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AUTHOR'S NOTE

M. Giannini has written the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th sections; D. Minervini has written the 4th section.

Diffusion of New Technologies

- 1 The diffusion of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) has massive effects on society and economy. According to Manuel Castells (2002), we are presently at a crossroad as concerns the development of human societies. The constant flow of information gives a reticular structure to society ; lifetime is being modified, daily space reorganized, the nature of social relations transformed.
- 2 The technological innovations modifying our usual experiences of time and space also act on the social relations that are present in the organization of work. In the previous industrial period, the rationalization of production has standardized the working time and limited the working space within the borders of firms. Now, as new concepts of production are applied to the organization of work in the context of a worldwide competition, working time is referred to in a wider working place. Time and space are, in effect, elements of a global system of production. Working time is scattered over traditional workplaces and working places are dislocated by working time.
- 3 In new organizations of work, therefore, new parameters have arisen for the management of corporate efficiency and modalities of control over economic and social development. The relationship between enterprises and markets loosens the institutionalized frontiers and it is the place for new, much less sure and firmly fixed

relations of production. In this scenario of global economy and technological networks, social relations appear to be very fragmented and fluctuating.

- 4 In other terms, new technologies widen the opportunities for competition between firms in world markets as well as for employees in a world system of jobs. Firms of any size, small or big, local or multinational, are able to regard markets as a network continually absorbing their products and outputs. They can get benefits from different and far-away markets but they rapidly need to come to terms with transnational economic and cultural flows. Also employees needing to be at the same time in different and far-away places get benefits from the new ICT that shortens distances but this also creates interferences between various cultural institutions and labor markets.
- 5 However, both employers and employees, who want to reap those benefits, need to transfer the dialogical scheme, strictly connected to the new technologies, into the users relations. McLuhan (1964) was defined as the “prophet of the global village” because he wrote that distance will no longer be a problem with modern ICT, not only because of the multidimensional and transnational character, but also because of emphasized reciprocity which is integrated in the idea of communication. Even though it was in a perspective of social harmony, he saw technological networks as the opportunity of a “mass production”, an instantaneous and all-inclusive meeting of producers, workers and consumers. In other terms, he saw cooperation as the key character of people who get involved with new technology.
- 6 Even in the first industrial society, cooperation has been considered fundamental in order to regulate organizations, and technologies were seen as supports of asymmetric and hierarchical relations. Barnard (1938), with a careful observation more than an exceptional far-sightedness, pointed out that the cooperatives relations between organizational actors constituted the base of the best business and efficiency. It is in this context that cooperative relations between managers and workers have been institutionalized.
- 7 Now, technological innovations in industry claim dialogical relations. Most of social actors acknowledge that cooperation is an important prerequisite for the economic and social benefits that can be reaped from the implementation, learning and use of ICT. But work culture is still very closely tied to the long and deeply held tradition of industrialism, whilst cooperation needs to be regulated in new institutions, while sharing new values and new parameters for immaterial jobs and cognitive skills (Levy 1990 ; Himanen 2001).
- 8 Work organizations are only now moving towards the post-industrial stage of development, the impact of which on work may still be too early to estimate. In any case the change is already apparent in new ways of organizing work and in new practices introduced in organizations. Telework is one good example of such changes and it is to the analysis of this form of work organization that we now turn.

Telework

- 9 Telework is one of the most important new practices which arises from the use of the new ICT in organizations. Telework reduces distances. It creates a flow that intertwines working life and daily private life, roles and cultures that were previously separated. Business strategies and teleworkers face new parameters of time and space. Economic

sectors and national frontiers are redefined, as well as working place, workdays and holidays. Social and economic relations between the social actors involved are modified.

- 10 The analyses that deal with telework are numerous, particularly from the mid-eighties to the end of the nineties. They are often disseminated in the international literature on transformations of jobs and organizational innovations for competitiveness¹. Nevertheless, it is more and more obvious that teleworking, both in homes and in satellite offices, part-time or full-time, does not mean only "to work at a distance" even if this definition directly associates jobs to new technologies. The most important research projects at an international level and in Italy show that the development of telework is associated with the new structuration of time and space, and the practices involve diverse professional profiles and mainly flexible workers.
- 11 In Italy, the sociological debate takes into consideration the European targets and regulation of teleworking², which has been promoted in companies and public administration in order to benefit from productivity gains, increased flexibility, and cost savings. In the European Reports it is said that the general public will also reap benefits in the form of reduced pollution levels, traffic congestion and energy consumption. Employees will get benefits, in the form of more flexible working arrangements, which will be particularly beneficial for those tied to the home ; for people in remote locations, the narrowing of distances would help cohesion. Nevertheless, in the same European Reports it is indicated that problems arising from decreased opportunities for social contact and promotion would have to be addressed ; also, impact on labor legislation and social security provisions would need to be assessed.
- 12 A large part of the sociological debate has found that problems are not balanced by benefits. The teleworker is found suffering from social isolation (Bianco 1990), decreased opportunities for promotion, lack of training to organize a self-sufficient and technological job (Giannini, Imperato 2000). It has been noticed that unions have not been active in negotiating agreements on telework (Di Nicola 1998), so the legal protection and social security for teleworkers has not been developed (Sbordone 1997).
- 13 Telework is seen as widely used for the flexibilization of workers rather than to reconcile people with their life. It seems to be part of a general move towards greater variability and flexibility in the way work is organized. It is seen as the elimination of the spatial and legal distinction between home and work, as a strategy to deprive workers of every possibility to find refuge away from the work place, to encourage longer working hours, to oppose trade unions and finally to once again relegate women to the four walls of their home (Cepollaro 1986, Di Nicola 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2003).
- 14 In the Italian analysis and research, telework has been generally presented as a composite world of different professional profiles and skills, people of different generation and gender. An insight into this world has been sufficient to see a polarization of workers into two groups, the one including high skilled and autonomous people, the other low qualified and without legal protection (Di Nicola 1996a, 2003 ; Giannini, Imperato 2000). Most sociologists are also convinced that good practices of teleworking imply the pre-requisite of cooperation between social and organizational actors.

- 15 Indeed, while the previous cooperative model of industrial relations is resistant to change, the enduring little attention to telework in legal regulations and collective bargaining³ could be a sign of weakly institutionalized cooperation. In this context, practices of teleworking are performing in a different manner from the rhetorical model of social and individual benefits for a job at a distance in innovative firms.

Questions on telework

- 16 As we have seen, the implementation of telework in industry implies technological and organizational innovations as well as social and cultural changes. Some rising questions concern the social actors involved in innovative organizations of work.
- 17 The first question can be summed up as the point of view of employers, who require competitiveness, productivity gains and flexibility. Telework could support the attainment of these corporate goals, but it is not clear that it will save labor costs. In effect, it is found that corporate costs are paid for investments and safety when there is dislocation of a workplace, and there are also costs related to managers learning new ways of controlling the work done. Employers may also have to assume social costs for the change in the relations with employees and unions in order to regulate telework.
- 18 The second question focuses on the point of view of the employees, who have to change working place, as well as acquire new ways of accomplishing their job. As telework often takes place in homes, changes also involve the family relations. Employees pay costs, which depend on their labor position and contract in a legal and industrial relations system, and this cost consists in lack of promotion and recognition of their abilities, few opportunities of learning new technology use and new modalities of communication. Additional costs are paid if teleworking implies flexible and unprotected jobs, social isolation and, for women, traditional relegation to their home.
- 19 The third emerging question is crucial. It concerns the construction of dialogical and cooperative relations in order to implement teleworking practices.
- 20 In other terms, the question concerns what has been called “intelligent cooperation” (Accornero, 1997). Most researchers see that in innovative organizations, management and workers develop cooperative relations based upon loyalty, confidence, trust, sharing values and aims⁴. Cooperation is a process which is influenced by trust, while this may imply a calculative attitude, for future benefits (Axelrod 1984, 1992), or emotional dimensions (Hollis Akerlof). In the innovative firms, frequent information and communication, lack of temporal limits, the size of the social network, the necessary self-sufficiency and independence in accomplishing jobs, are characteristics promoting trust and cooperation (Sydow 2001).
- 21 In the organizations of work, communitarian values, as social trust and reciprocity (Brint 1994), are inputs for a process of cooperation, which can be institutionalized in a framework of legal rules and collective bargaining. Following Giddens’ approach on social practices ordered across space and time, cooperation is institutionalized in formal rules whereas the relation between individual trust and social system trust is recursive (Giddens 1984, 1990). The process of institutionalized cooperation, therefore, should assume the communitarian values and at the same time set a frame of reference for individual cooperative relations.

- 22 Indeed, in the specific case of telework that shortens distance between organization of work and organization of private life, cooperation looks at wider issues of economic and social concern. Sharing values, trust and cooperation involves different actors, which recursively act in different social relations and different cultural frames of reference. It can be hypothesized that in a world of technological and organizational innovations, employers should increase corporate competition, flexibility and cost savings, employees should improve quality of their work and life, unions should defend social interests, protect workers, mainly those running the risk of being marginalized.
- 23 For the most part, the sociological debate on the implementation of telework in innovative organizations has emphasized utilitarian models, trying to identify benefits or disadvantages for both the employers and employees⁵. This approach has prevented from going deep into the analysis of elements and modalities of cooperative relations as prerequisites of the ICT use in changing job relations. A good level of cooperation has been taken into consideration in the analyses of self-sufficiency, as a condition for attaining different interests, and empowerment of workers as an institutionalizing aim.
- 24 The research project, in which we have been engaged and on which we report here, focuses on the cooperative relations and related values in a context where telework is implemented in different firms. Size and economic sector as well as type of employees are elements considered in the analysis of teleworking experiences. The discussion on results will contribute to the argumentation developed above.

The project research: aims, case studies, and results

Transferring Zanussi Best practice.

- 25 In the 90's, the large firm Zanussi s.p.a. experimented telework in the context of implementation of positive actions to encourage women's access in the labor market to improve their working conditions. This experiment was received positively by the European Commission who defined it a "Best Practice" of technological and organizational innovation.
- 26 Among to the strong points that characterize the Zanussi Best Practice, the elevated level of trust in the cooperative relations between the enterprise's actors could be considered as the most important one. On the one hand, management has redefined production control to adapt it to work that can be done externally and far from the main building. On the other hand, the company unions, with their preoccupation for equal opportunity, have promoted the attainment of a formal agreement on the regulation of the telework experimentation. These cooperative relations, therefore, have apparently been essential for the implementation of telework.
- 27 We present here the results of four case studies realized in various organizational contexts that differ in dimension, activity sector and territorial location. The research objective was to implement the Zanussi Best Practice in each one of these enterprises. The four organizations involved in the research were : a small-medium enterprise in the service industry in the province of Ancona, a public local health company in Bologna, a large firm operating in the north and the centre of Italy and a big food industry in Rome.

- 28 In each case study, the formal and informal cooperative relations among the workers are analyzed to show how the company unions and the management have created the conditions necessary to implement telework. The case studies^[1] show a relation between the typology of cooperation and organizational dimension ; this relation is defined by the specificity of the business contexts analyzed.

The small-medium enterprise in the service sector⁷

- 29 C.N.A. Service is a company belonging to C.N.A. (National Confederation of Handicraft and of SMEs), an important institutional actor that provides services and support to enterprises in the province of Ancona. Specifically, C.N.A. Service offers legal aid for fiscal, labor regulation and counseling for the planning and start-up of new enterprises. It operates in the province of Ancona with a network of 19 offices, with 116 employees, of which 93 are female.
- 30 These enterprises have based their developmental strategy more on high intensity labor than on expansive technological innovation. Because of the globalization of markets, these enterprises face new challenges and the need for new productive strategies. The transfer of *Zanussi Best Practice* constituted an answer to this need for innovation for C.N.A. Service. This enterprise, actually, was particularly interested in the introduction of telework, considering the latter as an opportunity to redefine and to improve the organizational business asset.
- 31 This case study⁸ has analyzed the specific relational context of the C.N.A. Service and, more generally, the small-medium enterprises. In this enterprise, face-to-face relationships, more than formal and routing ones, seemed decisive for the functioning of the organisation and the success of the enterprise.
- 32 Empirical results showed that this informal relationship was characterized both in manager-employee interactions and in management-company union interactions. Actually, the absence of high internal conflicts and impersonal relations in enterprise-employee relationships favored a consensual process rather than a process based on strict procedures for the start of experimentation.
- 33 In this way, a female part-time employee responsible for the bookkeeping was chosen to experiment working at home. Direct relationship, thus, facilitated the cooperation among enterprise personnel, and it is due to this that the experimentation of a new telework practice was made possible.
- 34 Another important question was highlighted in this case study. The experimentation confirmed a hypothesis largely shared in sociological literature which sees in telework the realization of an important function of social sustainability. Indeed, the high organizational flexibility of telework could be applied in the labor market in the case of people with disabilities making the continuity of work activity possible in conditions of unplanned emergencies and necessity. In the case of C.N.A. Service the problem of a female employee who needed a long period of recovery was solved through the experimental introduction of telework.

The Administrative Department of the Local Health Unit ⁹

- 35 The Administrative Department of Ausl (Local Health Unit Company) could be considered as a small public organization belonging to a network of health structures. This department is the administrative centre of four hospitals and other health structures present in the South Bologna area. Some 27 per cent of the Emilia Romagna resident population rely on this network of structures ; this population is characterized by a steady growth rate due in part to the presence of immigrant citizens. Thus, this context appears to be changing and dynamic ; and it imposes a constant re-organization effort in order to face a continually evolving health service demand.
- 36 The willingness of management to introduce organizational innovations that could make the strict bureaucratic protocols of some functions/tasks more flexible and effective appeared coherent with the opportunity to introduce telework.
- 37 Furthermore, in this case study¹⁰ the project of transferring the Zanussi Best Practice is highly relevant from the point of view of gender, given the female predominance of the AUSL working population and the high employment of part-time workers which are often confronted with the balancing of working time and similar needs.
- 38 So, as it happened in Zanussi Best Practice, telework was used to counter the career stagnation phenomena that characterize the career of women who are confronted with the “double burden” of labour market and domestic work.
- 39 This research was characterized by continuous feedback between management and workers on the actual improvement opportunities concerning both organizational and working process effectiveness aspects and working conditions.
- 40 The case study results showed some relevant elements that allowed the construction of a relational cooperative mood informally ruled by inter-personal trust. Such elements included frequent meetings during the phase of enterprise organization analysis, and a constant information and communicational process among all organization personnel on the research activities. Moreover, the collective process of planning and design of the experimental telework practice was important.
- 41 A decisive input into the realization of this experimentation came from the presence of norms ruling telework in the Public Administration and defining worker tutelage. Under these conditions, a female employee who experimented telework was assessed. She was a part-time physiotherapist who asked to experiment telework because of health reasons. In this specific case, a home-working, in-building work schedule was designed, and tasks were considerably redefined. Indeed, these tasks were transformed into management and organizational functions of the physiotherapy health service and they represented a professional and learning development occasion.
- 42 From an operative and organizational point of view, the presence of highly computerized communicative processes and procedures indubitably facilitated the application of telework from a technical point of view. Eventually, thanks to a rather innovative business culture, telework gave way to a major enhancement in the management and assessment of human resources.
- 43 Therefore this case study highlighted a technical-organizational innovation ; indeed, telework could be executed in a small-medium company if the inter-personal “trustee cooperation” among the organization’s personnel is supported by a normative environment that ensures teleworker tutelage and guarantees. The introduction of

telework met fewer constraints in this context, which was already socialized to computerization ; in this context, the technical applicability of a telework practice is higher and the cultural resistance to technological innovation is lower.

The big enterprise in the trade sector¹¹

- 44 The Coop Toscana-Lazio is a big enterprise operating in the retail distribution of food and non-food stuffs. This enterprise is part of a network of 52 points of sale of different dimension in which about 3,000 workers are employed. The Group is constituted of about 500,000 associates and it is characterized by a notable financial stability and good development perspectives. This enterprise is part of “Lega delle Cooperative”, a large cooperative movement whose aim is to develop a cooperative system and to strengthen its ethic and values. In this enterprise the female population of workers is of 58 per cent, a little less than half of whom are part-time employees.
- 45 This research was realized by the business function of the Direction and Personnel Management where 313 employees work, 98 of which are female.
- 46 The organizational context analysis performed in this case study¹² showed the presence of a deep rooted representative union. This collective seemed particularly strong in regulating work, performing two-layer bargaining, through the cooperative distribution of the National Collective Contract and through an enterprise supplementary Contract. These contracts ruled several specific aspects such as labor organization, working time, vacations, mobility, health tutelage, equal opportunities and hires.
- 47 Thus, formal bargaining regulates relationships between the union, the enterprise and the workers. Yet it emerged that the cooperation among enterprise actors didn't develop only in formal terms. Indeed, the research highlighted a participation-based enterprise relationship system deeply rooted in the cooperative movement culture. Norms and working contracts ensured a steady comparison and counseling process concerning enterprise living trends and labor organization among social enterprise personnel. In this way, despite the large organization dimension, enterprise personnel could interact through a relation system allowing anyone to express their views.
- 48 On the enterprise side, the will to develop human resource management was observed. Particularly, great care was given to take advantage of employee qualities, personal skills. Most of the enterprise paid attention to vertical segregation of women, and hence to the scarce presence of them within enterprise management or high-responsibility positions. Some policies related to work-life balance and working times were updated. This was done through an array of differentiated tools : leaves for assistance and health motivations, part-time for both women and men raising children in their very first years, and part-time reversibility.
- 49 Therefore the Best Practice transferring project appeared quite consistent with the enterprise work-life balance or reconciliation politics ; this was seen as a way of counteracting the vertical marginality phenomena of female representation in the enterprise through telework experimentation. In fact, the enterprise tried to accommodate the needs of a female worker employed in the personnel area who risked losing her work because of a move to a very distant residence.

- 50 This case study showed clearly that telework is technically feasible for high-content professional profiles. The female employee experimented a mixed flexible formula of telework, that is a combination between mobile working, home working and on-site work. This peculiar formula allowed the coordination of the female employee's working activity thanks to both computer technology and direct relation while on-site.
- 51 However, it was clear that the level of innovation and organizational flexibility was proportional to personnel openness to a cultural shift concerning the human resource management and work organization activities. In the case of Coop Toscana-Lazio, undoubtedly the particular cooperative enterprise culture positively influenced the experimentation of telework.
- 52 The research showed another major aspect. The results confirmed that telework represents a good opportunity for reconciliation between living and working time, hence it is an optimal tool to counter the female segregation phenomena. Yet this case study also showed that "critical" situations that can be solved via telework do not pertain only to gender. Indeed, in this specific case, a problem due to the excessive distance between worker residence and enterprise was solved. Actually, the state of urgency was not due to gender but to a broader theme of conciliation between professional activities and personal living needs.

The big enterprise in the food sector¹³

- 53 Sagit SpA is one of the most important companies in the ice cream and frozen food industry; it belongs to the Unilever Anglo-Dutch multinational group. The case study was realized in the Sagit building of Rome in which the administrative functions are done ; the establishment counts some 450 employees, of which 135 are women.
- 54 The research was performed through quantitative and qualitative methodologies¹⁴. Different aspects were analysed : the relationship between telework introduction and context variables, direction and control models of the enterprise, the enterprise philosophy and its particular organizational culture, the workers' sense of belonging to the organization and their perception of telework.
- 55 Since the early phases of the research, and during the first investigative interviews, it emerged that the relationship with unions was characterized by internal strife and a poor overall interest towards the realization of a telework practice as a tool aimed at enhancing the working conditions.
- 56 With regard to this, the enterprise management initially showed an open attitude towards the possibility of a technical and organizational innovation such as telework. However, during the research this project seemed less and less feasible, because of a disjointed union front. In this context, the enterprise seemed to consider abandoning the innovation process, afraid of its consequences in respect to union strife.
- 57 The lack of an institutional regulation on telework at both the legislative and work bargaining level also characterized this case. These were the main causes for the failing of the Best Practice transfer project.
- 58 Yet this case study is very interesting for its organizational specificities and for results collected in the different phases of the research.
- 59 Through the analysis of context variables and organizational model, the telework potential of each task was determined. To this end, a quantitative methodology already

used in Zanussi experiments was adopted; with this methodology, frequency and typology of the activities of each task were evaluated.

- 60 From a merely technical and organizational point of view, it emerged that all tasks were teleworkable, except for those pertaining to maintenance. Indeed, telework is a very flexible working modality, and it may fit different organizational contexts. The telework evaluation showed that both highly standardized or little qualified activities and customer-supplier ones are potentially teleworkable. Moreover the study concerning enterprise organization proved that the most teleworkable task/functions were those characterized by a high decision-making autonomy. Thus, telework introduction is more likely in flexible organizational contexts that allow an interaction not only based on hierarchical relationships.
- 61 Competence of workers in managing the communicative process requiring the use of cognitive and communicative tools is of great importance. As much importance is given to physical space conditions in which one teleworks. Indeed, by no means should the home working solution be taken for granted since a comfortable place is needed to telework, and this place doesn't always match with one's private home environment.
- 62 The main issue pointed out by the research is that of communicative flows involved in telework. These flows could either be of the horizontal kind, that is the relationship among colleagues, or of the vertical kind, related to hierarchical control. Telework could be realized when hierarchical control shifts from a production-based direction model process to an evaluation based on goals and tasks.
- 63 This case study's results allow some more considerations. Telework introduction decisively depends on enterprise culture and particularly on human resource management policy. In the case of a large enterprise such as Sagit, internal problems tend to be auto-ruled within the enterprise itself, while the relationship towards the external environment is characterized by a strict evaluation and control strategy of variables influencing the achievement of enterprise targets. In order to support this organizational balance, Sagit tends to valorize and strengthen the worker awareness of valuable production for the enterprise. Management tries to establish an identity and a strong sense of belonging rather than boosting the development of worker decision and operative autonomy on a coordinate interaction of the different enterprise sub-group.
- 64 In this way the enterprise attempts to bind workers to their productivity and to the achievement of the enterprise targets. This human resource management policy appears inconsistent with typical market dynamics, which aim at centralizing decisional power rather than promoting a decisional "local awareness" within productive places. Cooperative relationship systems seem very weak, improperly formalized and union interventions are not sufficiently incisive, at least in the telework introduction project.
- 65 Technological innovation and other flexible forms of work different from stable and safeguarded work require a system of participative enterprise relationships capable of making the link between global enterprise goals and employee instances. This is achievable only in innovative and flexible organizational contexts, which could overcome the hierarchical model of decision-making processes. Instead, the informative system detected in Sagit seems to constitute a gauge for management predominance in decision-making.

- 66 Research results inspire interesting reflections arising from the employee point of view. One of these concerns gender. Telework isn't based on "gender", since the subjective dimensions that characterize its advantages, i.e. the autonomy in time management and the opportunity of a comfortable environment, aren't gendered.
- 67 In the case of autonomy, this possibility seems to be more appreciated by younger women, given the fact that they have recently had access to tasks characterized by a high decision-making content and self-learning processes.
- 68 As to comfortable environments, the research highlights the fact that home working solutions may cause the return of women to isolated and secluded environments rather than constituting an improvement for their working conditions. For these reasons a telework practice should be characterized by the willingness of employees, who have to value the working conditions of the telework station outside the enterprise building, and its reversibility, that is the possibility of reintegrating work on site if desired¹⁵.
- 69 Eventually, telework could represent a solution for ecological issues deriving from pollution but this evaluation needs to take into account difficulties that workers meet reaching their work stations, while it seems more influenced by individual ideologies and evaluations.
- 70 Thus, a clearly complex and problematic organizational context emerged. The numerous variables and the complexity of the aspects involved in telework introduction in a context such as Sagit suggest the need for clear rules favoring the regulation of cooperation among enterprise personnel. Conversely, an institutional regulation was detected; it derives neither from legislative nor from the collective bargaining on telework, but rather from an enterprise culture which favors internal forms of communication and control aimed at sharing enterprise targets related to the labor force. Telework requires flexible and participative organizational innovation.

Discussion

- 71 The research results have demonstrated that cooperation is an important condition to implement telework in organizations, while these vary with culture and size of firms and also with contract conditions and autonomy in work. Some theoretical findings can be discussed with the caution that any generalization requires.
- 72 The first finding is that small organizations appear to encourage the "social trustee cooperation". This arises in situations of proximity, narrow control and personal evaluation, and requires sharing values. These situations are similar to the basis of the personal control, as defined by Woodward (1965). The informal and communitarian relations resist in firms as well in society (Akerlof 1970, Mutti 1998), whilst the "face-to-face" increases reciprocity, loyalty and trust (Brint 1994 ; Bagnasco 1999).
- 73 In fact, in the case study of the small firm in the service sector, telework has been implemented by transforming a simple administrative job (book-keeping). The ways in which jobs are organized seem to be linked to the development of SMEs in the global economy. Also, social actors' culture make them accept telework as a way of getting over gender differences, whilst the woman who opts for telework sees here a possibility to combine working life and private daily life more easily. The teleworking practice arises in a face-to face relation and in a situation of "social trustee cooperation".

- 74 The case study of the Health office can be considered as a small size organization in the public services sector ; it is particular, because a law protecting workers regulates teleworking in this context. The transformation of the physiotherapist into a teleworker giving physiotherapy treatments seems to be linked to flexible and self-sufficient jobs that the organization has defined. The managers think that distance is no problem for controlling and evaluating jobs ; the physiotherapist finds equilibrium between working life and private daily life. It should be added that the teleworking practice arises in a frame of both “institutional cooperation” and “social trustee cooperation”.
- 75 The second finding is that collective bargaining usually regulates industrial and social relations in big organizations. The “institutional cooperation” is a source for technological innovations, communication codes and parameters of jobs control and evaluation. This type of institutional regulation fits the current society where contractual relations overcome communitarian relations, and trust includes social rules (Giddens 1984, 1990). The process of cooperation is more properly a recursive result of calculative trust (Axelrood 1992, Picchierri 2001).
- 76 The cases of the two big enterprises, the one in the trade sector (goods distribution), the other in the food sector (administration), show different processes in the way to experiment teleworking practices. In the first case, the employee, who is a highly qualified and well-positioned woman, asks for telework. The corporate management accepts and finds it compatible with the specific work requirements of self-sufficiency, flexibility and responsibility. In the trade sector, collective bargaining set a system of rules for telework. In this sector, unions and employers’ relations are traditionally cooperative. The corporate culture of cooperation seems to act as a frame for the managers and the employee relations in supporting the teleworking practice.
- 77 In the big private enterprise, instead, both unions and employers have never reached collective agreements to regulate telework. The institutionalized social relations seem to be incapable of regulating telework as a form of technological and organizational innovation. The management is ambiguous ; some of the unionists make the experimentation of telework difficult ; the commission of gender equality seems to be almost indifferent. Industrial communication system, traditional managerial ways of controlling and evaluating work, and traditional labor unions relations define work.
- 78 This last case study demonstrates that corporate institutions function as a source of trust (Zucker 1986), and the recursive process of social relations in the trust system (Giddens 1984, 1990) can contribute to make cooperative relations re-embedded in the same institutionalized trust system. In this case, as culture and values are opposed to practicing work at a distance, the experiment of telework fails.

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NOTES

1. See among others: Forester (1989), Nilles (1992), Vv.Aa., (1994), Lallement (1990). In Italy, Ciborra, Maggiolini (1985), De Masi (1995), Borgna, Ceri, Failla (1993), Bianco (1990) and mainly Di Nicola, some of whose works are quoted in Bibliography.
2. See *Oil Report* (1990) ; *Bangemann Report and European Council Report* (1994) ; *Soete Report* (1996) ; *UNICE (Employers Association)-CES (Unions Conference) Agreements*, all quoted in Di Nicola (1996)
3. Late nineties in Italy, telework has been promoted by law for handicapped people in public administrations, and has been introduced in some private big companies, collective bargaining and agreements ; recently a framework of rules for collective bargaining has been implemented by most important trade unions and employers associations.
4. Amongst the vast literature on trust as a component of interaction system at individual and institutional levels we refer mainly to Zucker (1977), who distinguished three sources of trust : process, characteristic, institution, and Giddens (1984, 1990), who started by this distinction to elaborate the disembedding and reembedding concepts in the analyses of the recursive relations between individual trust and system trust. Following these authors, Sydow (2001) has pointed out that trust is an input influencing actors' relations but also an output of the context. Therefore, the characteristics influencing trust and cooperation are frequent information and communication, the lack of temporal limits, the size of social network, the self-sufficiency and dependence in accomplishing a task. Particularly, for trust as prerequisite of cooperation see Gambetta (1988), who defines it as a resource generating within cooperation process. For calculative trust for future benefits see Axelrod (1984, 1992), while for emotional trust see Hollis (1998) and Akerloff (1970). See also Kern (2001), Sabel (1992), Mutti (1998), the last author affirming that trust is ambiguous, whether utilitarian or identitarian logic, as connected to a result of a period of cooperation between rational actors.
5. Di Nicola (1999) presents a complete list.
6. For further details on case studies, see Giannini (2006)
7. See the case study in David and Giovagnoli (2006).
8. During the first phase of the investigation, tasks/functions were selected and evaluated. The questionnaire including quantitative variables is similar to that of the experiment in Zanussi Enterprise. Experimental teleworkers were volunteer employees. The training lasted one month.
9. See the case study in Sbordone (2006).
10. The research project started by the analysis of the organization. All the employees were informed about telework and the *Zanussi Best Practice* project. The questionnaire was distributed after the teleworking practice had been projected. At last, the work experience was monitored and evaluated.
11. See the case study in La Salandra (2006)

12. The evaluation methodology of tasks, as provided by the Zanussi Best Practice, was adjusted. Once the organization and high professional tasks analyzed, the experimentation of telework practice was planned and executed. A union agreement, called “open experimentation”, took place.

13. See the case study in Giannini, Minervini, Quinto (2006).

14. A structured questionnaire to employees, interviews to privileged witnesses in the enterprise, a focus group on a sample of employees (by age, gender, level and function) have been used as investigation techniques.

15. These aspects are explicitly regulated in the Inter-federal Agreement (9 June 2004) that acknowledges the guidelines in the first European Agreement on Telework, which was signed in 2002 between Etuc, Unice, Ueapme e Ceep (Bortone Cimaglia 2006).

ABSTRACTS

The diffusion of ICT has massive effects on society and economy. The impact of the new technologies on work is apparent in new ways of organizing work and in new practices introduced in organizations. Telework is one good example within these. In this paper, we present the results of a recent research project on telework, in which we have been engaged. Differently from the approach referring to a model of benefits for economic and social actors, our hypothesis is that the dialogical scheme is strictly connected to new technologies and cooperation is an important dimension of teleworking. In our study, cooperation is found performed both in social relations between employers and employees and in institutionalized relations between managers and unions. Although the two forms of cooperation, here called “social trustee cooperation” and “institutional cooperation”, are often thought as prerequisites of “best practices” of new working arrangements, our case studies demonstrate that cooperation has not always arisen that make possible to implement practices of teleworking. By focusing on cooperative relations, the results of different case studies in industry and in the service sector are discussed, thus intending to contribute to the development of sociological debate on telework.

La diffusion des TIC a des effets majeurs sur la société et sur l'économie. L'effet des nouvelles technologies sur le travail est évident dans les transformations de l'organisation du travail et des pratiques dans les organisations. Le télétravail est un bon exemple de ces nouvelles pratiques. Le présent texte expose les résultats d'un projet de recherche récemment mené sur le télétravail. Contrairement à l'approche qui présente un modèle d'avantages pour les acteurs économiques et sociaux, notre hypothèse est que le schème dialogique est lié aux nouvelles technologies et que la coopération est une dimension importante du télétravail. Dans notre étude, la coopération est observée à la fois dans les relations sociales entre employeurs et employés, et dans l'institutionnalisation de relations entre managers et syndicats. Bien que les deux formes de coopération, appelées ici *coopération sociale* et *coopération institutionnelle*, soient souvent considérées comme des prérequis aux « meilleures pratiques » en matière de nouvelles organisations du travail, nos études de cas montrent que la coopération n'est pas toujours au rendez-vous, ce qui rend difficile la mise en place des pratiques de télétravail. Nous discutons des résultats de diverses études de cas dans l'industrie et les services en nous centrant sur les relations de coopération et ce, afin de contribuer au débat sociologique sur le télétravail.

INDEX

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