Mapping themes in the study of new work practices

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Abstract

Both shaping and shaped by technological, economic and social facets, the world of work has witnessed a wide array of changes. This review article sets out to provide a synthesis of some of the main directions and insights of existing research connected to the new world of work. In particular, we approached the topic of new work practices through four key dimensions: (1) Conceptual and methodological dimensions in the study of new work practices; (2) Spatial and temporal manifestations of new work practices in the collaborative economy; (3) Individuals, organizations and new work configurations; (4) Power and control. The review article critically discusses the future of work and argues that the 'new' world of work simply repeats asymmetrical power relations and inequalities that characterise work activities, with the potential of exacerbating even further disparities, inequalities and precarity.

Keywords: future of work, gig economy, inequalities, precarious work, platforms, spatiality and temporality of work

Introduction

Globalization, economic volatility and technological changes have engendered a wide array of transformations in the world of work (Brocklehurst, 2001; Tietze and Musson, 2005; Messenger and Gschwind, 2016; Kingma, 2018). New work arrangements, which are becoming increasingly prevalent (Cappelli & Keller, 2013; Petriglieri et al., 2018), not only affect the structure of labour markets (Sweet and Meiksins, 2013) but also the ways in which work activities are carried out and spatially organized. In that context, work practices are depicted as increasingly

flexible, autonomous, collaborative and entrepreneurial. These trends have been paralleled by the relative demise of the bureaucratic organization and the growth of the so-called post-bureaucratic rhetoric through which various forms of organizations have flourished, amongst which the networked organization, the virtual corporation, the project-based organization or the modular organization. These changes have been further materialized through the ascent of various 'professional trends', such as digital nomadism (Makimoto and Manners, 1997), new forms of entrepreneurial activities (Matlay and Westhead, 2005), Do-It-Yourself (DIY) and Do-It-Together (DIT) movements (de Vaujany and Aroles, 2019), or coworking (Spinuzzi, 2012), and are linked to the emergence of new workspaces.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have played a pivotal role in the diversification and evolution of the workplace (Brocklehurst, 2001; Wilson et al., 2008), enabling an exponential acceleration of prevailing trends and paving the way for a wide array of transformations. In particular, one can observe how new forms of collaboration are facilitated by recent technological innovations (Faraj et al., 2011). In addition, work is seen by many to no longer be bound to a particular place or time (Bosch-Sijtsema et al., 2010) and is, by extension, endowed with a greater sense of flexibility and autonomy (Baruch, 2000; Golden, 2009; Tremblay and Thomsin, 2012). Importantly, alongside these opportunities, come a series of concerns relating to issues of surveillance, control and, more generally, power dynamics (Sewell, 1998, 2012; Brivot and Gendron, 2011). These various changes have had and are having considerable implications for organizations and for professional activities in general.

The fragmentation, multiplication and diversification of work practices as well as the emergence of new forms of collaboration fall under the umbrella of 'new work

practices'. Research on new work practices, which constitutes the focus of this review article, has generated a vast body of literature, with earlier discussions on the changing nature of work dating back to the pioneering work of Nilles (1975) and Toffler (1980) on telework and telecommuting. While the notion of new work practices features regularly in the literature, there is a lack of consensus around its actual contours (Messenger and Gschwind, 2016), as evidenced by the various terms in use, such as 'non-standard work' (Ashford et al., 2007) or 'alternative work arrangements' (Spreitzer et al., 2017). We contend that this is due to both the diversity of work practices associated with the new world of work as well as divergences with regards to what might be considered 'new' in that context. In this review article, we use the expression 'new work practices' to refer to a wide range of practices placed on a continuum of work flexibilization and diversification, from remote work to collaborative entrepreneurship to digital nomadism.

While research on these topics has expanded over the past thirty years or so, there has not been, to date, a reflective piece that would provide an overview of this so-called new world of work (for excellent reviews on specific aspects of new work practices, see for example Ashford et al., 2007; Spreitzer et al., 2017; Kingma, 2018; Howcroft and Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2019, amongst many others). This review article proposes a review of the research falling under the remit of new work practices. In particular, this review article approached the topic of new work practices through four dimensions: (1) Conceptual and methodological considerations in the study of new work practices; (2) Spatial and temporal manifestations of new work practices in the collaborative economy; (3) Individuals, organizations and new work configurations; (4) Power and control. Our purpose here is not to review all the literature on new work practices but rather to provide a synthesis of this vast body of scholarship

through our four dimensions and to articulate a reflection around the future of work, based on the insight gained through reviewing relevant literatures. We believe that such a multi-dimensional approach can be particularly insightful in the study of new work practices; more often than not, research in that area tends to gravitate around one of the four aforementioned dimensions, thus overlooking the ways in which these dimensions are interconnected.

This review article is structured as follows. The next four sections provides a synthesis of the literature on new work practices through the aforementioned four dimensions, namely Conceptual and methodological considerations in the study of new work practices; Spatial and temporal manifestations of new work practices in the collaborative economy; Individuals, organizations and new work configurations; Power and control. The final section discusses the future of work and critically considers the implications of new work practices.

Conceptual and Methodological considerations in the study of new work practices

Despite a tendency to look back at the past as a golden age of stability and the present as an era characterised by unprecedented rates of changes, it nonetheless seems fair to advance that over the past thirty years, the world of work has undergone a wide array of significant transformations. It is important to consider the multi-dimensionality of these changes, rather than assuming some one-off rupture or linearity, when exploring new work practices. Earlier technological developments, such as mobile phones and Internet in the 1980s or wireless connections in the 1990s, have greatly contributed to changing the ways in which professional activities have

been carried out ever since. In particular, they enabled the materialization of a multitude of different work modalities, increasingly diverging from stereotypical '9-to-5' office jobs (Barley and Kunda, 2001). While important, technologies alone do not suffice to apprehend the ascent of the 'new world of work'. A plethora of other forces and factors at the meso, macro and micro levels have shaped how work practices have evolved as well as how organisations have responded to this changing context. These forces include legal, economic, political, cultural and institutional dimensions, and even societal aspirations for change (see for instance Bornstein, 2007).

The latest manifestations of new work practices revolve around the rise (or perhaps more accurately the explosion in numbers) of new modalities of employment, including zero-hour contracts and other forms of unsecure employment under the auspices of platform capitalism (Scholz, 2017; Peticca-Harris et al., 2018); the growing popularity of online labour platform workforce (see Bergvall-Kåreborn and Howcroft, 2014); the development of crowd-based and collaborative forms of entrepreneurship (Sundararajan, 2017); and the emergence of new spatial work arrangements (e.g. coworking spaces, makerspaces, hackerspaces, fablabs, etc.). These emerging trends raise a variety of questions around the actual 'fabric' of work. Clearly, a significant proportion of work activities occur outside the realm of the 'formal organization' (Boudreau et al., 2015; Barley, 2016; Petriglieri et al., 2018) through new forms of entrepreneurship, zero-hour contracts, freelancing, collaborative work arrangements and so on. This only not shifts the 'traditional' spatial locus of work, but it also blurs the boundaries between what can be seen as work and what belongs to the private sphere. As a result, the concept of work itself appears increasingly elusive and difficult to apprehend.

The changing nature of work has been approached through various sub-disciplinary angles within the management literature, each contributing to different debates and questions surrounding new work practices. Research in organizational behaviour has, for instance, looked at employee motivation and the psychological implications of new work practices (Putnam et al., 2014; see Spreitzer et al., 2017, for a thorough review on organizational behaviour research on the new world of work), while research in organization studies has been more concerned with the themes of identity, resistance and power (see Barley et al., 2017; Fleming, 2017; Selenko et al., 2018). Commitment, career management and flexible work arrangements have been recurrent themes in the human resource management literature (e.g. Innocenti et al., 2017). This succinct list, by no means exhaustive or restrictive, simply sets out to highlight the breadth of questions and concerns falling under the umbrella of research attending to new work practices. The topic of new work practices has long been of interest to economists and sociologists alike (Spreitzer et al., 2017) and has also featured prominently in the work psychology literature (see for instance Cascio, 1995; Standen et al., 1999; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007).

Aside from being approached from various (sub)disciplinary angles, new work practices have been explored through many different theoretical lenses. Institutional theory has featured rather prominently in the unpacking of changing work dynamics (e.g. Hultin and Mähring, 2014; Hinings et al., 2018). In addition, a significant body of research has sought to attend to the materiality of these new work practices. This has, for example, taken the form of phenomenological (de Vaujany and Aroles, 2019) or sociomaterial (Mazmanian et al., 2013; Lehdonvirta, 2018) inquiries. Others have, for instance, drawn from the work of Foucault to position coworking spaces as complex 'post-capitalocentric spaces' (Vidaillet and Bousalham, 2018), from the

work of Deleuze and Guattari to conceptualize coworking spaces as affectual assemblages (Jakonen et al., 2017), from the spatial theory of Lefebvre in the study of new ways of working (Hirst, 2011; Kingma, 2016), or from labour process theory in order to apprehend the gig economy (Gandini, 2019).

From a methodological standpoint, a significant body of research has explored the new world of work through a quantitative lens. This includes research on the relation between telework and the notion of community based on the analysis of large-scale surveys (Kamerade and Burchell, 2004); or more recently, Assenza's (2015) study of entrepreneurial hackers and co-working spaces (and how space can contribute to new venture creation) that offers a model for empirical measurement of the interaction between spatial configuration and economic outcomes; or Gertner and Mack's (2017) exploration of the entrepreneurial orientation of different types of business support to entrepreneurs such as incubators, accelerators and co-working spaces, and who suggest indicators for measuring different dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation. Qualitative research on the new world of work probably outnumbers its quantitative counterpart. Various methods have been mobilized, including ethnographic research to explore coworking (see Butcher, 2018; Blagoev et al., 2019), freelancing (Osnowitz, 2010) or 'third workspaces' (Kingma, 2016); interviews with Uber drivers (Peticca-Harris et al., 2018), platform workers (Lehdonvirta, 2018), teleworkers (Baruch, 2000); or blog-based virtual ethnography (Boell et al., 2016). Still others have drawn from a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods (see for instance Feldman and Bolino, 2000 on career motivations in self-employment). A challenge for quantitative and probably to a greater extent for qualitative research, is the multimodality of a variety of work arrangements. The heterogeneity of 'non-standard' work (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004) brings to the

fore a series of methodological and theoretical challenges regarding how we can apprehend the new world of work. One such issue concerns the growing prevalence of the digital in organizational settings and the methodological endeavours required to make sense of organizations and work in this context of digitalization (Akemu and Abdelnour, 2018).

Spatial and Temporal manifestations of new work practices in the collaborative economy

The temporal and spatial manifestations of new work practices, together with both their organizational and non-organizational implications, have been the subject of a multitude of studies since the early days of telework. Discussing telework, Messenger and Gschwind (2016) distinguish three stages or generations in the spatiality of work: the home office, the mobile office and the virtual office. In the case of the 'home office', professional activities are, *de facto*, conducted at home, with home becoming the place where two discourses, those of industrial and household production, meet (Tietze and Musson, 2005). In turn, this contributes to the blurring of the boundary between work and private life (Golden and Geisler, 2007; Sayah, 2013), with the realization that work always wins (see Gold & Mustafa, 2013). With the 'mobile office', professional activities occur in third spaces (*sensu* Oldenburg, 1989), which have typically included cafés, restaurants or trains. The inclusion or repurposing of these 'social' spaces relies on the development and democratization of wireless technologies allowing for remote connections to servers, client databases and email services. Finally, in the context of the 'virtual office', work is conducted in 'intermediate spaces' (Messenger and Gschwind, 2016); these can, for instance,

include elevators, parking lots or even sidewalks that can be mobilized in order to read emails or any other documents. This third stage corresponds to an extreme evolution in terms of the spatiality of work, as any location can potentially form part of a work routine, and even movements between places have been captured and incorporated in that logic.

In addition to colonizing new spaces, changing work conditions have had a wide range of practical implications in terms of how organizations are spatially structured. Materializing the image of 'multi-location employees', a growing number of organizations have repurposed their spatial environments by embracing the logic of 'hot-desking', 'touch- down' or 'drop-in desks'. Many office workers are no longer offered a fixed desk or office (Felstead et al., 2005); the underlying assumption being that by offering spatial flexibility to employees, there would, at any point in time, only be a reduced number of employees on the premises of the organisation. This spatial evolution is somehow aligned on the development of open space offices in the 1950s and their supposedly productive properties. ICTs have played a pivotal role in the success of open plan offices, as they maintain a sense of 'perceived proximity' (Wilson et al., 2008), thus enabling employees to ignore spatial distances. While hot-desking might reduce organizational costs (and provide some additional structural benefits to an organization), it can also be counterproductive with employees struggling to find an available space or to coordinate with their colleagues (Bosch-Sijtsema et al., 2010). A large body of literature has reflected on both the benefits and limitations of these new spatial configurations (for example see Hirst, 2011).

Messenger and Gschwind's (2016) stages, developed to apprehend the spatial implications of telework, are relevant and applicable to independent workers involved in all sorts of work modalities, be it freelancing, collaborative entrepreneurship,

digital nomadism or creative work. The first and third stages, respectively the home office and the virtual office, match those of teleworkers. A difference, albeit not systematic, can be noted for the second stage with regards to the type of 'third space' mobilized. For self-employed individuals, these would more commonly take the form of collaborative spaces, which have been blossoming since their inception in 2005 (Gandini, 2015). The term 'collaborative space' refers to a variety of spaces built on the premises of collaboration and community. The most common types of collaborative spaces are coworking spaces, makerspaces, hackerspaces and fablabs. Interestingly, these spaces embody different ethos; for instance, coworking spaces are seen as imbued with a more corporate flavour as compared to the political ethics of hackerspaces, or the strong 'community orientation' of makerspaces. Coworking spaces, which host professionals working in shared office spaces, have received attention in the literature (Spinuzzi, 2012; Garrett et al., 2017; Jakonen et al., 2017; Blagoev et al., 2019). If coworking spaces are mostly used by freelancers, microbusinesses and self-employed individuals (Bouncken and Reusch, 2018), they have also nonetheless been colonized by company employees, in line with the development of 'hot-desking' and similar practices. An apparent paradox lies at the heart of coworking spaces: while their potential for change is very often put forward in the articulation of their ethos and manifesto, they are, in parallel, the latest materialization of neoliberal economies and logics (Spinuzzi, 2012; Vidaillet and Bousalham, 2018), as they favour, amongst other things, individualization and the atomization of work. On that point, Gandini (2015: 194) notes that 'with notable exceptions, most contributions in the literature build on the assumption that coworking represents an inevitably positive innovation, with few dwelling upon empirical findings and rarely offering a critical understanding'.

Additionally, a significant body of literature has engaged with the development of hybrid workspaces (Halford, 2005) where workers mobilize a multitude of workspaces in their professional endeavours (Hislop and Axtell, 2009), including organizational workplaces (for employees), coworking spaces, home and other spaces somewhere 'in-between'. Such hybrid working arrangements are set to become more common in the future (Sewell and Taskin, 2015). This hybridization also concerns the structural design of organizations with some spaces purposively mixing features of professional and leisure activities (with, for instance, the inclusion of onsite gyms), thus fostering the gamification of organizational space (Morschheuser and Hamari, 2019). While work seems to become increasingly more detached from spatial considerations (Felstead and Henseke, 2017), the development of an array of new work-oriented spaces denotes an attempt to rematerialize or re-spatialize work outside the formal boundaries of organizations. A similar observation could be made with independent workers who seek to escape from '9-to-5' office jobs and yet engage with coworking spaces that offer a structure similar to that of organisations (Spreitzer et al., 2017).

The alteration of the temporality of work through new practices is particularly noticeable at two levels. While long-term employment used to be a key dimension of traditional forms of organizing, the rise of freelancing, zero-hour contracts and other short-term and temporary forms of employment that occupy a growing percentage of the current work landscape (De Stephano, 2016) have thoroughly altered the 'duration' of work. Lifetime employment is no longer a defining feature of work modalities and clearly not one that would be presented favourably in discourses surrounding and framing the new world of work. This is not to say that such arrangements did not exist before, but rather that their growth has been exponential,

as facilitated through online platforms and new forms of workspace. A second aspect of these changes concerns the daily operations of professional activities: various technological innovations have put organizational employees (and independent workers alike) in a situation where they can be reached instantly, at any time and virtually no cost (Mazmanian et al., 2013). This culture of instantaneity and immediacy can lead individuals to experience a constant form of stress related to the imperative of always being 'on' (Barley et al., 2011; Pettica-Harris et al., 2018). Contract and gig workers hold significant schedule flexibility (Spreitzer et al., 2017; Lehdonvirta, 2018), even though in practice, many are not in the position to use this flexibility to their advantage (Pettica-Harris et al., 2018).

In the context of what we may call the 'shattering of the time/space of work', a 'no boundary workforce' arose, most accurately depicted by the lack of spatial and temporal limitations of its professional activities (Chen and Nath, 2005). While the fact that workers can access work-related information without any spatial or temporal consideration might be hailed as a source of flexibility and organizational agility (Campbell and McDonald, 2009), it is also a cause of workaholism (Sarker et al., 2012) and a form of extreme work (see Granter et al., 2015) that can have many adverse effects on both organizations and individuals (see for instance Baruch, 2000; Boell et al., 2016). Interestingly, all these trends are sometimes related to a possible process of disembodiment and individual isolation, which in turn can be counterbalanced by disconnecting from digital networks or through collaborative practices that aim to re-introduce collective support and solidarity (see de Vaujany and Aroles, 2019). There is no doubt that the spatio-temporal structure of organizations, and work in general, has drastically changed, as we are moving towards a work culture of instantaneity and ever-increasing connectivity. While the

research reviewed in this section has shed light on the evolving spatiality and temporality of work, it also reveals challenges when it comes to conceptualizing the complex temporalities of work and mapping the multi-dimensionality of the new spaces of work.

Individuals, organizations and new work configurations

Work 'performed on a fixed schedule, at the firm's place of business under the firm's control and with mutual expectation of continued employment' (Kalleberg et al., 2000: 257) is, for many, an antagonistic idea that no longer reflects the current reality of the world of work. Fundamental shifts both in terms of the nature of work and its spatiotemporal arrangements have transformed the relation between organizations and individuals, notably in terms of employment and working conditions (see Neff, 2012; Appelbaum, 2013). In particular, the focus on flexibility heralded as the central dimension of new work practices raises a number of serious concerns for individuals and their welfare. Spreitzer et al. (2017) distinguish three types of flexibility inherent to alternative work arrangements: flexibility in the employment relationship, flexibility in the scheduling of work (i.e. the temporality of work), flexibility in the location of work (i.e. the spatiality of work). Of particular interest to this section is the first type of flexibility, which concerns direct employment (full-time and part-time workers in an organization), co-employment (employment mediated by a recruiting agency) as well as contract work (short-term, project-based, hourly-paid).

Hybrid forms of work, in the shape of 'plural careers' (Caza et al., 2017), are boosted by the ever-growing popularity of the 'digital nomad' (professionals engaged

in various forms of work and characterized by their mobility) narrative and the expansion of online labour platforms (such as *Upwork*, *Peopleperhour* or *TaskRabbit*). These have considerably challenged traditional employment relations at the cost of individuals. On that matter, Ashford et al. (2007: 67) note that 'as nonstandard work becomes more prevalent in the economy, in organizations, and in individuals' career paths, we need to update our field's implicit portrayals of the nature of employees' attachment to organizations'. This is all the more important as all types of workers (self-employed and employed alike) are impacted by changes in work conditions (Spreitzer et al., 2017). Speaking to these changes in particular, Batt (2018: 465-466) argues that 'underlying the different dimensions of the new world of work is a fundamental change in the logic of capitalist organization from a managerial business model to a financial one'.

An extensive body of literature has looked into how working conditions have changed within organizations in the context of remote work (or telework). Remote work has been praised for a variety of reasons, from how it contributes to fostering organizational agility (Campbell and McDonald, 2009), to reducing organizational costs (Gregg, 2011), to enhancing flexibility and autonomy (Baruch, 2000; Pearlson and Saunders, 2001; Golden, 2009; Tremblay and Thomsin, 2012), to enabling employees to enact their own working times and spaces (Morgan, 2004; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Pyöriä, 2011), to improving work morale (Wheatley, 2012), amongst others. It has equally been criticized on many grounds, including the extent to which it can adversely affect knowledge sharing (Sarker et al., 2012), lead to instances of work intensification (Kelliher and Anderson, 2009) or hinder collaboration within an organization (Baruch, 2000; Pearlson and Saunders, 2001; Pyöriä, 2011). Contradictory results are frequently found in this literature, with, for

example, studies reporting that telework positively contributes to job satisfaction (e.g. Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Golden, 2009) and others arguing that it effectively reduces work satisfaction (Suh and Lee, 2017). Be that as it may, these organizational patterns of work redefine the implicit psychological contract that binds together an organization and its employees.

Moreover, organizations increasingly resort to hiring contract workers who receive no long-term job security, benefits, or even adequate training (Bidwell and Briscoe, 2009). Likewise, various studies have shown how workers hired on temporary contracts encounter increased difficulties with upward mobility, receive fewer institutional protections (in the form of health and retirement packages) and as result, are more disfranchised from work, resulting in lower union membership (Bidwell et al., 2013; Cobb, 2015). Highlighting the precarity of these work arrangements, Sliter and Boyd (2014) show that part-time workers resort to moonlighting either to complement a low-paid job or because they cannot find full employment. Managing different job commitments, with little security and no future prospect, is, again not a new phenomenon (precarious work predates ICTs – see Quinlan, 2012), but one that has considerably expanded over the last ten years. This raises some fundamental questions related to the ever-growing precarity of workers and the absence of institutional and legal frameworks to counterbalance these trends. Importantly, while the emergence of new work practices is linked to technological, economic and social changes, they are also intrinsically connected to profound transformations in the balance of power in the realm of industrial relations. In turn, this has changed the nature of collective voice, calling for a rethink of the ways in which we approach issues of rights at work. In that context, it seems apparent that various de-regulation policies within employment relations have played a pivotal role

in launching a neoliberal landscape in which these new work practices would flourish.

These issues and concerns strongly resonate with depictions of new employment relations, or perhaps more accurately working conditions, in the context of 'alternative' work arrangements (digital nomadism, zero-hour contracts, etc.). In the gig economy, the burden of economic risk has been shifted onto workers, resulting in workers excluded from traditional employment deals and protection (Friedman, 2014). This is particularly noticeable with platforms such as *Uber* or *Deliveroo* that promote self-employment over traditional employment (De Stephano, 2016). Service providers, understood as freelancers offering services through a platform, communicate directly with service users (i.e. customers) for a short period of time and for a very specific task. Their 'license to operate' is granted by the platform on which their work is advertised. Acting as mere intermediaries, these platforms do not hold any responsibility with regards to the quality of the service delivered, while making large profits on the labour of the service providers. A logic based on the premises of the reputation economy (Gandini, 2016) guarantees the working of this system: providing that one receives positive reviews, one will receive new 'contracts'; 'in the driver rating system offered to riders, passengers are empowered to act as middle managers over drivers, whose ratings directly impact their employment eligibility' (Rosenblat and Stark, 2016: 3772). These platforms thus enact a process of 'labor arbitrage' (Graham et al., 2017). The ever-growing number of similar offers, together with the idea that one is 'only as good as one's last performance', place service providers under a tremendous amount of pressure and greatly foster precarity and insecurity.

Unsurprisingly, precarity, lack of security and a short-term orientation lie at the heart of these new work configurations (Bergvall-Kåreborn and Howcroft, 2014;

Moisander et al., 2018), which attract an ever-increasing number of individuals through their 'win-win imageries' (Ekman, 2015). In addition, this affects how individuals engaged in these work configurations, relate to the concept of work identity (see Doherty, 2009); Blatt and Ashford (2006) argue that workers, physically detached from organizations, create meanings through their work differently: interactions with others (limited by their work modality) play a minor role in the creation of work meaning as compared to self-knowledge and self-referential systems. In sum, through a radical responsibilization of the workforce (see Fleming, 2017) and a redefinition of the main actors involved in the development and maintenance of work arrangements, the employment relationship is 'fissured' (Weil, 2014). In that context, while the role of traditional unions seems to have weakened (see Holtgrewe, 2014), we can note the emergence of new forms of trade unions (see Alberti and Però, 2018), calling for a rethinking of the ways in which they operate and can potentially reinvent themselves (see Dencik and Wilkin, 2015).

Power and control

Despite their importance, questions of power and control have somehow been left aside in mainstream approaches to the study of new technologies and work. While earlier discussions of remote work have praised its emancipatory dimension as a source of both independence and flexibility (see Golden, 2009; Tremblay and Thomsin, 2012), many subsequent studies have been more concerned with the practical implications of escaping the direct gaze of one's line manager or even colleagues (see Sewell and Taskin, 2015). In addition to challenging the role of the middle manager (in line with the apparent flattening of organizational structures), the possibility of working outside the physical realm of an organization has fostered the

development of new, creative and insidious forms of control and surveillance. This may refer to software, initially designed for teamwork purposes, which records or monitors time spent online, availability status, productivity, etc. in the same fashion as one may know when someone was connected on various platforms. As an example, exploring the set-up of a computerized knowledge management system (KMS), Brivot and Gendron (2011: 152) argue that 'the use of the KMS in the case firm unexpectedly fostered the constitution of a lateral network of surveillance whereby colleagues and peers are involved in scrutinizing the validity of one another's work, irrespective of the office's hierarchies and official lines of specialization'. Other studies have reported on how technologies, and more recently algorithms, can be mobilized in setting up new forms of control and new geometries of power from which one cannot extricate (see Sewell and Taskin, 2015; Rosenblat and Stark, 2016; Woodcock, 2017; Wood et al., 2018; Veen et al., 2019). In addition, Holtgrewe (2014: 17) notes that 'for trade unions, new forms of control and surveillance in the workplace remain key issues'. Altogether, this reflects wider forms of control in surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2015; 2019)

It would be reductionist and simplistic to assume that technologies alone account for the expansion of these forms of control. Differences between workers engaged in remote work and those who are not may lead to certain tensions with the assumption (held by those working within the organization) that working remotely or at home is a way of reducing one's work input. In addition, managers' fears and concerns over their potentially decreasing ability to monitor in person the performance and commitment (see Causer and Jones, 1996) of remote workers might account for some of the negative views and prejudices on remote work. It seems fair to argue that these work configurations foster 'horizontal forms of control' (see

Sewell, 1998; Vosselman, 2002; Dale, 2005), where colleagues (purposively or not) act as surveillance agents, thus extending the control exerted by more senior managers. Furthermore, the possibility of being monitored may potentially lead to higher levels of self-discipline, resulting in greater difficulties when it comes to disconnecting from work. The image of the multitasking 'super-worker' (not alien to academic spheres) produces feelings of anxiety and guilt for those who seek to balance their working lives with other activities, reinforcing self-discipline and by extension promoting a culture of overwork as the new norm (see Ekman, 2015).

The paradoxical relation that binds together independence/flexibility and control also strongly resonates with work arrangements occurring outside the formal boundaries of organizations. While indisputably flexible work modalities, freelancing and independent work in general are nonetheless governed and controlled by the 'moves' of the market, i.e. one is highly dependent on the contracts received and must accept them as they come (see Peticca-Harris et al., 2018). The same goes for digital nomadism: behind the glossy image of travelling, success and leisure lies a somehow darker picture, that of individuals engaged in a variety of professional endeavours and heavily reliant on short-term contracts and assignments. In addition, with regards to online labour platforms, workers are rarely in a position of control, as either the service users (on platforms such as *AMT* or *Upwork*) or the platform itself (e.g. *Uber* or *Deliveroo*) set the value of the gig (Gandini, 2019). Digital technologies are also mobilized to enact various forms of control over the self-employed individuals operating within the gig economy (Moore and Robinson, 2016). Self-employed workers do not escape insidious forms of control that have been discussed with regards to remote work; 'gig economy platforms are exemplary of nuanced and innovative forms of technologically centered, normatively driven practices of control

over workers and their work' (Gandini, 2019: 1051).

Discussion and conclusion: Imagining the future of work

The future and end of work have been the object of a long-standing interest in the sociology of work and in the field of organization studies (see for instance Adler, 1992; Granter, 2009). Such debates, spurred in part by the development of Artificial Intelligence and the continued advance of automation and robotics, have exploded in recent years and tend to intensify during periods of rapid economic, cultural and social change (see Granter, 2009). During the 1980s in particular, a 'future of work', not to mention an 'end of work' literature flourished, with 'post-industrial utopians' (Frankel, 1987) such as Alvin Toffler offering predictions on new ways of living and working. Indeed, Toffler's concept of the 'electronic cottage' can be seen as part of the genealogy of the present-day location-independent worker, combining as it does notions of network technology and working remotely, and a changing attitude to labour and consumption in the market economy (Frankel, 1987: 28).

Spreitzer et al. (2017) propose two images of the new world of work. The first image, which is highly positive, gravitates around the experience of highly skilled workers who are in the position to use their wide range of skills to navigate easily through the new world of work, grabbing opportunities as well as creating their own and being in high demand. In this war of talent, they can exert a great level of agency in shaping their professional journeys, for instance rejecting jobs and contracts they are not interested in. They can thrive in any work arrangements, deciding when, where and how to work. As such, this global elite is one of the main beneficiaries of this new world of work where aggressive forms of capitalism benefit the very few

who are fortunate enough to modulate the system to their own advantage. Alongside this image, lies a second one, which is considerably less glamorous and far removed from enthusiastic portrayals of the new world of work. This image, quantitatively more dominant, concerns the life and situation of 'low-skilled' workers for whom job security, living wages and decent working conditions are increasingly absent from the working deals they are being offered through these new work arrangements. This new 'precariat' (Standing, 2011) pays the costs of the flexibilization of the job market and constitutes the core labour without which this new world of work would not hold. Increasingly, white-collar workers are joining the ranks of this global precariat.

A recurring theme in both academic literature and the media is the risks posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI) with regards to employment (Ford, 2015); 'Images of computerization and its economic and social impacts on the 'future of work' are often replete with deterministic predictions that people will be supplanted by robots' (Bergvall-Kåreborn and Howcroft, 2014: 213). Spencer (2018) argues that the impact of AI on employment will be more qualitative than quantitative. In other words, rather than depriving us all of a job, the development of AI will lead to jobs that are less interesting, more repetitive and require fewer skills. On that point, Batt (2018) argues that information and advanced technologies have reshaped and are reshaping the employment relationship in two main ways: first with regards to the organization of production and second around the organization of work, both quantitatively (the content of the tasks allocated) and qualitatively (the nature of the tasks allocated). These views concur with the two images of the new world of work put forward by Spreitzer et al. (2017): on one side, a growing number of repetitive, low-skill-requiring jobs and on the other, fewer 'fulfilling' jobs requiring a wider range of skills.

Okhuysen et al. (2013: 492) note that 'work and workplaces are constantly reorganized, reformed, and reconstituted such that the people doing the work, the arrangements around the work, the technology used in the performance of the work, and even the purpose of the work may change'. As argued in this review article, these changes have a wide range of implications on all aspects of work (Messenger and Gschwind, 2016; Spreitzer et al., 2017; Kingma, 2018). Discussing and questioning the future of work is, by extension, a way to interrogate the future of management and 'formal' organizations. The ever-increasing focus on freelancing, individual mobility, autonomous platforms (often equated with markets) and independent work communities reveals a particular ideology that gravitates around a set of new practices aspiring to non-managerial ways of living and 'working together'. The return to a culture grounded in making and 'do-ocratic' practices (see Kostakis et al., 2015) epitomizes a project far removed from traditional, hierarchical and centralized organizations. In that context, managerial discourses and techniques are often rejected by the more militant actors advocating new work practices (such as hackers in Germany or 'third-place militants' in France). In parallel, online labour platforms embody a very different trend, one that embraces the commodification of an ever-increasing number of services (Howcroft and Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2019) in line with processes of work intensification. The 'new' aspiration for communities (found in collaborative entrepreneurship, coworking spaces and so on) and the logic of online labour platforms seem to rely on diametrically opposed ideological motives, but in the end, we contend that both remain trapped in the promises of so-called 'post-capitalist' narratives.

An important question on which to ponder is the extent to which the 'new' world of work is actually new. There is a tendency to look back on the past as a

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golden age of stability and at the present as an era of unprecedented changes. Certainly, technologies have contributed to accelerating the pace of changes but are these changes more drastic than the ones that, for instance, took place through the development of Fordism? As argued by Jessop (2005), Fordism resulted in the growth of private consumption of standardized, mass-produced 'ideological' commodities (such as cars, televisions, washing machines, refrigerators, or mass tourism) in nuclear family households, and the provision of standardized, collective goods and services by a bureaucratic state. Side effects of Fordism were 'drastic falls in the rural population, destruction of traditional working class milieux, the privatization of family life, the depopulation of inner cities, and the environmental and social impact of the automobile' (Jessop, 2005: 46).

Finally, the 'emancipatory potential' of new work of practices needs to be more carefully examined. As argued in this review article, the new world of work is experienced very unevenly. To date, most discussions on new work practices have adopted a Western-centric lens (with some notable exceptions, such as Graham et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2018), with little attention paid to the form these practices may take in the 'non-western world' and also to the 'social cost' of these practices. To conclude, we contend in order to respond to these pressing questions relating to the new world of work, it is important to be aware of the different dimensions of the on-going debates on new work practices. In particular, engaging with the four dimensions outlined in this review article might allow us to grasp the ways in which changes to the world of work occur at different levels – micro, meso and macro, but also social, economic or politic – and unsettle work practices, their spaces and tempo, forms of collective action as well as power relations and dynamics.

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