

TRAVAIL HYBRIDE : PROPOSITION DE CONCEPTUALISATION HYBRID WORK: A CONCEPTUALIZATION-ORIENTED REVIEW

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Objectif de la recherche : Définir le concept de travail hybride, au moyen d'une revue de la littérature intégrative permettant un travail de conceptualisation.

Conception/méthodologie/approche : En suivant la démarche de conceptualisation issue d'une revue de littérature intégrative telle que décrite par Podsakoff et al. (2016), nous (a) identifions les différents attributs du travail hybride à partir de la littérature existante ; (b) organisons et catégorisons ces attributs ; (c) développons une définition préliminaire ; (d) formulons une définition plus précise.

Résultats : Le travail hybride est caractérisé par cinq attributs (de multiples lieux de travail, le recours aux technologies de l'information et de la communication (TIC), la nature des activités de travail, la temporalité du travail, la flexibilité). Le travail hybride désigne la combinaison de différents espaces-temps pour réaliser un travail, en fonction de la nature des activités à réaliser et en ayant recours aux TIC.

Limites et implications de la recherche : Une limite méthodologique de la recherche tient au caractère contextuel du travail hybride qui est peu pris en considération dans un travail de conceptualisation qui impose une montée en généralités. Une implication de ce travail réside dans sa portée scientifique puisqu'elle permet de définir un concept émergent mais souvent confondu avec des concepts proches tels que le télétravail.

Implications pratiques : Cette contribution est motivée par le manque de conceptualisation du travail hybride, qui reste un mode d'organisation du travail difficile à démêler du télétravail ou du travail flexible. La proposition d'une définition soutenue par la littérature scientifique actuelle pourra être utile aux chercheurs ainsi qu'aux professionnels soucieux d'étudier, de comprendre et de mettre en œuvre le travail hybride.

Originalité/valeur : Cet article est, à notre connaissance, le premier à utiliser une revue de littérature intégrative pour discuter les définitions existantes du travail hybride—et à ne considérer que les publications propres au travail hybride. Ce faisant, l'article identifie les caractéristiques spécifiques du travail hybride et les organise de manière à proposer une définition cohérente et la plus robuste possible.

Mots-clés : Travail hybride, télétravail, conceptualisation, hybridité, revue de littérature intégrative.

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RÉSUMÉ

(FR)

En suivant la démarche de conceptualisation issue d'une revue de littérature intégrative telle que décrite par Podsakoff et al. (2016), nous (a) identifions les différents attributs du travail hybride à partir de la littérature existante ; (b) organisons et catégorisons ces attributs ; (c) développons une définition préliminaire ; (d) formulons une définition plus précise. Le travail hybride est caractérisé par cinq attributs (de multiples lieux de travail, le recours aux technologies de l'information et de la communication (TIC), la nature des activités de travail, la temporalité du travail, la flexibilité). La distribution des espaces et des temps de travail en fonction des activités constitue une spécificité du concept de travail hybride. Il peut, dès lors, être défini comme suit : le travail hybride désigne la combinaison de différents temps et lieux pour réaliser un travail, en fonction de la nature des activités à réaliser et en ayant recours aux TIC.

(EN)

By following the four conceptualization steps described by (Podsakoff et al., 2016), We undertook an integrative literature review to (a) identify the different attributes of hybrid work; (b) organize and categorize these attributes; (c) develop a preliminary definition; (d) formulate a precise definition. Hybrid work is characterized by four attributes (multiple work locations, use of information and communication technologies (ICT), the nature of work activities, work temporality, flexibility). The distinction of work time and workspaces based on work activities is a conceptual specificity of hybrid work. As such, hybrid work can be defined as: an activity-based combination of different work times and spaces enabled by the use of ICTs.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the late 1990s, it was commonplace to say that there were more studies on telework than there were teleworkers...and that there was no agreed definition of telework (see e.g., Baruch, 2000; Qvortrup, 1998; Martínez-Sánchez et al., 2007; Sullivan, 2003). Nothing could be further from the truth. It is commonly accepted in the scientific community that telework refers to the exercise of a professional activity, in part, at a distance and using information and communication technologies (Felstead et al., 2005; Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Until recently, telework and its typologies (home-based, mobile, telecentre, alternate, regular, occasional, etc.) have been characterised by their location, frequency and use of technology (see e.g., ECaTT, 2000; Taskin, 2003). Over the years, telework and its modalities have been the subject of a continuous conceptualization process. This work should not be confused with the abundant research led on the many effects of teleworking on outcomes like job satisfaction, performance, commitment, well-being, etc. (see e.g., Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden et al., 2008). This performative and descriptive research often eluded the question of how to conceptualize telework, so much so that the question of 'what telework are we talking about' became a common one at scientific conferences and practitioners' forums. Today, the same observation can be made about hybrid work.

Since the COVID-19 crisis, there was an increase of interest in hybrid work (Carrasco-Garrido et al., 2023). After the mandatory lockdowns, both employers and employees saw a potential in a working arrangement that might allow ‘the best of both worlds’. A growing number of studies have been published on the subject, but no serious attempt has been made to conceptualize it. As a result, most works referring to hybrid work (or hybrid telework) refer to and rely on studies of telework or new ways of working, instilling the feeling that these terms are interchangeable (see e.g., Mosteiro-Romero et al., 2023; Klaser et al., 2023; Kemell & Saarikallio, 2023). However, the context in which we are now talking about hybrid working is clearly different from that in which the concept of teleworking took root: the number of teleworkers has grown considerably over the last decade, the configuration of workspaces has changed, the relationship to work has been transformed and the regulation of telework has evolved in many countries and organisations. Hybrid working seems therefore referring to a broader organisational and individual reality than that of a strict combination of workspaces, including management methods. But does it really?

This is what this article intends to establish through an integrative literature review of the notion of hybrid work. After having briefly considered what the notion of hybridity means in general, and what it can specifically mean, we present the 56 references collected and propose a classification of their content and characterization of hybrid work. This helps us to compare them to existing and well-established close concepts (like telework, mobile work, virtual work, flex-work) and to formulate a definition of hybrid work. This consists in the main contribution of this article.

The paper is structured as follows. In a first section, we show the vagueness that currently characterizes the use of the notion of hybrid work, and we thus demonstrate the necessity of the conceptualization work we are tackling here. We characterize the necessary guidelines for such conceptualisation work. Then, we detail the method followed to carry out the integrative literature review which allows us to conceptualize the notion of hybrid work. The classification of sources and characteristics associated with hybrid work, is presented. At the end of this work, we formulate a definition of hybrid work, which we then discuss with regard to elements from recent scientific and professional literature.

2. STATEMENT

According to Stross (1999), the word hybrid finds its origins in Latin *hibrida*, where it was used to refer to the progeny resulting from the breeding of a wild board and a domesticated sow. Brah & Coombes (2000) and Guignery et al. (2011) trace the origins of hybridity to the result of the crossing of two distinct plants. Regardless, while the use of the term hybrid seems to have originated in biology/botany, it would soon set of to become a widely used word. Though, hybrids where not always viewed under a positive light and episodes such as the use of the word in racist discourses by colonial powers (Guignery et al., 2011) did not help its case. In contemporary times, one is hard pressed to find a field in which it is absent. The most popular examples can be given from the automotive industry where hybrid vehicles refer to a mix of both an internal combustion engine and an electric engine (Singh et al., 2019), or from the field of defence where hybrid warfare refers to a “*combination of features in warfighting that were not as strategically prevalent in previous wars*” (Mumford & Carlucci, 2023, p. 194). Though example do not stop there, and the hybrid reference can be encountered in the pharmaceutical industry (Hybrid medicines, see Lecler et al., 2021), in Arts (Hybrid artforms, see Levinson, 1984), or in education (hybrid learning, see Raes et al., 2019) to cite a few. Closer to our field of study, hybrids in social sciences refer to the process where separate social practices or structures mix and result in new ones (Garcia-Canclini, 2021), while in organizational studies, hybrids are the intermediates between two or more distinct organizational structures (Minzberg,

1984). Although this term has become commonplace in many languages, what does it really mean in the context of work, organization and HRM studies? For some it is evidence, for others, it is less so evident. For Young (1995) hybrid is in itself a hybrid concept, and for Mintzberg (1984), it is the ‘grey between the black and white’, and while some praise it, others warn of its results (Guignery et al., 2011).

When applied to work, hybridity seems to wear multiple masks. Indeed, in the scientific literature, hybrid work is often used with little to no explanation attached to it. As if it were an axiom that should be obvious, self-explanatory and beyond any necessary explanation. While it often refers to some sort of working in and away from the office, precisions that could cement it as a solid concept remain elusive. Consequently, hybrid work lacks (a clear) definition in the literature—leading some to refer to ‘hybrid telework’ (Garrasco-Garrido et al., 2023), ‘hybrid workplace or workspace’ (Petani & Mengis, 2021; Halford, 2005) and others to depict hybrid work as a mean to supplement employees’ revenues (Bögenhold & Klinglmair, 2017; Kristiansen et al., 2023; He & Goh, 2022) adding some confusion.

This lack of precision is not without danger. Indeed, a large number of studies referring to hybrid working since 2020 are based on research on telework, remote work or flexwork published between 1990 and 2020. Can we confuse these notions with the realities behind them? What are these realities, and are they different? How can we capture them in a concept that will provide a basis for producing and accumulating new knowledge about a new object for the social sciences? Our intuition lies in the fact that hybrid work fits with the context of highly individualised work organisation that has become more widespread since the health crisis and that, if we want to capture its characteristics and challenges for work organization and management, we need to consider its specificities, we contend.

By conceptualization, we mean “*the process through which we specify what we mean when we use particular terms in research*” (Babbie, 2010, p. 130). This is important since any attempt at studying a phenomenon passes through building a certain agreement about the meaning behind the concepts at its centre (Babbie, 2010). Concepts designate “*cognitive symbols (or abstract terms) that specify the features, attributes, or characteristics of the phenomenon in the real or phenomenological world that they are meant to represent and that distinguish them from other related phenomena*” (Podsakoff et al. 2016, p.161). As such, concepts are essential for research since they represent the elementary constituents for theory by categorizing and conveying complex phenomena through common language and allowing researchers to communicate (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). Such importance stresses the relevance of approaching concept development carefully and methodically. Indeed, while a good conceptualization would distinguish a concept by identifying its key attributes, a poorly executed conceptualization has repercussions at both the conceptual and operational levels since it either does not properly identify the components of a concept or fail to disentangle them from those of other concepts (Podsakoff et al., 2016).

In the quest to conceptualize hybrid work, we will focus on collecting a representative set of definitions from the existing literature and explore them to identify the established attributes of hybrid work. These attributes will then help to build an understanding about hybrid work and subsequently develop a comprehensive definition of the concept (Podsakoff et al., 2016). The end goal is to provide a conceptualization of hybrid work that is consistent with the existing body of knowledge, easy to differentiate from other close concepts and easily operationalized for the needs of potential future empirical research (Gerring, 2011).

While the concept of hybrid work lacks proper definitions and is entangled with other somehow similar concepts, it remains that a significant body of literature exists. The contribution of this

article is to develop a comprehensive conceptualization of hybrid work by drawing on said literature and going an extra step by undertaking a cross-disciplinary reflection on the concept of hybridity and its implications for the organization of work. In so doing, we pursue what Berslin & Gartell (2023) qualify as ‘prospector’s’ path to a literature review and seek to “*set out a new narratives and conceptualizations*” (p.7). Case in point, a conceptualization of hybrid work ought to bring new paths for future research.

3. METHODS

Conceptualization work implies taking a thorough look at how the existing literature already explains the phenomenon of interest—here, hybrid work (Decarlo, 2018; Podsakoff et al., 2016). Therefore, adopting an integrative literature review as a research method is a suitable means to achieve conceptualization (Elsbach & Knippenberg, 2020). In this section, we introduce the way we compiled the data set made of the references we considered, as well as the way we structured the selection of core characteristics of hybrid work, following the method suggested and experimented by Podsakoff et al. (2016).

3.1. An integrative literature review: Drawing up the data set

Concretely, an “*integrative literature review is a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated*” (Torraco, 2005, p.356). Therefore, an integrative literature review does not stop at exposing a body of literature but rather goes an extra mile by critically analysing and synthesizing its content to create new knowledge (Elsbach & Knippenberg, 2020). In a way, an integrative literature review “*aims to balance both the generative power of the narrative process, while being more systematic in the process of integration of the literature*” (Fan et al., 2022, p. 173). For these reasons, Elsbach & Knippenberg (2020, p. 1277) consider that integrative literature reviews are among the most useful vehicles for advancing knowledge and furthering research in a topic domain. In the case of this article, a look will be taken at the concepts that emerge from the fifteen years since hybrid work was coined, critiquing, and synthesizing the content of the literature to achieve a conceptualization of hybrid work.

To proceed with the literature review, a search using the keywords ‘hybrid work’, ‘hybrid working’, ‘hybrid workplace’ and ‘hybrid workspace’ was undertaken in the ‘Discovery’ database tool on the 5th of January 2024. The search was limited to journal articles that have one of the keywords as part of their titles and yielded a total of 122 results. After eliminating duplicates, a preliminary reading of each abstract was undertaken to identify which sources fit our topic (hybrid work as an alternative work arrangement) and resulted in keeping 44 publications for the literature review. To avoid missing on some relevant sources in the field of management studies, another search (on the same date) using the same keywords was undertaken in the ‘Scopus’ abstract and citation database, with a focus on the fields of ‘business, management and accounting’. This yielded a total of 76 results. After applying the same selection criteria of eliminating duplicates and publications that are out of our topic, 7 additional sources were identified. While the aforementioned sources constitute the main data set used in our conceptualization work, we also considered five additional papers due to their number of citations in the academic articles collected so far. All the publications identified and reviewed can be found in Appendix 1.

The authors acknowledge that this is not the first literature review that targeted hybrid work. Indeed, Garrasco-Garrido et al. (2023) proceeded to a systematic literature review about ‘hybrid telework’. Though, our article differs from the former in both the aim, which in our case is to conceptualize hybrid work, and the method, which in our case is an integrative rather than

systematic review. Additionally, in their article, Garrasco-Garrido et al. (2023) explores ‘hybrid telework’ which further support our observation about the porosity of the boundaries between close concepts.

3.2. Analyzing data

In order to find common characteristics to hybrid work amongst the 56 selected references, we followed the four stages identified by Podsakoff et al. (2016) for developing an exemplary conceptualization. Concretely, the identified literature was analysed in a way to establish and organize the attributes of hybrid work. Then we worked to characterize the category of the attributes, in considering the convergence of the sources used: did all the 56 articles we considered point to these attributes? Some appear shared (flexibility and temporal distribution), others may be considered as necessary but not sufficient (multiple locations and the use of ICTs), and activity-based appears sufficient but not necessary. It means that, amongst the 56 references we analysed, multiple work locations, the use of ICTs and the activity-based distribution are attributes that jointly become sufficient to characterize hybrid work. This categorization within the literature on hybrid work (4.1.) has not to be confounded with the comparison we orchestrated between close concepts (4.2.). Attributes have been compared to those of other work arrangements in order to establish which are necessary, sufficient or shared characteristics for the concept of hybrid work. What follows, is the development of a preliminary understanding of hybrid work. Finally, we will work to refine our definition of hybrid work to avoid any ambiguity or uncertainty (Podsakoff et al., 2016).

4. RESULTS

In this section, we first present and discuss the key attributes associated to hybrid work. Then, we confront these attributes to close concepts (telework, flexwork, distributed workplace, remote work) in order to assess the specificity of our characterization. This allows us to propose a preliminary definition of hybrid work before refining it in the discussion section.

4.1. Hybrid work attributes

In the following section, the most common characteristics of hybrid work are identified and explained. These are (1) ICT use (useful to the completion of hybrid work); (2) multiple physical work locations (hybrid work implies working from multiple workplaces); (3) flexibility (hybrid work is associated with the ability, for the employees, to balance work and private duties and to make arrangements); (4) activity-based (the choice of working hybrid is dependant of the nature of the tasks to be performed); and (5) time distribution (hybrid work combines different workplaces for a specific and often limited or constrained period of time).

Key Attribute	Sample definition	Authors
Information and communication technologies (ICT) use	“In times of remote or hybrid work, employees rely heavily on digital collaboration technologies to seek or provide professional advice, communicate task-related information, and manage conflicts” (Wu et al., 2023, p. 1)	Ainurrofiq & Amir (2023); Aksamija & Milosevic (2023); Albu (2022); Appel-Meulenbroek et al. (2023); Aprilina & Martdiantry (2023); Benedic (2023); Castañeda et al. (2022); Chaudhury & Deng (2022); Choudhury et al. (2022); Deschênes (2023); Dimitru (2023); Eurofound (2023); Gilson et al. (2022); Halford (2005); Harunavamwe & Kanengoni (2023); Jullien & Taskin (2022); Khatri et al. (2023); Klaser et al. (2023); Keppler & Leonardi (2023); Mishra &

		Bharti (2023); Nakash & Bouhnik (2023); Naqshbandi et al. (2023); Nugroho & Hermawan (2022); Paul & Perwez (2023); Peprah (2023); Petani & Mengis (2023); Radonić et al. (2021); Roy (2022); Sailer et al. (2023); Sampat et al. (2022); Singh & Sant (2023); Stasiła-Sieradzka et al. (2023); Suravi (2023); Tahsiri (2023); Teng-Calleja et al. (2023); Trevor & Holweg (2023); Vartiainen & Hyrkkänen (2010); Verma et al. (2022); Vesala (2023); Wheatley et al. (2023); Wu et al. (2023); Yadav et al. (2023); Zomerdijk et al. (2023).
Multiple work locations	“Hybrid workspaces are not simply relocated or dislocated, but multiply located” (Halford, 2005, p. 22)	Ainurrofiq & Amir (2023); Aksamija & Milosevic (2023); Albu (2022); Appel-Meulenbroek et al. (2023); Aprilina & Martdiantry (2023); Aroles et al. (2019); Benedic (2023); Bloom et al. (2022); Castañeda et al. (2022); Choudhury et al. (2022); Deschênes (2023); Dimitru (2023); Eurofound (2023); Fan & Moen (2023); Gilson et al. (2022); Halford (2005); Harunavamwe & Kanengoni (2023); Hislop & Axtell (2007); Jullien & Taskin (2022); Kemell & Saarikallio (2023); Keppler & Leonardi (2023); Khatri et al. (2023); Klaser et al. (2023); Mishra & Bharti (2023); Nakash & Bouhnik (2023); Naqshbandi et al. (2023); Nurul Iman et al. (2023); Oygur et al. (2022); Paul & Perwez (2023); Peprah (2023); Perrin et al. (2023); Petani & Mengis (2023); Putri et al. (2023); Roy (2022); Sailer et al. (2023); Sampat et al. (2022); Singh & Sant (2023); Skountridaki et al. (2023); Stasiła-Sieradzka et al. (2023); Suravi (2023); Teng-Calleja et al. (2023); Trevor & Holweg (2023); Vartiainen & Hyrkkänen (2010); Verma et al. (2022); Vesala (2023); Wheatley et al. (2023); Wu et al. (2023); Zomerdijk et al. (2023).

Flexibility	“Hybrid work (...) can be characterized as a type of ‘flexible work’ as opposed to permanents, fixed worked agreements” (Eurofound, 2022, p. 7)	Ainurrofiq & Amir (2023); Aksamija & Milosevic (2023); Aprilina & Martdiantry (2023); Benedic (2023); Bloom et al (2022); Castañeda et al. (2022); Choudhury & Deng (2022); Choudhrury et al. (2022); Deschênes (2023); Dimitru (2023); Eurofound (2023); Gilson et al. (2022); Kemell & Saarikallio (2023); Klaser et al. (2023); Mishra & Bharti (2023); Nakash & Bouhnik (2023); Naqshbandi et al. (2023); Nurul Iman et al. (2023); Paul & Perwez (2023); Peprah (2023); Radonic et al. (2021); Sampat et al. (2022); Singh & Sant (2023); Skountridaki et al. (2023); Stasiła-Sieradzka et al. (2023); Suravi (2023); Teng-Calleja et al. (2023); Trevor & Holweg (2023); Verma et al. (2022); Wheatley et al. (2023); Wu et al. (2023).
Activity based	“The idea is to break an employee’s working week into tasks, distinguishing between tasks that are typically best done in person (...) and those that can be best done individually” (Bloom et al. 2022, p. 2)	Ainurrofiq & Amir (2023); Aksamija & Milosevic (2023); Albu (2022); Appel-Meulenbroek et al. (2023); Bloom et al (2022); Choudhury et al. (2022); Eurofound (2023); Halford (2005); Jullien & Taskin (2022); Kemell & Saarikallio (2023); Klaser et al. (2023); Oygur et al. (2022); Peprah (2023); Sailer et al. (2023); Trevor & Holweg (2023); Verma et al. (2022).
Time distribution	“Hybrid work, where employees spend some of their work days in the physical office and the rest of their work days working remotely” (Choudhury et al., 2022, p. 1)	Ainurrofiq & Amir (2023); Aksamija & Milosevic (2023); Albu (2022); Benedic (2023); Bloom et al (2022); Choudhury et al. (2022); Dimitru (2023); Eurofound (2023); Fan & Moen (2023); Sailer et al. (2023); Sampat et al. (2022); Stasiła-Sieradzka et al. (2023); Teng-Calleja et al. (2023); Trevor & Holweg (2023); Verma et al. (2022); Wheatley (2023); Wu et al. (2023).

Table 1 – Identifying the attributes of hybrid work

4.1.1. Information and Communication Technologies use

The development in ICTs was shown to go hand in hand with a parallel development in both the how(s) and the where(s) of work (see e.g., Vatiainen & Hyrkkänen, 2010 or Petani & Mengis, 2023). In that sense, ICTs were considered as enabling work to be accessible from increasingly more locations (Perrin et al., 2023). Even the ways of working were considered as evolving with the development of ICTs (Vatiainen & Hyrkkänen, 2010). This puts ICTs at a central spot when considering hybrid work. Not only are technologies a facilitator of hybrid work, but they can be considered as a necessary condition without which hybrid work cannot exist, as stated by Wu et al. (2023, p.1) : “hybrid employees rely heavily on digital collaboration technologies to communicate and share information” in a context where “*the entire*

organization is making use of digital technologies for communications” (Keppler & Leonardi, 2023, p. 2).

This importance of ICTs and digital technologies is a recurrent theme within the hybrid work literature, explicitly or implicitly. Yadav et al. (2023) and Teng-Calleja et al. (2023), for example, define hybrid work as a combination between online and offline modes of working, while Roy (2022) refers to hybrid work as mixing in person and virtual work settings. Halford (2005) did already mention the important role of ICTs in enabling the multiplicity of work locations as the cyberspace becomes a mediator of work at the office and at home. What is interesting though, is that in contrast to a lot of authors that came after, Halford (2005) uses the vocabulary ‘cyberspace’ and does not seem to consider ICTs merely as a tool but rather a gateway to another workspace of sorts. Statements such as: *“spatial hybridity changes the nature of work, organization and management in domestic space, in cyberspace and in organizational space”* (Halford, 2005, p. 19) support that fact. This means that in parallel to the organizational, home and third places, the cyberspace is a constituent of what the author calls hybrid workspaces. The hybrid is not just referring to the combination of multiple workspaces, but each of these workspaces is in and of itself a digital/physical hybrid (Petani & Mengis, 2021). In that sense, the authors reflect what was said before by aiming to *“extend the understanding of hybrid workspaces and argue that technology is not just a means for such new ways of working, but that it further increases the multiple locatedness of workspaces, as work is simultaneously – though to different degrees- located both virtually and physically”*, which has important implications on how employees *“affectively experience the multiple locatedness of hybrid spaces, including how boundaries run between digital and physical IT-enabled spaces”* (Petani & Mengis, 2023 p. 1531). What is observed here is that ICTs can be considered as both enablers of hybrid work and (virtual) workspaces and socio-materially practiced and lived work environments by employees.

4.1.2. Multiple work locations

A dimension that is omnipresent in almost each definition of hybrid work is that of space—more precisely, working from at least two work locations (e.g., Perrin et al., 2023; Hislop & Axtell, 2007; Aroles et al., 2019). While the home and organizational offices are always part of this multitude of work locations, other third locations exist. This is what can be referred to as ‘spatial hybridity’ (Halford, 2005), where work is managed and organized across multiple spaces (Eurofound, 2023).

According to Halford (2005, p. 22) who is credited as the founding figure of hybrid work, hybrid workspaces are *“not simply relocated or dislocated, but multiply located”*. This definition points to the fact that any consideration of hybrid work, should take a holistic and integrative approach that looks at the combination of spaces in which work takes place rather than each space individually (Halford, 2005). In that sense, there are no more central work locations but all of them are equally important. While the author certainly acknowledges certain implication of what she calls ‘spatial hybridity’ (e.g., activity-based locations and the temporality of work), this spatial hybridity is only limited to work from home and work from the office—like in many other articles (see Apple-Meulenbroek et al., 2022; Nakash & Bouhnik, 2023; Aprilina & Martdianty, 2023; Trevor & Holweg, 2023; Teng-Calleja et al., 2023; Gilson et al., 2022; Mishra & Bharti, 2023; Khatri et al., 2023; Klaser et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2023). Others, such as Bloom et al. (2022) provided a more specific term for employees who work solely between their home and the office by calling it ‘hybrid working from home’.

This scope was later widened by Hislop & Axtell (2007) who claimed that limiting hybrid work to just two locations misses out on considering other categories of workers like, e.g., mobile

teleworkers who can work in locations in between home and the office. Third places (train stations, airports, pubs, cafés...) then became considered as other places associated to working hybrid, extending Halford's (2005) spatial hybridity, embodied in work locations beyond the home and the office. In the same vein, Eurofound (2023, p.18), clarifies that "*a physical space turns into a workplace when it is used for work and is a physical setting for work. The availability of workplaces in different locations and the opportunity to choose which workplace to use are powerful enablers of hybrid work*". This definition highlights the multiplicity of physical workplaces within a hybrid model and avoids any limitation that would confine it to home and the traditional office. According to some authors, third places include partners' or customers' offices, public spaces, public transports, satellite offices, or home (Vartiainen & Hyrkkänen, 2010; Perrin et al., 2023).

Additionally, physical workplaces are expected to exist as long as work is physically done within their premises, but Petani & Mengis (2023) argue that advances in digitalization enables the continuous pluralization of the locations where work takes place in what they refer to as IT enabled workspaces.

4.1.3. Flexibility

Flexibility is another attribute frequently associated to hybrid work in the literature we investigated. According to Suravi (2023), it is a key element for hybrid work. Since it becomes possible to work from different locations, the questions of what role and to what extent do employees have control over their work distribution arises. To the point that numerous sources consider hybrid work as a form of flexible work arrangements (e.g., Eurofound, 2022; Nakash & Bouhnik, 2023; Skountridaki et al., 2023; Wheatley et al., 2023).

As stated by Pepurah (2023), an employee who works in a hybrid working model has a flexibility to work from anywhere during the time allocated for remote work. Similarly, Bloom et al. (2022) argue that flexibility lies in the fact employees can organize their time to fit activities other than work during the remote working time (e.g. picking kids from school or doctor appointments). In the same vein, Ainurrofiq & Amir (2023) consider the organizational division of work between office and remote work as a sign of flexibility *per se*.

Work flexibility traditionally refers to "*the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks*" (Hill et al. 2008, p. 157). This means that, in a hybrid working context, flexibility can be temporal, in a sense that employees have more discretion in choosing when they will work (Klaser et al., 2023), or spatial, in a sense that employees have more discretion in choosing from where they will work (Klaser et al., 2023)—as stated by authors referring to the anywhere-anytime allowed by hybrid work (see e.g. Naqshbandi et al., 2023). But flexibility means something more than identifying different places and times to perform tasks: it implies the ability to arrange times and spaces regarding work and private requirements—what leads Nurul Iman et al. (2023) and Verma et al. (2022) to position workspace flexibility and work-time flexibility under the hybrid work umbrella. Flexibility has not to be confound with individual freedom, as highlighted by Wheatley et al. (2023) who argue that while some organizations may choose to offer 'flexibility without constraints' others may as well put certain boundaries on it. Indeed, flexibility circulates within a spectrum depending on the "*level and priority of flexibility and discretion regarding both type and time*" (Rowley, 2022, p.418). By that, is meant that in terms of flexibility, hybrid work is dependent on the context and can change over time (Rowley, 2022).

Overall, within the literature, flexibility can be found as a by-product of hybrid work (e.g., Verma et al., 2022), a motivator to engage in hybrid work (e.g., Sampat et al., 2022), or a building block of hybrid work (e.g., Naqshbandi et al., 2023). As for Wheatley et al. (2023),

they go even further by considering that hybrid work is a type of ‘flexible work’. According to Klaser et al. (2023), flexibility can either be spatial, temporal, or contractual. As for Eurofound (2023) flexibility can be viewed in terms of time, locations, organization, and work relations, all of which can be at play in hybrid work. What remains is to find a balance in the given scope and degree of flexibility that is needed for setting up a customized hybrid work model (Choudhry et al., 2022).

4.1.4. Activity-based distribution

One way to use the hybrid work enabled spatial / temporal flexibility is to allocate the times and locations based on the tasks or activities to be performed. Jullien & Taskin (2022) highlighted that hybrid work is a model of work organization that is structured around the activities to be realized. So, where and when to work can be dependent on the activities that are expected to be fulfilled (Aksajima & Milosevic, 2023; Choudhury et al. , 2022; Halford, 2005; Jullien & Taskin, 2022; Apple-Meulenbroek et al., 2022; Bloom et al., 2022), what makes activity-based distribution a key attribute of hybrid work.

According to Halford (2005), hybrid work has led to a division of work tasks between tasks that are routinized (and require an isolated environment ripe for concentrations, and do not necessitate an interaction with colleagues) and tasks that are more complicated (and require active communication and support from colleagues and supervisors). Rather than focusing on the routinized or complicated nature of tasks, Bloom et al., (2022) and Aksamija & Milosevic (2023) consider that there are tasks that require social interactions and those that are more individual in nature. Ultimately, according to Apple-Meulenbroek et al. (2022), the choice of where to work depends on the appreciation by employees’ about where they would feel more comfortable and productive while pursuing either task.

Besides the individual’s choice in distributing their tasks between different suitable locations, organizations as well can chose to identify certain tasks for which they want employees to be present at the office (Trevor & Howleg, 2023). According to Bloom et al., (2022, p.2), the idea behind hybrid work “*is to break an employee's working week into tasks, distinguishing between tasks that are typically best done in person (...) and those that can be best done individually*”. As an illustration, Trevor & Howleg (2023) identified four types of activities: individual procedural tasks, focused creative tasks, coordinated group tasks, and collaborative creative tasks—where it becomes harder to perform the last tasks than the first ones remotely. Furthermore, according to Sailer et al. (2023, p.656), “*companies should identify key jobs and tasks, determine what are the drivers of productivity and performance for each, and think about the arrangements that would serve them best*”. The authors further highlighting that both organizations and employees should identify together tasks that play a key factor to design a hybrid work model.

4.1.5. Time distribution

Time distribution is a key attribute of hybrid work, while it often remains implicit, as a consequence of the mobilization of the four previous attributes we identified. In principle, since hybrid work entails at least a certain proportion of work time to be spent at the office (Wu et al., 2023; Dimitriu, 2023), it can exist in multiple configurations and tough certain organizations can choose to offer extended options for remote work, others prefer to put certain temporal boundaries to structure work outside the office by establishing mandatory days at the office (Wheatley et al., 2023). Some definitions of hybrid work focus on this temporal distribution of work between different locations (e.g., Gilson et al., 2023). Others go a step further by quantifying the amount of time that should be spent at home (e.g., 2-3 days a week for Bloom et al., 2022) or at the office (e.g., 60% of the working time, according to Ainurrofiq & Amir,

2023), and the ideal balance, in time, between home and the office (e.g., fifty-fifty for Fan & Moen, 2023, one third to half of the total working time at home in Choudhry et al. (2022) study).

The importance of identifying the share of work done in and out of the office was highlighted even further by Stasiła-Sieradzka et al. (2023), who defined hybrid work through the multiple possible divisions of work that can either provide the freedom for employees to choose when they work remotely, divide the working week into a proportion of days for remote work, organize remote work by shifts, or even a week-in / week-out remote work configuration. Additionally, Aksamija & Milosevic (2023) reported three possible settings of hybrid work depending on the percentage of time spent working remotely and in the office. These settings range from a higher percentage of remote work, a more or less equal percentage of remote and presential work, and a higher percentage of office work.

Time distribution of work between different locations is thus an important attribute of hybrid work. Verma et al. (2022, p. 21) consider that *“a well-prepared work schedule will furnish optimal arrangements of the number of days working from home and corporate offices”*. Therefore, the organization of hybrid work happens in respect to certain guidelines, not least of which is the formal agreement about the setting that shall be adopted (Sampat et al., 2022; Dimitru, 2023; Putri et al., 2023), among which developing a hybrid work schedule seems important since *“in a hybrid model, it is necessary to harmonize several individuals working separately, at their homes with teams and/or groups working on-site, with different working programmes, and different responsibilities”* (Albu, 2022, p. 62).

In conclusion, we observe the more we combine the attributes of hybrid work, the more they appear entangled. Time distribution is closely related to the flexibility associated with hybrid work practice and that leads to select spatial and temporal areas that are the most suitable in regard of the activities to be performed, which in turn draws on the use of ICTs to stay connected anytime, anywhere. However, hybrid work also encompasses an organizational setting: this is not an individual arrangement chosen and designed by workers, it is also part of organizational and managerial policies and regulations. To some extent, hybrid work can be seen as the result of the negotiation of its attributes in organizations. Therefore, its attributes will be associated to specific regulations, e.g. work schedule, dysconnectivity principles, availability periods, regular on-site meetings, etc.

4.2. Confrontation with close concepts

When looking into existing hybrid work definitions, one is confronted by the entanglement with other work arrangements. Peprah (2023) argues that, although ‘hybrid workplace’ is a relatively new term, it is but a mere metamorphosis of other previously known terms such as remote, flexible, or telework. In most of the publications on ‘hybrid work’ we have considered, authors drew on the literature on telework to present outcomes related to hybrid work. It is a matter of fact that hybrid work can be represented as an amalgamation of other flexible working arrangements, like telework, flexwork, distributed workplace or remote work. Examples of this view are found in Klaser et al. (2023) who considered that hybrid work is a combination of characteristics of remote work, flexible work, agile work and smart work, all of which represent the same phenomena from different perspectives, or Naqshbandi et al. (2023), who view hybrid work as the use of flexible work and telework.

Our conceptualisation-oriented review aims to clarify this by giving hybrid work a specific definition. But are the attributes identified earlier really specific to hybrid work or are they shared by these other related concepts? This is what we are going to analyse in this section.

This brings us to the second step of conceptualization that was advanced by Podsakoff et al. (2016), which is determining if the identified key attributes of hybrid work are either necessary, sufficient, or shared. According to the authors, this step has two virtues: shedding light on what the author called the ‘essence’ of the concept or rather the attributes that are at its core; and disentangling the concept of interest from other somewhat similar related concepts (Podsakoff et al., 2016). While clearly relevant, one can argue that such goals are even more important in the case of conceptualizing hybrid work. On the one hand, while the attributes that were identified are commonly reported in the literature (this is illustrated by the large number of references common to the five attributes in Table 1), there is no unanimity. On the other hand, blurred boundaries are observed between different alternative work arrangements and their definitions. To gain in precision, thus, “*Necessary (essential) properties are things that all exemplars of the concept must possess. Sufficient (unique) properties are things that only exemplars of the concept possess*” (Podsakoff et al., 2016, p. 181). As for shared attributes, they are characteristics that are recurrent across multiple flexible working arrangements, and of which at least a certain number must be present to qualify hybrid work as a concept. Following that, comparing the hybrid work attributes with close concepts will allow to formulate a preliminary definition of hybrid work and complete the third step of conceptualization (Podsakoff et al., 2016).

Concretely, to make sense of the different encountered characteristics, Table 2 classifies hybrid work characteristics into necessary, sufficient, or shared attributes, and puts them against the backdrop of certain concepts that were identified as comparable to hybrid work. We identify ‘confusable’ concepts (telework, flex-work, remote work) and ‘comparable’ concepts (distributed work). The former being those concepts that from the literature were observed as having a blurred line with hybrid work, and the latter comes from recent work from the authors, having shown sharing enough characteristics with hybrid work.

Based on the existing literature on these concepts (existing reviews and widely quoted sources : Ajzen & Taskin, 2021; Allen et al., 2013; Athanasiadou & Theriou, 2021; Bailey & Kurland, 2002; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Vartiainen, 2021; Jullien & Taskin, 2022; Lamovšek & Černe, 2023; Largier, 2001; Nayani et al., 2017; Olson, 1983; Roper & Ha Kim, 2007; Shifrin & Michel, 2021; Schäfer et al., 2023; Soga et al., 2022; Taskin & Bridoux, 2010; Taskin et al., 2019; Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992), we can define them as follows:

- **Telework** is defined as work that is performed, in full or in part, from different locations, using information and communication technologies (Nilles, 1997; Perez Perez et al., 2003; Nakrosienie et al., 2019).
- **Flexwork** refers to specific work practices that combine flexibility in time and location such as telework, open space or shared offices (Richardson, 2010; De Menezes and Kelliher, 2011; Richardson and McKenna, 2014; Vilhemson and Thulin, 2016, quoted in Ajzen & Taskin, 2021).
- **Distributed workplace** refers to combining several places of work (home, office, third places) in order to perform work while using ICT to communicate and interact with colleagues or from different organisations (Hislop & Axtell, 2009; Rober & Kim, 2009, quoted in Jullien & Taskin, 2022).
- **Remote work** refers to a working model in which employees can pursue work tasks outside the organization due to the use of technology (Ferrara et al., 2023).

Attributes	Hybrid work	Telework	Flexwork	Distributed workplace	Remote work	Category of attribute
Multiple work locations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	Shared
ICTs	✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓	Shared
Activity based	✓	X	X	✓*	X	Sufficient but not necessary
Time distribution	✓	✓	✓	X	X	Necessary but not sufficient
Flexibility	✓	✓*	✓	X	✓	Necessary but not sufficient

Table 2 - Categorizing the attributes of hybrid work in comparison with close notions (* implicit)

From the above table, we observe there are some attributes that are not unique to hybrid work. Among these attributes, multiple work locations and the use of ICTs are shared with the other close notions we considered. Therefore, to identify hybrid work, other complementary attributes are needed. Time distribution and flexibility are important attributes of hybrid work but it is shared by some other concepts. So, it appears as necessary attributes to characterize hybrid work, but not sufficient (unique). At this stage, four attributes on the five we identified from the literature review are not specific to hybrid work. This may justify the use of telework, flexwork and hybrid work as synonyms. This would certainly be the conclusion of this article if we would not have identified a fifth attribute, which is sufficient (unique) and not shared by other concepts: activity-based distribution. In that sense, it appears that the activity-based distribution of work is one attribute that distinguishes hybrid work from other flexible work arrangements.

5. DEFINING HYBRID WORK

Following Podsakoff et al. (2016), we engaged in a conceptualization-oriented review of hybrid work. Having studied telework for a long time, the emergence and recent popularity of this concept seemed to us to justify such a conceptualization work. In the common sense, hybrid work seems to replace and be confused with the notion of telework. But, in the scientific community, does it cover new specificities that may justify research in that field?

It is true that conceptualizing hybrid work is challenging and “*the basic concepts of ‘hybridity’, ‘hybrid work’, ‘hybrid organizations’ and ‘hybrid workplaces’ are still evolving*” (Eurofound, 2023, p.14). Additionally, according to Teng-Calleja et al. (2023), hybrid work literature is nascent and only saw a rise to prominence during the years following the COVID-19 crisis (Carrasco-Garrido et al., 2023). But, while a lot of sources tend to overlook the subtleties of hybrid work, others provide more in-depth highlights of its specificities. We selected 56 trustworthy sources and analysed them in order to characterize hybrid work, and to define it.

From this integrative review, it emerges that multiple work locations, the use of ICTs, flexibility, time and activity-based distributions are the key attributes of hybrid work. In order to make our conceptualization more robust, we compared hybrid work attributes to close concepts, asking if these attributes that are necessary to qualify hybrid work were shared with other concepts (see Table 2). Let’s imagine that telework was defined the same way as hybrid work, it would have meant hybrid work and telework share the same roots and describe the same phenomenon. Concepts would have been used interchangeably.

But this work led to identify specificities to hybrid work: first, the combination—i.e. the simultaneous presence—of five attributes; second, the discriminatory role played by activity-based distribution in defining hybrid work. In other words, *in addition to hybrid work being an activity-based work model that uses ICTs to enable working at multiple work locations, it needs to incorporate flexibility and a temporal distribution of work*. When proceeding to a refinement of this preliminary definition, we come to the following proposal:

Hybrid work refers to the combination of multiple locations to carry out work, using ICT to perform tasks and interact with others. The nature of the activities to be performed plays an important role in determining the way these working places and times are combined, as well as the search for flexibility, from both individuals and organizations.

Workplaces and times are selected regarding the nature of the activity. This implies that there is room for choosing the appropriate combination of workspaces, depending on contextual factors at the organisational and household level. This suggests that hybrid work is implemented with a flexible purpose.

6. CONCLUSION

Following a rigorous process, this paper generates a conceptual definition of hybrid work that sets it apart from other alternative work arrangements. While a lot of characteristics that were identified are not unique to hybrid work, the activity driven choice of work locations / times is an attribute that is (at least explicitly) unique to hybrid work. When it comes to work organization, this characteristic is not negligible. The focus is not anymore on work locations, information technologies or flexibility but on where work tasks can be best accomplished. This does not negate the importance of other characteristics but rather adds a new factor that puts the emphasis on work. This new focus does not prevent employees from enjoying autonomy or flexibility, neither does it hinder managers in their follow ups. Hybrid work becomes a concertation between the two to account for a combination of work tasks, work environments, employees' personal needs, and managers' requirements. As such hybrid work is likely to be a personalized work organization rather than a structural one.

For professionals, this conceptualization of hybrid work entails new considerations for how to optimize their work practices by having a more comprehensive set of organizational considerations. For researchers, this conceptualization of hybrid work would allow to establish a starting point for future empirical research to investigate the implications of the work arrangement and avoid falling into conceptual ambiguity. Our conceptualization work suffers from some limitations. First, it is deeply rooted in the existing literature we found in early 2024 and using the databases we selected. It could be argued that updating this work would be welcome, while the risk of doing so is to contribute to the instability of the notion. Second, we focused on the arrangement itself, not on hybrid workers. We therefore did not consider existing characterizations of hybrid workers (digital nomads, mobile workers...) as well as consequences of the hybrid work practice for individuals, organizations and Society (productivity, energy demand, well-being...). This would have allowed to characterize hybrid work differently, according to other dimensions. We decided to stay focus on the mere work arrangement in order to differentiate from existing concepts it is confused with.

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APPENDIX 1 – Existing definitions of hybrid work

Authors	Title
Vesala (2023)	Lived rhythms as a ground for togetherness and learning in hybrid workspace
Halford (2005)	Hybrid workspace: re-spatializations of work, organization and management
Petani & Mengis (2023)	Technology and the hybrid workplace: the affective living of IT-enabled space
Oygür et al. (2022)	Hybrid workplace: activity-based office design in a post-pandemic Era
Radonić et al. (2021)	The impact of hybrid workplace models on intangible assets: The case of an emerging country
Suravi (2023)	Training and development in the hybrid workplace
Paul & Perwez (2023)	Influence of quality of work life on psychological capital of organizational leaders using artificial neural networks: a study on learning in hybrid workplace
Tahsiri (2023)	Towards designing for the post digital hybrid workplace
Peprah (2023)	Hybrid workplace: current status, positives, negatives, challenges, and team learning
Naqshbandi et al. (2023)	The future of work: work engagement and job performance in the hybrid workplace
Wu et al. (2023)	Information sharing in a hybrid workplace: understanding the role of ease-of-use perceptions of communication technologies in advice-seeking relationship maintenance
Nugroha & Hermawan (2022)	Strengthening collaboration through perception alignment: hybrid workplace leadership impact on member awareness, understanding, and learning agility
Roy (2022)	COVID-19? Digitalization and hybrid workspaces: a critical inflection point for public sector governance and workforce development
Apple-Meulenbroek et al. (2022)	How to attract employees back to the office? A stated choice study on hybrid working preferences
Banerjee & Gupta (2023)	A mixed-method exploration of effects of technostress on remote / hybrid working professionals
Wheatley et al. (2023)	Navigating choppy waters: flexibility ripple effects in the COVID-19 pandemic and the future of remote and hybrid work
Dimitru (2023)	The new challenges of hybrid working (part office, part home)
Nakash & Bouhnik (2023)	The effects of COVID-19 on information management in remote and hybrid work environments
Aprilina & Martdianty (2023)	The role of hybrid-working in improving employees' satisfaction, perceived productivity, and organizations' capabilities
Zomerdijk et al. (2023)	The influence of hybrid working in the context of agile software development within the Dutch financial sector
Trevor & Holweg (2022)	Managing the new tensions of hybrid work
Ainurrofiq & Amir (2023)	Application of e-culture in a hybrid working model: a case study in the banking industry in Indonesia

Sampat et al. (2022)	An empirical analysis of facilitators and barriers to the hybrid work model: a cross-cultural and multi-theoretical approach
Teng-Calleja et al. (2023)	Examining employee experience of hybrid work: an ecological approach
Gilson et al. (2022)	Postpandemic hybrid work: opportunities and challenges for physical activity and public health
Mosteiro-Romero et al. (2023)	Elastic buildings: calibrated district-scale simulation of occupant-flexible campus operation for hybrid work optimization
Mishra & Bharti (2023)	Exploring the nexus of social support, work-life balance and life satisfaction in hybrid work scenario in learning organizations
Khatri et al. (2023)	Unveiling heterogenous knowledge-oriented leadership and knowledge acquisition based hybrid work agility of knowledge workers
Benedic (2023)	Hybrid work for small businesses: strategies for reaping benefits
Keppler & Leonardi (2023)	Building relational confidence in remote and hybrid work arrangements: novel ways to use digital technologies to foster knowledge sharing
Sailer et al. (2023)	The challenges of hybrid work: an architectural sociology perspective
Kemell & Saarikallio (2023)	Hybrid work practices and strategies in software engineering-emerging software developer experiences
Klaser et al. (2023)	The future of hybrid work in Italy: a survey-based socio-technical-system analysis
Skountridaki et al. (2023)	Missing voices: office space discontent as a driving force in employee hybrid work preferences
Aksamija & Milosevic (2023)	Post-pandemic office spaces: considerations and design strategies for hybrid work environments
Stasiła-Sieradzka et al. (2023)	Not so good hybrid work model? Resource losses and gains since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and job burnout among non-remote, hybrid, and remote employees
Petersen (2023)	Remote and hybrid work options for health science librarians: survey of job postings before and after the COVID-19 pandemic
Castaneda et al. (2022)	Effects of hybrid work model on employee and staff's work productive: a literature review
Lang et al. (2022)	The future of teamwork: facilitating effective team performance in virtual and hybrid work environments in a post-pandemic world
Verma et al. (2023)	The future of work post Covid-19: key perceived HR implications of hybrid workplaces in India
Albu (2022)	Hybrid workplaces – an analysis from ergonomic perspective
Yadav et al. (2023)	High-performance work system and learning orientation in offline, online, and hybrid workplaces: the mediating role of affective commitment
Putri et al. (2023)	The role of human resource risk on employee performance in the hybrid workforce era
Nurul Iman et al. (2023)	Does subjective well-being and perceived organizational can support stratup employees' performance during hybrid workforce era
Deschênes (2023)	Digital literacy, the use of collaborative technologies, and perceived social proximity in a hybrid work environment: Technology as a social binder

Detjen & Webber (2023)	Leading hybrid teams in a transition to the future knowledge workplace
Rigolizzo (2023)	Learning in a hybrid world: new methods for a new workplace
Fan & Moen (2023)	The Future(s) of Work? Disparities Around Changing Job Conditions When Remote/Hybrid or Returning to Working at Work
Singh & Sant (2023)	The Moderating Role of Workplace (Hybrid/ Remote) on Employee Engagement and Employee Turnover Intention
Harunavamwe & Kanengoni (2023)	Hybrid and virtual work settings; the interaction between technostress, perceived organisational support, work-family conflict and the impact on work engagement
Mikkelsen et al. (2023)	Supervisor Communication Competence and Employee Outcomes: Predictive Effects in Remote, Hybrid, and In-Person Workplaces
Chaudhury & Deng (2022)	Does hybrid working promote collaboration and creativity? An empirical study
Jullien & Taskin (2022)	La reconfiguration des liens sociaux nécessaires au partage de connaissances en contexte de travail hybride