walls of the the knife and the back trenches missions, which means not trusting sort of kind of being trying to protect yourself”*

Based on the discussions with colleagues, it is hard for me to label the past leadership as “laissez-faire”, although that’s one of the typologies I have pre-selected as part of the all-types element of AQAL model. I would re-phrase it to a despotic laissez-faire style. I find it in particular remarkable in EIPA’s case, that although, the leadership has changed over three years ago, trust remains an issue to overcome.

*“And that's just kind of stuck and there is a deep there's a bit of a trust issue there, you know, so that defensiveness from staff then inspires the defensiveness from management and why they've been so difficult and sorry. And at the same time, I don't know how much of it is also the management have the approach that they, you know, they have their ideas”.*

At the same time, I have noticed, how some of the practices of the old leadership remain living in the employees, even though the leadership is long gone. This is one of the crucial aspects of how organizational cultures and the managerial practices and processes are interconnected and influence each other. More about this practices will be discussed in the next section.

### **6.3 Quadrant “It” (Individual, Exterior/Objective) – managerial practices**

If at the lower-left “We” quadrant there was a consensus in terms of where does the organizational culture of EIPA stand and that it needs an upgrade, then on the level of processes, I encountered various contradicting views. In my analysis I will outline two main challenges in this quadrant: digitalization and coherence of processes. I will shortly elaborate further on them, but first I would like to start with what seems to be a common premise in the organization:

*“There is a believes that if something works in one way, we should not change it. I put things that if something was good once, it's going to be good for a very long time.”*

The departing point for this quadrant is a conformist-orange paradigm or ethnocentric worldview, which works greatly for stable environments, clear structures and role divisions and lack of change over time, which EIPA’s environment has benefitted from.

Yet, the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic forced EIPA to change its operations and automatize and digitalize most of the processes. This change directly impacted the employees at all levels and to a large extent changed the job profiles of supportive staff. The new environment required now strong digital competences and ability to adjust to virtual environment, which requires well established (and automatized) processes as well as clear communication.

*“Our, our job has completely changed... completely. And then suddenly, yeah, we were not familiar with Zoom, WebEx and all of this. Yeah. Suddenly, we had to do it... At the beginning there were a lot of problems and also with some but not because of that we couldn't manage but because some of these things didn't work.”*



Instead of solving problems by going to the office of a colleague and asking them to solve your issue in a verbal conversation, employees needed to either look for solutions by themselves and thus learn various new digital tools or re-establish their daily routines for more collaborative virtual work, which also required tech-savviness. The problem with the first option was that it broke the idea of being served on the level of senior scientific staff and also required some level of decision-making or empowerment to make decisions, which was not always in the mind-set of supportive staff, who would rather follow the decisions of the senior staff. The problem with the latter option was the resistance to change as well as not very much supportive cultural environment, as we have learned it from the previous quadrant.

*Automation, digitalization, webinars, no more seminars, not the old way of working. So everyone is affected... And the biggest difficulty now is that this old ways of working. So people just don't want to stop doing so. But this affects all the other staff around that as well (...) They are so used of getting served or you're being served. They are not able to work in another way. So, you know, we work around it and allow it or we stop working with them. But these are not easy decisions and they are not decisions for other, of course, but it is effective.”*

At the moment, digitalization is perceived at EIPA as something necessary and no longer avoidable, but there seems to be an illusion that digitalization of processes is about changing the instruments of work not the whole concept of work itself.

*“So, the isolation didn't help with all those processes, but it really did accelerate everything. But also, if you wanted to go fully digital, you had to commit to digital. You cannot say that we're going to keep our ways of working... Given that you're telling that you are changing the whole landscape. And the expectations of creating a new way of working was that they expect to transplant the exact same way they work with the same responsibilities but in digital, which doesn't work like this.”*

In amber organizations and conformist-amber mind set digitalization is seen a “one size fits all” approach. If this change needs to be implemented, then according to the worldview of orange it must work and I don’t care how it works. Digital is understood as “copy-paste” or

“execute” commands. It is an instruction: press here, then here and then repeat. Yet, digitalization is not only about how to implement it. It's about understanding of the complexity of choices that go with it. It's about developing a big picture vision of options and the pluralism of the outcomes. It is also about developing a complex and holistic thinking, which is more inherent to a worldcentric teal organizations.

*“OK, suppose things that you give them kind of a one size fits all solution, right? I'm going to tell them step one, step two and one by one how it works. But that's not how digital works. Like I can give you the general methodology, but you have a thousand ways to do it. It's not just one way possible. It's not like there's one specific way in that you put the pedal you can do whatever you want in digital without limits, well there are some limits, but still just so much more, so many possibilities.”*

The mismatch in expectations towards digital and how it actually works, creates a level of frustration among the employees, especially the ones, with less capacity to see the spectrum of possibilities digital is offering. There is a common premise in the organizational thinking, that junior staff is more tech-savvy and should support senior staff in managing digital platforms and tools. This has two problematic results for the organizations: 1. It does not develop the capacity of senior staff at the “all lines” level of the AQAL model and 2. It supports high fluctuation among junior colleagues, who are hired with false expectations and then leave the organization.

*“So let's say if you were a research assistant, you come here as a person, let's say with the Bachelors and Masters in law, and then you start a job and it turns out you need to manage break out rooms (on zoom) and make presentations, which was not in your job description. (...) And so in a way, it creates false expectation for those who want to work here compared to what is it in reality. That in a way, the mistake... That is the biggest one is trying to transit the support staff's duties to the research staff because it was simply not invested in support staff. And the support staff right now is incapable to fulfill the demands of working digitally.”*

To address the issue of expectations and frustrations, the leadership announced a process of external evaluation of job descriptions, which should bring more clarity in terms of the actual

needs of the organization and how these needs can be fulfilled. Although the process is not finished yet, I did ask my interlocutors if they noticed any difference.

*“Right now. There are things that are different from when I started, like once I know it's not the case for everyone, but personally I think the research, the relationship between research systems and support staff has improved tenfold. There was a real lack of clarity regarding responsible for the first year. I was here 18 months and that's a lot clearer now.”*

*“And there definitely is more of a community, more interaction between staff than there was when I first started, but also that I don't that the side effects perpetrating.”*

Automation and digitalization of processes is however only one side of the medal. In order to automatize and digitalize processes, one needs to have clarity on the processes first. As we know from the Lower-Left “We” quadrant, at the moment EIPA does not has the strongest culture of sharing information and cross-team collaboration. In my summary, I already mentioned a situation, when I was talking to persons A, B and C and they were referring to each other as the focal person for my question. Similar impressions of the coherence of the processes came from my interviewees.

*“OK, so from the day you started it, it's kind of clear that things are a bit it's not, you know, it's not clear that they're ad hoc. You just feel like you should know more than you do because that helping hand isn't there.”*

*“And they are a team of five or six. So that was already an indication that they are not very.. they are a team but not they are not working together. So everyone has their own system and that should not be the case. That's not efficient and it shouldn't be. So there they are, probably not the only ones. I think there are more departments where there are no or not or they are not clear processes.”*

*“I always hear some people say we don't have processes and others say yes, but we do have process, but they don't follow them. So that's a mindset. But at least you need to have a process to lay down to make sure that everyone knows what the process is.(...) So processes in the department are different.”*

There is, however, an alternative view on the question of coherence of the processes, which highlights once again what was said in the last quote, where a colleague referred to different views in the house.

*“it's not that we put it in writing or something like that, that we have everything and then next week or next seven I'm going to read my things. No, we are not doing that. (...) I think that's a bit childish to do it. Like that's to have this kind of process processing. If you do this, if you do that, if you do this, I think it's a bit. Yeah, childish”.*

*“And I think that we are now to be honest, not everything should be on paper. Everything a process since everything's out, everything it is. I found it a bit sad. I think it's the bits back to school.”*

*“It's not that. As if you don't trust people. We have to have everything in written, and you have everything in written. And for what? Nobody reads it. Nobody. So you spent hours writing guidelines, writing things, and nobody reads the so what is the point of then about to say? I explain to you, at least you remember something. I hope.”*

Interestingly, among those, whom I interviewed and who are longer employed at EIPA the attitude towards existing processes was more positive than among the new comers (including myself). From an Integral perspective, the sole fact that there is this clash and unclarity of whether there are processes or not is already a sign of having a “tumor in the body”. Looking at this aspect with an Integral eyes, I see there a clash of different levels and states of development. Since in this aspect EIPA is operating rather from an amber paradigm, which used to make decisions top-down, have stable and predictable environment, it is more natural for the employees, who are longer in the organization, that they do not necessarily all see the need for having processual guidelines. They are so long in the organization that they know by heart the major processes as well as have an advantage of being an institutional memory of the organization. And since their job has not changed much over the years, they may feel a sense of discontent with newcomers, for whom things are not obvious.

In my conversations with EIPA employees, who are employed less or around three years (including myself), there seems to be a strong pluralistic-green thinking, which strives for bottom-up processes, gathering input from all and trying to bring opposing points of view to eventual consequences. People are looking for occasions to discuss work related processes, divide the responsibilities and bring coherence.

*“(...) and there's no transparency. There's no accountability, especially because if you mess up here, it's like, - hey, we move on. Like there's no, I mean, I don't mean to be punished, but there needs to be a lesson learned from your mess up. There's no debriefing session on this. I have not seen that”.*

#### **6.4 Quadrant “Its” (Collective, Exterior/Objective) – systems, strategies, leadership**

*“But you know, there is one comfort I have, we have really.. we had a very good world. We have done a lot. Our role was there and I hope, I really hope we can reestablish again.*

The last quadrant “Its” covers collective exterior aspects of the organizational transformation. In other words, everything related to systems, networks (stakeholders), decision-making, strategies etc. From the previous quadrants we know about the challenges EIPA is experiencing on the level of organizational culture and have analyzed how they impact the processes level. Together, the challenges outlined in the previous quadrants have also implications on the system as whole:

As I mentioned before, Covid-19 pandemic fostered the change not only in organizational instruments but also its purpose.

*“So that's one of the difficulty we have and where we still have to find exactly how to position ourselves that's the big challenge, the productivity and the positioning gains among the stakeholders.”*

*“Because the landscape has changed, you know, this competition has changed the way how, you know, business is being distributed has changed. I think you will have to be far more agile, let's call it far more reacting to change to new developments. You need to be*

*playing on the ball. You will really have to make sure with your customers what do they need?”*

*“So and in these extremely volatile situation we need to actually define what we want to be because who we were we cannot keep on being and this question has been unresolved for many years.”*

In the situation where everything is in constant flux, leadership has to shape the policies, identify new direction for the organization and give people a perspective. In classical amber paradigm, the organizational direction would be defined by creation of organizational strategy. This is also something that was mentioned to me in various conversations with EIPA employees.

*“At the moment when something's burning, we don't look for the future. We don't have foresight. There's so many things that we've called out early and said, this will happen. We need to do something about this.”*

*“Well, it's kind of hard to go fast enough. And we have no communication. What's happening? What direction are we going? What are the next steps? There's no vision. The only thing we do is conflict resolution”.*

It seems that in this quadrant the dominant thinking in the organization is also connected to the amber paradigm. Yet, how much would an amber-paradigm strategy be helpful for an organization, which is going through a constant flux? In my conversation with the leadership of EIPA, I discovered a new paradigm of thinking about strategic decisions:

*“And then it's like, OK, let's just listen to the market. What is that? How can we grow the market opportunities that they face in this? And for us, because we see here, you know, also we need to keep the people there. (...) and then you have to be that a company which you believe they need so in the meantime where we are actually surviving, we are doing some changes to get the sites in there.*

The suggestion to “listen to the market” gives a strong indication for a Teal type of thinking, which includes intuition and the “inner rightness”. A belief that there is a right way to

go, and that there can be one right strategy for the organization to develop belongs to an amber, ethnocentric paradigm. The focus of worldcentric Teal paradigm shifts towards the plurality of visions, all of which can be correct and true.

*“I don't think and I don't believe in anybody having any vision when you are new and you don't know thing. So you cannot come and say it's like this... you need to understand. You need to listen... You need to understand the market.”*

Having said this, I come to my last aspect in this section, which is leadership. In the Lower-Left “We” quadrant, I have already outlined some of the impressions related to the past leadership of EIPA and how much the culture and the overall environment has suffered from it. Here, I would like to touch upon the current EIPA's leadership.

EIPA's current leadership can be truly described as transformative. The main approach is to transform the organization by providing an example and creating new good practices to be established. The moto of the leader is *“My door is always open”*.

Another change happened when the leadership started spending time more in the offices of people.

*“The first thing that was a complete change to people here is that in the past, management was asking people to come into the management's office. Instead, I was, there more like a headless chicken running the corridors.. I was going to people because that's the best way and also you feel it”.*

In one of my conversations with a colleague, we discussed, how every lifecycle of an organization needs a certain management style. At the moment, EIPA is in need of a transformative leaders, who are themselves open for change, who take people on board, who listen and who have the courage to face difficulties at all levels. In the interviews with leaders, they have stressed that this all is an experience and we are trying to build or re-build something new, something that was not there before.

Those, who were building an organization at the beginning, were building it according to their worldviews and value system. Laloux elaborated on this aspect in his book *“Reinventing Organizations”* stating that *“leaders put in place organizational structures, practices, and cultures*

*that make sense to them, that correspond to their way of dealing with the world” (Laloux, 2014, p. 41).*

A vision from higher worldview paradigm, would inevitably clash with a mind-set of lower one. Transformative type of leadership will inevitably meet the resistance and mistrust of the hostile organizational environment. Thus, the role of a leadership in the process of organizational transformation is crucial not only in a sense that this is a person with the decision-making power and also power to enforce if needed, but also because the mind-set and the worldview paradigm of the leader will consciously or not define the extent of the transformation the organization will undergo.

## **7. Conclusions**

I started this work as an attempt to understand the individual experiences of employees, whose organization is going through a transformation and establish connections of how these perspectives impact the big picture of transformation. For my analyzes I chose a metatheoretical Integral Theory and its AQAL model, which integrates a four dimension-perspectives of objectivity, interobjectivity, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity. I was driven to understand how can individual values and worldviews impact organizational transformation in public sector environment, where I work. Additionally, I wanted to know more about the possibilities to develop organizational capacity to have agile response to external changes. Lastly I wanted to know what role leadership plays in the process of organizational transformation?

To answer my questions, I wrote down my own experiences in the organization and conducted 10 qualitative semi-structured interviews, which I divided in four quadrants, representing different perspectives of I, WE, It, and Its.

To sum up: From the Integral perspective, EIPA is operating mostly as an amber organization with a corresponding ethnocentric worldview, which is suitable to operate in stable environments with clear procedures and hierarchy. Most of the public sector organizations come from such an environment, yet in light of the constant flux that is attributed to a complex reality of the modern societies, an amber paradigm is not capable to provide an adequate solution to the external changes. This said, an organization needs to develop itself into a worldcentric mind-set and establish practices of a green or even teal organization. Yet, in order to do so, two important components



are needed: 1. Readiness of individuals to open up for new perspectives and 1. a green or teal leadership.

Thus, to answer my first research question: the worldviews of individuals in the organization have a direct impact on the overall development of the organization and its ability to transform. As I described in the example with digitalization: it is not enough to learn the commands and steps of digital processes and continuing to believe that working environment will remain the same as it was for the past decades.

To answer my third research question: an analysis conducting using the AQAL model showed how leadership always play a crucial role in different quadrants, because leaders are the ones to set the structures, cultural norms and values and the overall direction of the organization. Thus, they are interconnected with all AQAL quadrants. At the same time, the worldview paradigm dominant in the mind-set of the leaders will be mirrored in the organization, even beyond the time of the leaders in it.

While looking for an answer to my second research question – how the capacity of organization to develop an agile response to changes be developed – I came to the realization that the organization does not need to develop this capacity. It needs to become an agile organization itself. The green-pluralistic and teal paradigms are characterized by living through” their practices. In particularly in case of teal organizations, the agility comes from self-management and wholeness. While amber and orange organizations are busy with establishing hierarchical rules, KPIs and awaiting for approvals, teal organizations have the necessary knowledge, understanding and mandate to act whenever the situation requires a response.

Now, of course, public sector organizations with its regulations and limitations stemming from the laws will not change into a teal operating model in one day. Yet, I’m convinced that integration of AQAL model in human resource, strategic planning and at the top leadership level, would have a huge impact on how people are hired (meaning not only based on their skill-set in their CVs, but also their personality), how teams are built and tasks are distributed etc.

The color code for states of mind and organizational paradigms developed by Wilber and other Integral theory practitioners is a valuable tool for identification of where do organizations stand in terms of their development and their thinking about themselves, their development and the worldview. This knowledge builds a valuable awareness for all and helps further to understand how to overcome the challenges related to one or the other level of development. At the same time,

the color code allows to see that in different aspects of the analysis different types of paradigm may exist simultaneously. This understanding allows to move away from dogmatic beliefs that there should be one common way for all. As was seen in case of EIPA, its culture has a good foundation of a green-pluralistic organization, yet its understanding of processes and structures is stuck with the amber paradigm and its current leadership looks at the world from a teal perspective. However, this does not prevent some of the green or teal employees of EIPA to fall back in the mind-set of amber, when speaking about strategies and directions.

## **8. Reflection and limitations**

The journey I have undertaken so far with my research enriched my understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon and of the theoretical and methodological approach I have selected. In this section, I would like to reflect on the process of conducting this research and outline some general limitations of the model I applied.

First, I must admit, I have underestimated the complexity of the Integral Theory and the Integral Methodological Pluralism to be able to conduct a fully integral work. This could have been easily developed into a post-graduate two-year research. I do, however, believe that Integral Metatheory is a valuable tool for future studies in academic environment and that my work will contribute to the scientific community as a first attempt to implement Integral Theory in practice.

My second difficulty with this work was also related to the fact that not many practical studies have been conducted, which I could use as a basis for the current work. There is a good number of literature to read about the Integral Theory from a philosophical standpoint but not many applied research has been conducted yet. Thus, my work has suffered in terms of choosing aspects that should be include and which should be taken out as the result of my field work. I'm afraid that some of the connections might be clear only to me at the moment and not to my reader, simply because not all of the aspects analyzed were included in this work in the end.

Having said that, I have noticed (rather late than early, thus this was not improved) that I have not provided much of an explanation of how do I define who of the colleagues I have talked to has an amber, green or teal mind-set. This has completely slipped my mind in the writing phase as I have probably too many pre-understandings for this and have assumed this should be evident.

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# Appendix 1

## Warm-up:

1. How do you feel today?
2. Tell me please, what do you do at EIPA? What are your main duties.
3. How long are you working for EIPA?

## Main part: The „I“ block – reflecting on personal experience – subjective view (intentional)

1. Can you guide me please through your personal experience at EIPA. How would you describe your experience here?
2. How would you describe the processes happening at EIPA? Please give some examples?
3. Can you please share with me some of your thoughts about EIPA's organizational culture? Something that is outstanding or something that caught your attention.
4. In your opinion, how successful EIPA is going through the process of change?
  - How well are you aware of the change that the organisation is going through?
  - Do you think your supervisor/EIPA's leadership provided enough guidance for you to go through the change? Please elaborate on some examples
  - Have you ever had a need to convince your team or in the whole organisation that a particular change needs to happen? How did you approach it? Give some examples please
  - Do you feel being a part of the change processes happening at EIPA? Can you give a couple of examples?
  - Have you ever felt resistance towards change in the organisation? Please indicate some examples?
  - Why do you think people resist change in general?
5. Can you please reflect on difficult situations for you and how did you handle them?
  - What is change for you? How do you understand it?
  - How do you personally manage changes in working environment? (do you like them or not, how do you approach them. Please share some examples)
6. Can you please guide me what lead you to make the decision to leave EIPA?

**Main part: The “we” block – reflecting on the experiences from a group perspective – intersubjective view (cultural)**

7. Tell me about your experience working with other teams at EIPA.
  - How well do you know what other teams/colleagues are doing?
  - How do you find social life at EIPA?
  - Do you often have lunch/coffee with your colleagues? And with leadership?
  - Do you like how the processes/communication between teams are organised?
  - How do you feel about people leaving EIPA? Does it affect you? If yes, how?
8. How would you describe the change of the organizational culture/values?
9. How would you describe your relationship with colleagues at EIPA? How has it changed over time?
10. Have your ability to interact with difficult people improved over time?

**Main part: The “it/its” block – reflecting on the experiences from an organizational perspective/leadership perspective – objective/interobjective view (behavioural and social)**

11. I would like to ask you some questions about Leadership and Organisation in general:
12. What are the values of EIPA?
13. How has the change happening in the house influenced managerial practices? What are the external (and internal) factors?
14. Can you name some of the changes they have implemented so far?
15. How would you identify a leader? What qualities should a leader have in your opinion?
16. Do you have strong relationships with people you lead? (question for leaders) Give a couple of examples, please.
17. How do you think EIPA’s leadership handles crisis situation? Give a couple of examples, please.
18. How do you think your supervisor handles the crisis situations? Examples
19. Do you think your manager/top leader delegates tasks well? Would you like there to be anything differently?
20. How are decisions made in EIPA? Who makes them?
21. How do you normally know that some decisions have been made?
22. How satisfied are you with the current model of decision-making?

**Closing:**

23. If it were up to you, what are the three things you would like to improve in EIPA?
24. In what ways has your daily experiences have changed over time?
25. How do you feel about EIPA today in comparison to your first impression?