Chapter 29
The Telework as an Organizational Innovation in the Entities of the Third Sector

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the role of the telework as an organizational innovation incorporated to the activities of the third sector as well as in the creation of networks and links between these entities. The telework has become a tool that has produced important changes in the traditional organization of the work, and has improved the inter- and intra-organizational communication, in addition to promoting the creation of extensive networks of collaboration in the third sector. The online connection and the provision made in telework mode have also served for the creation of a higher density of contacts between the entities that are grouped in the third sector, done so that it benefits the transmission of information and collaborative practices in providing services to the citizens. Its effectiveness consists in the speed that prints the response capacity of the social economy entities.

INTRODUCTION

Telework has evolved in recent decades into a new way of organising work.[1] The novelty of this is that services are provided online from various locations outside the physical environment of an organization via new communication technologies. On the other hand, the telework is associated with the economic development through the creation of enterprising networks (Moon, 2007; Siha & Monroe, 2006) and the regional development (Roca Pulido & Martínez López, 2006). On the other hand, telework is as-

sociated with internal flexibility (Martinez Sanchez et al., 2006; Taskin, 2007; 2008) and has given rise to organisational innovations including the creation of connected networks – networks that have taken on an important role in ensuring the response capacity of all types of organisations[2]. Telework promotes two dimensions of horizontal structures: on the one hand, it reduces the number of intermediate hierarchical levels within an organisation by making communications between the central operational nucleus and work designers and planners more direct; on the other hand, it reduces hierarchies between organisations by creating collaborative networks of which they all form a part, and by making increased and improved use of the capabilities and potentials of the organisations themselves. The analysis of the inter-organizational relations and their relationship with the economic structures has been studied from various angles: the exchange of capital, personnel and information between organization (Aldrich & Mardsen, 1988), the networks of scientific collaboration and their efficacy (Uzzi & Spiro, 2005) or the network and collective action (Flores, Koster, Lindler & Molina, 2012).

In organisations which have adopted network systems, telecommuting can, in principle, be considered a new type of organisational logic that further accelerates the return on the resources employed – one that makes different use of space and time variables than in traditional organisations. However, some authors question whether telecommuting, or more generally, telematic and computerised procedures used as tools, constitutes a real break from traditional work organisation structures, as suggested by Baethge and Oberbeck (1995) in their article on office work. Networked telework – at least in its most widespread form in asymmetric networks – does not threaten to replace the constituent elements of the old logic of work organisation described by Martin Artiles (1999), i.e. process automation, the dominance of the logic of time economy, the primacy of quantity over quality, product uniformity, and the standardisation of operations.

In this article we will generally address some of the applications of telework in the areas of social economy and third sector institutions and organisations[3]. Our second section, following this introduction, examines telework as a quantitative dimension in terms of its dissemination throughout the European Union and other leading countries. We will also take a broad look at the general lack of regulation with regard to telework in most countries, and the exception presented by recent Spanish labour reform, which for the first time includes weak regulation of the practice of working at home, which in this case, may be considered to be telework for all practical purposes. Section 3 examines new organisational forms which are generated and generalised by telework and which are collectively called 'network organisations' in this paper. While there are many different types of organisations, this paper presents those associated with telework common to all organisational forms that incorporate telework. Section 4 describes how organisations operate via telework. Here we aim to emphasise the general characteristics that result from incorporating telework in different third sector and social economy institutions and organisations. The fifth section presents an overview of how telework affects the organisation of the entities that use it. Finally, the last section explains some of the central ideas that have been developed in the paper and proposes some ideas for further research to examine the relationship between telework and the third sector.

THE PREVALENCE AND REGULATION OF TELEWORK

In 2003 SIBIS[4] created a definition of telework which included four modalities: telework from home, mobile telework, freelance telework in SOHOs (small office/home office), and telework done in shared facilities outside of organisations and the home. A worker would fall under the category of teleworking

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