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**Title:** Rehumanising Knowledge Work through Fluctuating Support Networks: A Grounded Theory

**Session:** Grounded Theory Methodology Session C Business & Management Studies

**Abstract:**

This study employed classic grounded theory methodology to produce a theory of rehumanising knowledge work through fluctuating support networks in the knowledge workplace. Data consisted of field notes and transcripts from personal interviews and focus group sessions. Participants were representative of the public and private sectors and a variety of professional fields that fall under the general rubric of knowledge work. Data were analysed using the full complement of procedures that comprise classic grounded theory methodology. These include theoretical sensitivity, initial open coding, constant comparison of empirical indicators, core variable emergence, delimiting and selective coding, theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation through interchangeability of indicators, conceptual memoing, analytic rules for hand sorting of conceptual memos and the emergence of theoretical codes that integrate the theory.

The resultant thesis explains the basic social structural process of fluctuating support networks through which knowledge workers self-organise to overcome dehumanised work environments, consequent of a rapidly changing workplace context. Such networks operate outside the formal structures of organisations. They are epiphenomenal - self-emerging, self-organising, and self-sustaining. Participation is voluntary and intuitive.

The core variable of the theory is the basic social psychological process of rehumanising. Through fluctuating support networks, knowledge workers rehumanise their work and their work environments. Rehumanising gives meaning to work while sustaining energy and commitment. Rehumanising is characterised by authenticity, depth and meaning, recognition and respect, safety and healing and kindred sharing. Fluctuating support network relationships offer members validation and subtle support. Through network participation, members find ways to pursue shared interests and passions. Network activities are characterised by challenge, experimentation, creativity and learning. They provide members with renewed energy and learning. The resultant sense of achievement builds member confidence and increases passion for sustained network engagement.