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Telework and the re-organisation of the control of work in the public sector

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Abstract

Telework affects the spatial and temporal framework of work. Therefore, we observe a re-organisation of the conduct of work that affects the employment relationship, especially the dimension of control. This contribution illustrates the necessity to re-define the rules of control and to recast managerial practices and role. The case study conducted in a Belgian public agency indicates that a conflict of rules may occur when introducing telework, and that control tends to intensify.

Keywords

Control, regulation, human resource management, work, teleworking, public sector

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1-Introduction

The phenomenon of teleworking, which is emblematic of new flexible forms of work organisation, has been first considered as an exclusively technological innovation, while nowadays it is understood as a component of a flexible way to manage work (Taskin and Vendramin, 2004), that is potentially favourable to employees as well as to employers, but can also lead to new sources of tension.

Teleworking¹ refers to an alternative work arrangement facilitated by ICTs that enable employees to work physically outside the conventional workplace by bringing work to the workers (Fairweather, 1999; Feldman and Gainey, 1997; Nilles, 1994). Telework therefore involves “the decoupling of work activity from one material workplace such as ‘the office’ (...) as well as from prescribed working hours, work schedules, scripts and practices” (Tietze, 2002: 385), what challenges traditional organisation theory and management practices. Little research focuses on the study of such transformations which directly affects the employment relationship. Nevertheless, traditional management practices, especially control, based on the visibility (i.e. the capability to observe the employee) and the presence (i.e. the capability of the employee to interact with co-workers) of employees are no longer adapted to remote working arrangements like telework (Felstead et al., 2003). Consequently, telework involves a re-regulation of work, i.e. a re-organisation of the conduct of work (Edwards et al., 2002), which will have variable effects on the employment relationship.

¹ In this paper, we use the term ‘teleworking’ rather than ‘telecommuting’ where the former, mainly used in the European literature, refers to a broad variety of work arrangements including work from neighborhood work centers, clients’ premise, or home and ‘working on the move’. In contrast, the latter focuses on working arrangements that allow avoiding commuting (Huws et al., 1990) and refers mostly to home-based teleworking (Venkatesh and Johnson, 2002). The use of telecommuting as a synonym for telework may therefore confuse the issue of defining and conceptualizing telework by overemphasizing transportation, even in research where the focus is on another aspect of decentralized work (Sullivan, 2003: 159).

This contribution draws on both teleworking and control literature and attempts to investigate how a new form of work organisation may affect the managerial relationship and practices and lead to a re-regulation of work. We address two main questions: first, we question the nature of the re-organisation of control when introducing telework (in which direction control evolves, if so?); second, we question the process of this re-regulation within the public environment (why does telework fit, or does not fit, to bureaucratic organisations, and how telework modifies the existing bureaucratic principles, if so?). According to the literature in management, control has been implicitly considered as exclusively practised and totally mastered through management. The socio-ideological forms of control (i.e. subjective), recently developed by Kärreman and Alvesson (2004) are part of this perspective. Self-control, exerted through workers themselves, as well as social controls, exerted through peers, are not sufficiently considered in the literature. However, those forms of control largely contribute to the re-regulation process we observe in despatialised situations. This paper aims at studying the rules of control's constitution and transformation processes in the specific context of home-based teleworking.

The study is based on the case of a Belgian public agency, ECOMIN, which planned to implement telework for translators, who perceived it as a way to escape from the workplace, characterised by an unpopular open space. This case allows us to observe the regulations operating in order to re-create the visibility and presence of employees. Despite the setting of specific rules, the project did not in fact proceed. If this may be partly explained through structural elements, the brief consideration of the case of a second agency allowed us to identify a conflict of rules as the reason of that failure: control modes specifically developed for the translators (performance control) appear inappropriate with the prevailing bureaucratic norms of control.

This article will first present the existing literature about teleworking, management and control; Second, the background and methodology of the study will be presented; Finally, the observed process of re-regulation of control practices will be discussed, by introducing the notions of *social regulation* and *convention* as key elements to understand those organisational changes.

2-Control, a key issue when studying telework

From a historical point of view, it is interesting to note that telework has parallels with the situation which prevailed before the Industrial Revolution which brings work into industries, while dividing labour. In the eighteenth century, it has been argued that the factory system (bringing together many workers into a single workshop) was the necessary outcome of the use of machinery. Similarly, telework is presented today in the managerial literature as consequence to the developments of ICTs. As argued elsewhere (Gorz, 1976), the emphasis on technology tends to obscure the real motives of the Industrialization and, we would say, of the contemporary remote working. Marglin (1976) underlined the critical role of the social organisation of work (and especially of control and supervision) in the transformation of work. The phenomenon seems exactly following the same logic today: telework is not simply a technologically superior way to conduct work, it is a new form of organizing work, still embedded in a managerial relationship and, therefore, accounting for supervision and control. Proponents of telework argue it is a way to improve autonomy, flexibility, trust and commitment of workers while radical critical literature presents teleworkers as ‘e-slavers’. We propose here to consider telework in a pragmatic perspective, as a flexible way to organize work which can lead to a reorganisation of the work processes as well as the managerial practices and legitimacy.

Such flexible work arrangements include various alternatives to traditional offices, including home, satellite offices, telecentres or telecottages, client’s premises, transportations, and other

transit places. Telework is characterized by (i) a distance, i.e. a spatial and temporal dispersion; (ii) a frequency, i.e. the extent of time spent teleworking; and (iii) the use of ICT. In this study, we focus on paid work performed at home, at least one day per week.

In the literature, teleworking has been presented as a strategy to help organisations decrease costs and increase productivity (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997; Neufeld and Fang, 2005), respond to employees' needs for a healthy work-family balance (Mokhtarian et al., 1998), and reduce air pollution and traffic congestion (Perez et al., 2004; Salomon and Salomon, 1984). Often perceived as a 'win-win solution' that makes work employer- and employee-friendlier, teleworking seems sometimes to take the status of a myth: teleworkers are often portrayed as autonomously organizing their working days, deciding their own work schedules and shaking off workplace controls (Allen and Wolkovitz, 1987; Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Taskin and Devos, 2005).

Researchers have put forward some challenges linked to this new form of work organisation. Widely quoted and studied are the danger of social and professional isolation for teleworkers, and the risk of work-family conflict (e.g. Felstead et al., 2002; Kurland and Cooper, 2002). Previous research has also pointed to the links between teleworking and strategic HR issues such as turnover, retention, career management, commitment, culture, and performance (Cooper and Kurland, 2002; Illegems and Verbeke, 2004). Nevertheless, the challenges telework addresses in terms of management, employment relationship and control have been rarely studied and appear most of time as future research directions.

Telework puts into question management practices through the introduction of a breach within the fundamental characteristics of the traditional exercise of management control, which are the *presence* and the *visibility* of employees, according to Felstead et al. (2003). In other words, teleworking modifies the "rule of the three units" (of time, space and action) which characterizes the traditional exercise of control, where (a) the *unity of place* allows the

supervisor to control *de visu* and *in situ* the work of its subordinates (Lallé, 1999: 98). This rule refers to the industrial context where the work carried out in the workshop or the factory can be controlled directly by the foreman, for example. This model of supervision cannot apply in situation of despatialisation, since it precisely causes to free work from a centralized place. Work is carried out –partly– out of the presence of the hierarchy, from one –or several– other place(s); (b) in terms of control, the principle of the *unity of time* results in assimilating working time and the result of work. Again, when the operations are well defined and reproducible, employers have only to control the duration of work in order to control work. However, despatialisation makes this temporal control difficult; (c) the *unity of action* is characterized by the preliminary definition of the work procedures, methods and rules for conducting efficient work. However, telework develops in sectors and functions that are more characterized by the unforeseen and the adaptability, where it is rather the capacity to deal with new situations which is controlled.

Lallé (1999) presented the traditional practices of control as appropriate to the industrial sector, but not adapted to the service sector. Studying control modes within the bank sector, she argues that new forms of work organisation call into question the “rule of the three units”, making insufficient, inappropriate even against-productive, certain traditional forms of control.

Evidence from previous research

In terms of control, telework has been presented as a factor of autonomisation or liberation of the workers (from the production constraints) as well as a mean to intensify work, namely through the use of electronic monitoring. The few empirical results we present here below illustrate contrasted –but real– effects of telework on the managerial relationship and, especially, on control modes.

Analysing the technological means allowing the supervision of teleworkers (close monitoring), Fairweather (1999) identifies a potential intensification of such forms of control, arguing that ICTs give more control indicators to managers than those traditionally used to control on-site employees. Similarly, Wicks (2002) shows an increase in the use of technological-based supervision when telework was introduced in a Canadian financial services company. In those two studies, technology constitutes a mean of (close) control that balances the increase of autonomy employees can benefit in terms of work organisation.

In a case-study conducted in an Italian telecommunication company, Valsecchi (2006) noted the emergence of four different strategies of control following the introduction of home-based telework. In a context where the remote audiovisual control of individuals is legally forbidden, management developed a collective monitoring of the performance ('collective gaze'): employees are part of teams including teleworkers and non-teleworkers; when the answering rate is too low, the manager sends a collective e-mail to the whole team, which increases the pressure and the suspicion on remote workers. Second, in order to ensure the quality of the service, teleworkers were involved in additional training sessions. Third, customers were encouraged to react for any problem they may have encountered. Fourth, the teams wherein teleworkers are involved, with non-teleworkers, constitute another form of control. Valsecchi described those call centre teleworkers as more tightly supervised than before teleworking was implemented.

Felstead et al. (2003) carried out 13 case studies and questioned 120 people (home-based teleworkers, managers and trade unions). They underlined the emergence of *ad hoc* modes of control, in addition to the increase in the use of ICTs. For instance, they showed that managers introduced new means of control (through ICTs by activating the surveillance capabilities of existing managerial devices), but also that they promoted trust or set additional short-term or

medium-term output targets in order to overcome the lack of visibility of home-based teleworkers.

Deffayet (2002) conducted a case study in an auditing and technical advice company. Teleworkers were high-qualified engineers combining home-based telework and mobile working. They had to visit some clients during a day and doing some reporting from home after their visits. After having adopted telework, Deffayet observed an increase in performance monitoring: the manager of the engineers' team asked for more detailed reports and feedbacks and called them sometimes several times a day for checking if visits were carried out. From their point of view, teleworkers felt they became their own bosses, organizing their working day, their visits and being in direct relation with customers. Therefore, they refused the intrusion of their manager that they did not consider as legitimate. What this research underlines is the potential impact of telework on the managerial relationship –and its legitimacy in terms of role. Deffayet pointed out that this relationship has to be recast in a new way when managing professional workers, who asked for more qualitative support (rather than quantitative supervision).

Finally, Dambrin (2004) studied the influence of telework on the employee-manager relationship by focusing on communication and control modes. The interviews she conducted among employees in charge of sales illustrated a decrease in the formal interactions between employees and their direct supervisors, even though the communication with superior hierarchical levels was facilitated through the remoteness. Dambrin underlines the reduction of the importance of the direct managers' role who, in reaction to the increase of autonomy allowed to the salespersons by telework, have no other choice than developing output measurement tools based on the short-term results. The development of such new control tools may be interpreted as a way to legitimate the role of the direct manager, through the reaffirmation of a certain division of labour.

These research results clearly illustrate the ‘disruptive’ effect of telework practice on control and on the managerial relationship. By analysing the process of re-regulation of the control of work, the following case study addresses two additional questions: (i) does telework contribute to intensify the managerial control?; and (ii) why do employees adopt telework if the answer to the former question is positive?

3-Case study in a Public Agency

Telework first developed in IT and consultancy companies. This may explain why most empirical work focus on the study of home-based telework in such companies (see eg. Peters et al., 2004; Cooper and Kurland, 2002; Teo et al., 1998), which are emblematic of highly-skilled employment and deregulated work, i.e. where flexibility, informal arrangements and high-commitment practices are widely used. However, from our point of view, the future development of telework depends on its ability to be adopted in other companies where the conduct of work appears more regulated. A bureaucratic organisation like a public agency constituted a promising field of enquiry. The formalisation characterising such work organisation allowed us to identify the norms of control and the regulation process taking place around the telework project.

Background and methodology

The findings presented in this paper are derived from ECOMIN (which is an pseudonym), a Belgian public agency, which has developed a teleworking project for the HR department, and more especially for the translators. For more than six years, the public sector has been involved in a major restructuring process aiming at increasing the service offered to the citizens by developing a customer- and results-based approach. ECOMIN employs around 3,000 persons and is one of the largest public agencies in Belgium. Its mission is to develop a sustainable economic policy. ECOMIN is composed of 7 general directions and 3 support

departments. HR is one of these departments and has 177 employees among which 76% are low-qualified workers, i.e. having no degree at all or a secondary school's degree.

ECOMIN is a bureaucracy, which is not surprising. The horizontal and vertical division of labour is high. Most of the tasks of the 177 workers belonging to the HR department is dedicated to the application of rules and procedures, coming from administrative law or decided by a small number of experts and responsible persons. Moreover, the content of the job of those low qualified workers is composed of a very limited number of tasks : working hours calculation, encoding of days-off justifications, recruitment, appraisal, etc. The coordination mechanism is therefore characterised by a process standardization: a pre-defined sequence of action, which relies on a large number of forms and tools (like the clocking-in machine), has to be respected.

Behind this set of formal rules, the role of the hierarchical responsible person can be considered as a supervisory job, i.e. this person constitutes an instance of control of the work done, in terms of quality as well as quantity. Control is then highly personified and relies on existing indicators, like listings (number of files managed), absenteeism rate, or working time. The exercise of control is therefore closely linked to the presence and visibility of workers. The 'boss' ensures the workers are sitting in the office and putting in the hours, before worrying about what they really do and how. These bureaucratic practices do not allow the development of a feeling of liability and of the control practices that are associated to, like self control. Finally, the power is centralized into the strategic apex (in the President's hands) and the standardization of work processes does not allow a large discretionary room for manoeuvre to local responsible persons.

Interestingly, it has to be mentioned that during our investigation, the ECOMIN personnel was removing into a new building, and the members of the HR department have been spread within an open space. This kind of physical organisation of work values the *presence* and

visibility of workers as means of control. Indeed, the open space allows social control, which was not so developed before, namely around the temporal norm of work. The consequences of this move have not to be undermined since it constitutes a deep change in terms of work organisation for public agencies. It also illustrates that offices and desks are devices of managerial regulation, control and disciplinary gaze (Felstead et al., 2005).

The project of implementing telework, decided in June 2004, primarily affects the 177 members of the HR department. The motivations for the development of telework are first cultural since teleworking is perceived as a strategic lever contributing to the development of a performance culture, namely through the introduction of some performance indicators and the elaboration of a tacit contract between the worker and the HR Director; Obviously, telework is proposed as a reward to the deserving employees. Second, they are societal in reference to mobility and roles balancing issues. Finally, the implementation of telework aims to meet the request formulated by translators who perceived it as a way to escape the workplace (see below).

The translation service of ECOMIN is composed by 4 translators-reviewers, 3 translators and one translator-director. In order to ensure their anonymity, we will name indifferently those 8 persons « translators ». Those who have the master's degree in linguistic studies have the title of *translator-reviewer* or *translator-director*, depending of the seniority. Translators consider themselves as “technicians of the language” achieving a very exacting job. They work for the different general directions and support departments of ECOMIN, which they consider as, and name 'clients'. Within the translation service, some strong principles characterize the organisation of work, like the need to meet the deadlines assigned by the clients and a management tool of incoming/exit translations (collective mailbox).

The ECOMIN case draws on 28 semi-structured interviews (8 translators, 2 HR Directors, 3 persons in charge of the telework project, 14 chiefs and employees of the HR department

interested in teleworking and one trade union employee). The interviews took place between January and April 2005. All lasted for between 40 minutes and one hour and 45 minutes in duration and were tape-recorded and fully transcribed. In the end, telework was not implemented, for the reasons we will develop later. In order to understand this failure, we conducted additional interviews: we first met the persons who were in charge of the project in November 2005, and we also interviewed 8 people between April and June 2006 (leader of the project, managers and teleworkers) in another public agency, HUMIN, the only one where telework has been implemented².

Data Analysis

i-Towards Performance Management?

As early mentioned, the HR Director considers telework as a strategic lever in order to motivate and make employees more responsible, what statuses and HR practices of the public sector do not allow. The HR Director therefore wants to offer telework only to the most deserving employees, as a reward, and in the context of the negotiation of a tacit and individual contract between the chosen employee and himself. The goal of such arrangement would be the setting of performance targets and the definition of the tasks to perform at home.

At ECOMIN, we don't have any performance principles today, because we don't have the carrot nor the stick (...) So, we have to find other means and I thought telework would be one for some of my employees. Because, through teleworking, I've got a kind of deal to make: "ok, you decide to work according performance principles, i.e. we give you some objectives, you organise your work as you want to achieve it at home or in the office, but you have to show that you achieve the assigned objectives and, in counterpart, we eventually give you the opportunity to benefit from the advantages of telework in terms of balancing private and professional duties, etc." [HR Director]

² For a detailed and comparative analysis of the two case studies, see Taskin, L. and Edwards, P. (2007) "The possibilities and limits of telework in a bureaucratic environment: Lessons from the public sector", *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 22(3): 195-207.

The individual and *ad hoc* character of this arrangement, as well as its personalization, constitutes a breach into the current organisation of work within the public sector, which remains characterized by collective, impersonal and general rules.

At the very beginning of the discussion about telework for the translators, the HR Director instituted a new performance indicator : the individual statistics. The goal is to make use of an indicator measuring the amount of pages translated on a daily basis, and for each translator. The target settled was first 5 pages per day, but raised later to 6 pages. According to the HR Director's point of view, this new rule of control constitutes the carrot he needed in order to motivate some employees, since telework will only be proposed to the translators who can reach this productivity rate.

Theoretically, the HRD announced that those who translated five pages a day will be elected for teleworking, and not the others. That was the message. And that's a first reason, maybe, why some started to accelerate. [Translator]

And it is at this moment that the HRD said we didn't do it on a voluntary basis, but on a productivity basis. We needed to have at least six pages per day. It was too much because at that time we already had five pages. For one single page... [Translator]

The introduction of this statistic constitutes a new important breach within a bureaucratic structure like ECOMIN. Around telework, some regulations takes place where object is the performance of individuals. Moreover, the translator-director disposes of a large range of management tools (collective mailbox where texts are coming in and from where they are sent back when translated, common platform on the network where translations in progress are available, etc.) that, in the case of telework, seem to be used for surveillance purpose.

We're working in network, we can put translations in and everybody can come in and see what we're doing, the chief may see it (...) It is then organised by service and we stock the translation on the network and everybody can find its translation...Ourselves, when working, we're already at the right

place and if someone wants to verify what he/she was doing, he/she can easily come into the system and check where she/he stopped his/her translation. [Translator]

Therefore, we can wonder why translators, employees of the public sector, agree with this situation of intensified and more controlled work, without too much of resistance. According to Collinson et al. (1998), workers may accept limits to the exercise of discretion and increased effort levels, and thus welcome new managerially defined disciplines if they perceived some advantage to the situation, namely when this results in a better organisation of work. The 'disciplined worker model' may help us to understand why translators accept the measurement of their productivity through statistics, insofar as it brings a sense of order in a context characterised by conflicts. Another explanation of this 'disciplined' attitude comes from the opportunity to escape to the working conditions of the service (conflicts and open space) that telework offers. In the translators' view, this intensification of work would be counterbalanced through the time spent at home, far from social control, conflicts and requirement of presence. This valuation of telework is then embedded in the private sphere of employees.

The last time I was appraised, it was in 1998 and, anyhow, we all had 7.5/10 in order to avoid conflicts, everybody had the same mark (...) Today, we don't have meetings anymore in the service. There are only informal contacts. Anyway, when we had service meetings, it was only to devalue people and to allocate the translations to the preferred employees. It was only to settle someone's hash and it came to personal attacks on the competencies' level of people... [Translator]

The building is also tiring. There is the open space, of course, but the building can lead to diseases: the light, the lack of air, and sometimes the temperature that we cannot regulate... This is part of tiring and not really motivating working conditions. [Translator]

In a context wherein the work organisation and control practices are based on presence (i.e. the worker's ability to interact with its colleagues) and visibility (i.e. the capacity to observe the worker) of employees, the introduction of new forms of control (performance-oriented or

even trust-based) generates a fundamental conflict between the bureaucratic model and its specific norms of control and other modes of control (see Sisson and Marginson, 2003). In accordance with our hypotheses, it seems that telework requires the fitting of existing rules of control, according to the perception of the interviewees.

In people's heads, telework means taking folders and going home. Except translators, I don't see who could telework. For who making a policy...I think we have to underline, in order to develop the project, the ability to control easily, even remotely. In the case of the translators, that is the big argument: if we don't see them, never mind, because they work by using e-mails and other tools that allow us to supervise them. I think it is what we need to say (...) If we want to broaden the experiment, we need guaranties in terms of control. And, here, what is in stake is the liability of chiefs (...). With translators, and with the management tools of the director, the place of work doesn't matter: we can see what they translate. We can control the quality of the work. There are no risks. [Project leader]

ii-A limited re-regulation

Structural factors (occupational characteristics, organisational size and bureaucratic management) appear not to fit to the development of such a new form of work organisation. Therefore, the adaptation of management practices and, in particular, of the existing bureaucratic modes of control based on the notions of visibility and presence, seemed necessary.

In the case of translators, some new rules have been introduced, breaking with the existing convention, for example, the depersonalisation of the control function to the benefit of technological-based management tools, the individualisation of rules and of the teleworking arrangement itself and, of course, the implementation of a performance measurement system. The latter has been imposed on the translators who accepted it, in a disciplined way. Those re-regulation of work contributed to modify the rules of the game, but at a too local level (the service of translations) to be able to affect the general principles of the bureaucratic organisation.

In other words, telework introduces the principles of non-presence, non-clocking in, individual (and, to some extent, informal) arrangement, trust and performance management. As many notions that put into question the existing bureaucratic principles, largely based on the *presence* and the *visibility* of workers. Finally, through the withdrawal of the telework project and the introduction of an open space, those bureaucratic principles are reinforced.

4-Discussion

By breaking with the units of time, space and action and with the conventional view of the workplace, telework overthrows the traditional work organisation and management practices, which need to be recast. In this contribution, we focus on the re-organisation of control modes. The regulations we observed affect managerial practices and relationship most of the time in the way of intensification, by introducing new practices or by developing a surveillance purpose to existing practices.

The empirical data we presented illustrate that autonomy and control have to be considered as the two parts of the same coin. Workers are given more autonomy but, simultaneously, there is a centralization of control. There is not a simple trade-off between control and discretion (Geary, 2003) and the dialectic of control and autonomy is not a zero-sum game (Edwards et al., 2002; Taskin and Edwards, 2007). Employees agree the limitation in their autonomy and the intensification of work in the name of the disciplined worker principle (Collinson et al., 1998), because they value these changes namely in terms of work reorganisation. Indeed, translators accepted to be closely monitored, because it allowed more transparency in the work process, even if the system was criticized by some. Moreover, they valued the monitoring of the translated pages per day for non-professional reasons (the ability to work at home), what contributed to enhance the ‘disciplined worker’ thesis.

In general, the re-organisation of control modes we observed may be interpreted in the sense of intensification. First of all, administrative and technocratic controls are reinforced, namely through the use of ICTs. In addition, we identify two others forms of control that play a major role in the despatialised working situations, and are not enough taken into account: self discipline, exercised by employees themselves, and social control, exercised by peers (which may be observed in the second case we briefly presented and where telework has been successfully implemented). This answers our first question regarding the nature of the re-organisation of control and needs further details since it deals directly with identity-related issues.

Another major finding of the empirical case presented here consists in the insufficiency of the local regulations which took place at the translations service level. Management practices were, indeed, deeply modified but telework did not develop. These local regulations –that introduced performance based management, non-presence and non-time related control– clashed with the rules of the game, i.e. the general bureaucratic principles that are, partly, internalised. So, these new and accepted norms of control, linked to telework practice, appeared *dissonant* to the general bureaucratic principles and this may explain why telework was abandoned. To this extent, the challenge addressed to management consists in developing coherence for making sense to the telework project. Telework then fails because it introduced control principles that are in conflict with the *convention* that prevailed (Gomez and Jones, 2000; Taskin, 2007) and the internalised and collective norms that individuals shared within this bureaucratic structure. This is the second main contribution of this paper.

Even if it was not the purpose of this paper, this research illustrates that the bureaucratic model still exists and that its objective principles are in fact reinforced through new tools (of control) and discourses (on trust). As explained by Pulignano and Stewart (2006), and despite a commonly shared assumption presenting the shift from bureaucratic structures to the post-

modern organisation as ineluctable, the bureaucratic model still prevails. The objective principles and the formalisation of such bureaucratic structure and practices also explains the intensification of control (in order to reproduce visibility and presence) as well as the extent to which individuals strongly internalise corporate values and collective norms.

Whether telework seems likely to develop in flatter structures and only for key workers (Clear and Dickson, 2005), the balance between costs and benefits of telework does not only rely on contingency factors. What is also at stake is the capacity and the willingness of management to innovate, to re-regulate work. The conflict of rules we identified could be challenged by modifying the existing routines. Actually, telework is part of other changes while constituting a change itself. It contributes to broader transformations that recast the work process, the structures but also the body of shared values. That is also why it is valued for escaping a changing working environment.

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