

Towards sustainable hybrid work?

**Proximity, (dis-)embodied
work(place) and meaningful work**

Dr. Michel AJZEN

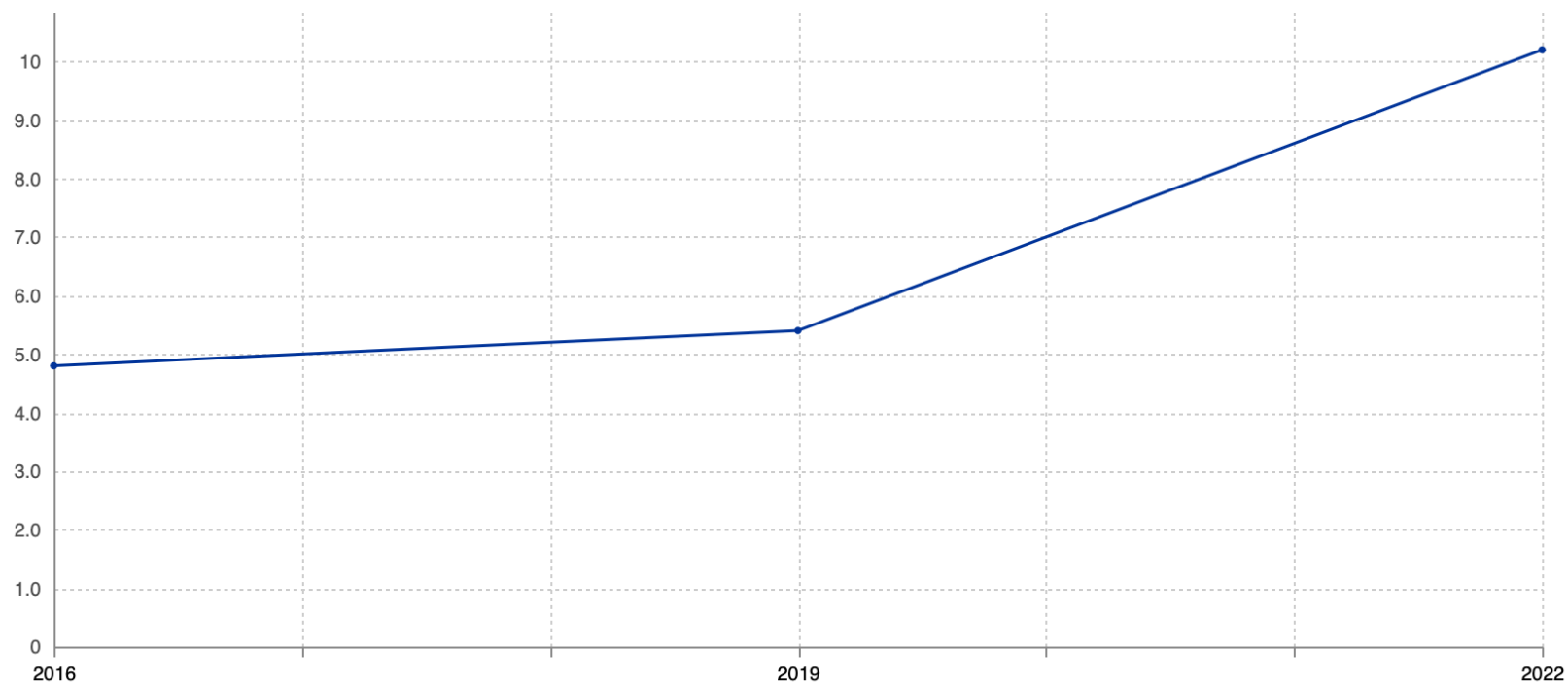
Assistant Professor in Organization and Innovation Management

University of Namur, Belgium



1. The rise of Hybrid Work

- Spread of *working homes* (Nansen et al., 2010) → engaging most white-collar workers to **relocate work at home** (Eurofound, 2020)
 - New flexible and ICT-mediated working practices and managerial modes



Employed persons working from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and professional status (%) – Eurostat, 2023

- Future remains widely open in terms of possible evolution of HW (Eurofound, 2023a), but **HW is expected to stick** (Barrero et al., 2021; Thulin and Vilhelmson, 2021).

HW refers to different “(...) results from the interplay of four main elements: physical, temporal, virtual and social. Each element is composed of different sub-elements that interact with each other and can be combined in many different forms”
(Eurofound, 2023b:33)

2. Impacts of Hybrid Work on work(ers)

- Positive influence on individual performance or work-life balance (Gerards et al., 2018; Ongaki, 2019; Taskin et al., 2022)
- But also many challenges...

Level		Impact	Source
Collective	New interaction/ collaboration patterns (Waizenegger et al., 2020; Wu et., 2021; Yang et al., 2022)	Virtualization of interactions; De-socializing effects: decrease in social contacts	Hislop & Axtell, 2009; Taskin & Bridoux, 2010; Boell et al., 2016; Ajzen & Taskin, 2021; Taskin et al., 2022; Gifford, 2022
		Decrease in the social cohesiveness, support and trust	Collins et al., 2016; Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012
		Word degradation	McBride & Lucio, 2016
Individual	Individualization and work intensification (Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010)	Isolation, disconnection from the team	Golden et al., 2008; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; van der Lippe & Lippènyi, 2020; Gifford, 2022
		Connectivity, excessive availability, overwork, work-life balance	Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Palumbo, 2021; Hughes & Donnelly, 2022
	De-humanisation (Taskin et al., 2019; Taskin et al., 2023)	Reduced job satisfaction and higher turnover rates, social loafing, absenteeism, burnout and psychological strain	Alnuaimi et al., 2010; Bell & Khoury, 2016; Lagios et al., 2021

The lack of physical proximity increases the distance with the meaning of work

(Taskin, Coster, Ajzen & Terlinden, 2022)

The meaning of work is central to employees' wellbeing

(Chalofsky & Cavallaro, 2019)

3. Loss of proximity, loss of meaning? The role of presence



- The meaning of work is **socially constructed** based on interactive processes (Bailey et al., 2019; Chalofsky & Cavallaro, 2019; Voswinkel, 2020)



Construct of meaningful work (Chalofsky & Cavallaro, 2013
in Yeoman et al., 2019: 101)

- The **role of presence** is crucial to build the meaning of work as it allows to re-embodiment work, workers and the workplace through visibility; mutual understanding; feeling of belonging to an organization/a working community; access to the subjective and collective dimensions of work (Patesson et al., 2022)

*Managers are invited to re-think their
management and leadership practices*
(Contreras et al., 2020)

*Line-managers may play a crucial role to
re-humanise their work approach, and for
employees to feel humanely managed*
(Taskin, Klinsiek & Ajzen, 2023)

but...

4. Disaffection of managerial occupation

- Increasing complexity in scoping managerial work (Kurdi-Nakra et al., 2022)
 - Tensions and paradoxes of managerial work (De Ridder et al., 2019)
 - Occupational discomfort (Bourmistrov & Kaarbøe, 2017).
 - Decline of the managerial status (Brocklehurst et al., 2010) and lack of recognition (Kokkonen, 2013).
- The rise of HW has further shaken up the line manager's role and activities (Gan et al., 2022; Monks & Conway, 2022).
- Along the crisis, managers have **re-invested their efforts in people-management** (Taskin, Klinsiek & Ajzen, 2023)
 - Managers derived major benefits in finding or reconnecting with a major feature of their job: namely **caring, supporting, and promoting**
 - By extending the meaning of work to others, they also discovered the meaning of their own work
 - **But...**
 - Combining an over-investment in re-humanising work with other traditional activities **appears to be unsustainable** and leads to frustrations regarding the lack of organizational resources and support (Inglebert-Frydman, Patesson, Ajzen & Falque, 2023)

Discussion

- Managerial - and HR - challenges to enable sustainable hybrid work.
(Taskin, Klinksiek & Ajzen, 2023)
 - Consider the role and place of people and community management activities in comparison with other strategic and operational aspects of the manager's occupation.
 - Develop comprehensive training schemes oriented toward emerging or reinforced issues of co-presence, such as the proper use of technology and associated psychosocial risks (fatigue, hyperconnectivity or work-family conflict).
 - Support managers to organise co-presence within teams, where it is locally re-regulated beyond managerial and HR policies.
(see Ajzen & Taskin, 2021; Ajzen, 2021).
 - Promoting a professional community give meaning to managerial actions and work.
 - At stake is managers' ability to stimulate the meaningfulness of work within their teams.

**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION**





References

- Ajzen, M. (2021) From de-materialization to re-materialization: a social dynamics approach to new ways of working. In: Mitev, N., Aroles, J., Stephenson, K.A. & Malaurent, J. (Eds) *New Ways of Working. Organizations and Organizing in the Digital Age (Technology, Work and Globalization)*. Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 205–233.
- Ajzen, M. & Taskin, L. (2021) The re-regulation of working communities and relationships in the context of flexwork: a spacing identity approach. *Information and Organization*, 31(3), 100364.
- Alnuaimi, O.A., Robert, L.P. & Maruping, L.M. (2010) Team size, dispersion, and social loafing in technology- supported teams: a perspective on the theory of moral disengagement. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 27(1), 203–230.
- Barrero, J. M., Bloom, N. and Davis, S. (2021). *Why working from home will stick*, NBER Working Paper No. 28731. National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA.
- Bell, C.M. & Khoury, C. (2016) Organizational powerlessness, dehumanization, and gendered effects of procedural justice. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 31(2), 570–585.
- Boell, S.K., Cecez-Kecmanovic, D. & Campbell, J. (2016) Telework paradoxes and practices: the importance of the nature of work. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 31(2), 114–131.
- Bourmistrov, A. & Kaarbøe, K. 2017. Tensions in managerial attention in a company in crisis : How tightening budget control resulted in discomfort zones for line managers. *Journal of Accounting & Organizational Change*, 13(2): 239 261.
- Brocklehurst, M., Grey, C. & Sturdy, A. 2010. Management: The work that dares not speak its name. *Management Learning*, 41(1): 7-19.
- Carnevale, J. B., & I. Hatak. 2020. « Employee Adjustment and Well-being in the Era of COVID-19: Implications for Human Resource Management » *Journal of Business Research* 116: 183–187
- Collins, A.M., Hislop, D. & Cartwright, S. (2016) Social support in the workplace between teleworkers, office-based colleagues and supervisors. *New Technology, Work And Employment*, 31(2), 161–175.
- Contreras, F., Baykal, E. & Abid, G. (2020) E-Leadership and teleworking in times of COVID-19 and beyond: what we know and where do we go. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 590271.
- De Ridder, M., Taskin, L., Antoine, M., Ajzen, M. & Jacquemin, C. (2019) Le métier de manager en transformation: Une démarche prospective. *Management & Avenir*, 3(109), 37–60.
- Eurofound (2022), *The rise in telework: Impact on working conditions and regulations*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Eurofound (2023a), *The future of telework and hybrid work*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Eurofound (2023b), *Hybrid work in Europe: Concept and practice*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Felstead, A., & Henseke, G. (2017). Assessing the growth of remote working and its consequences for effort, well-being and work-life balance. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 32, 195–212.
- Gan, J., Zhou, Z.E., Tang, H., Ma, H. & Gan, Z. (2022) What it takes to be an effective “remote leader” during COVID-19 crisis: the combined effects of supervisor control and support behaviors. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1–23.
- Gerards, R., de Grip, A., & Baudewijns, C. (2018). Do new ways of working increase work engagement? *Personnel Review*, 47(2), 517–534.
- Gifford, J. (2022). « Remote working: unprecedented increase and a developing research agenda ». *Human Resource Development International*, 25(2): 105-113
- Golden, T.D., Veiga, J.F. & Dino, R.N. (2008) The impact of professional isolation on teleworker job performance and turnover intentions: does time spent teleworking, interacting face-to-face, or having access to communication-enhancing technology matter? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(6), 1412–1421.

- Hislop, D., & Axtell, C. (2009). To infinity and beyond?: Workspace and the multi-location worker. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 24(1), 60–75.
- Inglebert-Frydman, A., Patesson, L., Ajzen, M. & Falque, L. 2023. Soutenir les managers. Quel soutien au bien-être des managers de proximité dans un contexte de désaffectation du métier ? Rapport de recherche du labor-H, (3)3 : 1-124.
- Kelliher, C. & Anderson, D. (2010) Doing more with less? flexible working practices and the intensification of work. *Human Relations*, 63(1), 83–106.
- Kokkonen, K. 2013. How are you, manager? A Literature Review of Care Home Managers' Wellbeing. *Designing Wellbeing in Elderly Care Homes*, 162-175.
- Kurdi-Nakra, H., Kou, X. & Pak, J. 2022. The road taken and the path forward for HR devolution research: An evolutionary review. *Human Resource Management*, 61(2): 239-258.
- Lagios, C., Caesens, G., Nguyen, N. & Stinglhamber, F. (2021) Explaining the negative consequences of organizational dehumanization: the mediating role of psychological need thwarting. *Journal of Personnel Psychology*, 21(2), 86–93.
- McBride, J., & Martínez Lucio, M. (2016). Disaggregating and reaggregating work: Workers, management and the struggle over creating coherency and purpose in a context of work degradation. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 26(4), 490–504.
- Monks, K. & Conway, E. 2022. The future of work: Implications for the frontline manager's role in HR implementation. In *Research Handbook on Line Managers*: 335-348. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Nansen, B., Arnold, M., Gibbs, M. and Davis, H. (2010). Time, space and technology in the working-home: an unsettled nexus. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 25(2): 136-153.
- Ongaki, J. (2019). An examination of the relationship between flexible work arrangements, work-family conflict, organizational commitment, and job performance. *Management*, 23(2), 169–187.
- Taskin, L., & Bridoux, F. (2010). Telework : A challenge to knowledge creation and transfer. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21(3), 2503–2520.
- Taskin, L., Parmentier, M. & Stinglhamber, F. (2019) The dark side of office designs: towards de-humanization. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 34(3), 262–284.
- Taskin, L., Coster, S., Ajzen, M. & Terlinden, L. (2022) Fondation Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve. Workvid-19: Territorialité, Relation managériale et Équilibre vie privée-vie professionnelle en contexte de télétravail intensif. Une approche longitudinale, 72.
- Taskin, L., Klinksiek, I., & Ajzen, M. 2023. Re-humanising management through co-presence: Lessons from enforced telework during the second wave of Covid-19. *New Technology, Work and Employment*. 1-25
- Tremblay, D. G., & Thomsin, L. (2012). Telework and Mobile working: Analysis of its benefits and drawbacks. *International Journal of Work Innovation*, 1(1), 100–113.
- Vayre, E., & Pignault, A. (2014). A systemic approach to interpersonal relationships and activities among French teleworkers. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 29(2), 177–192.
- Vilhelmson, B., & Thulin, E. (2016). Who and where are the flexible workers? Exploring the current diffusion of telework in Sweden. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 31(1), 77–96.
- Waizenegger, L., McKenna, B., Cai, W. & Bendz, T. (2020) An affordance perspective of team collaboration and enforced working from home during COVID-19. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 29(4), 429–442.
- Wu, Y.J., Antone, B., Srinivas, A., DeChurch, L. & Contractor, N. (2021) Teamwork in the time of COVID-19: creating, dissolving, and reactivating network ties in response to a crisis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(10), 1483–1492.
- Yang, L., Holtz, D., Jaffe, S., Suri, S., Sinha, S., Weston, J. et al. (2022) The effects of remote work on collaboration among information workers. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 6(1), 43–54.

FOLLOW US ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

 @EU2024BE

 Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU

 @EU2024BE

 @EU2024BE

 @EU2024BE

 www.belgium24.eu



be

EU



belgium24.eu