

Teleworking: International Perspectives

From Telecommuting to the Virtual Organisation

edited by Paul J. Jackson and Jos M. van der Wielen
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Teleworking has long been proclaimed as a revolution in working practices for the 21st century. However, critical discussion of this subject has often failed to address the rapidly changing contexts of the globalisation of markets and the proliferation of new technologies. This book is an up-to-date, groundbreaking and comprehensive assessment of teleworking.

Paul Jackson and Jos van der Wielen are researchers and lecturers with deep experience of investigating and analysing telework. In this book they have assembled and edited contributions by some 20 experts from a wide range of disciplines to produce the most comprehensive perspective on the subject available to date. Each chapter has a complete set of references, making this a valuable start point for new research, as well as an important record of the state of the art in telework-related studies at the end of the twentieth century.

Teleworking: International Perspectives is an up-to-date, groundbreaking and comprehensive assessment of teleworking. It includes:

- multidisciplinary contributions drawing on sociology, management science, economics, philosophy and information technology
- analysis of postmodern and post-industrial contexts
- a selection of empirical studies from across the world
- accounts of different modes of teleworking, from homeworking to centre-based working
- examination of the links between teleworking and the virtual organisation

Wide-ranging, detailed and original, this book is a valuable introduction to teleworking and an important contribution to the debate on the future of work and organisation.

To achieve a more thorough understanding of the complex nature of the telework

phenomenon, we must build bridges with adjacent values – on restructuring, re-engineering, business networking – as well as with relevant disciplines, such as social geography, economics, IT-sciences and work psychology. The **introductory Chapter** provides a look at the main teleworking approaches, actors and agendas. Starting with a discussion of the three dominant approaches of the subject, the paper examines the complexity in teleworking caused by the array of actors involved in research and practice. This chapter then discusses the key social and organisational issues involved in teleworking developments, before concluding with a look at the emerging agendas that need to be solved.

The chapters that form **Part One** have two main aims. First, they address some of the conceptual problems involved, taking into account the conceptual ambiguity in telework discussions and the links made between telework and virtual work. Second, the authors examine the framework that provide a theorising of the aspects related to the integration of the teleworking and virtual working within the economic, technological and social change.

In **Chapter 2**, Lars Qvortrup identifies three life forms – self-employed, wage earner and career-oriented person – which are characterised by the way work and leisure time are related, and involve different attitudes towards work and family life.

In **Chapter 3**, Constance Perin analyses the social and cultural implications of work schedules, flexibility and project work, and contrasts the different time-space scheduling demands of industrial and modern production systems.

Paul McGrath and Maeve Houlihan in **Chapter 4** identify the macro-level changes that characterise the new organisational structures and form of economic activity that are viewed as postmodern. They conclude that telework impacts on organisational arrangements are: the increasing of the centralisation and control; the

decentralisation and empowerment; the promotion of the micro-enterprise.

In **Chapter 5** Martin Harris notes that the development of the virtual organisation has, in common with other related social and organisational transformations, generally been treated as part of the paradigm shift and rejection of Fordist/Taylorist modes of organising. So we can identify the role of the culture and divergent organisational rationality in understanding the way organisational form come about.

Drawing on studies undertaken in Austria, Canada, the UK and Germany, the authors of the chapters included in **Part Two** illustrate how individuals and families have sought to adapt to changes that reconstitute the boundaries between and within work relations and the home.

Martin Kompast and Ina Wagner set out in **Chapter 6** a framework which highlights that new temporal and spatial modes of organising demand new ways of managing boundaries between colleagues, clients and private life.

In **Chapter 7** Kiran Mirchandani, by renegotiating the divide between the tradition domain of "work" and those of so-called "non-work" (the arena dedicated to leisure, the family or activities that are not "real-work"), shows how homeworkers reconstruct their notion of "work" when social and spatial relations are reconstructed.

Leslie Haddon focusses, in **Chapter 8**, especially on the maintenance of boundaries between domestic and work roles.

In the **final Chapter** of Part Two, André Büssing examines the social tolerance of telework by looking at such factors as ecology, culture and humanisation of work. He also contrasts the benefits for quality of life that are achieved through homework with those obtained from collective, centre-based teleworking.

The contributors to **Part Three** illustrate ways in which telework issues can be integrated into broader areas of social planning and organisational change.

Alistair Campbell and Charles Grantham point out, in **Chapter 10**, that the spatial and temporal distribution of modern organisations, demand new ways of managing the informational and human resources of enterprises. This involves

the combination of the 'technical perspectives' – such as the ability to access data – with 'business perspective' – the questions of utility and added value. To illustrate how this can be done in a distributed environment, the authors introduce the methodology of the "Organisational Assessment System" (OAS).

The integrating of teleworking into "service management" jobs is the focus of **Chapter 11** contributed by Scott A. Johnson. He discusses the framework for integrating teleworking into service management, with the aim of enhancing the delivery of services.

In **Chapter 12**, Lois M. Goldman and Benjamin A. Goldman argue that city planners have an important role to play if teleworking is to bring advantages to cities as a whole, rather than simply benefiting individual teleworkers and their companies.

The integration of teleworking with broader social issues is also the matter of **Chapter 13**, written by Ann Brewer and David A. Hensher. They develop a framework for the study of travel behaviour by examining it in the context of the organisation of work.

In **Chapter 14** Koji Sato and Wendy A. Spinks focus on the possible contributions of teleworking to crisis management. They outline the results of a survey regarding the extent of earthquake damage and the disruption this caused to normal life – especially work and commuting routines.

In the **final Chapter** of Part Three, Paul J. Jackson illustrates how teleworking can be used as a perspective in a "non-teleworking" organisation to frame a process of organisational analysis and learning.

Part Four includes particular strategies and experiences of different teleworking actors and networks from around the world. These cases not only highlight different forms and aspects of telework; they also show the differing aims and interests of the actors involved.

Chapter 16, due to Dima Dimitrovna and Janet W. Salaff, reflects two groups of office-based administrative workers, each of which interacts with their clients at a distance. The authors examine the relationship between different types of technology, task characteristics and organisational processes.

In **Chapter 17**, Steven Fireman pays attention to the individual teleworker. He develops a

model for explaining the reasons for “withdraw” from telework. The model helps us to understand how individuals, across a range of cultures, adapt to teleworking in specific organisational context.

Georg Aichholzer describes in **Chapter 18**, several projects in which telecentres were established in the form of neighbourhood offices, satellite offices and resort offices.

In **Chapter 19**, the main actors of interest are the telecom companies. Patrizio Di Nicola and Ruggero Parrotto describe how these companies, whilst keen to promote telework as a business product, have also been engaged in using it themselves.

In **Chapter 20**, Lennart Sturesson highlights the vendor’s perspective (IT and telecom companies) on teleworking.

Reima Suomi, Ari Luukinen, Juhani Pekkola and Marya Zamindar dedicate the **final Chapter** to the critical role played by management capabilities and opinions the introduction of telework. The authors argue that the spread of telework will depend on an adequate technological and communication infrastructure, appropriate technological skills and the reorganisation of corporate structures and cultures.

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