8. Assessing the new world of work

This is the translation into English of Chapter 7.

8.1. The new world of work as concept

8.1.1.   The new world of work is a totality

While there is considerable vagueness concerning what precisely the new world of work (NWW) is, and in practice there are almost as many definitions or visions as there are applications, there are a number of combined effects that make NWW a coherent whole. As a result, NWW can be a solution to multiple issues that arise at the same time.

When defining NWW, the emphasis is placed on autonomy and freedom as basic concepts. The rest follows from these. In practice, its starting point is principally teleworking and office layout. The implementation of these results in a new organisational model or organisational structure.

Each case we examined reflected a different adaptation of NWW. Teleworking is sometimes an essential component (KBC), is sometimes fully implemented (VRT), is intentionally restricted (Eneco, Unizo) or we see a differentiated application depending on the position (FPS Social Security).

Working in an open office is something no one chooses for its own sake. However, with a good interior architect, it can be 'OK' in practice for most employees. An open office does allow the company to work in a much smaller surface area, promotes interaction to a certain extent, and makes it possible to also foresee other types of areas with the money saved. These other areas can offer an activity-based office layout which can be better than closed offices for other aspects of work (possibilities to consult without disturbing others, creative spaces, meeting places). It also provides companies with great flexibility to distribute working areas differently in the case of growth or a change of focus in activities, without the expense of moving.

Teleworking is the key element in this. It sometimes serves simply as a bargaining chip to compensate for the loss of concentration and quiet in an open office. Sometimes it is a starting point to meet the demands of employees, sometimes it is an option offered to free up more workplaces. It is technically possible in all the examples studied, and possibilities are increasingly being sought to also convert location-dependent tasks into tasks that can be done remotely. Nevertheless, the application of teleworking varies strongly: from considerable (up to three days per week at FPS Social Security) through limited (Unizo) to hardly used in practice (VRT). When teleworking is not fully

implemented, this is sometimes for technical reasons (VRT) or because importance is placed on internal communication (Unizo).

The binding element between teleworking and the office environment is the technology. The technical infrastructure that must be built for the workplace components (including clean desk) and teleworking is largely the same, and comes down to the complete digitisation of the document flow and associated technologies such as follow-me printers. In practice, the difference between working in a shared workplace and working outside the office frequently is only the Internet connection required to log into the company network.

We were unable to determine the extent to which digitisation of the document flow impacts the substance of the tasks, but a fundamental re-allocation of tasks was only required in very few cases. When such a re-allocation was required (VRT, Unizo, to a certain extent FPS Social Security), this meant an important transition for the organisation, but this was rather an occasion to also implement NWW immediately, rather than a consequence of NWW. The most important change with respect to work organisation is leadership style, with leaders being expected to place the focus on the result rather than on the working hours.

Here again the space was able to help. Several organisations indicated that closed offices make it possible to hide, literally and figuratively. In an open office, it is clear to all what people are doing, and one can expect much more social control on the meaningful use of working time.

8.1.2. Fragmented scientific research

While the New World of Work is a whole, there are quite a few constituent parts related to various – if not all – aspects of the work: organisation, interaction, terms of employment, working hours, working conditions. Scientific research can be found on some of these aspects. However, little is known concerning the effects of interaction. The concept is too broad to be scientifically examined as a single concept.

Because of this, many uncertainties remain. What are the long-term effects on social relationships? Is there a form of auto-selection taking place in which those with a personality that is not well-suited to the typical layout of an NWW office leave or avoid these companies or organisations altogether? Are advantages and disadvantages indeed in balance?

8.1.3. New or old companies and offices

The fact that NWW entails a specific work environment is not only clear, it frequently is also the intention (Unizo, Eneco). NWW imposes a certain dynamic that contrasts with ideas that have become entrenched or long-term stability. This makes it interesting as a concept and gives it a certain attractiveness. However, this new culture is not for everyone. This consequence is clear to most companies. Sometimes it is also implicitly the aim. The departure of employees who do not feel at home in such an environment is taken for granted (Unizo, …)

or employees are selected based on characteristics that are in line with NWW (Eneco). For government institutions (FPS Social Security) or companies with a long history (KBC, Port of Ghent) this is not so obvious. Consequently, in these situations, the implementation of NWW proceeds more slowly, and greater importance is attached to participation and/or involving personnel in its development.

The fact that temporal flexibility and working independent of location are attractive options for candidate employees is undoubtedly the case for a substantial group of those in the labour market; it remains to be seen whether this also applies to working in an open office.

8.1.4. Generations: not applicable

NWW is often promoted as the environment in which Generation Y loves to work. The argument goes like this: generation Y as age group is becoming scarce in the labour market (which based on projections might not necessarily be problematic) and have a specific set of expectations that employers must meet to remain attractive. From a scientific perspective, questions can be raised concerning the division into generations, but since they are often seen as reality by managers, consultants and researchers, they are relevant in any case.

In our examples, considerations concerning generation did occasionally surface. Only at the Port of Ghent has a forecast been made of the evolution in personnel, and it was found that there indeed will be a need for a preferably younger inflow within a few years. Eneco is a very special case, because as a young company it primarily employs young people. FPS Social Security cites the generation issue as an important motivation for introducing NWW.

Generation is not an issue in most of the cases: with one exception, no analysis was made of generations on the work floor. It also was not observed or experienced that young people request aspects of NWW or that they have a greater preference than others for teleworking or other aspects. The desire to work independent of time and place probably has more to do with commuting distance and the nature of the work than with age.

8.1.5. Usefulness and relevance

Promoters of NWW sometimes propose it as a *pars-pro-toto*, a concept for which there are only benefits, concerning personnel policy, work-life balance, productivity and efficiency, sustainability, mobility, as well as employer attractiveness.

However, it is not always a bed of roses. A negative connotation exists among a part of the public and professional opinion. This is at least partially due to the use of the NWW concept as a peg on which to hang a change that is experienced as nothing more than a cost-saving measure. The savings on office space are frequently an 'offer you can't refuse'. If that turns out to be all there is, people feel like they were misled. In addition, companies that roll back a number of NWW

principles easily make the news (Yahoo!, HP, BMW, …). The occasions for this are diverse, ranging from taking a creative new start in a company in difficulty, to protecting the work-life balance of employees. The disadvantages of open offices are also eagerly described in the general press. Even in the Netherlands, the birthplace of NWW, it is noted that there is a less positive atmosphere surrounding NWW.

8.1.6. Productivity

Productivity is not an issue as such; but what is an issue is the effectiveness of the organisation in achieving greater communication and consultation. Productivity is measured almost nowhere.

Perhaps the most important productivity gains are achieved through the analysis of work processes and document flows conducted to optimise ICT before introducing NWW.

8.1.7. Triggers

There are a number of aspects that trigger NWW: an impending move, a cost-saving operation, and ICT.

The transition that accompanies the full implementation of NWW is significant. Furthermore, several aspects of the organisation are changed simultaneously, something that is necessary if the aim is to allow the various constituent parts to fit together and reinforce one another. Implementing NWW based only on a vision of the organisation, without breaking with other past habits, is almost impossible. Of all of our examples, the Port of Ghent is probably that facing the least urgency in the short term; hence we see a relatively slow, gradual introduction there. The best-known examples, such as FPS Social Security, Getronics and Unizo, all took place on the occasion of moving an office, which to be sure found its place in a larger vision of the organisation. Even at Eneco, a new company, a move was taking place, be it for a relatively small number of people.

This places NWW as a concept in a vulnerable position. It is always linked to a move, which sometimes results in significant cost-saving measures. This also appears to provide needed momentum to an organisational change. Because of this, NWW frequently is identified with these cost-saving measures: by employees as well as by project managers of other organisations who equate a move to a smaller office with NWW, even if this is misplaced.

8.1.8. Flextime, co-working

In the wake of NWW, there are also a number of other new approaches to work that are gaining in popularity, such as co-working. However, these focus more on the self-employed, who in this way are able to gain social contact and facilitate professional connections.

What we do see in the examples are the workplaces for visitors. In almost all cases (FPS Social Security, Getronics, Eneco, Unizo, Port of Ghent), visitors are given a place to work on site, for example before or after a meeting. These workplaces to be sure are not located among the employees themselves but usually in an attractive, furnished room close to the reception area. Not much use is made of these, but they are still fairly new. The idea does open up possibilities.

8.1.9. Implementation and project management

In many companies, when implementing NWW, a distinction is made between facilities (everything related to building management), general management, IT and personnel. If this is not centrally managed based on a clear vision and mission, developments in the various domains take place in parallel, which gives rise to inconsistencies and different rates of implementation.

8.1.10. Sustainability as motivation

Sustainability is a motivation often mentioned in the context of NWW (or teleworking). Due on the one hand to savings with respect to space and thus energy, often combined with a move to an energy-efficient building, and on the other hand to savings related to commuting, important steps are taken in the direction of sustainable entrepreneurship. In some cases (KBC, Eneco), these motivations are explicitly mentioned, in others they tend to be seen as supplementary motivations or benefits. Due to the mix of motivations concerning NWW, sustainability is never proposed as a basis for its introduction. It is also difficult to distinguish between cost-saving measures and 'pure' sustainability, since they occur together both as motivation and as benefit. Therefore, the risk in our examples of a project's negative backlash due to 'greenwashing' is probably virtually non-existent; the motivations are clear.

What we do need to pay attention to is the fact that, on the occasion of a relocation combined with teleworking, a number of other effects related to mobility can surface. Getronics, for example, centralised its offices and made available a number of telecentres. KBC also provides for the possibility of telecentres by giving each of its employees in principle the opportunity to sit behind a desk at any KBC branch. The effects of this on the mobility decisions of workers can be significant; by for example opting more often for a location that is easier to reach by car than the main office that is accessed by train. Teleworking is also an incentive for those living farther away to continue to work for the company at a location closer to their home.

8.2. Teleworking

8.2.1.   Trust as fundamental decision

Teleworking is one of the core elements of NWW and therefore is present in each of the cases. However, the way it is implemented can vary considerably.

Most striking is the fact that in almost all cases, teleworking has been in place for some time, but only in recent years has it been promoted as a general principle for all. Prior to this it was limited to the happy few, who usually occupied a higher position where it was already the habit not to look at the clock. Thus it was organised on an informal basis. The fact that teleworking in principle is being promoted for all, can lead to a significant increase in its use. The number of tasks eligible for teleworking is increasing, people are quite creative in its application, and it is supported by proposals from the employees themselves (FPS Social Security, Janssen, Port of Ghent). For each position, there are a group of tasks that can be performed at home, even if for only one day per month. Sometimes technological innovations such as the remote control of devices can open up new possibilities or at least be the occasion for creative thinking on the topic (Janssen).

In all examples, the office remains the place to be: only in one place is it possible not to work in the office more than half of the time (FPS Social Security), but this possibility is only actually used by a limited number of employees. Also common to all examples is the fact that the policy on teleworking is simple: the option is given to all where teleworking is feasible within the position, and arrangements are made with the team members or one's immediate supervisor. In the older examples, a sometimes cumbersome teleworking policy was developed; this is no longer so in the new cases (KBC, FPS Social Security, Get). The approach is now all or nothing: Either trust exists or does not, and mutual trust is best developed by simply assuming it exists. The clearest example of this is KBC, where this more cumbersome policy was for all intents and purposes repealed. Rules concerning accessibility or availability were also eliminated. The philosophy is clear: no more strict rules.

8.2.2.   Modest remuneration for something that is a favour

In all examples, technical provisions are foreseen such as VPN or a laptop that can be taken home. Remuneration varies widely, but is usually limited to fixed compensation (one euro per day) or to covering the costs of equipping a location or the connection (FPS Social Security , Getronics, KBC). For large companies, this compensation can quickly become significant; one euro per day of teleworking can quickly add up when it concerns thousands of teleworkers for multiple days per week. For private companies, it probably only concerns compensation that covers but a limited part of the real costs; this indicates that teleworking is implicitly a favour granted at the request of the employee. This is

quite clear. The aim is to keep open the option that employees are in the office when this is deemed necessary. This is so in all cases.

8.2.3. Preference given to personal over electronic communication

Communication with teleworkers takes place via somewhat traditional channels such as telephone and e-mail. We encountered no examples where video calling or video conferencing was systematically used. These solutions clearly are not viewed as a full-fledged substitute for personal communication.

The importance of personal interaction can also be seen in the specifics of a number of cases. At the VRT for example, it is possible for the editorial staff to perform each task remotely: in principle and technically. However, almost no one makes use of this possibility; the only exception might be the case in which, for example, after a news report, a reporter living nearby works further from home. At Eneco, the teleworking arrangement was eased only recently, even if it was technically possible. The aim here was to preserve the connections with and among the young growing company, and teleworking did not promote this. However, the time is now considered ripe to make teleworking possible to a limited degree, at the request of employees. At FPS Social Security, in turn, intensive teleworking (3 days per week) is especially used by executive personnel; managers or knowledge workers that must frequently communicate work at home much less (1 day per week). At FPS Social Security, employees themselves may choose whether and how much they make use of teleworking. Getronics is an example of something in between. Since it has been making use of 'nomads' (employees who are present more at the customer's site than in the company's office) for some time now, a more developed culture was already present for electronic communication. There, bonding with the organisation takes place differently, among others via an inspiring office environment and an emphasis on company values.

For the rest, in most examples, one day per week is foreseen on which all members of a specific team must be present, as is the case at Unizo. Consequently, the meetings are not formal in nature (even though team meetings are usually planned for this day), but it is an organised form of being present that makes personal contact possible.

8.2.4. Attention to work-life balance

Over-teleworking, where teleworkers do not stop working on time, is viewed as a risk in all cases: as potential for the new workers, as real for older workers. The solution is seldom a technological one (limiting login time, making servers unavailable, no longer forwarding telephones, etc.). Monitoring this is usually viewed as a task for the supervisor.

Several companies that are more advanced in their application of teleworking, now also take into account personal characteristics related to NWW when hiring.

What is not discussed in the literature and also seldom came up for discussion in the examples (except for Unizo and Getronics) is the scheme in which use is made of a hybrid form of teleworking and flexible working hours: the working day in the office is shortened in the morning or in the afternoon, with work being done at home at the start or the end of the day, and the commute taking place outside rush hour.

Here it is probably not experienced or considered as a form of teleworking but rather as a form of flexibility. At Unizo, where it is used often, it is seen as an offshoot of working and managing based on results rather than as an application of teleworking.

8.2.5. Work-life balance is handled at home, not in the office

Only rarely does NWW coincide with facilities intended to provide a feeling of 'home', such as crèches, shopping possibilities, ironing services, etc. We encountered this typical package of measures nowhere (except at KBC on a small scale). Thus efforts are no longer taken to bind employees to the company building in this way.

This may not be confused with making the office environment more pleasant, which frequently comes down to creating a home atmosphere via the use of wood, natural stone or warm colours that provide for a warmer setting than does white florescent lighting.

8.2.6. Digital nomads as pioneers

The technology and the work scheme used in most of the cases of NWW are tailored to the pioneers: consultants (often IT related) who work at the client's site due to the nature of their activity. Arrangements are made so that they can remain in touch with the head office. Applications such as virtual desktops, VPNs, chat applications in the professional environment, were originally developed for this group and are now also being used by the 'fixed' employees.

8.3. Furnishing the offices

8.3.1. Open space with many variations

NWW is always accompanied by open space, workplace components and the corresponding clean desk. Workplaces are installed in an open space; meeting rooms for internal consultations are nearby. There is also always a coffee/printer corner that makes informal contact possible.

For the rest, there are many variations, especially concerning workplace design. Workplaces can be separate but can also be grouped into a cluster of up to eight units. Clusters consist of workstations located next to each other, or of very large tables. Sometimes an intermediate wall is present; acoustic and visual panels

may also be used; sometimes there are "phone booths" where calls can be made, sometimes there are lounge areas consisting of chairs with high supports where discussions can take place with a minimum of interruption. Initially touchdown workplaces were almost always foreseen, but these were little used in practice and their use has been discontinued (KBC, FPS Social Security).

The interior architecture used in the offices can differ strongly. Work environments can be equipped to be functional, with plenty of light and transparency (Unizo, VRT). In others, attention is paid to the use of soothing, warm materials (such as wood) and colours (Getronics, KBC in Leuven). Elements such as sofas with high back rests that provide privacy are often used, even in predominantly functional designs (VRT, Eneco). Due to the clean desk policy in place everywhere, tables rather than office furniture can also be used, which amplifies the spatial effect.

Special attention is frequently paid to the informal spaces. Meeting rooms can be furnished to intentionally create a warm homelike atmosphere (Eneco, FPS Social Security). There can also be lounge areas (Eneco) and certainly also a cafeteria (Unizo, Getronics, KBC). Some companies have also created spaces that are furnished to stimulate creativity, or are furnished and/or illuminated with bright colours and special furniture so that special meeting or brainstorming techniques can be applied (Getronics, KBC). In fact, a number of these 'specials' can also be applied further to activity-based working, which makes it clear that for these companies, creative processes, relaxation or informal contacts also constitute an integral part of work. In this way, a company's vision on work is also translated into the organisation of space.

8.3.2. Open offices in a new light and sound

The history of office layouts shows that architecture is used by organisations to support or guide a specific way of organising work. Architectural possibilities such as the size of buildings, floors, lighting, ventilation and ICT give form to an organisation's development. As these evolved, the possibilities open to the organisation also grew. In the case of open offices, this emerged from the same ideas as those of Taylor, and these were then refined in the context of a lean management philosophy. Taylor and lean are based on standardisation, rigid procedures and hierarchical control and oversight, which in fact are the opposite of the ideas of autonomy and freedom that are at the basis of NWW.

Targeted or not, the furnishing and layout of an office reflects the organisation's vision and the place of an individual therein. Thus ICT is a disruptive technology, in the sense that it 'frees' employees from their fixed workplace on the one hand, but on the other hand also follows them everywhere, in the case of the smartphone even to the bedroom.

Acoustics and privacy were not mentioned as important issues in the examples; in most cases, it was assumed that the measures taken were adequate, or, more importantly, that these two possible disadvantages do not outweigh the benefit of

working more efficiently. Resistance on the part of personnel is usually considerable; but this disappears after a few months. The decision to change to open space is always taken by management; there was no case where employees themselves made the choice. Also in the literature there is no example known of employees who preferred this arrangement.

Privacy in the broad sense, interruption by colleagues, and loss of concentration and disruption due to sound or noise are the most common complaints about working in an open office. In many cases, however, the open space concept requires precisely that of employees: more interaction, more communication and information exchange. This is most pronounced in the case of the editorial staff at the VRT. There the layout was designed precisely around the continuous exchange of information between the editorial staff of several programmes and media; the intent is for incoming news to be quickly picked up by all. Consequently, we see that the editors in the first line of the information processing also sit physically close to one another, among others due to the use of functional areas. Editors wishing to complete a piece in relative peace choose a place further from the epicentre where greater seclusion can be found. Also at Unizo we see a strategy to facilitate a greater exchange of information across the various departments. In this regard, in the case of a strategy of information exchange, the benefits of an open office can outweigh the disadvantages such as loss of concentration. Research shows that communication in a open office increases to be sure, but not to the extent that it outweighs the loss of productivity. Close proximity to colleagues, also in private offices, carries the most weight. However, it is the case that for simpler line positions, an open office can be an advantage since it can break the monotony of the work.

In these examples, the demand for peace and quiet in offices is usually greater than the demand for spontaneous communication. This results in the overall atmosphere being predominantly that of moderation and quiet (Unizo, Getronics). There are indications in the literature that introverted personalities experience more difficulty in open offices. In our examples, however, the emphasis was placed on the fact that it was predominantly the extrovert personalities who felt that they had to adapt because they did not want to disturb the others with their exuberant manner.

While most literature, both scientific and promotional, emphasises NWW as principally an organisational form, the aspect of saving on office space is always important. Accommodations are a significant expense, and switching to an open office is a major change, material aspects included. The need to make a drastic change in accommodations, whether due to an impending move, expansion plans, or cost savings, is almost the only opportunity organisations have in an economic context to expend the money and the effort to realise a thoroughgoing refurbishment.

The effects of NWW are not measured, except indirectly in satisfaction surveys. This can be partially explained by the absence of a calculation of costs and benefits beforehand – independent of the only clear parameter, accommodation

costs. The justification for a refurbishment predominantly lies in the total concept of NWW, which in many cases is made subservient to organisational goals. The mix of a relocation or refurbishment, which was necessary in any case, with the implementation of an organisational vision and the belief that the company or organisation will perform better after its introduction, makes a cost-benefit analysis based on objective measurements of productivity secondary.

A difficult problem when studying the scholarly work on the effects of an office layout is that the disadvantages of working in an open office are described in detail, but usually without reference to other office layouts. In fact there are no studies available on other office layouts, which makes it difficult to compare an open plan with other forms. Usually the alternative of a closed, private office is implicitly assumed.

The question is, to what extent are open offices a must for NWW. Many effects, including increased interaction, might also be found to a certain extent in other types of office layout that are less taxing on users.

8.3.3. Privacy

The privacy aspect is also ambiguous. A significant amount of privacy is lost in an open office environment. Open meeting rooms, cockpits with glass walls, open coffee corners also contribute to permanent visibility. This lack of privacy invariably is described in the literature as a disadvantage. Literature is not yet available on measures such as cockpits and separate telephone zones, thus also not on the extent to which these impact the privacy effects.

In our examples, the attitude toward privacy is ambiguous. Open offices are seen as an essential element of the total package and the emphasis here is placed on the visibility of all in the organisation and the anticipated improvement in internal communication. This principle is difficult to reconcile with privacy. The fact that social control increases in a open environment is sometimes also viewed as a desirable effect. People can no longer hide. Loafing becomes much more difficult. There is little sympathy for those who have problems with it. The fact that it becomes clearer who is working and who is not is not a bad reason in itself, but it rests on a fairly narrow definition of the need for privacy. In some examples, reference is made to the fact that even in more traditional office layouts colleagues know those who take their work seriously and those who don't.

Moreover, the various examples always indicated that they were looking for other solutions to regain privacy in the personal communication between colleagues, by making use of chat systems to converse, or making appointments outside the workplace or the building. The tendency to create one's own space remains.

8.3.4. Flexdesking on a permanent basis

Flexdesking or workplace sharing in practice indeed results in flexibility: workplaces are shared and the clean-desk policy is well implemented. This allows optimum utilisation of space. In all of the examples, it appears that

occupancy was well below the maximum that could be accommodated, and in fact fewer workplaces would have been sufficient. The underlying idea, that people will choose workplaces spread throughout the floor or building, does not appear to be applied in practice. In all examples, it is stated that most people sit either in the same place or in any case in the same zone. Teams usually are assigned to a specific zone. There are no examples of companies where assignments were made ahead of time concerning which team or which department would be located at a specific place.

In practice, as shown in our examples, workers tend to always sit in the same place. To counteract this, Eneco for example organised 'move days'; On Friday, for example, all are asked to sit somewhere else.

8.3.5. Involving everyone

In all examples, there are no longer separate offices for certain positions, not even for HR, executives or management. The underlying idea is that everyone should participate in the open space and that an office is not a privilege.

However, there are a number of intermediate solutions. There are meeting rooms at Getronics and Eneco that are used as a workplace by management or the CEO. When not in use by them, however, these meeting rooms are available to all. A clean desk policy is also applied. These solutions are used both to make the change in culture more palatable to managers and executives, and to handle the many meetings that they have when they are in the office.

In almost all examples, there are also conference rooms where privacy is enhanced by placing a translucent film on the windows. These are intended to meet the need to regularly (more often than initially assumed) be able to have a confidential, personal meeting, without tensions or emotions being visible to colleagues.

8.3.6. The office is not home

What is missing in most of the examples (Eneco is an exception, as is KBC to some degree), is furnishing or equipping the office in order to make it more like home. Amenities such as a laundry service, recreational games such as table football, cooking or shopping services, are rare. At companies that apply NWW, there is also no tendency to make office life as homelike as possible or to allow the private sphere into the office. This also does not fit the NWW strategy, where the aim is for employees to no longer be in the office, nor is there the expectation that such is necessary or desirable. When such services are offered, this option tends to find its place in improving the work-life balance (such as a bread vending machine and a limited shopping service) or in support of cohesion within the company (the recreational area and multifunctional canteen at Eneco).

8.4. Digitisation

8.4.1.   Digitising documents

Digitisation of the existing document flow is present in all of the examples. This is seen as a necessary condition for implementing full-fledged teleworking and the application of a flexdesk and clean desk policy. Paperless working is always thoroughly implemented, even though a 'residual' amount always remains on paper. In some cases, the remaining paper is archived (KBC, FPS Social Security) and in fact access to this is the exception. In other cases, work is done on documents that are only temporarily on paper: they are printed in order to be read, but are not saved in paper form. All offices have printers with high-tech features (follow-me). Thus, paper always remains available.

In the discussions, the process of digitisation was not questioned in detail; for most of the discussion partners, it appeared to be taken for granted. As a result, we were unable to determine the extent to which digitisation also had an effect on the organisation of work or job content. This can sometimes be an important change only for administrative personnel because it allows them to engage in teleworking (FPS Social Security, KBC, Getronics).

The literature suggests that an important role is played by digitisation in consolidating organisational goals. Digital communication (chat, video calling over IP) can be an important compensation for the more difficult forms of communication in open offices. We were unable to see this mechanism clearly in our examples, perhaps partly because the analysis of the workplace dynamics did not go deep enough.

8.4.2.   Communication technology

Communication technology remains limited to telephone and e-mail, maybe with an additional chat or social-network application. However, these appear not to be intensively used except in companies with many 'nomads'. In none of the visited cases were video calling (Skype) or chat seen as a full-fledged replacement for personal communication.

However, in all cases there was a thoroughgoing use of a digital calendar. It is possible for all to see when someone is present, in a meeting, teleworking ... This is intended to support interaction on site.

8.5. Trust and leadership

Trust in employees is the basis and starting point of each application of NWW, even when teleworking represents only a limited part of the whole.

For managers, the task is always to manage in function of *results*, which is implicitly described as being in contrast to (mere) *presence*. In most cases, training is provided for this. In some cases, but certainly not all, reference is

made to KPIs. During the discussions, detailed questions were not posed in this regard; for the discussion partners this was a fairly obvious line. This was a crucial fact in the overall scheme in one case (Port of Ghent). Basically, a choice was made that included supervision and a structure with evaluation meetings, but little mention was made of a full-fledged structure (except again when there was talk of KPIs). A fundamental choice was made for trust and to work to achieve results, objectives that stand in contrast to an approach based on a structural, controlling organisation.

Little material can be found in the literature on directive leadership. Additional research into how leadership and result-oriented work are applied in practice is recommended.

What is clear is that here again there is an indirect effect. The introduction of teleworking is the occasion for adopting the different style of assessing and leadership (and in open space, NWW projects even precede the furnishing of offices).

In some cases limited training was given to managers. When introducing evaluation meetings, training is usually also foreseen for the evaluator. In all of the examples, the manager is explicitly expected to monitor the employees in preserving a good work-life balance. Technological solutions were occasionally offered that imposed a certain barrier to working outside normal hours (KBC), but this was somewhat limited unless the organisations in question were less than candid here, preferring this information not to be made known.

Concerning trust and a switch in leadership style, there was not much transition beforehand; in short, at a certain moment a decision is taken to give trust, usually on the occasion of the introduction of teleworking. This also has spatial ramifications: placement of the managers among the employees (VRT, Unizo, Eneco, Janssen) or giving them a separate room but with transparent furnishings or by also making these rooms flex/clean desk (Eneco, Getronics).

8.6. Strategic options

Strategic decisions often coincide. Organisations are never faced with a series of separate problems, but only start on a major transition if multiple goals can be achieved at the same time. NWW is well suited to this since it simultaneously promises solutions to multiple domains of corporate policy, in an integrated way, while it also looks modern and popular, making its acceptance easier.

8.6.1. Weighing the positive and negative

There probably are both positive and negative aspects to NWW. The open office with flexdesking is experienced as negative by almost everyone, but if it is well designed, it is accepted. Moreover, when there is an escape route via teleworking, a 'deal' can be made, even if the combined effects are a question

mark in the long term. Over time and when applied intensely, teleworking is negative for both the work-life balance and for the functioning of the organisation as a whole, but it provides an immediate answer to issues of commuting time, work-life balance in the short term, and escaping the open offices.

Going paperless and the associated flexdesking require an adjustment and a long learning curve, but it makes a better use of space and facilitates teleworking.

Cost saving as a reason to sit in a less pleasant office environment is not very attractive, but when it finds its place in good communication and when there is an eye for compensatory measures, it can be seen as 'good policy', which is always acceptable.

Although teleworking and open offices have clear disadvantages for the organisation as a whole, there are, mainly in open offices, important advantages apart from the cost saving aspect. Communication and interaction will increase to a certain extent, so that it can be strategically interesting for an organisation to work this way. Once consultation and interaction are desirable, its advantages can outweigh the decreased concentration and the discomfort surrounding the loss of autonomy in the workplace.