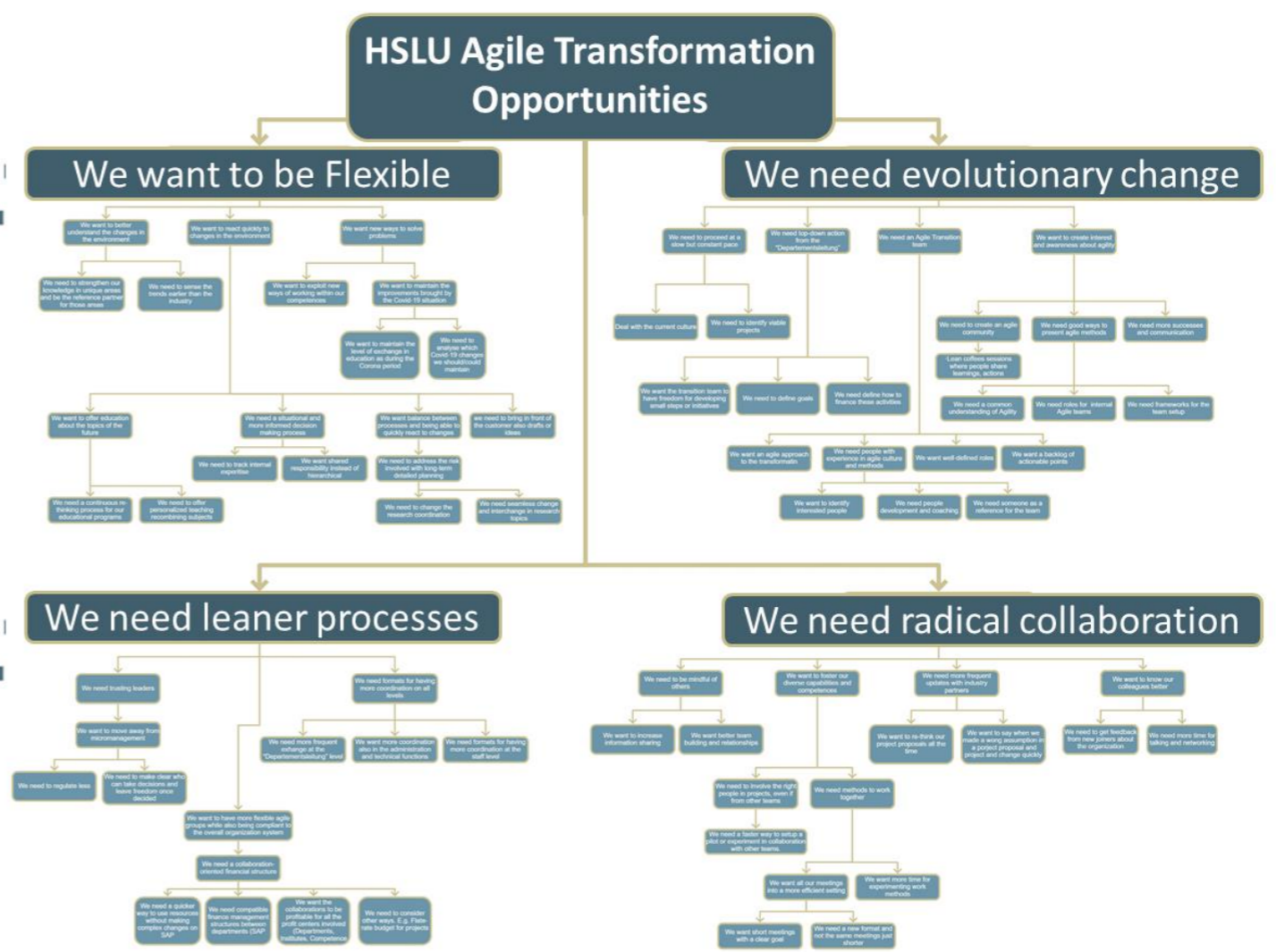
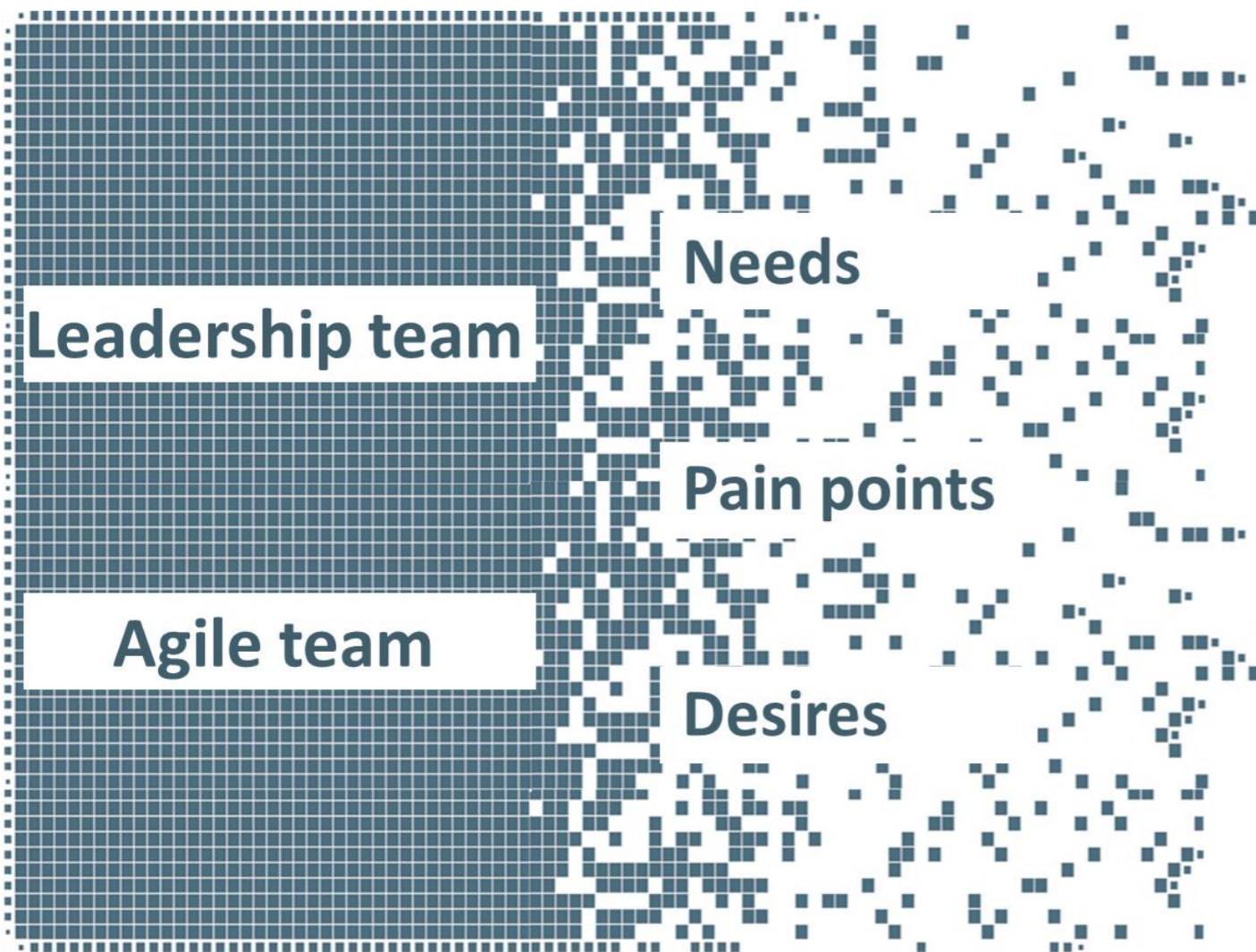
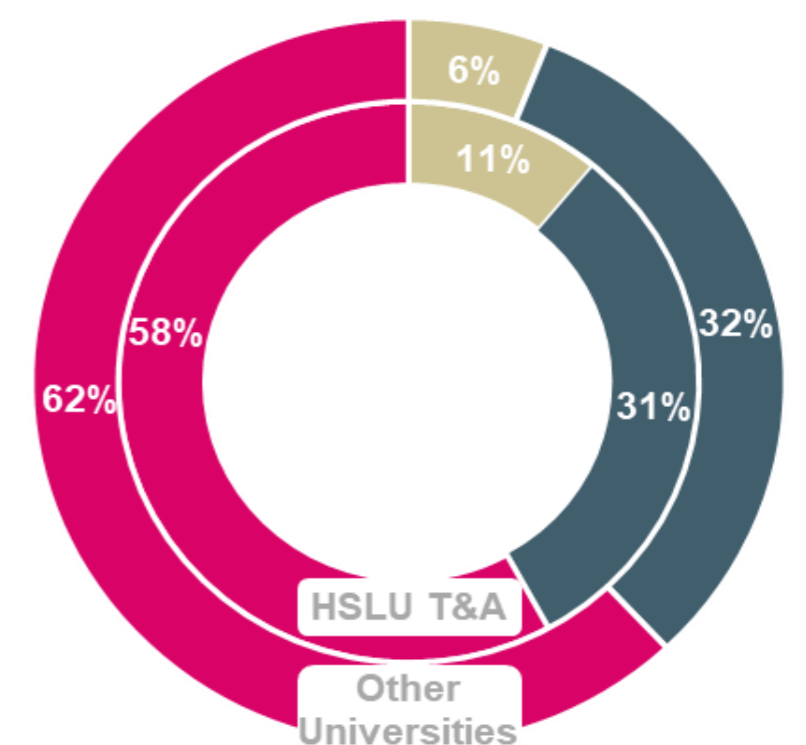
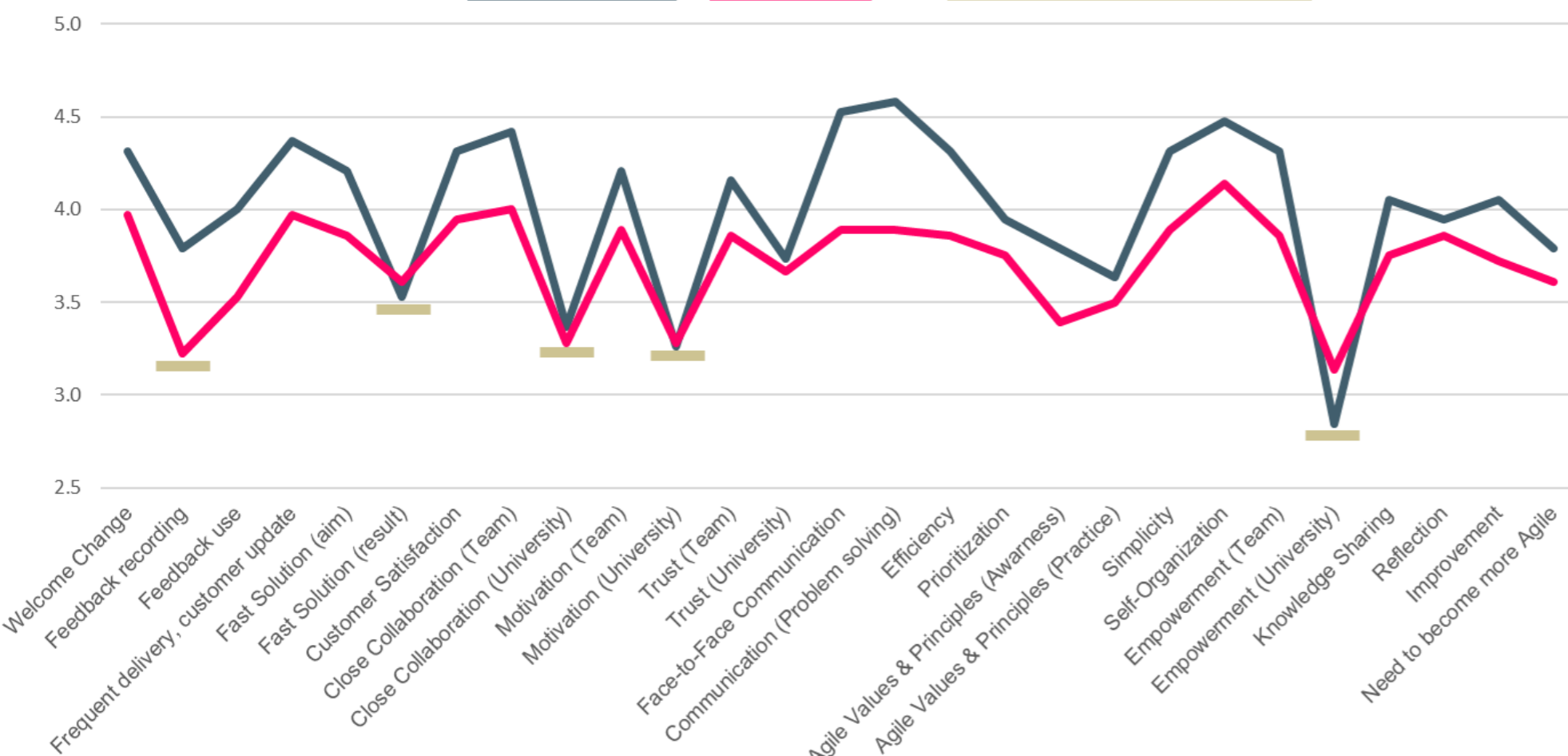


Master-Thesis Engineering, Fachgebiet Business Engineering and Production

# Recommendations for the development of an agile mindset, leadership culture and interdisciplinary cooperation: an exploratory investigation at HSLU T&A applying Action research



Comparison Team Leaders - Employees and areas for agility potential



My university:
 

- needs to become more Agile
- is already sufficiently Agile
- does not need to become more Agile

## Problem statement

Within the framework of the organization's 2020-23 strategy, in June 2019, HSLU T&A initiated an agile collaboration practice in the form of Thinking Spaces. By September 2020, 100+ employees, leaders, and students had taken part in more than 20 Thinking Spaces sessions, covering strategic topics.

Given the positive feedback and benefits of such an initiative, a group of people within the department started an exploratory journey towards agility improvement. Thus, the T&A Agile team was formed at the end of 2019.

The T&A Agile Team has built knowledge and conducted pilot projects, which have provided proof of work, initial practice touchpoints, and raised internal interest. Nevertheless, after initial successes, the COVID-19 outbreak stopped the flow and shifted the focus to operations management. The problem is worth examining because the current situation requires an efficient allocation of

resources. This thesis takes the challenge of understanding how Agile practices could lead to cultural change and narrowing down the steps for T&A to move in the Agile direction.

## Solution concept

In this exploratory study using action research, it has been fundamental to balance the in-depth literature consultation and the iterative reflection on the industry partner (HSLU T&A). *Awareness, transparency, and incentives* are the primary enablers of a sustainable environment, with sustainable practices, which radiate the new culture throughout the organization. The first investigation domain worth mentioning is the discussion with the leaders. The T&A leadership team is mindful of the need for organizational change and showed great interest in the Agile topic. Nevertheless, they also

highlighted the limited resources and the necessity to sense more compatibility between the Agile mindset and the university environment. This work supports in these regards by formalizing an opportunities framework, built ad-hoc for the organization. It clearly visualizes the needs, desires, and pain points while also serving as a robust decision-making tool, enabling the design of a long-term transformation roadmap (Picture at the top). On a shorter timescale, the organization-wide assessment identified the perceived need to become more Agile (Bottom-right figure), and the cultural areas with potential for Agile introduction (Bottom-left figure). Although the questionnaire showed relatively high absolute values, it has been possible to determine the institutes and areas with higher potential for buy-

in by cross-evaluating the data. The Thinking Spaces' material (Denkräume) revealed the exact gaps in these areas, while expert interviews pointed out which Agile practices could have a more significant impact on them.

Agile is often viewed as "something that Spotify and Amazon do". With this thesis' findings and recommendations, the organization is better equipped to consider its unique context and operating model. Progressive learning is the tool for ultimately creating a better way of living for people and more responsiveness for the stakeholders.

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