1

Introduction: New Ways of Working, Organizations and Organizing in the Digital Age

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Focus of This Edited Volume

This edited book revolves around the ways in which organizations and work itself have changed in the light of the digital age, with a particular focus on the role of materiality, body and technologies in these new organizational landscapes. This book therefore combines recent scholarly

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interest in organizational spaces and materiality with a focus on management and work practices.

This focus is aligned with the previous volumes on Materiality and Space, Materiality and Time, Materiality, Rules and Regulation, Materiality in Institutions, and Materiality and Managerial Techniques already published by Palgrave Macmillan respectively in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018 and 2019, based on the Organizations, Artefacts and Practices (OAP) series of workshops that ran at Paris-Dauphine University, the London School of Economics, LUISS (Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali) in Rome, Nova School of Business and Economics in Lisbon and the University of Technology Sydney.

OAP was set up with the goal of facilitating discussions among scholars from a wide range of disciplines (e.g. management, anthropology, sociology, history, geography, philosophy, psychology, etc.) who share an interest in materiality in the context of organization and organizing. OAP relates to debates in the fields of Science and Technology Studies, (socio) materiality, organizational space, work sociology and organization studies, among others. Some of the recurrent OAP themes are: process, performativity, time, space, legitimacy, symbolism, iconography, discourse and materiality; artefacts as the constituents, results or outputs of organizations and organizing; materialization and performativity in organizations; the entanglements or imbrication between the material and social dimensions of organizational practices; new vocabularies to act or overcome the social-material dichotomy; power, discourses and materiality; the exploration of organizational space, artefacts and spatial practices; the affordance of materiality and space in organizations; managerial techniques and the evolution of work. It draws on various theoretical perspectives, such as phenomenology, pragmatism, institutionalism, critical theory, post-Marxism, critical realism, actor-network theory, among others.

This sixth volume is based on the 8th OAP workshop on *New Ways of Working: Rematerializing Organizations in the Digital Age* that took place at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in June 2018. It was organized jointly by...

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This book focuses on New Ways of Working (NWW) and sets up to explore the manifestations of these new practices with a particular emphasis on the place occupied by technology, materiality, space and bodies within contemporary working configurations. NWW can be regarded as part and parcel of the wider trend of workspace differentiation and flexibilization. This transformation encompasses the flexible use of home workspaces in terms of ‘teleworking’, the flexibilization of office spaces under the form of ‘hot desking’, ‘coworking’ or ‘nomadic working’, as well as ‘mobile working’ (i.e. ‘third space’) between all of these workspaces. Ever since the early 1990s, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have played a pivotal role in the diversification and evolution of the workplace, thus fueling a fast-paced and changing world of work. The increased embeddedness of digital technologies within the core of our social, organizational and structural make-up, along with the heightened preponderance of digitalization, has raised a number of important and timely questions relating to materiality, embodiment, temporality and spatiality in organizational landscapes.

Topics covered at the Amsterdam workshop included flexible working, the evolution of workspaces, digital working, work practices and buildings, entrepreneurship and materiality in the digital age, the role of space and technology in the constitution of organizations, meaning and sense-making in innovative workspaces, theories and methodologies of workplace studies, human-machine interaction and the working body, infrastructures of digital organizational technologies, the significance of time in relation to the change and management of workspaces, anthropology and ethnography of the workplace, the institutionalization and legitimation of New Ways of Working, Do It Yourself (DIY), hackers, makers, fab labs and the emergence of open knowledge and open innovation, boundary setting in new organizational forms, interfaces in combined virtual/material modes of working, creativity and commitment in digitalized modes of working, the materialization of labor relations in flexible work arrangements, leadership and organizational control in new work environments, identity in virtual and material workplaces, collaborative virtual spaces, the design and aesthetics of new work environments, sociomateriality and ontologies of New Ways of Working, digital
modes of surveillance in the workplace, informal workspaces and social relations in organizations. The following chapters were selected from the 82 papers presented, and keynote speakers provide a preface and a post-face to this volume.

Our intended readership consists of academics, researchers and graduate students in Management and Organization Studies. It has the potential of constituting a valuable resource for researchers and graduate students in organization studies and management, and scholars across disciplines who are interested to know more about the interrelations between New Ways of Working and material artefacts in organizations from a sociomaterial perspective. This book may also be of interest to researchers and postgraduate students in Sociology, Science and Technology Studies, Media and Communication Studies, Information Systems, Anthropology, Labor Studies, Architecture and Design and Cultural Studies.

New Ways of Working

The flows of globalization, together with the ever-increasing digitalization of our society, have fundamentally changed the nature of work by challenging ‘formal’ bureaucratic logics of organizing (Courpasson & Reed, 2004; Pulignano & Stewart, 2008) and positioning flexibility, adaptability and dynamicity as the core values of new working configurations (Kallinikos, 2003; Marsden, 2004; Pulakos, Dorsey, & White, 2006). This has been paralleled by the emergence of the post-bureaucratic rhetoric (Heckscher, 1994) through which various forms of organizations have flourished: the networked organization (Scott Morton, 1991; Sproull, Kiesler, & Kiesler, 1992), the virtual corporation (Davidow & Malone, 1992; Jackson & van der Wielen, 1998), the project-based organization (Hodgson, 2004), the modular organization (Garud, Kumaraswamy, & Langlois, 2002) to name but a few. Rather unsurprisingly, ICTs have played a pivotal role in the diversification and evolution of the workplace (Brocklehurst, 2001; Tietze & Musson, 2005; Wilson, O’Leary, Metiu, & Jett, 2008) by enabling an exponential acceleration of already-existing trends. Clearly, new technologies offer many opportunities when it comes to organizing and managing work; for instance, new
forms of collaboration are facilitated by technologies (Faraj, Jarvenpaa, & Majchrzak, 2011); work is no longer bound to a particular place or time (Bosch-Sijtsema, Ruohomäki, & Vartiainen, 2010); there seems to be a greater sense of flexibility and autonomy (Baruch, 2000; Golden, 2009; Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012); new forms of entrepreneurship are facilitated through ICTs (Matlay & Westhead, 2005) and so on. Alongside these opportunities comes a series of concerns relating to issues of surveillance, control and power dynamics (Brivot & Gendron, 2011; Sewell, 1998, 2012; Zuboff, 2015), notably around the emergence of horizontal forms of control (Dale, 2005).

The ways in which the concept of work is evolving are riddled with paradoxes (Aroles, Mitev, & de Vaujany, 2019). On one side, it can be argued that we are effectively witnessing the ‘dissolution of work’ (as we know it), or perhaps the erosion of the specificities of the notion of work. In other words, work is becoming increasingly more integrated in other activities (Sundararajan, 2017) to the point that the boundary between private and work lives has become entirely spurious (Gregg, 2011; Tietze & Musson, 2002). Within that context, a wide range of places (such as trains, coffee shops, planes, etc.)—third places (Oldenburg, 1989) or third workspaces (Kingma, 2016)—have come to occupy a key position in the redefinition of working patterns and routines, thus arguably contributing to de-specialization of work. At odds with this stance is the view that work is not disappearing but reappearing under a completely different form (as if ‘reinventing itself’).1

Embracing the seemingly inexhaustible promises of the digital age, we engage in an ever-greater range of collaborative activities and in that context, work is seen to becoming increasingly more collaborative with regards to the rise of the so-called sharing economy (Bouncken & Reuschl, 2016; Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2016; Sundararajan, 2017; Stephany, 2015; Widlok, 2016). This is noticeable through various trends, such as coworking (Spinuzzi, 2012), digital nomadism (Aroles, Granter, & de Vaujany, 2020), collaborative entrepreneurship, Do It

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1 See for instance mobile telework (Hislop & Axtell, 2009), ‘hot-desking’ or ‘drop-in desks’ (Brown & O’Hara, 2003; Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2005).
Yourself (DIY) movements (Wolf & McQuitty, 2011), prosumption\(^2\) (Humphreys & Grayson, 2008; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010), crowdsourcing (Howe, 2008), new forms of freelancing and entrepreneurship (Taylor, 2015), but also through the emergence of a wide array of new spaces: makerspaces (Anderson, 2009), collaborative spaces (Gandini, 2015; Garrett, Spreitzer, & Bacevice, 2017), fablabs, hackerspaces and so on.

Therefore, while some formal structures of work are disappearing, work is becoming increasingly visible in the sense that it pervades all social spaces and is no longer confined to organizational spaces or dedicated spaces. The fragmentation of work, the multiplication and ramification of work practices, the emergence of new forms of collaboration, the rise of prosumption and so on fall under the umbrella of NWW. These various changes have considerable implications for organizations; the spatio-temporal reality of organizations has been shattered, as miscellaneous fragmented temporalities and spatialities have come to replace the once-dominant linearity of organizations and preponderance of bureaucratic logics. In that sense, the increased embeddedness of digital technologies within the core of our social, organizational and structural make-up, along with the heightened preponderance of digitalization, has raised a number of important and timely questions relating to the materiality, embodiment, temporality and spatiality of organizations and work practices.

Recent books have looked at the economic impact of changing work practices in the context of the sharing economy and the rise of online platforms (Munger, 2018; Scholz, 2017; Sundararajan, 2017). Others have approached the new world of work through the lenses of human resource management, focusing on the ways in which new work practices have altered ‘traditional’ terms of employment (Boudreau, Jesuthasan, & Creelman, 2015; Weil, 2014; Sweet & Meiksins, 2015; Ellison, 2004). Some have attended to specific aspects of the new world of work, including the development of makerspaces (e.g. Anderson, 2009); the

\(^2\)It is however worth noting that prosumption (production by consumers) is not necessarily a new phenomenon (e.g. fast-food, automatic-teller machines, etc.), but rather that it has intensified and progressively encapsulated most sectors, services and activities.
consequences of automation (e.g. Ford, 2015); or the precarity encountered in the gig economy (e.g. Morgan & Nelligan, 2018). Advanced communication technologies, online platforms and automation are just a few technological advancements disrupting ways of working, organizing and consuming. Scholars are busy explaining the implications these technologies have on a range of topics such as organizational space (Alexander & Price, 2013; Dale, Kingma, & Wasserman, 2018; Flecker, 2016; De Vaujany & Mitev, 2013; Myerson & Bichard, 2016; Turner & Myerson, 1998; van Marrewijk & Yanow, 2010).

Our book complements these works and integrates their central themes by examining where and how contemporary work and organizing are enacted. Virtual, collaborative, open, flexible, coworking, maker and community spaces are becoming ubiquitous and are intimately entwined with ways of working, managing, organizing, collaborating and consuming.

Book Structure

By accessing these themes through work spaces, the studies that make up this book are woven into a comprehensive narrative of the new ways and worlds of work. It is divided into the following five parts.

- Part I: New Ways of Working and the Sharing Economy
- Part II: New Ways of Working and Collaborative Spaces
- Part III: New Ways of Working and Telework
- Part IV: New Ways of Working and Organizational Spaces
- Part V: Organizational Aspects of New Ways of Working

Part I: NWW and the Sharing Economy

In “Platforms and the New Division of Labor Between Humans and Machines” (Chap. 1), Hamid Ekbia and Attila Marton propose that historical perspectives deflect from a fundamental shift in the division of labor between humans and machines. Historically, machines were
designed to augment and/or replace human labor by mechanizing and automating what humans are not capable of doing. In the current shift, humans are increasingly relegated to what machines cannot do—that is the creative, affective or organizing labor of human beings. Those aspects of human work that drive and enable the workings of current socio-technical systems are increasingly trivialized and made invisible, and consequently rendered uncompensated or undercompensated. They elaborate on theoretical avenues for explaining the sociotechnical mechanisms underlying this shift and the new ontology of work practices that comes with it. They contend that contemporary automation introduces novel mechanisms for converting humans into a standing reserve for machines.

In “Social Media as a New Workspace: How Working Out Loud (Re) Materializes Work” (Chap. 2) Claudine Bonneau, Nada Endrissat and Viviane Sergi argue that social media should be considered as a new workspace that needs to be inhabited and fed. Their study focuses on social media, defining them as distinct yet complementary workspaces. Based on a ‘working out loud’ approach, they provide an overview of the various visibilization practices of work on Instagram, and show that social media represent unfinished and ‘behind-the-scene’ aspects of work and new workspaces for showing work and performing new subjectivities that are being crafted through practices of posting. As such, investigating what is being done and performed on social media is key in understanding some of the current transformations of work.

In “Institutionalizing Crowdwork as a Mode of Employment: The case of Crowdworkers in Nigeria” (Chap. 3), Ayomikun Idowu and Amany Elbanna focus on crowdsourcing as a monetary profit-generating type of employment, particularly on micro-tasking as a method of income generation in Nigeria. Embracing micro-tasking on crowdsourcing platforms can be argued to provide opportunities as a source of income to the unemployed and low-income youth in Nigeria. They explore identities and social practices within crowdsourcing through a series of interviews with digital workers on online digital platforms to understand their experiences and crowdsourcing in the Nigerian context.
Part II: New Ways of Working and Collaborative Spaces

In “Materiality as Ingredients of Events: Comprehending Materiality as a Temporal Phenomenon in a Makerspace” (Chap. 4), Anthony Hussenot addresses the role of materiality in the formation of situated and social temporalities through an ethnographic study. He questions the definition and redefinition of temporalities that make activities possible by anchoring them into a history, present and anticipated future. Based on Whitehead’s philosophy, he argues that materiality constitutes ‘ingredients of events’ that define temporality. The event is considered as a unit of analysis in which the social and the material occur as a unique phenomenon. His ethnography shows how materiality has participated in the definition and the redefinition of the past, present and future of a makerspace and its surrounding town. The main contribution is in the suggestion of a ‘temporal relational ontology’ in which the material and the social can be understood as occurring in the same event that defines shared temporalities, enabling makers to make their activity possible and anchoring it in a broader past, present and anticipated future.

“The Role of Digital Materiality in Organizing a Living Lab” (Chap. 5) by Philippe Eynaud and Julien Malaurent focuses on living labs which are clusters aiming to organize partnerships on a territory, support interaction among stakeholders and bring together academic and lay knowledge. Based on Leonardi’s concept of ‘digital materiality’, which distinguishes between the physical and the digital material, the authors discuss the use of digital resources in the accomplishment of social practices and organizational routines in an organic agriculture living lab. They study how the digital artifacts are seen as collective and shared material for the group and how they are instantiated. Their research shows the importance of materiality in the organizing processes, how it takes both physical and digital forms and should be regarded as a hybrid object.

In “Do Coworking Spaces Promise a Revolution or Spark Revenge? A Foucauldian Spatio-Material Approach to the Re-Spatialization of Remote Work in Coworking Spaces” (Chap. 6), Aurelie Leclercq-Vandelannoitte investigates how managers of classic organizations deal
with new workplaces. She develops a framework based on Foucault to conceptualize a spatial and material approach to the manager’s role in these new work arrangements. It enables her to investigate coworking spaces along three dimensions: space as discursive construction, instrumental materialization and embodied experience. Through a qualitative case study with guided tours, observation and interviews, she identifies paradoxical tensions between autonomy and control and finds that these coworking spaces are materialized extensions of corporate settings at a distance, enabling work continuity, but in contradiction with the official discourse; they are based on the notions of collaboration and openness but are also associated with more conventional control. Paradoxically, where work can be everywhere, space and materiality are crucial to develop our understanding of organizational life and of the manager’s role, whose identity, legitimacy and meaning are more than ever embedded in spatial and material issues.

In “More Than Perks and a Shared Office: How Coworking Spaces Participate in Entrepreneurs’ Resource Acquisition” (Chap. 7), Kutay Güneştepe, Zehra Topal and Deniz Tunçalp investigate architects/designers/managers’, entrepreneurs’ and start-up employees’ experiences and understandings of how place identity and coworking culture have emerged and intertwined with the physical space, artifacts and policy interventions over time. The study covers the unfolding of these dynamics from a process perspective with a longitudinal study of ITU Magnet, a coworking space located at a science park in a university campus, dedicated to selected start-ups at the post-seed stage trying to scale-up. They employ Bourdieu’s forms of capital framework to understand the underlying mechanisms of resource acquisition enabled by coworking spaces.

Part III: NWW and Telework

“From De-Materialization to Re-Materialization. A Social Dynamic Approach to New Ways of Working” (Chap. 8), by Michel Ajzen, explores how teleworking is regulated through social dynamics, and how this social regulation process produces social norms. The author combines Reynaud’s social regulation theory and the theory of conventions in order
to question the potential for emancipation or alienation of teleworkers. Two in-depth case studies are presented, showing many re-regulations of work activities and with different rational conventions. He observed a process of de-humanization resulting in the ‘invisibilization’ and deskilling of work but, simultaneously, in strategies consisting in re-visibilizing people. Other results are a transformation of the meaning of the workspace; some shifts of responsibilities from top to middle management through local flexible work arrangements but also from middle managers to employees through the empowerment rhetoric; and some workers resisting the dominant order through the re-appropriation of spaces and times.

“Work/Non-Work? Laminated Boundary-Tensions and Affective Capabilities: A Case of Mobile Consulting” (Chap. 9), by Natalie Paleothodoros, concentrates on how boundaries are constructed and how they become meaningful in practice. Her aim is to understand the role, practice and meaning of the mobile phone in the organization of work/non-work boundaries from a sociomaterial perspective. Her research is based on ethnographic fieldwork in a firm of mobile consultants. She offers insights into the tensions of mobile organizing, how the material is implicated in boundary organizing and in (re)negotiating work and non-work boundaries.

**Part IV: New Ways of Working and Organizational Spaces**

In “Space for Tensions: A Lefebvrian Perspective on New Ways of Working” (Chap. 10) Andrea Simone Barth and Susanne Blazejewski propose a theoretical approach to study the tensions, paradoxes and boundaries associated with the introduction of new work concepts and offer a framework based on paradox theory to extend Lefebvre’s theoretical concept of space. They argue that paradoxical relationships might emerge, be negotiated and be accepted through the act of producing, constructing or modifying space. They suggest that tensions in new work spaces arise and are addressed in the process of planning space; are negotiated through social practices of occupants that engage with the planned
space; and are recognized and potentially accepted by occupants in the process of imagination. The process of imagining (lived space) from Lefebvre’s concept may thus become a powerful instrument for handling inherent paradoxes for both designers and occupants of new work spaces.

In “Beyond Flexibility: Confronting Conceived and Lived Spaces of New Ways of Working” (Chap. 11), Grégory Jemine, Sophie Fauconneau-Dufresne, François Pichault and Giseline Rondeaux first characterize the NWW ideal discourse about space into four dimensions: fluidity, activity-based, deterritorialization and horizontalization. Their chapter questions how this discursive ideal type is translated into concrete devices and practices in organizations. They perform a comparative study of two contrasting cases, by employing Weick’s concepts of sensemaking and sense giving to understand how the ideal type of space advocated by NWW promoters is embodied into concrete spatial devices and patterns. In both cases, the ideal type of space ultimately became an object of contestation. Four forms of contestation related to the four aforementioned dimensions are analyzed: sedentarization, activity-based constraints, colonization and stratification. What seems to matter, beyond sense giving and sensemaking activities, is also the users’ political relationships with space as well as their individual and collective strategies of appropriation.

In “Transmateriality of Architectural Representation and Perception” (Chap. 12) Angela Bargenda critically examines architecture as an expressive system of organizational values and symbols, and as a social space that generates workplace identities. A longitudinal analysis of the architecture of bank buildings is presented, and their spatial, temporal and social dimensions related to cultural and societal phenomena. She conceptualizes architecture both as a material artifact and a mediator of organizational identity, and sees architectural expression as offering symbolic resources for identification. Stylishly redesigned flagship bank branches and innovative aesthetics provide experiential value to stakeholders. The study presents architectural semiotics as an interpretive framework to uncover the deeper meanings of architectural text. It shows that the materiality of built forms interconnects with social, historical and cultural systems, thus producing persuasive regimes of meaning.

In “Technology and the Simultaneous Collapsing and Expanding of Organizational Space: A Covid-19 Experience” (Chap. 13) Anouk
Mukherjee first reflects on his experiences with videoconferencing during the Covid-19 pandemic, which leads him to theorize that organizational space is both simultaneously collapsed and expanded through Information and Communication Technologies. He explores our experience of space by drawing on neurosciences and how they provide support for the Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception. Using key concepts of Merleau-Ponty he shows how the concept of the Bayesian brain helps explain the experience of organizational space, both proximate and remote.

**Part V: Organizational Aspects of New Ways of Working**

In “From Innovations at Work to Innovative Ways of Conceptualizing Organization: A Brief History of Organization Studies” (Chap. 14) Lise Arena and Anthony Hussenot discuss how organization studies have accounted for innovations at work and their influence on the way organization has been conceptualized over time. Based on the time period from the 1950s to the 2010s, this historical analysis puts the emphasis on the interrelated evolution of the technological context (from industrial to digital innovations), the organizational phenomena (from centralized bureaucratic hierarchies to fluid organizations) and the ways of working (from the rise of professional management to the projectification of work). It is argued that organization theories have evolved along with evolutions of work practices and technologies. Industrial innovations led to a rather monolithic way of conceptualizing organization while entrepreneurship, nomadic ways of working and digital innovations favored increasing processual ways of conceptualizing organization.

In “Community Management Practices in Coworking Spaces: Being the ‘Catalyst’” (Chap. 15), Aurore Dandoy studies the community dimension of collaborative spaces through a participative ethnographic design in which she acted as a community manager, conducted interviews and visited coworking spaces. She explores how field actors describe their feeling of community in which the community manager appears to have a key role. The community manager can be seen as an incarnation of the space and is significantly involved in the community and the
sharing of emotions between coworkers. She analyzes community feeling through a phenomenology of activity as an outcome of the coworking space and the community manager’s daily work. Embodied phenomenology helps include the community dimension and explain the impact of the community manager on community feeling in these new workspaces.

In “The Rise and Fall of a New Way of Working: A Testament of an Organizational Identity Mimicry” (Chap. 16), Marie Antoine addresses the failure of the implementation of an NWW project in a private company by focusing on the spatial component and the changes it introduced for workers and organizational identity. She envisages organizational identity as organizational members’ shared interpretations about the characteristics which compose their organization and distinguish it in its social context. Data were collected through observations, document analysis and semi-structured interviews on the official purpose of the project, the new work environment, workers’ perceptions and the concrete changes it brought in their daily routines and their reflections about the company. The failure embodies an identity mimicry, that is a desire and attempt to target a different organizational identity by adopting new rules and ways of working which prove difficult to implement. The original organizational identity is related to its technical core business which relies on employees’ practices and experiences and cannot be successfully supported in an NWW activity-based workspace.

“Deconstructing New Ways of Working: A Five-Dimensional Conceptualization Proposal” (Chap. 17) by Grégory Jemine aims to understand the progressive normalization and the mechanisms through which NWW have become a legitimate reference in its organizational field. This chapter provides support for five ways of conceptualizing NWW: (1) as a management fashion disseminated across organizational fields; (2) as a set of discourses and narratives; (3) as an organizational change project; (4) as a material workspace; and (5) as a set of work practices and behaviors.

Gibson Burrell and Karen Dale offer a foreword and Leo McCann an afterword to this volume on New Ways of Working: Organizations and Organizing in the Digital Age. Most of these chapters were completed before the Covid-19 pandemic; Leo McCann and Anouk Mukherjee both made a start in addressing its implications which have been immense
in terms of New Ways of Working in the digital age. We hope this volume will inspire further research on these recent developments and their long-term repercussions.

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