


# Chapter 1


## Breaking Disciplinary Boundaries: Toward an Integrative Study of Contemporary Work

**Zyed Achour**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1578-9062>

*National Institute of Labor and Social Studies, University of Carthage, Tunisia*

**Balakrishnan Muniapan**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1013-8367>

*College of Business, Digital Transformation, and Entrepreneurship, Birmingham, UK*

### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter examines the necessity of transcending disciplinary boundaries to better grasp the complexities of modern work. Critically assessing traditional fields—sociology, organizational psychology, labor economics, and management science—it identifies their strengths and limitations in addressing contemporary shifts like digitalization, globalization, and evolving worker expectations. By integrating emerging paradigms (e.g., digital transformation, work-life hybridization, fluid organizations), the text proposes a multidimensional framework bridging economic, organizational, social, technological, and subjective dimensions across micro, meso, and macro levels. It also discusses methodological implications, advocating for interdisciplinary, systemic research to advance a renewed science of work—one that is both theoretically robust and actionable for organizational and societal change.*

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-1962-9.ch001

## INTRODUCTION

The growing complexity of the world of work in this century profoundly challenges our traditional analytical frameworks. While Mayo (1933) and Taylor (1911) proposed one-dimensional approaches to work, focused respectively on human relations and scientific organization, the contemporary reality of work now eludes any mono-disciplinary interpretation. As Castells (2011) points out, we have entered an era where technological and organizational transformations are inextricably intertwined, creating hybrid and complex work configurations that challenge our traditional analytical categories.

The profound transformations reshaping work today, from the rise of digital technologies and the globalization of value chains to the emergence of new organizational forms, demand a radical renewal of our theoretical and methodological frameworks. While the disciplinary traditions of sociology of work, organizational psychology, labor economics, and management science have each generated valuable insights, their fragmentation increasingly limits our ability to fully grasp complex, interconnected phenomena that transcend established boundaries. This chapter advocates an integrative approach that bridges these divides to better address the realities of contemporary work.

This chapter aims to examine the foundations of a truly integrative work science, capable of articulating different levels of analysis and theoretical frameworks to grasp the complexity of contemporary work. Drawing on the pioneering work of Friedmann (1964) relating to interdisciplinarity in the study of work, as well as the more recent contributions of Bernard et al. (2020) highlighting the importance of this approach in work research, we will highlight how interdisciplinarity promotes a better understanding of the social dynamics of work and professional experiences. The objective is thus to establish the conceptual foundations of a renewed approach to work science.

This discussion unfolds in several stages. We begin by mapping the traditional disciplines of labor studies, highlighting their distinctive contributions as well as their areas of convergence. Next, we examine emerging paradigms that challenge conventional analytical frameworks, setting the stage for the proposal of an integrative theoretical model. We then consider the methodological implications of this approach for both research and practice. Ultimately, the chapter aims to establish the conceptual foundations for a renewed science of work, one that captures the complexity of contemporary transformations while preserving the depth and richness of established disciplinary traditions.

28 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: [www.igi-global.com/chapter/breaking-disciplinary-boundaries/383217](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/breaking-disciplinary-boundaries/383217)

## Related Content

---

### Knowledge Sovereignty and Decolonial Paradigms in Transnational Pedagogy and Curricular Polycentrism: Polylogue and Power Rebalancing in Global Academia

Ashraf Alam (2026). *Rethinking Policy, Innovation, and Global Structures in Higher Education* (pp. 167-204).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/knowledge-sovereignty-and-decolonial-paradigms-in-transnational-pedagogy-and-curricular-polycentrism/406443](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/knowledge-sovereignty-and-decolonial-paradigms-in-transnational-pedagogy-and-curricular-polycentrism/406443)

### Development of a Global Policy of All-Pervading E-Learning, Based on Transparency, Strategy, and Model of Cyber Triple H-Avatar

Vardan Mkrttchian, Alexander Bershadsky, Alexander Bozhday, Tatiana Noskova and Svetlana Muminova (2016). *Developing Successful Strategies for Global Policies and Cyber Transparency in E-Learning* (pp. 207-221).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/development-of-a-global-policy-of-all-pervading-e-learning-based-on-transparency-strategy-and-model-of-cyber-triple-h-avatar/139503](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/development-of-a-global-policy-of-all-pervading-e-learning-based-on-transparency-strategy-and-model-of-cyber-triple-h-avatar/139503)

### At the Crossroads: Nationalism, Localism, and the Pursuit of Social Justice

(2026). *The Impact of Organizations on National Interests, Local Autonomy, and Individual Freedoms* (pp. 279-294).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/at-the-crossroads/394991](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/at-the-crossroads/394991)

### Implications Between the Green Product Consumption on Organizational Green Productivity and Organizational Performance Strategies

José G. Vargas-Hernández and María F. Higuera-Cota (2024). *Research Anthology on Business Law, Policy, and Social Responsibility* (pp. 995-1015).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/implications-between-the-green-product-consumption-on-organizational-green-productivity-and-organizational-performance-strategies/335744](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/implications-between-the-green-product-consumption-on-organizational-green-productivity-and-organizational-performance-strategies/335744)

### Financial Stability and Systemic Risks of Stablecoins

Harvesh Kumar Seegolam and Loretta Joseph (2026). *Stablecoins and the Future of Financial Regulation* (pp. 141-188).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/financial-stability-and-systemic-risks-of-stablecoins/400526](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/financial-stability-and-systemic-risks-of-stablecoins/400526)