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The impact of telework: Time, Temporalities and Human Communication

Jean-Marc JULLIEN PhD students / IMSIC Toulon

*Cross-presentations by IMSIC/Sao Paolo PhD
students*

Telework concept

Definition

Telework can be defined in accordance with Article L-1222-9 of the Labour Code as *"any form of work organisation in which work which could have been carried out away from the employer's premises is carried out by an employee away from the employer's premises on a voluntary basis using information and communication technologies"*.

Issues

The challenges of telework are multiple. For the company and the employee, it allows for greater autonomy, time savings, organisational freedom, and a reduction in travel time and commuting time (Taskin, 2003)

Issues during the pandemic

Telework had become the tool to deal with the covid crisis. This has been transformed into telework crisis (Roncati, Magré, 2021)

Many links between communication and anticipation

The work of Norbert Elias (1973) highlights the development process of civilization. Culture seems to be built on a process of internalizing norms and one's own societal behavior. There is thus a process of self-anticipation.

Erving Goffman (1973), in his study of rituals, highlights a communicative logic based on anticipation. Goffmanian communication can be summed up as the logical sequence (scene definition - unbalance - return to balance).

This logic can also be found in the information and communication sciences, with the question of incommunication (Wolton, 2018) / (Eric Dacheux, 2015, 2018): incommunication is an integral part of communication.

Communication is resistance to entropy (Galli, 2020)

Time concept

Time and temporalities

Time is difficult to define: inspired by the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) and Norbert Elias (2014), we can distinguish between "signified time" and "signifying time".

“Signified time” corresponds to ontological and physical time. It is time that can be measured by clocks. For example, noon corresponds to the time when the sun is highest in the sky.

“Signifying time” corresponds to the meaning we give to time. Meaningful time is symbolic. For example, noon corresponds to lunchtime.

The concept of temporality we wish to develop is close to Martin Heidegger's concept of *Zeitlichkeit* (1927). Temporality is the awareness of the time we have left to live. It is characteristic of *Dasein* (way to be)

Temporality can turn away from its finiteness by preoccupying itself with another finality: this is temporalization.

Ontological communication

Ontological communication is directly linked to the process of temporality. David Galli (2020) includes in his theory of human communication (linked to emotions) the question of resistance to entropy, i.e. fighting against our finitude.

By following this path, we can extend the field of communication to an ontological dimension. Thus, from an ontological point of view, there is no absence of absence, because *Dasein* (way to be) can “presentify” the absent.

The notion of the imaginary is therefore central to this type of communication. *Dasein* communicates indirectly through tools. The use of a tool refers directly to another tool, to another *Dasein* (*way to be*).

Communicative ontology passes through the face. The face is constitutive of the identity of others (Le Breton, 2016); it is through this part of the body that I identify with others, but it is also through the face of others that I become aware of their finitude (Levinas, 1983) and their temporality.

Ontological communication

Basing ourselves on the work of Marcel Mauss (1950, 1958), we can think of communication as a gift of temporality that we make to the other.

For Mauss (1950, 1958), the gift is explained by a process of triple obligation (giving, receiving and giving back) in which the obligation to give back remains the most important.

Mauss (p.161 & p173, 1950/1958) "to accept something from someone is to accept their spiritual essence from their soul [...] We mix souls with things; we mix things with souls".

The obligation to give back is therefore the most important because it balances the process by restarting the cycle of giving through a return. If there is no return, this will lead to a debt and therefore an imbalance in which the person in debt will owe something to someone, and more specifically to themselves (Tarot, p.60, 2003).

Anticipation and telework crisis

Ontological anticipation would be possible through the use of digital tools (television or social networks) that have enabled the State to maintain communication based on two registers: fear and blackmail (Le Goff, 2021).

Anticipation linked to the emergency of organisation:

Setting up business continuity plans

Use of PowerPoint to prepare meetings in advance

Change projects (teleworking)

On-line training, sometimes during teleworking hours

Anticipation

Anticipation

The time of anticipation aims to seek and draw on one's experience and therefore one's memory in order to reach an idealised future that will make it possible to avoid any risk in practice. the chronological structure is as follows (Future, past, present).

(Present/future [risk] → Future/Present → Present/Past →
Past/Present → Present/Future [wished]).

Space, Body and screen

Space

Space: time has a specific relationship to space which is defined by the bringing together. This is the action of abolishing the distances of what is far away

Body

The temporality of immediacy pushes the use of the body into automatism by losing awareness of duration. It becomes completely outdated and obsolete in this digital time (Froment, p 309, 2018).

Screen

Distance and screens also contribute to the modification of the experience. Availability for the other requires time synchronization between communicators

Methodology

Methodology : Quantitative

The methodology is characterised by, on the one hand

A **general statistical analysis** to introduce the research lines. It will allow us to establish a general observation on telework by studying its evolution over the long term and by bringing out interesting statistical indicators such as the difficulties of adaptation or the sectors most affected

Methodology

Axes of research

Anticipation is related to lack of experience and risk of unforeseen events, the lower the autonomy the higher the chance of unforeseen events or difficulties

Teleworkers who lack autonomy must anticipate to avoid the unexpected

The increase in work intensity reflects a difficulty in adapting to the work environment

The distance between employees contributes to the increase in employee autonomy, as it is more difficult to transmit information properly. Thus, the lack of communication leads to a process of anticipation.

Methodology

Methodology : 2) Qualitative

Use of **semi-directive interviews** following the chronological plan of anticipation (future, past, present and space and body (with life story question).

The semi-directive questions will be complemented by case study questions.

The case studies will also allow a comparison of what the actors say and what they would do in a real situation. Both occasional and intensive teleworkers will be interviewed. 50% private sector and 50% public service. Sample 20 interviews

6- Field feedback

Anticipation linked to the configuration of the space: This concerns the configuration of the space entirely dedicated to teleworking.

I have a small area of 28 m², it's my living room, and I've designed it so that I can sit down and do some teleworking. In other words, that's why I invested in a big screen or a standing desk. So I sit on the sofa, I put the desk sixty centimetres off the floor, it becomes a piece of TV furniture, the screen is wide enough to take advantage of the sound bar or things like that.

Availability to others: this is a deliberate behaviour aimed at preserving one's 'self' in relation to others.

Fears for me. In fact, the first time you telework, you're so scared sometimes that they'll call and I'll have gone to make myself something to eat or go to the toilet. You're afraid you won't be reachable even though it lasts five seconds, you know. Those were the fears. So that it would be badly perceived

6- Field feedback

Anticipation linked to receiving a message: rather rare, it is only possible when you know someone's activity well. This anticipation is more related to a professional task than to teleworking.

Yes, sometimes you could anticipate a message from a colleague. But it's not an activity that's premeditated. In fact, we generally know with our colleagues what time each of them logs on, we have habits in practice, we know that some people log on later, some earlier. Some people tend to work evenings

Anticipating technical risk: this is behaviour aimed at preventing the risks associated with the use of digital devices.

The main fear, particularly for my generation. It's digital-related fears. In fact, before confinement, very few people teleworked. We did it a little before we left, where we had headsets so that we could use the telephony, communication and meeting software with the programmes we had been given, but we did that and we learned a little on the job and as we were able to

6- Field feedback

Technical tool as a means of anticipation: In this case, the digital tool itself is used upstream to carry out an action that will be carried out in the future: for example, email.

Sometimes I finish my day at 10 or 11pm and I'm not going to send an email at that time of day. He's potentially going to read it, so you programme it to arrive at 7.30am the next day or 8am. There are certain systems that do this, such as Outlook or Zimbra.

Anticipation when speaking at a meeting: this involves preparing the arguments/speech for the meeting in advance.

When you speak, when you see people and they listen to you, you have to prepare what you're going to say without forgetting anything. This is more difficult than in a face-to-face meeting. You have to summarise what you're going to say and, above all, sometimes you have to use the opportunity to speak to express your agreement or disagreement with what has been said before.

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7- Conclusion

Based on these previous examples, we will use a questionnaire to determine whether there is a link between anticipation and communication.



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