

Remote Control: Three Faces of Power in Telework

Authors

Stefanie Reissner, Newcastle University (email: stefanie.reissner@newcastle.ac.uk)

Michal Izak, University of Lincoln (email: mizak@lincoln.ac.uk)

Abstract

Building on the existing interest in the issues of control and power involved in mobile working, and more specifically of problematizing mobile workers' autonomy, we delve deeper into the role and application of individual agencies in satisfying explicit and implicit expectations and norms. Steven Lukes' Three Faces of Power theory applied from Foucauldian angle is used to structure the inquiry into different strategies of dealing with power and control by organizations and individuals. We find that as distance from an explicit source of power and tangible means of control increases, so does the likelihood that mobile workers will actively substitute them with individually developed mechanisms through subjecting themselves to newly self-generated routines and micro-controls. We propose that those findings are particularly important in the context of spatially, temporally and behaviourally attenuated means of explicit control characterizing mobile work, the salience of which in modern economy is undisputable. This paper is based on an interpretivist interview-based study.

Key words: autonomy, control, discourse, Lukes, mobile work arrangements, power

Acknowledgement

This research has received funding from the British Academy for the Humanities & Social Sciences and the Leverhulme Trust under the Small Grants Scheme (award No. SG152296), which is gratefully acknowledged.

Introduction

Flexible work arrangements such as teleworking, distance work and agile working have been on the rise for at least four decades (Oettinger, 2011). The profoundness of change in today's workplaces resulting from introduction of a range of new technologies facilitating mobile working has been widely discussed (Block, 1990, Rifkin, 1995; Aronowitz and Cutler, 1998). As individuals are increasingly able to take advantage of this increased connectivity, the global population becomes more mobile and the once firm association between a place of work and its content becomes problematized. In a number of industries, flexible forms of cooperation (e.g. crowdsourcing) further enhance the flexibility of working arrangements (Massolution, 2013), thus undermining the more traditional mode of attachment.

Local disparities naturally exist, including the differing pace of adopting the new modes of work across the world. In Europe, large organizations are often keener to engage in teleworking (almost three times more employees were teleworking in companies employing more than 250 workers in 2006; see The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014), while in the US those employed in smaller establishments, as well as self-employed, tend to telework on more frequent basis (Deloitte, 2011; Household Economic Studies, 2012). Studies also indicate that teleworking nowadays appears to be particularly popular in the Middle East and Africa, Latin America and Asia-Pacific area, where 27, 25 and 24 percent of employees, respectively, telecommute on a frequent basis (up to 56% in India, which according to IPSOS (2012) has the highest proportion of teleworkers on the globe). Notwithstanding those differences, the trend towards increased connectivity and spatially extending the association between individuals and their work can be deemed a global phenomenon the significance of which is almost unprecedented (Guest, 1997). In this paper, however, we intend to focus on the micro-dynamics of mobile work, exploring issues of control and power as both individuals and individuals seek to be in charge.

Teleworking as a material practice is discursively legitimized using arguments relating to (1) external factors such as helping to protect the environment (Novaco *et al.*, 1991) or improving competitiveness due to cost reduction (Egan, 1997), and (2) internal factors such as improved work-life balance (Hill *et al.*, 2001) or job satisfaction (eg Pryce *et al.*, 2006). While the extant literature on teleworking is abundant (eg Byron, 2005; Galinsky *et al.*, 1996; Galinsky *et al.*, 2011) and the financial stakes high (counted in billions of dollars, eg Telework VA, ND),

insufficient attention has been given to ownership of and control over teleworking (despite some discussion in Brocklehurst, 2001).

The context of dynamic conceptual, behavioural and spatial reformulation of work and its relationship to private life has mainly been associated with new ways of working (eg Collins *et al.*, 2016), aligning relationships between organizational actors (Brock, 2006), embracing new technologies and artefacts (eg Duxbury *et al.*, 2014) as well as redefining one's approach to home and work spaces (eg Halford 2005; Nansen *et al.*, 2010). Nevertheless, notions of control and power involved in such work arrangements deserve more attention. So far, few studies have attempted to identify distinctive mechanisms implicated in *en masse* spatial distancing of employees from organizational headquarters and to explore the ways in which mobile work design can endure *despite* coercion as a controlling strategy that is (typically) less available than in an office work environment.

In this empirical paper, we use Stephen Lukes (1974) tri-partite framework of power to explore how organizations and individuals seek to maintain control in mobile working. Our main interest is in the ways in which (a) both parties seek to set the agenda for such work arrangements in terms of availability and practicalities (see Lukes' 'Face 2' of power) and (b) changing societal discourses shape their understanding of the concept of work (see Lukes' 'Face 3' of power). In the next section, we introduce the theoretical underpinnings of our work, before describing the research approach. In the main section, we present an analysis of explicit attempts at control in teleworking, followed by attempts at agenda-setting and the ways in which organizational actors' perceptions of teleworking are shaped. We conclude by considering the strategies of control implicated in three faces of power and discussing their implications.

Theoretical underpinnings: Teleworking and power

The extant research on teleworking has shown interest in the potential importance of new technologies on how work is being controlled (Kurland and Egan, 1999; Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Dimitrova, 2003) and in the role of individual agencies in shaping and structuring the space where work is executed (Massey, 1994; Herod, 2003; Dimitrova, 2003). Moreover, there have been attempts to develop the core elements of a mobile working framework, such as social (Bailey *et al.*, 2002), economic (Egan, 1997) and environmental (Novaco *et al.*, 1991) factors.

Yet, the extant research exploring control in mobile working has predominantly focused on the coercive dimension of control, typically associated with the use of digital surveillance technologies, the explicit level of the execution of power or on teleworkers' need to 'be in control' of their time to achieve better work-life balance (Lapierre and Allen, 2012).

A notable exception is the so-called 'autonomy paradox', which explains that employees who have more autonomy are more inclined to work harder and/or longer hours (Evans *et al.*, 2004; Mazmanian *et al.*, 2005; Michel, 2011). In this perspective, control results from both direct means such as explicit supervision and from more or less obtrusive forms of professional socialization (Tompkins and Cheney, 1985) or the introduction of particular norms, such as the 'ideal worker' (Weiland, 2010) – individuals who have no interests outside of work. Thus, employees who enjoy more autonomy in arranging their work may become more committed and invest more time and energy (Hyman *et al.*, 2005; Peters *et al.*, 2009; Schieman 2013). Other ways in which the 'autonomy paradox' operates is by allowing employees to control process only while deadlines remain fixed and by managers' practically restricting access to mobile work even if they publicly allow for it (Putnam *et al.*, 2014). It has also been indicated that some employees perceive mobile working as 'not real work' and feel obliged to 'repay' their organization by working longer hours (Moe and Shandy, 2010). Many of these features point towards subtleties of power operating at a distance, creating norms and establishing the ways 'things are done' on the one hand but imposing the patterns of reaction subsequently internalized by employees on the other, thus cloaking the notion of control as if it has not existed (Broadfoot, 2001).

As much as the 'autonomy paradox' introduces pivotal notions and embeds the discussion on power and control in the context of tele-, mobile or agile working, we believe that a framework for understanding the types of control and mechanisms of power wielded in organizations allowing for mobile work has yet to be developed. Similarly, there has been little discussion so far on how mobile workers can be regarded as not only subjects, but also as agents of power. We propose that a structured inquiry is needed into mechanisms that sustain the model in which individual employees – while exercising a degree of control – are implicated through a variety of control mechanisms. To do so, we employ Lukes' (1974) tripartite framework for analyzing power as an interpretative scheme to better understand how it is instilled and sustained in a teleworking context, thus shedding light on the three distinctive aspects of an 'autonomy paradox': coercion, agenda-shaping and preference-shaping (although, as will be explained in

the methodology section, the choice of this framework was inductively-led). Our intention is to eschew the narrowly understood critical frame to allow – in line with Foucault (1978) – for a more nuanced understanding of power as not only limiting and commanding, but also creative force.

Lukes' theory embraces earlier concepts of power as an exercise in coercion (A forcing B to comply) (eg Dahl, 1961) and as the capacity to influence agenda-setting thus excluding certain topics from the range of possible actions (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962), which he respectively calls 'Face 1' and 'Face 2' of power. But Lukes proposes that yet another "supreme and most insidious use of power" is to shape "perceptions, cognitions, and preferences in such a way that [people] accept their role in the existing order of things" (Lukes, 1974: 24) – called 'the third face' of power. The neo-Marxist theoretical underpinnings (Hay, 2002) of Lukes' 'third face' orient it towards ideology critique. Therefore, its interest lies in elucidating the ways and mechanisms through which social actors tend to misperceive their own interests – in addition to being unable to pursue them either due to explicit imbalance of power (Face 1) or lack of scope and perspective (Face 2) (Hay, 2002).

Admittedly, Lukes' framework is sometimes perceived as difficult to operationalize as non-agenda setting may appear methodologically inaccessible (Polsby, 1980). However, Lukes' 'relevant counterfactual' (A's predisposition to act/abstain from acting in a manner preventing B from thinking and/or acting differently than s/he would have acted otherwise, see Lukes, 1974) has been proven empirically applicable (e.g. Crenson, 1971; Dearlove, 1973; Gaventa, 1980). In the spirit of Lukes', we do not disregard the occurrences of explicit coercion. Rather, in our analysis we are interested in agenda-setting (Face 1) and perception/cognition-shaping (Face 2). Taking a cue from Hay (2002), we are methodologically oriented towards supporting our exploration of the shaping of agendas and processes of mobile working within organizations (Face 2) with the analysis of wider societal discourses fundamentally affecting reconceptualization of work on a broader scale (Face 3). Thus, as explained in the next section and somewhat against the grain of Lukes' theory, ethnographic methods will be applied to analyze teleworking / mobile working as an emerging social construction.

It is the third face of power which has been found most contestable and which has been accused of projecting an image of 'false consciousness', alluding to a logical untenability of stating that someone misperceives his/her own interests (Hay, 2002). After all, it could be argued, that by

identifying somebody's interests as 'not real', the external observer undeservedly assumes the privileged position. For example, who is to say which approach to aligning oneself with organizational policies in the context of mobile working represents their best interest? Inevitably, this path would lead to essentializing particular practices or set of values and thus entail resorting to some sort of model or ideal representing what's best for a particular employee with all unwanted ontological, epistemological and methodological consequences. However, reading Stephen Lukes' theory in this way is in itself a misrepresentation. Much has already been written in support of Lukes' 'third face' (Akram *et al.*, 2015), and our intention is not to provide yet another defense. We would however like to indicate that, minimally, Lukes' notion is not in any way logically incoherent if approached from an interpretivist angle: once the normative approach is resisted, we no longer need to mobilize any essentialist notion of a model or ideal type and can focus instead on the ongoing processes of social production thereof. In other words, proposing what constitutes 'real' preferences is not a precondition to denaturalizing them by showing where they came from and in which social, historical contexts they have been developed.

Research approach: Lukes meets Foucault

To inquire into the shaping of preferences includes two associated aspects: (1) the workings of 'the social' within the confines of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) directing our range of 'available' wants, needs and desires, *and* (2) the reproduction of those strivings (Foucault, 1978) (conscious or not) that reciprocally mold our intention to embrace a particular agenda of preference. We are thus facing a potentially multi-directional movement: towards ingraining the social norm regarding an established (or establishing) social practice and simultaneously towards aligning the individual preference to the practice or set of values being targeted. The sentiment that preferences are not emerging naturally and 'have history' directs our attention to the processes through which individual preferences are embraced – that is produced and reproduced – through social actors' engagement with the external world, without the recourse to any 'ideal model'. All that is needed to make sense of the existing behavioural pattern of conduct and behaviour is to know what sorts of norms are continuously reproduced within a social field (Akram *et al.*, 2015).

This, of course, is anything but trivial as the shaping of preferences is underpinned by deeply held beliefs and norms as well as established practices and patterns of action, all of which are

rarely made explicit (Digeser, 1992). As proposed by Foucault (1980), however, those processes can never be decoupled from the operation of power – a productive force shaped by and shaping the individuals. The latter’s immersion in the social, economic and cultural contexts legitimating the range of possible or desirable actions translates into how they reciprocally enact power relationships between themselves and within the institutions they are part of, thus (re)producing ‘legitimate’ behaviours and actions (Miller and Rose, 2008). The emphasis is on the talk and action through which implicit assumptions are charted (Akram *et al.*, 2015), which are the sufficient access points to making sense of ‘why people accept their role in existing order’ (Lukes, 1974: 24). This is how Foucauldian notions provide support for an interpretivist angle on Lukes’ theory of power: the ‘shaping’ of preferences, cognitions, etc. must be simultaneous with (rather than following the) grasping of the dynamics of establishing oneself as the subject in the first place. From this perspective, an interpretivist approach enabling for a focused exploration of individual worlds *in the making* is preferable over more positivist or structuralist approaches which start from an established notion of an individual as a predefined subject.

Hence, our analysis of talk and described behaviour of the social actors immersed in the context of mobile working enables us not only to understand the personalized approaches to work but can also inform us about the principles of ‘internal regulation’ (Deleuze, 1988) reflecting the influence of external agendas (Lukes’ Face 2) and attempts at perception-shaping (Lukes’ Face 3). Flexible working schedules undoubtedly account for an increased freedom from certain workplace-related duties, such as direct physical supervision or one-to-one scrutiny from one’s peers. However, it remains implicated in numerous emerging power plays and relatively new modes of coercion which such indirect working schemes may, paradoxically, facilitate. Our study takes the position that there is no significant discontinuity regarding the *fact of* exercise of power (Foucault, 1978) at a distance as compared to its application in proximity, but that modes of application – and indeed its source – are sensitive to the type of (mobile) working arrangements.

Research methods: Data collection and analysis

Our research involves interviewing mobile workers – individuals who work in multiple spaces across a working day or week – from a wide variety of backgrounds, including law, marketing, human resources, financial services, higher education and the public sector. At this stage in our

research, we eschew clustering data according to industries or types of employment, as we intend – in an interpretivist fashion – to enable patterns to emerge holistically from our material (Kostera, 2008). All research participants can be described as knowledge professionals, including the employed and the self-employed as well as those managing other mobile workers. Data collection is ongoing, and to date we have interviewed 20 mobile workers with an average length of interview of around one hour. An overview of research participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Interviewee profile

Pseudonym	Age band	Industry	Employment status	Management
Felix	40-49	Public sector	Employed	
Dennis	40-49	Public sector	Employed	
Gina	30-39	Public sector	Employed	
Carl	30-39	Higher education	Employed	
Adam	60-69	Marketing	Self-employed	Contractors
Barry	40-49	Law	Self-employed	
Agnes	60-69	Higher education	Employed	
Bernadine	20-29	Higher education	Employed	
Claire	20-29	Higher education	Employed	
Daphne	40-49	Higher education	Employed	
Eve	40-49	Higher education	Employed	
Florence	40-49	Higher education	Employed	
Edgar	40-49	Financial services	Employed	Subordinates
Grace	40-49	Public sector	Employed	
Hazel	30-39	Public sector	Employed	
Nathan	20-29	Marketing	Employed	
Clarissa	50-59	Adult learning	Self-employed	
Gavin	30-39	Technical consulting	Employed	Subordinates
Emma	30-39	Marketing	Self-employed	Contractors
Wilbur	60-69	Human Resources	Self-employed	

Data are analyzed inductively. We have started off with multiple readings of the interview transcripts, noting down aspects of power, control and being in charge with some being more

explicit than others. There were very explicit references to organizations seeking to exercise control over mobile workers through the availability and use of mobile technology (Lukes' Face 1), more subtle agendas of monitoring mobile workers (Lukes' Face 2) and individuals' perceptions of the differences of office and homeworking, which we have used to structure the analysis presented next.

Empirical analysis: Three faces of power in telework

'Face 1' strategies

The first 'face' of power groups those attempts at control which are oriented towards, more or less explicit, compliance. From an organizational point of view, the mobile working agenda includes numerous instances of compliance, including limiting the availability of teleworking days to specific days of the week (Grace), the necessity to be generally responsive to queries via email and telephone during the working day (Emma) as well as an attendance monitoring system that requires individuals to 'clock in' digitally, either from home – *I have to tick myself in, in the system, at the beginning of the [teleworking] day* (Gina) – or at the office – *After clocking in [on an office working day] I usually go and see what my colleagues are up to, and then I start working* (Felix).

In many ways, office work appears to be riddled with coercive measures. The physical presence and accompanying appraisals taking place at work together with a perceived need to 'put on an act' are characteristic to being present in the office space as Carl reflects:

When working from the office, because you are being watched more, so you start performing. I wouldn't be performing when I'm working from home – unless via email – I might be sitting in my underpants, because there is nobody to observe me, but when I sit in the office I feel strongly I need to perform.

However, working from a distance does not dissolve the notion of compliance despite direct control being more difficult to ensure. Indeed, some organizations openly attempt to control what their teleworkers are doing by checking up on them:

Currently the problem is that every day that I work at home, at the end of the day I have to send ah, to my boss what I did. And this is ah, less convenient for me because well ahm, it's much more stressful then to work at home [...], this forces me really to

work ahm, like almost eight hours probably on this day, when I work at home [compared to a much more compressed working schedule in the office] (Hazel).

This setup is found to be glaringly different compared to the office working day:

In the office, you can basically do nothing all day and then you, you still ahm, like, there is no surveillance, kind of. But since my current workplace is very hesitant about giving people telework, they are checking a lot at this stage. They are checking what you have done really. (Hazel)

Hazel recalls a tension here: on the one hand, she is allowed to work from home but her output is closely watched, while on the other, her superiors do not seem to care about her output while present in the office. But Hazel is resourceful in circumventing such blunt attempts at control as she admits: *I'm taking teleworking days only when I'm in the final stages [of a project], when I have like real ah, in quotation marks, like 'real' outputs*. Through such strategic actions, Hazel responds to her organization's attempts to monitor her work.

Hence, the classic theme of control in terms of enforcing coercion has less purchase in mobile working than in office-based work arrangements. Instead, less direct and more subtle control measures gain importance as the physical distance between employee and the office increases. Adam reflects on the conundrum of control in relation to his teleworking staff as follows:

Author 2: I'd like to come back to what you said earlier [about] control. Because in a sense while you have control over your own time and your own space and your own schedule, you have very little control over the people that work for you, because they are self-employed and you don't have the face-to-face contact. How do you reconcile that?

Adam: I trust them because you meet somebody and you instantly are able to build a rapport ... But then on an ongoing basis, I have the database come back to me every day and they put on their narrative on what they've been doing. So if they are calling a customer it might be 'call 1 in meeting', 'call 2 spoke to so and so interested but not yet'. So, there's a narrative there but doing what I call core statistics, adding stuff up, adding the number of calls, number of decision makers, I can get a reasonable feel of how they are performing. ... At the end of the day I can judge, I've been doing this quite a long time and I don't need sort of, I mean some people would say would you record your calls. No, I don't need to [do that].

Adam emphasizes the skills of assessing his staff from their first meeting about their ability and willingness to perform their tasks well, which seems to be part of a wider, somewhat benign teleworking discourse in which trust features strongly. Simultaneously, however, Adams relies on control mechanisms using qualitative ('narrative') and quantitative ('core statistics') measures to induce compliance from a distance. Hence, despite spatial separation of staff from the office, Face 1 control continues to have an important, albeit somewhat subtle role in mobile work arrangements.

'Face 2' strategies

'Face two', or the power of agenda-setting, delimits the range of possible actions to those affected, while simultaneously rendering them prone to be engaged in new initiatives and actions. Such indirect means of control are, therefore, bound towards inducing manifestable behaviours by means other than explicit coercion. In the context of mobile working one of the most prominent attempts at agenda-setting is associated with perceptions of teleworking as a less intensive way to conduct one's duties.

From day one the word got around that teleworkers are not keen on picking up their phones. Every new teleworker was perceived in that way; that once again, he failed up to answer the phone. Which may have something to do with you standing next to the laundry machine [while teleworking] and not being able to hear the phone ringing, whilst when you're in the office it is right there on your desk. So, it was not the case that you were not working, it was simply that you might have not been able to pick up the phone. In my experience people would rarely leave home when they were teleworking. And despite that, the teleworkers were... perhaps 'denigrated' would be too strong a word, but there were rumours that they [teleworkers] don't work, but do the shopping or something else instead. (Gina)

Such perceptions of teleworking as a more relaxed type of working can be coupled with behavioural patterns enforcing compliance through the means available at a distance as Gina recalls attempts by work colleagues to informally check up on teleworkers:

It became a popular saying that if you're teleworking then you're not actually working. There was even an expression: "Are you in the office tomorrow or are you having a lazy day?" [...] And people [teleworkers] complain sometimes that if you

are teleworking [the perception is that] it is not clear what you're actually doing. Such remarks were common among the colleagues as was this practice of insistently calling people [teleworkers] on their mobiles. (Gina)

In Gina's organization, there appears to be an internal agenda of ensuring that the allegedly lazy teleworkers are monitored through phone calls on their mobiles – even though this is likely to be counterproductive. Moreover, the expectation that staff – and particularly teleworking staff – are reachable and contactable beyond normal established time limits is also a strong theme in our data. For Agnes the 'ongoing availability' – in her case by means of an application installed on her computer – is 'problematic'. Another occasional teleworker, Daphne, recalls the times when expectations to be available beyond the office hours were difficult to imagine.

Back then [1990s] you didn't have internet on the train. It was much more ... selective, where you could get it. But now ... everything is integrated, I mean you can email everywhere. Even in the elevator [laughter] you can send emails ... So, the only place I could do, like, emailing was at my office. [...] But in a way it was also a bit more relaxed. Because, now you are tempted to, ... you tend to keep checking your emails all the time. I mean, [back] then you would just wait until Monday morning [laughter]. (Daphne)

Nowadays, however, some teleworkers perceive the need to be accessible in a temporally unlimited and in no way restrained manner as Carl outlines.

Our university is aiming to move us to a new telecomms system. Rather than having phones at our desks we will have usb-like things and we will be able to attach them to any computer, e.g. at home. And we can have headsets like in a call centre, which I'm not going to use, I'm not working in a call centre. We can also have our number rerouted to our home number, this way we are available day and night. And I'm not doing this – I have enough crap without it. Over the next few weeks our old telephone system will just not be working anymore and the new system will be rolled out. (Carl)

In this excerpt, Carl openly resists his organization's attempts to set the agenda for a new way of working, seeking to instil certain behaviours through the availability of technology. Yet, Carl seeks to disrupt such attempts at agenda-setting by highlighting his own agenda – refusing to use the new technology and engaging in behaviours of seemingly unlimited availability. Such counter-agendas have featured prominently in our data with teleworkers seeking to

protect their other professional commitments and their work-life balance as the following excerpts show.

But that's fine, I mean, I decided, you know. If I decide to work on the Monday mornings then that's okay. And then I do stuff which I like, so research for example. And, so I'm already doing more and the rest of the week I am just doing my best and the evenings do not count for that. For this time being, that's it. If it doesn't get done, then this is what I can offer. And this does not include reading emails in the evening, which is pointless anyway. (Florence)

This excerpt comes after Florence recalls a period of illness, which made her rethink her working patterns. She talks about the extent to which she used to work far more than her contractual obligations stipulated and in this excerpt emphasizes her agency in protecting important temporal boundaries between work and nonwork – 'I decide'. Similarly, Carl, reflecting on the perceived intrusion by his organization on the way in which work is structured, invokes more elaborate and minute agenda-setting attempts:

I would be very cautious about someone else trying to manage my time at home. It hasn't happened to me, but it has happened to my colleagues that their line manager asked them to be available on a particular time and they were like 'Oh, but this is my research time'. There can be some friction about how people's non-office work will be managed and controlled. Some managers are quite keen to micromanage, though, and frictions can happen. (Carl)

Carl goes on to call the bluff of agenda-setters in an academic context:

They want to appeal to all the traditional university values, but they want it to be a business at the same time, so you should be contactable all the time, work as if you were working on a shop floor because you are a service provider, this is a big commercial enterprise.

While on the surface organizational agendas of teleworking and associated control mechanisms are often followed, a great deal of conscious opposition and explicitly stated defiance is present in our data. Rather than being at the hands of their organization, teleworkers portray themselves as acting strategically to navigate the boundaries imposed by external agendas and coercive measures.

'Face 3' strategies

Crucially, the agentic landscape of self-developed means to construe and arrange work is moderated if teleworkers' own agendas are taken into account. As explained before, we approach the 'third face' of power from a Foucauldian perspective, thus scrutinizing the ways in which individuals construct themselves as subjected to power by performing actions which legitimize the existing discourses. Thus, the expressed desires, motivations and prompts to action – along with described behaviours – may constitute material for analyzing the mechanisms of perception-shaping among the actors involved.

The theme of differentiating manners of control between the office context and mobile working remains prominent amongst our research participants.

When I sit at home I don't feel like I'm being controlled all the time. In theory, there is not much of an oversight when I'm sitting in the office, but your boss can always pop in, or the secretary... and they would notice that in that particular moment I am not doing what I should have been doing, or that I'm gone for the moment. [...]. At home you don't have that, your state of mind is different, you're not 'in danger'.
(Gina)

However, as she adds:

When you're teleworking you can't delay responding to emails, it becomes suspicious, hence having the sound on is so very important, and you can stall it much longer when you're in the office. (Gina)

Hence, the crucial difference in terms of time management on home working day stems from the internal feeling that you need to 'worry' and care more for ensuring that your (absent) presence is widely registered. In fact, one interviewee comments that she sometimes arranges lunch meetings with her work colleagues on her teleworking days specifically to emphasize her presence on in a work context [unrecorded comments]. Other research participants have outlined that in contrast to long lunchbreaks in the office ('usually much longer than an hour', Hazel), the period devoted to lunch on teleworking days is spatially and temporally limited:

I usually don't [leave the house] to be honest, no. I usually don't, because I really have the obsession that if I don't respond to emails for too long, then people will think that I'm not working. If I don't have food at home, then I go out and get food. But it doesn't take me more than half an hour to get out and come back. (Hazel)

Whilst the official instructions received from the employer did not impose any special restrictions on teleworker's lunchtime, the notion of pressure and just 'not being enough time' during teleworking seems to be ingrained in the whole day's schedule:

I think I don't even do the dishes immediately after [having breakfast], I just push away the plate and just continue ah, doing the work that I am supposed to do on that certain day. [...] So at this point I am already quite stressed, because usually around, I would say, eleven when I really get going with my actual work, so I'm pretty stressed because until six o'clock I have to produce a written thing that is ready to go. (Hazel)

Asked if during the teleworking day and performing the scheduled task, she regularly checks her emails, Hazel replies:

Hazel: Ah, no I have a sound alert. So, I know when a message is coming in.
Author 1: And if it does while you're brushing your teeth...
Hazel: Yeah, I will check it, I will check it immediately, because ah, when you're teleworking you're under more surveillance, so, if I don't respond to my emails for longer than ten minutes, it will look suspicious. Because people think that I'm not teleworking or that I'm not working.

Hazel's time-management strategy is in no way externally imposed, rather emerging from what she perceives as the right way of arranging the working day:

Author 1: Is ten minutes [to respond to email on telework] an unwritten rule or a written rule?
Hazel: It's not a written rule, but I just thought it's kind of reasonable, right? Because for ten minutes you can be in the toilet.

As outlined above, our interviewees are able on some level to identify and handle the explicit calls for compliance as well as less direct ones resulting from, for example, peer pressure. However, the control mechanisms constituting part of a wider job design found their way into their individualized behavioural, spatial and temporal constructions of work. For instance,

prompted if during her teleworking day she keeps track of newly arriving email messages
Grace – who is a translator – responds:

- Grace: Yes, yes I have an alert on me.
Author 1: And you prefer it that way?
Grace: I can't imagine otherwise. [...] Yeah, that's, that goes with the work.
Author 1: And it doesn't bother you in any way...?
Grace: No. No, well, well I, I take it as it is.

While their job designs (translator and the analysts) do not naturally predispose Grace, Gina and Hazel to remain connected on a constant, ongoing basis, their construal of their work demands includes extended connectivity and near-constant reactivity. Yet, 'knowing how to behave' extends well beyond giving attention to emails and time management. Some of the mobile workers we spoke to were often reminded that teleworking is a privilege rather than an entitlement, and as such can eventually be taken away. In some cases, the prospect of losing the ability to telework was becoming internally embedded, thus providing a resource for new drives and motivations:

In my current organization, the management is very reluctant, they don't like the idea of telework. Even though it's been pushed by the trade unions for many years. And still we don't have regular telework. We only have this kind of telework that you can take sometimes. And I still feel like they are very suspicious and also when this teleworking scheme started, my boss said that ahm, we should be very careful not to break any rules. Or to be careful that we don't make a bad impression about telework. Because in the future we might never have ahm, regular telework. So, we should be very careful with this teleworking process, so that we don't make any mistakes that would show the management that it's a bad idea. So, I think, I feel extra motivated to, to respect all the rules during telework. (Hazel)

Other teleworkers also expressed similar sentiments (albeit less explicitly) normalizing the fact that the chance to work from home prompts the desire to be particularly careful about how work timely is performed.

I hardly ever curtail my working time [when working from home]; I make sure that even a 15 minute break is registered. I almost always work the full eight hours. (Felix).

By and large, mobile workers were creative in developing new thresholds, norms and justifiable exceptions enabling them to feel ‘in control’ of their work, while at the same time subscribing to an ideal, a ‘proper’ way of executing one’s duties. It was popular for instance to flexibly approach the ‘starting time’ while feeling a need to exclude it from officially claimed working time despite the lack of organizational control mechanisms in this respect (Felix). Similarly, in some cases the ‘meantime’ activities, despite being perceived as ‘deserved break’.

I normally exclude them from the official working time, don’t count them in (Gina).

The following narrative from Nathan (whose role requires him to spend significant amounts of time outside of the UK) captures the nuanced way in which control becomes embedded in the individual sensemaking, without a recourse to external discourses or imposed agendas:

Author 2: Are there certain times when you would stop looking at your email notifications?

Nathan: Ahm, when I’m in the UK probably not. I’ll just, like said, I’d be happy to, if a notification pops up, just slide it away and that’s it. But I don’t turn them off.

...

Author 2: So, if you got an email notification at three o’clock in the morning, when you’re in the UK would you look at it?

Nathan: Not if I’m sleeping, it’s on silent. I have to say that my phone is on silent.

Author 2: So, what sort of time would you switch it on silent?

Nathan: Pretty much all the time. Ahm, even for like, personal notifications, so, it’s never on loud ever. ... It’s more like when I’m awake, I have a little light that flashes and I can see ... when I have my hand on the phone or near me. So, I know if I’m getting a notification or an email. And normally within half an hour having received it I would have known that I’ve got it. But if I go to bed, that’s it. I’m going to bed and my phone is still on silent, it’s silent during the day ahm and so it stays on silent and it doesn’t wake me up. I’m not that kind of person, because there are some people who are like, I have the phone out loud and if I get an email at two in the morning I’ll read it, I’m not like that. I’m just like, if I’m around in the evening and I’m watching a movie and it’s nine o’clock and I’m getting an email, then I’ll reply to it because I’m watching messenger.

This exchange highlights the way in which Nathan has internalized control over email in a somewhat confused manner. Earlier in the interview (not quoted here), Nathan insists that he does not work outside of the office. Yet at the beginning of this excerpt he states that there is

no time when he does not stop looking at his work email and then continues that he indeed does so when going to bed and while being asleep. There is no indication in the interview that the employer controls Nathan's email use or that informal expectations exist about checking emails after normal office hours.

Discussion and conclusion

The emerging 'faces' of power in tele-, agile and mobile working provide a discursive landscape for discussing issues of agency and control as they transpire through spatially extended modes of interaction between individual and the workplace. Whilst data collection is at this point still ongoing, the behavioural patterns that we are observing – or rather their narrative descriptions by study participants – largely cut across industry sectors and types of employment. Remaining cautious as regards the dynamic status of our analysis, we would nevertheless like to offer preliminary thoughts towards future discussion.

As we have observed in our data, more explicit use of power (Faces 1 and 2) provokes a reaction by mobile workers. While this post-Machiavellian concept is hardly new, it seems especially pertinent to the mobile working context that is riddled with encouragement as well as requirement to take more individual ownership of the way in which work is organized. As the above empirical material suggests, the further mobile workers are physically located from the centralized source of power ('office'), the less direct oversight they are subjected to (Face 1) and the less specific and enforceable the external agendas are (Face 2). Hence the more room for shaping their work-life they seem to have, the less agency they seem to exercise to circumvent power and control embedded in their work, and the more they devote to self-control (Face 3).

Indeed, the defiant agencies seem to strongly underpin the explicit, coercive face of power. Our research participants are typically keen to and skilled in developing shortcuts and micro-strategies enabling them either shelter away from direct oversight in a back-office office cafeteria, put on the performance act, or just 'not work' while being in the office. Many of them are also proficient at dealing with the agendas being set for them while they work away from the office. Admittedly, in many cases the pressure of being constantly available and reachable is something they are coping with by means of submission. If they do so, they comply while being aware of the mechanisms of control instilled in the mobile working setup. Often,

however, they refuse to yield and draw a temporal, spatial or behavioural line limiting a spillover of work into their private life and distancing themselves from externally imposed means of control. Their creativity in moderating the latter can even go as far as to co-defining the rules of the game thus rendering them rigged to their favour – for instance, when the requirement to ‘present results’ is countered by requesting the mobile working on the day of the deadline with most work being already done beforehand.

However, the pockets of vacuum of control, where the construal of activity is largely left to individual’s interpretation, become soon populated with expectations and desires, which, while individually created, tend to mirror external agendas. For instance, on mobile working days, the length of legitimate lunchbreak, delay in responding to email, the manner of managing the incoming emails or the level of scrupulousness in calculating one’s ‘pure’ working time do not appear to be perceived as strictly imposed. Rather, our research participants develop innovative ways of ‘ensuring compliance’ despite the absence of an explicit policy. The breaks become shorter, email monitoring near-constant and time-calculation more restrictive than in the conditions of coercive oversight or presence of external agenda. As exemplified by Nathan, the ‘Third Face’ types of expectations may become hidden underneath layers of strategies to legitimize and de-legitimize certain courses of action, only to transpire through the expressed individual need to casually cross the dividing line between work and leisure.

In line with Foucault’s rendition of a dispersal of power, the latter does not disappear when Faces 1 and 2 are turned the other way. On the contrary, Lukes’ (1974) notion of the power to shape expectations (Face 3) can be perceived through Foucauldian lenses of subjectification (1978), where the individuals spontaneously shape their own practices, rituals and behaviours in line with what they perceive as legitimate or expected. The interaction with external discourses is difficult to ignore, and indeed mobile workers report experiencing a more or less explicit pressure from their peers and superiors. Yet, it is equally important, that the said pressure was as insidious as it was directionless and broadly invoked the general resentment of the office-based employees towards ‘different’, mobile ways of working. Mobile workers exercise significant discretion in translating this overarching aura of suspicion towards their trade, into tangible behavioural traits and mechanisms of self-control.

We find it significant that – while those findings may resonate with contributions already made in specific industries and professions (e.g. Holmqvist and Maravelias, 2011) – the

subjectification constitutes a distinctive and largely unexplored trait in mobile working (for exceptions, see Kesselring (2014) for sociological perspective; and Hislop (2013) for the more specific context of mobility). Specifically, it extends the ‘autonomy paradox’ into the area of individual reproduction of control. While ‘autonomy paradox’ perceived through lenses of Lukes’ (1974) theory firmly occupies ‘Face 2’ and paves the way to ‘Face 3’ by noticing that individuals may actively strive to fit into the established social norm, it does not, as far as we can see, emphasize the predominant role of individual agencies creatively applied to develop new standards and rituals drawing on existing, albeit non-specific sentiments and stereotypes. Given the enormous role generally ascribed to agency in mobile working as well as an ongoing discussion on the changing modes of power and organizational control in flexible working context, we find it important to accentuate the individually-agentic mechanisms of control and power when mobile working is concerned. In this paper, we hope to have delineated a preliminary procedure to better grasp the subtle dynamics in this timely area of organizational inquiry.

Bibliography

Akram, S; Emerson, G; & Marsh, D (2015). '(Re-)Conceptualizing the third face of power: Insights from Bourdieu and Foucault'. *Journal of Political Power*, 8(3): 345–362.

Aronowitz, S. and Cutler, J. (1998). *Post-Work: The Wages of Cybernation*. (New York, Routledge).

Bachrach, P and Baratz, MS (1962). 'The two faces of power'. *American Political Science Review*, 56(4): 941-952.

Bailey, DE and Kurland, NB (2002). 'A review of telework research: findings, new directions, and lessons for the study of modern work'. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(4):383–400.

Block, F. (1990). *Postindustrial possibilities*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bradshaw, A (1976). 'A critique of Steven Lukes' Power: A Radical View', *Sociology*, 10(1): 121-127.

Brock, DM (2006). 'The changing professional organization', *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 8(3): 157-174.

Bourdieu, P (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Broadfoot, KJ (2001) 'When the cat's away, do the mice play? Control/autonomy in the virtual workplace'. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 15(1): 110–114.

Byron, K (2005). 'A meta-analytic review of work–family conflict and its antecedents'. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 67(2): 169–198.

Collins, AM; Hislop, D and Cartwright, S (2016). 'Social support in the workplace between teleworkers, office-based colleagues and supervisors', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 31(2): 161-175.

Crenson, MA (1971). *The Un-politics of Air Pollution: A Study of Non-decision making in the Cities*. Toronto: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dahl, RA (1957). 'The concept of power'. *Behavioral Science*, 2(3): 201-215.

Dearlove, J (1973). *The Politics of Policy in Local Government: The Making and Maintenance of Public Policy in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Deleuze, G (1988). *Foucault*. Trans. Sean Hand. London: The Athlone Press.

Deloitte (2011). 'Next generation telework: A literature review', accessed 27/02/2017, available at: https://www.melbourneinstitute.com/downloads/hilda/Bibliography/Other_Publications/2011/Next_Generation_Telework-A_Literature_Review-July_2011.pdf.

Digester, P (1992). 'The fourth face of power'. *The Journal of Politics*, 54(4): 977-1007.

Dimitrova, D (2003). 'Controlling teleworkers: supervision and flexibility revisited'. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 18(3): 181-194.

Duxbury, L; Higgins, C; Smart, R and Stevenson, M (2014). 'Mobile technology and boundary permeability', *British Journal of Management*, 25(6): 570-588.

Egan B (1997). *Feasibility and Cost Benefit Analysis*. International Telework Association Annual International Conference, Crystal City, VA.

Evans, JA; Kunda, G and Barley, SR (2004). 'Beach time, bridge time, and billable hours: The temporal structure of technical contracting'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 49(1): 1-38.

Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. London: Harvest Press.

Galinsky, E; Bond, JT and Friedman, DE (1996). 'The role of employers in addressing the needs of employed parents'. *Journal of Social Issues*, 52(3): 111–136.

Galinsky, E; Sakai, K and Wigton, T (2011). 'Workplace flexibility: From research to action'. *Work and Family*, 21(2): 141–161.

Gaventa, JP (1980). *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Groutsis, D (2006). 'Globalisation and labour mobility: Migrants making spaces, migrants changing spaces'. In M. Hearn & M. Grant (Eds.), *Rethinking Work: Time, Space and Discourse* (pp. 144-164). Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Guest, D.E. (1997). Human resource management and performance: a review and research agenda. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 8: 263-276.

Halford, S. (2005). 'Hybrid workspace: Re-spatialisations of work, organisation and management', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 20(1): 19-33.

Hay, C (2002). *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Herod, A (2003). 'Workers, space and labor geography'. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 64(2): 112-138.

Hill, JE; Hawkins, AJ; Ferris, MS and Weitzman, M (2001). 'Finding an extra day a week: The positive influence of perceived job flexibility on work and family life balance'. *Family Relations*, 50(1):49–58.

Hislop, D. (2013). 'Driving, Communicating and Working: Understanding the Work-related Communication Behaviours of Business Travellers on Work-related Car Journeys'. *Mobilities* 8(2): 220–237.

Holmqvist, M. and Maravelias, C. (2011). *Managing healthy organizations: Worksite health promotion and the new self-management paradigm*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hyman, J; Scholarios, D and Baldry, C (2005). 'Getting on or getting by: Employee flexibility and coping strategies for home and work'. *Work, Employment & Society*, 19(4): 705–725.

Ipsos (2012). 'The world of work: Global study of online employees shows one in five (17%) works from elsewhere', accessed 12/03/2017, available at: (<http://www.ipsos-na.com/news-polls/pressrelease.aspx?id=5486>).

Kesselring, S. (2014). 'Mobility, Power and the Emerging New Mobilities Regimes'. *Sociologica*, 1: 1-30.

Kostera, M. (2008). *Organizational Ethnography: Methods and Inspirations*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Kurland, NB and Cooper, CD (2002). 'Manager control and employee isolation in telecommuting environments'. *The Journal of High Technology Management*, 13(1): 107–126.

Kurland, NB and Egan, TD (1999). 'Telecommuting: Justice and control in the virtual organization'. *Organization Science*, 10(4): 500-513.

Lapierre, LM and Allen, TD (2012). 'Control at work, control at home, and planning behavior: implications for work–family conflict', *Journal of Management*, 38(5): 1500– 1516.

Lukes, S (1974). *Power: A Radical View*. London: Macmillan Press.

Massey, D (1994). *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Massolution (2013). *The Crowd in the Cloud: Exploring the Future of Outsourcing*. White Paper, accessed 12/03/2017, available at: http://www.lionbridge.com/files/2012/11/Lionbridge-White-Paper_The-Crowd-in-the-Cloud-final.pdf.

Mazmanian M; Orlikowski, WJ and Yates, J (2005). 'Crackberries: The social implications of ubiquitous wireless e-mail devices'. In: Sorensen C, Yoo T, Lyytinen K and Degross JI (eds) *Designing Ubiquitous Information Environments: Socio-Technical Issues and Challenges*. New York: Springer.

Michel, A (2011). 'Transcending socialization: A nine-year ethnography of the body's role in organizational control and knowledge workers' transformation'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 56(3): 325–368.

Miller, P and Rose, N (2008). *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*. Cambridge: Polity.

Moe, K and Shandy, D (2010). *Glass Ceilings & 100-Hour Couples: What the Opt-Out Phenomenon Can Teach Us about Work and Family*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press.

Nansen, B., Arnold, M., Gibbs, M. and Davis, H. (2010). 'Time, space and technology in the working-home: an unsettled nexus', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 25(2): 136-153.

Negroponte, N. (1995). *Being Digital*. New York: Knopf.

Novaco, RW; Kliwer, W and Broquet, A (1991). 'Home environmental consequences of commute travel impedance'. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 19(6): 881–909.

Peters, P; den Dulk, L and van der Lippe, T (2009). 'The effects of time-spatial flexibility and new working conditions on employees' work-life balance: The Dutch case'. *Community, Work & Family*, 12(3): 279–298.

Polsby, NW (1980). *Community Power and Political Theory: A Further Look at Problems of Evidence and Inference*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Pryce, J; Albertsen, K and Nielsen, K (2006). 'Evaluation of an open-rota system in a Danish psychiatric hospital: A mechanism for improving job satisfaction and work-life balance'. *Journal of Nursing Management*. 14(4): 282–288.

Putnam, LL; Myers, KM and Gailliard, BM (2014). 'Examining the tensions in workplace flexibility and exploring options for new directions'. *Human Relations*, 67(4): 413–440.

Rifkin, J. (1995). *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*. New York: Putnam Publishing Group.

Schieman, S (2013). 'Job-related resources and the pressures of working life'. *Social Science Research*, 42(2): 271–82.

Stewart, T. A. (1997). *Welcome to the Revolution. The Information Age: An Anthology on its Impact and Consequences*. CCRP Publication Series, 11.

Telework VA (ND). Available at: <http://www.teleworkva.org/whatIsTelework/benefits.aspx>, accessed 31.01.2017.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (2014). What's Next: Future Global Trends Affecting Your Organization Evolution of Work and the Worker.

Tompkins, PK and Cheney, G (1985). 'Communication and unobtrusive control in contemporary organizations'. In McPhee RD and Tompkins PK (eds) *Organizational Communication: Traditional Themes and New Directions*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 179–210.

Weiland, SMB (2010). 'Ideal selves as resources for the situated practice of identity'. *Management Communication Quarterly* 24(4): 503–528.