

Understanding Distance in Remote Work: Why Collaboration Becomes Difficult—Even When Technology Works

The DIMODI project: linking theory, empirical insights, and practical interventions

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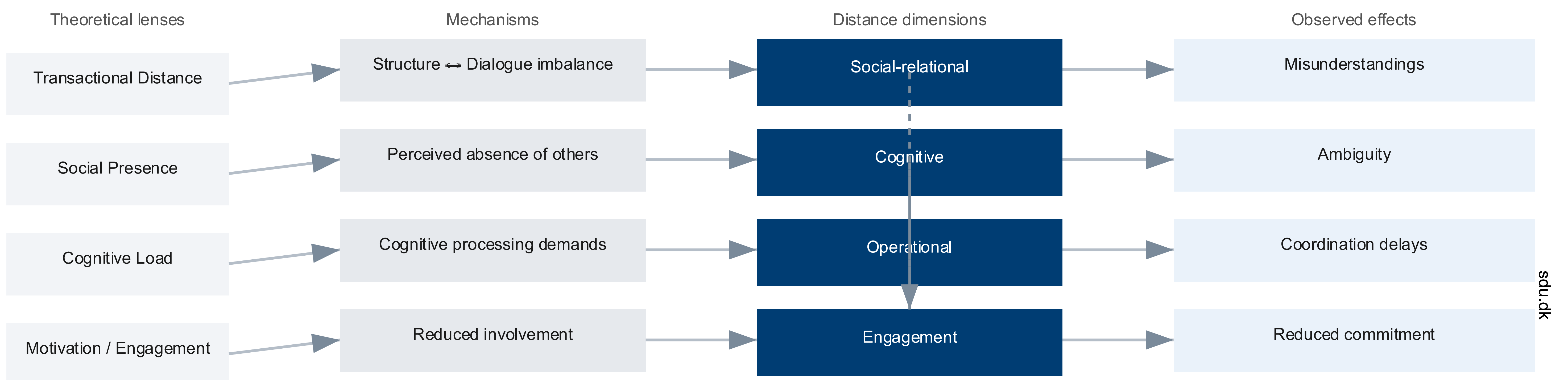


Remote and hybrid work are now established across Europe.

Yet many organisations experience persistent challenges in collaboration, despite functioning digital tools.

These challenges are not simply technical. They reflect different **dimensions of distance** that shape how people interpret, coordinate, and engage in work.

Dimensions of distance in remote work: conceptual structure and interdependencies



Theoretical Grounding

DIMODI builds on established perspectives on virtual interaction, including:

- Transactional distance (structure and dialogue in interaction)
- Social presence (perceived co-presence of others)
- Cognitive load (processing demands in digital environments)

These perspectives are integrated into a multi-dimensional model of distance in work contexts.

How Distance Becomes Visible in Practice

Distance rarely appears as an abstract concept in everyday work.

Instead, it becomes visible in situations such as:

- delayed coordination
- misunderstandings
- lack of visibility of others' work
- reduced sense of involvement

These observable challenges point to underlying distance dimensions.

Four Dimensions of Distance

- Social-relational distance: reduced informal interaction and social cues
- Cognitive distance: differences in interpretation and increased mental effort
- Operational distance: challenges in coordinating tasks and workflows
- Engagement distance: reduced motivation and perceived commitment

Project Focus

DIMODI aims to:

- identify how different dimensions of distance manifest in remote work
- analyse their impact on collaboration practices
- develop tools and learning formats to help organisations address them

Project Approach

- Interviews with employees working remotely
- Analysis of collaboration practices across SMEs
- Iterative development of diagnostic and training approaches

Project Contributions

DIMODI develops:

- a framework for analysing distance in remote collaboration
- a feedback tool for organisations
- micro-credential courses for SMEs

The project combines conceptual development with empirical insights and practical application

The Consortium: A transnational partnership bringing together expertise in pedagogy, digital psychology, and adult education.