

Editorial

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Editorial

From teleworking to hybridity: a new way of thinking about the management of our organisations?

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1. INTRODUCTION

The first documented experiments in teleworking date back to 1970s America (Lenehan, 2016) and came to prominence when Jack Niles created the first remote communication system for NASA (Chiru, 2017). Legislative changes, the emergence of new technologies and, most recently, the Covid-19 health crisis have resulted in the development of teleworking, to the extent that it has even become the norm in some companies (Chênevert *et al.*, 2022). Implementing teleworking practices involves a number of adjustment issues for the employee and management issues for the employer. Prior to the pandemic and the widespread use of teleworking in the context of lockdowns, this approach to organising work was both unusual and unfamiliar to most of those involved. To clarify the concept of telework, we propose a definition.

Teleworking is defined as:

“a regular and formal method of organising and carrying out work activities, taking place wholly or partly at a distance (i.e. away from the employer’s premises for at least one day a week) and via the use of information and communication technologies” (Vayre, 2019, p. 5).

In other words, teleworking is the practice of carrying out professional activities and tasks away from the premises made available for working groups by the employer, using information and communication technologies to stay connected with colleagues and the company. Vayre (2019) suggests that teleworking can also be considered as formal or informal,

occasional (less than one day per week) or extensive (more than one day per week) and finally traditional (during traditional working hours) or non-traditional (evenings or days not usually worked). According to Aguilera and his research partners (2016), prior to the pandemic remote working was mainly practised by a few intellectual professions, or certain professions characterised by a large degree of autonomy. In short, teleworking appears to be a multi-dimensional concept, applicable to certain types of employment and made possible by information and communication technologies.

Specialist newspapers and even magazines have been talking about the teleworking revolution since at least the 1980s. Yet it took more than thirty years, increased awareness of ecological impacts and a health crisis for teleworking to become firmly established in companies and public organisations. This observation gives credence to the sociologists who stress that technological or technical advances can only be developed if they are perceived as useful and legitimate by work collectives (Alter, 2005). Although teleworking has been a much-discussed subject for many years, it is now firmly on the agendas of our organisations. For example, in Switzerland, between 2001 and 2019, the proportion of people in employment who teleworked at least once a week in the four weeks prior to the surveys taking place rose from 6.6% to 24.6%. During the years marked by COVID-19, the proportion of teleworkers among the professionally active population rose to 34.1% in 2020, and even to 39.6% in 2021¹. Consequently, almost 40% of the working population in Switzerland has been able, or required, to telework, at least in part, whereas in France this proportion of the population rose from 2% in 2003 to 26% in 2022 (DARES, 2022). The figures available to us also enable us to put the rise in teleworking into perspective. It is worth pointing out that people who telework at home more than 50% of the time represented only 4.3% of the Swiss workforce in 2020. 12.8% telework less than 50% of their working hours and 17.1% only occasionally. So, while it is worthwhile looking at the phenomenon of teleworking and its consequences, it is also important to note that a significant proportion of the working population in OECD countries is simply not affected by this new form of work, either because their company does not allow it, or because their professional activities are not compatible with this way of working. Whatever the case, even if the actual number of teleworkers is not as significant as is often believed or imagined, teleworking is nonetheless a new phenomenon for a large proportion of employees and organisations. There is little doubt that the future of companies and public organisations will be hybrid, meaning that they will have to manage both employees working in-person on the company's premises, and employees, working remotely from home (Scherrer *et al.*, 2022).

It is therefore important to gain a better understanding, through scientific research, of how this new form of work, teleworking, is managed in today's organisations and of its many consequences, both beneficial and harmful, on employees and work groups. There are many areas of research in this field, such as the potential effects of teleworking on employee health, commitment and performance; work-life balance in teleworking; socialisation and the development of a group at a physical distance from each other; or how to supervise staff remotely,

¹ Information from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office: <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/culture-media-society-information-sport/society-information/indicators-generals/economy-nationale/teletravail.html> (last consulted on 3 March 2023).

whilst achieving a balance between control and trust. A better understanding of the consequences of teleworking, as well as the contexts and factors modulating these effects, would make it possible to identify the tools and levers available to both employees and managers to help preserve well-being and motivation at work, the employment relationship and the smooth running of the organisation. Following this introduction to our special issue on this new form of work, we propose a review - not exhaustive, of course - of existing literature in order to identify what we already know about the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking, for both employees and employers. In so doing, it is also possible to identify a number of individual and organisational factors that are conducive to better management of work collectives in the era of organisational hybridity.

2. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TELEWORKING

Based on the results of the works summarised in Table 1, there does not appear to be a consensus on the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking for employees and employers. Although certain aspects may be perceived as advantages or disadvantages, they need to be put into context in order to appreciate their real significance.

2.1. Advantages of teleworking for employees

For **employees**, teleworking seems to provide greater flexibility and autonomy at work (Pontier, 2004; Lister & Harnish, 2019). This is primarily a question of temporal or spatial flexibility, which enables a better reconciliation of roles and prioritisation of activities during the day through flexible working hours and geographical flexibility for carrying out work tasks (Vayre, 2019; Nakrošiene *et al.*, 2019). In this respect, spatial flexibility seems of little interest if teleworkers' working hours are not flexible, as they attach more importance to flexible working hours than to flexible arrangements for their place of work (Alexander, 2014).

Flexibility in work also increases employees' sense of autonomy, as they can choose when, where and how they do their work. (Boell *et al.*, 2013). This feeling of autonomy increases not only their level of satisfaction but also their productivity ((Nakrošiene *et al.*, 2019). Employees who telework are said to be more productive due to fewer interruptions and irrelevant interactions, thus increasing their level of concentration (Lister & Harnish, 2019; Nakrošiene *et al.*, 2019; Vayre, 2019; Owens, 2017). This increase in productivity depends, however, on the quality of interactions with the manager and family members (Aguilera *et al.*, 2016). It may also result from an increase in the number of hours actually worked (Vayre, 2019), which would not necessarily be an advantage in the long term for the employee.

According to Nakrošiene *et al.* (2019), teleworking can make easier to reconcile professional and private lives, in particular by reducing time spent travelling to work. The flexible nature of teleworking also gives employees the ability to fulfil personal life obligations between meetings (Hallin, 2020). The absence of commuting and the more flexible working conditions associated with teleworking result in time savings that help achieve a better work-life balance (Hallin, 2020).

However, in the context of teleworking arrangements, the balance between professional and private lives depends on the clarity of the rules laid down by the company relating to this mode of working, as well as the availability of technological and relational resources within

Table 1. Summary of the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking for employees and employers

	Advantages	Disadvantages
	Increased flexibility and autonomy	Increased social isolation
	Increased productivity and concentration	Decrease in formal and informal communication
	Increased job satisfaction	Fewer promotions and fewer opportunities for career progression
Employees	Fewer journeys and less travel-related stress	Role conflict between professional and private roles and a blurred boundary between private and professional life
	Better work-life balance	Work overload
	Increased motivation	Higher stress levels
	Increased happiness and quality of life	Reduced sense of belonging
	Lower costs	Internal communication much more difficult
	Increased productivity and organisational performance	Difficulty in encouraging socialisation between employees, particularly new employees
Employers	Increased employee retention	Requires and leads to a change in organisational and assessment/appraisal culture
	Reduced absenteeism	More complex management specifically in relation to control and performance management
	New employees attracted more effectively	Reduced employee commitment to the organisation
	Ensures continuity of operations in the event of health crises or natural disasters	Reduced sense of belonging to the organisation and to organisational values

References: Pontier, 2004; Mello, 2007; Brunelle, 2010; Walrave, 2010; Harker Martin and MacDonnell, 2012; Maruyama and Tietze, 2012; Greer and Payne, 2014; Aguilera *et al.*, 2016; Owens, 2017; Lister and Harnish, 2019; Nakrošiene *et al.*, 2019; Song and Gao, 2019; Vayre, 2019; Even, 2020; Golden, 2020; Hallin, 2020; Planchard and Velagic, 2020.

organisations (Vayre, 2019). Moreover, gender, the presence of young children and the frequency of teleworking are thought to influence work-life balance, with women being more likely to have to look after children and take on household tasks (Song & Gao, 2020).

In summary, teleworking generally seems to be associated with lower stress levels and higher levels of well-being. However, the role of teleworking on stress levels varies enormously from one study to another and on the basis of different factors. It may even be higher among some teleworkers, suggesting that a range of moderating variables modulate the effects of telework on stress (Song & Gao, 2019; Jaiswal & Arun, 2020).

2.2. Disadvantages of teleworking for employees

The literature outlines a number of disadvantages or limits to the benefits of teleworking (Pontier, 2004; Walrave, 2010; Nakrošiene *et al.*, 2019; Vayre, 2019). The various forms of social isolation are undoubtedly a major problem (Nakrošiene *et al.*, 2019). Whether we are

talking about social isolation, psychological isolation, physical isolation, organisational isolation or professional isolation, teleworkers complain about the lack of daily face-to-face interaction with their colleagues (Gallatin, 2018). These different forms of isolation are said to have an impact on stress, performance, commitment and intention to leave the organisation (Vayre, 2019; Golden, 2008). However, the effects of physical isolation must be distinguished from those of psychological isolation. In this respect, the study by Wang *et al* (2020) suggests that psychological isolation has a more harmful effect on employees' affective commitment than physical isolation. The survey also shows that perceptions of psychological and physical isolation are positively correlated with continuance commitment, suggesting that isolation factors may lead employees to make a 'calculated' commitment to their organisation only if they perceive direct personal benefits. The harmful effects of isolation with regard to commitment and the sense of belonging to a group can be particularly damaging during the organisational socialisation process (Taskin & Delobbe, 2003; de Boer & Delobbe, 2022).

This feeling of isolation depends on the frequency of teleworking, the personality of the teleworker and the communication tools available. Indeed, the more time spent teleworking, the greater the negative impacts of isolation (Golden, 2008). Teleworkers who work remotely more than twice a week suffer from a feeling of increased organisational isolation (Even, 2020). Wang *et al* (2020) also explain that some teleworkers, particularly introverts, may prefer to work separately from their colleagues. For these teleworkers, physical and psychological isolation is beneficial for their well-being. Finally, the performance of the technological tools used for communication may also play a role in the physical and psychological isolation perceived by employees (Wang *et al.*, 2020).

Another constraint raised in relation to teleworking is the higher number of hours worked by employees per week. Under the pressure of a sense of 'redeemability' as identified by social exchange theory, employees tend to work long hours, viewing teleworking as a privilege or a reward granted by the employer (Vayre, 2019). The higher productivity of teleworking observed in some studies is in fact the result of a higher number of hours worked (Planchard & Velagic, 2020).

Teleworking can also be seen as a brake on career development given the lower organisational visibility caused by distance (Brunelle, 2010; Dahlstrom, 2013; Nakrošiene *et al.*, 2019). According to the Even study (2020), teleworkers are worried about being out of sight and say they have very few opportunities to demonstrate their skills. In this respect, Golden and Eddleston (2020) suggest that the frequency of teleworking is negatively correlated with promotions and pay rises. According to this study, individuals who telework occasionally are more likely to obtain promotions or pay rises than those who telework more frequently (Golden & Eddleston, 2020). In addition to workers in marketing and sales, women with dependent children or those who do more than 50% of their work remotely are negatively affected in terms of their professional career development (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012).

Establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life is another major challenge for teleworkers (Hallin, 2020; Vayre, 2019). As there is no physical separation between the private sphere and work, it is more difficult for teleworkers to remove themselves from work when the day is over (Hallin, 2020). As such, Vayre's (2019) report suggests that some teleworkers may actually disinvest in the personal and social sphere after starting to telework. However, she reports that when teleworking takes place outside the home, the distinction between professional and personal life is much easier to make.

2.3. Advantages of teleworking for employers

Teleworking seems to be associated with lower costs for the employer. Firstly, teleworking reduces the costs associated with permanent occupation and maintenance of office space (Mello, 2007; Brunelle, 2010). It is also linked to a significant reduction in absenteeism (Brunelle, 2010; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Greer & Payne, 2014; Lister & Harnish, 2019; Vayre, 2019), which in turn reduces human resources management costs (e.g. replacement, discipline, work overload).

Secondly, teleworking is associated with increased attractiveness to employers (Mello, 2007; Lister & Harnish, 2019). Mello (2007) reports that teleworking enables companies to broaden their recruitment options, insofar as they can recruit employees who are located far away from the company. Finally, teleworking is associated with better employee retention (Brunelle, 2010; Harker Martin & MacDonnell, 2012; Boell *et al.*, 2013; Owens, 2017; Lister & Harnish, 2019; Vayre, 2019). The higher the retention rate, the less the company has to invest in recruitment and selection. Teleworkers are also said to enjoy greater work satisfaction, thereby reducing the risk of voluntary departure (Owens, 2017; Mello, 2007; Golden, 2006).

Performance and productivity, as perceived by employees themselves, are also higher when teleworking, especially among employees who had performance problems at the office before switching to teleworking (Brunelle, 2010). An increase in employee productivity could, under certain conditions, generate an increase in the company's overall performance (Pontier, 2004; Greer & Payne, 2014). However, other studies, including that by Lister and Harnish (2019) in the United States, suggest that teleworking may have no impact on organisational performance and productivity and that it is all a question of context.

Studies carried out during the Covid lockdown period, on the other hand, produced contrasting results. While some research identifies an increase in the efficiency of teleworkers during lockdown (Laborie *et al.*, 2020; Ozimek, 2020), others have noted a drop in performance (Gorlick, 2020; Morikawa, 2020; Giauque *et al.*, 2022).

2.4. Disadvantages of teleworking for employers

The difficulty of creating the conditions to socialise and integrate new recruits features prominently among the disadvantages of teleworking from an employer's perspective (de Boer & Delobbe, 2022; Gruman & Saks, 2018; Pontier, 2004; Walrave, 2010; Lister & Harnish, 2019; Vayre, 2019). The reality of working remotely reduces the opportunities to share organisational culture and values and get employees to adhere to them. This difficulty in socialising seems to depend in part on the frequency of teleworking. The higher the frequency of teleworking, the lower the level of socialisation (Vayre, 2019). Along the same lines, affiliation to a collective and functioning as part of team seem more complex in remote working situations; this is all the more pronounced when the team is large and members work in a highly interdependent manner (Brulhart *et al.*, 2022; Carillo *et al.*, 2021).

Among the management challenges in a teleworking context, the results of the study by Greer and Payne (2014) highlight difficulties in mentoring and managing the performance of remote employees. The lack of physical proximity between managers and their employees reduces their ability to mobilise, influence and develop legitimacy and credibility with them (Brunelle, 2010). The manager may experience a feeling of loss of control, as they are unable to exercise the kind of oversight that is typical of traditional management methods

(Pontier, 2004). As a result, telework requires a different employee management approach in order to find a substitute for direct observation, proximity and control, via a culture based on employee empowerment and target-setting (Pontier, 2004; Giauque, 2022). A change in attitude on the part of the manager is therefore needed to move away from a paradigm based on monitoring, punishment and reward to one based on trust and transparency (Brunelle, 2010).

Communication and interpersonal relations also appear to be a major challenge for organisations implementing teleworking (Brunelle, 2010). Employers must be careful to maintain long-distance relationships and ensure frequent and adequate communication with all employees, or risk undermining the sense of fairness (Greer & Paye, 2014). However, digital communication is not as satisfactory as face-to-face communication, because it partly eliminates informal communication (Hallin, 2020). Even (2020) reports that teleworking is associated with a reduction in informal and spontaneous exchanges with colleagues and between colleagues, which is said to hinder knowledge transfer and idea sharing. To foster an environment in which this becomes possible, organisations and their managers need to encourage formal and informal remote communication to ensure team cohesion and the involvement of teleworkers in the day-to-day running of the business (Walrave, 2010).

It is also reported that teleworkers, who are inherently away from the workplace, are less exposed to company norms, rules and values, which reduces their degree of commitment and sense of belonging to the organisation (Vayre, 2019; Nakrošiene *et al.*, 2019). However, identification and organisational attachment is higher among those who telework part-time or on an alternating basis and lower among those who telework full-time (Vayre, 2019).

Teleworking therefore requires management culture to adapt and change, which inevitably entails costs associated with change management. The loss of control brought about by distance would therefore appear to create management challenges in terms of assessing employees, performance management and mentoring. However, these challenges can be overcome if managers move from a more restrictive and controlling management style to one in which they keep a certain distance and is based on employee empowerment and autonomy (Pontier, 2004; Brunelle, 2010).

It should also be noted that managerial attitudes also need to change in a teleworking context. Traditional leadership, also referred to in the literature as transactional leadership (Bass, 1990), no longer seems to be an adequate managerial lever for steering and managing teams in hybrid mode. On the other hand, new forms of leadership appear to be useful tools for managing teams in hybrid mode, notably transformational leadership (Gerards *et al.*, 2021) - focused on the precise definition of shared objectives and values - or liminal leadership (Shaw-VanBuskirk *et al.*, 2019), which emphasises the importance of managers' relational and social skills in the day-to-day management of teams, a managerial approach that is particularly suited to volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous organisational situations.

3. WHAT LEVERS CAN BE USED TO MANAGE TELEWORK, PROTECT THE HEALTH OF TELEWORKERS AND SUPPORT THEIR PERFORMANCE?

The advantages and disadvantages presented above echo recent literature reviews aimed at identifying the main organisational dimensions, whether related to the job itself or to the teams, that are likely to constitute levers with a view to preserving the teleworkers' health

Table 2.

Job factors	Team factors	Organisation factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy • A clear role and clear tasks • Controlling the pace of work • Flexible working practices • Job satisfaction • A varied and diversified job • Technological tools and resources to support work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of belonging • Relationships based on trust • Attentive to others • Communication • Opportunities to develop relationships • Level of interaction with colleagues • Social commitment • Social relations • Social support • Support from colleagues • Support from line managers • Teamwork • Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisational climate • Clear organisational policies • Organisational support for professional and career development • Performance management (MBO) • A climate of emotional and psychological security • Supportive HR procedures and practices • Lifelong training

and supporting or strengthening their performance. The table below, adapted from Park *et al.* (2021), lists these different levers at job, team and organisational levels.

The levers linked to the job itself primarily correspond to the characteristics of the work. These factors show that the work characteristics model developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976) as long ago as the 1970s is still highly topical. Adapting the characteristics of jobs is therefore an important strategy for promoting the well-being of teleworkers and contributing to their performance at work. The factors linked to the ‘team’ level clearly emphasise the relational and social aspects, and the importance of support from managers. These factors show that supportive teams, in which altruism and solidarity are not just managerial slogans but genuine sources of motivation, are more likely to preserve the health of teleworkers. Few of us will be surprised to learn that trust within teams is a major factor in the well-being and performance of teleworkers (Ficapal-Cusi *et al.*, 2023). Finally, there are also organisational levers that should be taken into account to promote the well-being and performance of teleworkers. These include the organisational climate, clarity of organisational objectives, objectives-based management, professional development and lifelong training. These elements are often found in the literature on so-called ‘high performance’ human resource management practices (Alfes *et al.*, 2021).

The table opposite is therefore a source of inspiration for establishing working, team and organisational conditions that support and promote teleworker well-being and their performance, with the two aspects - well-being and performance - often being linked, which is good news in itself (Giauque *et al.*, 2022).

4. THE ARTICLES INCLUDED IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

This special issue on teleworking, its effects and impacts on employees and organisations, is made up of six scientific articles, based on empirical studies carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. These texts offer us multiple perspectives and a wealth of data from the field. Two of the six papers look at the impact of teleworking, particularly during the lockdowns, on new ways of regulating work in organisations. How did the players redefine their professional activities and what new organisational regulations are emerging in organisations

that are turning to a hybrid approach, possibly for the long term? These are the questions considered in the first two articles. Two other articles take a more specific look at the managerial aspects that teleworking is helping to rethink. It therefore seems appropriate to question organisations' ability to oversee the successful onboarding of their new recruits in a context of restrictive social isolation. Firstly, a major problem can be identified: that of the leadership and supervision of teleworkers. Does teleworking mean that managers need to adopt new attitudes and arrangements for managing their employees? How are forms of leadership affected by teleworking situations, particularly enforced teleworking? Secondly, remote 'onboarding', which has become a long-term HR issue following the lockdowns caused by

COVID-19, is not easy to achieve. However, organisational levers do exist to facilitate this remote integration. Finally, two other articles deal specifically with the well-being of teleworking employees. What are the effects of teleworking from the point of view of the people involved, particularly on their working conditions, well-being and commitment? Can we identify levers to support the well-being and commitment of teleworkers? These are some of the questions addressed in the last two articles. Let's present them now in more detail, without giving away too much of the content, so that we can better understand how this special issue is structured.

The first article, written by **Valentine Donzelot**, looks at the impact of the implementation of enforced teleworking as a result of the lockdown decreed by the Swiss federal authorities in March 2020, in a Swiss SME whose management is *a priori* reticent about this new form of work. The author details the switch to teleworking for us and argues that it has led to the emergence of new areas of organisational uncertainty, providing opportunities for the development of new power relations between stakeholders. In other words, the lockdown required reorganisation, which in turn opened the way for negotiations between stakeholders with a view to re-regulating workforces. This very 'Crozierian' (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977) reading of power relations and power reveals the development of new organisational inequalities, particularly in relation to access to teleworking for certain parties who do not have the necessary resources. As a result, these parties lose their ability to negotiate. Teleworking therefore helps to redefine areas of organisational uncertainty, redefines the resources that determine the balance of power between stakeholders and triggers power struggles. This article demonstrates a dynamic process of collective regulation in a context of organisational change, predominantly underpinned by the implementation of enforced teleworking.

A second article, proposed by **Claudie Riberolles, Cathy Krohmer and Christophe**

Baret takes us on a journey into the non-medical sector of a French public hospital, confronted with teleworking during the crisis caused by COVID-19. In particular, the authors want to know more about the impact of teleworking on professional activities, their content and their organisation. Their research is based on retrospective, semi-directive interviews with 30 employees in the non-medical sector, and the questioning focuses on the way in which the work was carried out, taking two distinct periods into consideration: (1) the introduction of teleworking under lockdown, and (2) hybrid telework following lockdown telework. The researchers observe significant transformations in work, some of them profoundly lasting: the acceleration of the digitalisation of work; the emergence of new distinctions between tasks that can be achieved whilst teleworking and those that cannot; the increase in employee autonomy, early on in the lockdown period, before the return of more direct control and supervision. This article gives us an insight into the evolution of work organisation in hybrid organisations.

A third article co-authored by **Clara Laborie, Nathalie Bernard and Alice Monnier** is also offered in this special issue. The authors are interested in maintaining teleworkers' well-being by looking at any specific needs they may have with regard to supervision and leadership activities in their organisations. To answer this important question, they conducted a questionnaire survey of 2,968 employees of a major social security organisation in France between November and December 2020. Their study highlights the fact that teleworking requires a rethink of managerial attitudes and behaviour, in other words leadership. Teleworking implies the presence of "augmented managers", capable of playing on multiple registers in order to motivate their subordinates and keep them in good health. More specifically, more participative decision-making and the exemplary role played by managers are proving to be levers for managing teams remotely. In other words, the answer to the question of whether teleworking implies new ways of managing teams is quite positive, and the article suggests some concrete ways forward.

The fourth contribution to this special issue is from **Charlotte de Boer**. It analyses the strategies that organisations can put in place to facilitate the integration of new recruits under conditions of remote socialisation, which are becoming increasingly common given the widespread deployment of teleworking and new ways of working. On the basis of a questionnaire survey of 250 employees who had started a new job wholly or partly working remotely, she has come up with some interesting results. Firstly, she points out that the frequency of teleworking, at least in the context of her empirical data, has no significant impact on respondents' emotional involvement in the organisation. This result, which runs counter to those demonstrating the negative impact of high teleworking frequency on employees' emotional involvement, suggests that we should consider the factors likely to moderate the potentially desocialising effects of teleworking. In this respect, the author draws our attention to the organisational levers that can facilitate the "onboarding" of new recruits remotely. The setting up of meetings and online get-togethers with colleagues is an effective relational tool for supporting the emotional involvement of new recruits. Other avenues and levers to encourage the integration of new recruits, in a remote mode, are suggested in the article and can provide valuable lessons for better steering and managing of teams in hybrid mode.

The fifth article aims to identify the impact of teleworking on employee well-being. It is the work of **Adeline Mbey Sendegne and Romuald Grouille**. The aim of this exploratory study is to understand the practical effects of teleworking on employees' well-being, identified through 13 interviews, held remotely during the lockdown period that began in March 2020 in France. The results show that teleworking has had negative effects on social relations at work, but also positive effects on the autonomy of the people interviewed. Time overload phenomena are also reported, corresponding to an increase in working hours, sometimes and often to the detriment of interviewees' private lives. The report mentions a clear lack of dedicated teleworking spaces, a phenomenon emphasized in other studies aimed at highlighting the difficulty some employees have in setting up more or less functional workspaces in environments that are little or poorly suited to teleworking. Other important questions emerge from the study, in particular the consequences of no longer considering work from a spatial point of view (despatialisation) on employees' professional identities and their commitment to their organisation, and even their professional activities.

Finally, **Karine Renard** gives us a contribution which also considers well-being and the commitment of public sector employees faced with enforced teleworking. Based on data from

a quantitative survey of 1,373 public sector employees working in a major public authority in French-speaking Switzerland, her investigation focuses on the respondents' perceptions of their degree of commitment, and conversely of their professional fatigue, during the lockdown period (March-May 2020) in Switzerland following the spread of SARS COV 2. The empirical study enabled the author to identify a number of factors that were conducive to the respondents' well-being and commitment, in particular the flexible working hours they were able to enjoy, as well as the possibility of communicating rapidly with colleagues and supervisors using digital tools. The relational and social support dimension is therefore identified as a lever for the commitment of the agents surveyed, while minimising the negative impact of enforced teleworking on their fatigue. The positive links between flexible working hours and the ability to communicate with colleagues and supervisors, on the one hand, and employee commitment, on the other, are partially mediated by respondents' perceptions of their working environment. Thus, the more they consider their work environment to be conducive to work-life balance, the greater and more positive the impact of the above variables will be. The same applies to respondents' perception of the degree of organisational support they receive. As readers will be able to see from these six contributions, the consequences of teleworking on organisational regulation, working conditions, commitment, well-being, and even on managerial tools and approaches, are diverse, varied and sometimes contradictory. Whatever the case may be, each of these articles contributes, in its own way, to advancing knowledge about the effects of telework, its human and managerial consequences, its advantages and limitations, and the possible ways of supporting this new way of working.

5. NEW RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON THE HORIZON

Despite the wealth of data and results provided by the articles in this special issue on teleworking, many questions remain with regard to teleworking conditions, its consequences, both positive and negative, and how it should be managed and steered within organisations. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to suggest a few additional avenues of research which could, in the future, contribute to significant advances in our understanding of telework-related phenomena.

The six articles in our special issue are all based on empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative, collected during the Covid-19 pandemic. It will not have escaped anyone that this data is historically and spatially embedded in a specific context. The contingent aspect of empirical studies is an obvious fact, which is difficult to overcome, but which constitutes a clear limit to the generalisation of results. This first remark is therefore a call for comparative studies or surveys, particularly in order to understand whether the methods, impacts and consequences of telework that are highlighted are unique or, on the contrary, transversal. It would therefore be desirable to carry out international surveys to compare the results with regard to national cultural and institutional contexts. However, it is also likely that telework, its methods, effects and consequences depend on sectors of activity (private, semi-public and public sectors in particular), or even areas of activity (health policies, social policies, safety, environment, energy, etc.), professions or occupations (moreover, certain professions are currently impossible to carry out remotely, which is proof that there are aspects to teleworking that are more or less compatible with carrying out certain professional tasks). We are therefore calling on researchers to set up international research teams to conduct comparative studies.

Interdisciplinarity is still a challenge in the field of management sciences. However, telework is a major social phenomenon that could enable scientists from a wide range of backgrounds (anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, psychologists, psychosociologists, management specialists, etc.) to share and discuss ideas and therefore study this new way of working in the light of different scientific disciplines, blending different levels of understanding (social and economic, organisational and managerial, relational and individual). This interdisciplinarity is desirable, but it has to be said that its potential has not yet been fully deployed in relation to teleworking.

Data collection methods and methodologies used in telework studies are mainly of two kinds: qualitative and quantitative. There is very little porosity between these two types of method. Surveys on telework combining the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methodologies are still sorely lacking. And yet, these mixed methodological approaches often prove to be very powerful. With regard to the phenomenon of teleworking, it seems clear that opening up to a variety of methodologies, if possible mixed and inventive, will lead to substantial advances in knowledge. Yet in this area, as in others, everything is still to be done, or nearly.

Studies in management science, like most studies in the humanities and social sciences, struggle to integrate the temporal dimension, even though longitudinal studies are increasingly being developed. Most of the studies produced on telework provide an updated snapshot of a situation, which is certainly valuable, but specific to a particular moment in time. Some studies attempt to juxtapose snapshots by asking respondents, at a specific point in time, about their recollection of the period of teleworking during lockdown, in relation to before or after enforced teleworking. This is a commendable attempt to bring the temporal dimension into the analysis of the modalities, effects and consequences of telework, but it is imperfect. In other words, longitudinal studies, in which data are collected from the same population over several years, are the only way to offer a dynamic analysis of the development of telework, its methods and the perceptions of the various players with regard to this new way of working.

Research into teleworking is slowly but surely opening up to the effects of power, domination and gender. Intersectionality, which studies forms of domination, oppression and discrimination not as separate entities but rather simultaneously, deserves to make its appearance in this specific field of study. Is there equality of treatment when it comes to teleworking opportunities in the workforce? The very act of asking the question provides part of the answer. Probably not. So which populations benefit from this new form of work, and which populations are excluded? Which populations benefit from teleworking, including in terms of well-being, and which on the other hand have difficulty coping with teleworking, due to a lack of available resources (material, technological, knowledge, etc.)? These are important questions because they touch on organisational justice and central ethical considerations. Studies inspired by the current of intersectionality would therefore be welcome and, above all, highly original and useful for managing the oft-hidden consequences of telework.

Finally, it should be noted that studies into teleworking tend to emancipate themselves from other currents of research into other ways of working. For example, studies into new ways of working (NWW) are also interested in teleworking, but include it among other ways of working which are unique in that they are free from a specific working time and a single place of work. The NWW approach also incorporates all forms of work which aim to adapt to the different activities carried out during the working day, requiring employees to change their place of work and be flexible in their working hours depending on the tasks to be carried

out (activity-based working conditions) (Renard *et al.*, 2021). Other subjects are currently emerging and deserve to be more closely linked with the research into teleworking, such as organisational agility, flexible work practices, sociocracy, holacracy and so on. It must be possible to encourage and develop a dialogue between these different currents of research in order to avoid the creation scientific communities, or “churches” operating in isolation to the detriment of a more general understanding of the organisational dynamics underway in contemporary companies and public organisations.

These proposals are not exhaustive, of course, but they do have the merit of highlighting new, innovative and, in our view, promising research prospects in relation to the issue of telework. To be continued...

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