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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is employees who work mainly at home and who utilise technological tools, in this case the telephone and PC, to carry out their job. In distancing the workers from the conventional workplace, teleworking raises a number of important sociological and managerial issues about the conduct of work, especially as it relates to control, which is the focus of this thesis.

The development of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) led to the diffusion of popular images, such as ‘the electronic cottage’, which emphasised teleworkers’ autonomy and freedom. These ideas give unrealistic pictures of the control exercised over teleworkers. This thesis aims to provide a more complex and realistic account of managerial control. Although research suggested that control by results is the main problem for managers, other structural and social factors affect control exercised from a distance. Examples include: the organisational and hierarchical structure of the work organisation, the lack of appropriate technological equipment, legal restrictions, the lack of a ‘teleworking culture’ and the ‘eternal’ employers’ importance of workers’ physical presence in workplaces. A series of management strategies, practices and policies have been re-shaped and deployed for controlling teleworkers. Other important factors for teleworking are self-discipline and self-management, and these are also explored.

Using qualitative methods, three different Italian case studies were compared: a highly bureaucratic public body, a virtual call centre and a small-medium sized enterprise. All the research was done in Italy, which represents the background of this study.

In order to illustrate how teleworkers are controlled, the theoretical framework of the ‘Social Dimensions of Control’ was used. This analyses control along four dichotomised social dimensions, which are: *vertical/horizontal control*; *central/decentred control*; *external/internal control*; *visible/invisible control*. These proved to be extremely important for exploring the new and complex methods through which teleworkers are managed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The research purpose

The aim of this thesis is to explore the methods of controlling employee teleworkers. In order to achieve this aim, qualitative research has been conducted in three Italian case studies. The first step is to explain the research purpose of this thesis: why is control among teleworkers such a relevant issue? In what ways can Italy provide important contributions to current literature on teleworking? What are the further contributions of this research?

The world of paid employment is diversifying into a range of non-standard forms (Casey *et al.*, 1997; Dex and McCulloch, 1997; Felstead and Jewson, 1999; Thompson and Warhurst, 1998). It has been argued that teleworking is one of the most rapidly developing and controversial examples of this change. Even though the exercise of control in workplaces is a longstanding phenomenon (Edwards, 1979), the advent of new forms of employments, such as teleworking, necessitates a new analysis of the ways through which control can be exercised. This is particularly important for teleworking. Popular imagery of the ‘electronic cottage’ or ‘virtual organisations’ (Kumar, 1978, Toffler, 1981) only superficially captures teleworkers’ experiences (Baines, 1999, Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995, Stanworth, 1998). Teleworkers who are free to organise their own work represent only a minority. This is valid for both employee teleworkers and self-employed teleworkers (Baines, 1999, 2002; Stanworth, C., 1996, 1998; Stanworth C. and Stanworth J., 1995, 1997; Stanworth *et al.*, 1993)

Literature on telework points out to what extent certain methods of exercising control over the workers, such as payment by piecework, can easily exploit them. The fashionable appearance of new technologies only masks these mechanisms (Allen and Wolkowitz, 1987; Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995). This issue is particularly important if we consider telework from an institutional point of view, and in a country, such as Italy where teleworking is an emergent phenomenon. ‘Since institutional processes spread partly through mimicry and partly through

elaboration of knowledge, then early adopters of teleworking influence later adopters of teleworking' (Daniels *et al.*, 2001: 1159). For this reason, if exploitative mechanisms of control acquire legitimacy among early teleworking experiences, they will be widespread within future teleworking schemes. It is important to provide a realistic analysis of the first teleworking experience in a country where teleworking is in its initial phase. In this way, the next teleworking schemes can learn from the weak points and the strengths of previous teleworking experiments, and, hopefully, research in this field can avoid legitimising teleworking schemes based on the exploitation of workers.

From this perspective grew the idea of using a case study methodology for carrying out the research. Apart from the several strengths of this methodological approach, each case study has a story to tell, and from this story it is possible to create a new one, maybe a better one. Academic research does not only target academics, but it may have implications for policy making.

Coming back to the earlier questions: in what ways can Italy provide important contributions to current literature on telework? Italy has been chosen not only because teleworking here is an emergent phenomenon; other aspects also attract research in this country. National pressures influence the introduction and the success of telework schemes (Daniels *et al.*, 2001). According to Daniels *et al.* (*ibid.*) legislation and government policy provide coercive processes that can either encourage or inhibit teleworking. Italy represents a particular example of how legislative interventions can affect this way of working. On the one hand, laws have been introduced for regulating telework and for facilitating its development¹. This helped the implementation of teleworking schemes within Italian public organisations and SMEs. On the other hand, several teleworking consultants believe that legislation can constrain the growth of teleworking. In addition, previous laws, which discipline workers' behaviour, can restrict the ways of

¹The *Bassanini Ter Law* which deals with teleworking in the public sector and the *Law 8th March 2000 n.53* which aims to spread teleworking in Italian SMEs will be explored further in Chapter 4.

exercising control among teleworkers.² Consequently, an analysis of Italian legislation on teleworking is essential for increasing our understanding of the phenomenon.

In addition to a largely under-researched context, Italy, provides an additional contribution to the research problem of managerial control of teleworkers which has not been explored in depth. Another relevant aspect, is the creation of a theoretical model. Through the analysis of previous research on teleworking and previous theoretical approaches on control, it has been possible to develop a theoretical framework which contributes to a more general discussion of the exercise of control in workplaces.

This first section has explained why it has been judged important to carry out the research. The next, aims to define the subject of the research, the teleworkers. There is much confusion on the term “teleworkers”, since it includes a wide category of people, hence it is important to specify what type of workers are the subject of this thesis.

1.2 Defining teleworking

This section aims to define what teleworking is and what type of teleworkers the thesis will focus on. It is necessary to include other variables in order to characterise the types of teleworkers that will be explored. Four dimensions of telework enable us to specify the group under study:

- 1) The *location of the work*: only teleworkers who work *at home* are considered.
- 2) The *technology* that teleworkers use: only teleworkers who use at least *telephone* and *PC* will be included in this definition.
- 3) The *contractual relationship* with the employer: all teleworkers studied are *employees*.
- 4) The *time* spent at home: teleworkers considered *work mainly at home*.

² For instance art. 4 Law 300/1970 outlaws individual control through audiovisual instruments. This law will be discussed in Chapter 4.

1.2.1 The location of the work

Table 1.1: The location of work

LOCATION	HOME- TELEWORK		MOBILE- TELEWORK	TELECENTRES/ TELECOTTAGES
TELEWORKING WHERE?	<p>✗</p> <p>Working from home</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Working at home</p>	<p>✗</p> <p>'Working on the road'</p> <p>Mobile telework can be conducted by working from home.</p>	<p>✗</p> <p>Working from local office facilities apart from the central workplace.</p>

The location of work is the most important variable for defining telework. Without remoteness of location telework would not exist. Early definitions characterized teleworking as working away from the traditional office (Grant, 1985; Kelly, 1985) or at home in general (Regeneye, 1985). Other research (Andriessen, 1991; Gray *et. al*; 1993; Holti and Stern, 1986; Huws, 1994; IRS, 1996a) classified teleworking by specifying the location where work is conducted:

► *Home-telework/Teleworkers–homeworkers/ Home-based telework*: where work duties are carried out *at* home or *from* home. The home is the work location of the subject of this research. This category of teleworkers will be explored in depth in the final part of this section after specifying the other locations where work can be carried out.

► *Teleworking from remote offices*: where work is conducted at offices which are remote from the main office. Work can be carried out at '*satellite offices*', which are controlled by the employer, or from '*telecentres*'. In this case, work space, IT and other office facilities are provided to a given community of employees, who do not work at home but wish to avoid the cost, time and inconvenience of commuting. Finally, work can also be performed in '*telecottages*', where training,

skills development and high performance ICTs are provided to local communities, and attempts are made to attract employment for self-employed teleworkers.

► *Mobile telework*: when service staff deliver “on the road” a range of services and capabilities that previously would have involved office-based staff or visits to the company offices. Work usually involves travel and/or spending time on customers’ premises. In some cases, mobile workers are able to work whilst travelling, for example in trains, planes or hotel rooms. Mobile workers are normally equipped with laptops and mobile phones which support their mobile work. Mobile teleworkers can sometimes work from home.

If we look at table 1.1 we can see that all types of telework are conducted from a distance. What distinguishes the different types of teleworking is that work can be carried out in different places. The home is only one place where work is conducted. The different worksites affect the way in which work is organised and the methods of exercising control over the teleworkers. This thesis focuses on people who work mainly at their home in their principal job.

Previous research (Felstead and Jewson, 1995; Felstead, 1996; Felstead and Jewson, 1997) focused on the spatial location of work by considering different datasets, such as QLFS (Quarterly Labour Force Survey) and the Census. According to these studies, it is necessary to make a distinction between the work conducted *at* home, *from* home, and in the *same grounds and buildings as home*. Therefore, working *at* home ‘refers to work which is conducted entirely within the spatial boundaries of the domestic living area.’ (Felstead and Jewson 1997: 330). My research embraces this specific location of work. Working *from* home includes ‘people using their home as a base but conducting work activities in other locations.’ (*ibid*: 330). Working in the *same grounds and buildings as home* concerns ‘people whose paid employment is conducted outside the home but in premises or grounds that include their domestic living area’ (*ibid* 330). Within this thesis the subjects of the analysis, those people who **work at home**, will be simply labeled **teleworkers**. It will be implicit that they work at their home.

1.2.2 The technology teleworkers use

Table 1.2: The technology teleworkers use

TECHNOLOGY	TELEPHONE	FAX	PC	E-MAIL, INTERNET, INTRANET	NET- MEETING
TELEWORKING THROUGH WHAT?	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗

Many definitions of teleworking include the use of ICTs, such as telephone, fax and PC. (Di Nicola, 1999; Huws *et al.*, 1999; *Labour Market Trends* 1999 and 2000). The linkage between new technologies and the possibility of working in places separate from the workplace, such as the home, has been emphasised by researchers as long ago as the 1980s (Bisset and Huws, 1984; Huws, 1984). According to a European Commission's survey, *Status Report on European Telework: New Methods of Work* (1999), over 9 million Europeans use ICTs to carry out their work away from the office. Other recent research (e.g. Huws *et al.* 1999; Baines, 1999) has emphasised the strong link between working at home and the use of ICTs. ICTs are, in fact, considered a facilitating device for teleworkers.

Other recent research based on LFS (*Labour Force Survey*, see Felstead *et al.* 2001) commented on the connection between working at home and ICT. As expected, the LFS data revealed that it is among non-manual employees that the reliance on ICTs is greatest. Without use of a PC and a telephone over half of workers belonging to this category (50.8 per cent) reported that they would be unable to operate at home, as compared to one in twenty (5.2 per cent) manual employees. What is surprising in this finding is that so many feel that working at home does not depend on ICTs. The link between ICTs and work from home must be further explored.

Some researchers did not include the use of ICTs for defining the concept of telework. For instance De Masi, an Italian labour sociologist, defines teleworking as:

‘any kind of work, which is carried out from a distance from the office or the company. Workers can carry out their activities even without using ICTs.’ (De Masi, in di Nicola 1999: 16)

In fact, ‘*tele*’ means ‘*remote*’, so telework must be a type of work which takes place at a distance. Therefore, according to De Masi, the use of ICTs is not an essential aspect of teleworking. The variable ‘use of ICTs’ has been included in this definition of the term telework in order to identify a precise specification of the group under study. This choice is strictly linked to the research question of this thesis, which aims to explore new methods for controlling teleworkers and also how teleworkers control themselves.

The teleworkers considered in this study are all employees, consequently their company can dictate the prerequisites necessary for teleworking. For example, all the companies considered that have introduced telework stated that teleworkers must be able to communicate with the company via ICTs. The companies themselves must provide the teleworkers with the necessary technology. Moreover, many methods for controlling teleworkers operate through ICTs. For these reasons the use of telephone and PCs are considered as the minimum requirements for being considered a teleworker. All the teleworkers in the study use telephone or PC in order to conduct their work at home. Some of them also utilise fax, e-mail and Intranet for communicating with the work organisation.

1.2.3 The contractual relationship with the employer

Table 1.3 The contractual relationship with the employer

CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP	EMPLOYEES	SELF-EMPLOYED
TELEWORKING FOR WHOM?	✓	×

Recent research on telework argues that teleworkers may assume different contractual roles. They can be self-employed, employees, directors of an independent business or a multiple job holder who, for example, conduct home-based work as a second occupation which is not the main employment. (Huws *et al.*, 1999). LFS (*Labour Force Survey*, 1999) and other research (e.g. Huws *et al.* 1999) also consider non-paid work. Obviously the category that the researcher chooses will affect the overall results of the study.

As Table 1.3 indicates, the teleworkers under consideration in this project are employees, who carry out paid work at their homes. The choice of employees teleworkers reflects the research questions of the thesis. This thesis aims to explore the new strategies of managerial control exercised over teleworkers. Therefore, teleworkers' relations with their supervisors and the organisational structure of the company will play an important role for an analysis of control. In contrast, if self-employed teleworkers had been taken into account, the focus would have been mainly on self-discipline and self-control.

Another relevant aspect that will be explored in this research is teleworkers' intra-communication with their company. By intra-communication with the company, we refer to any social exchange between the employees and their workplace, which is considered necessary for maintaining a sense of belonging to the company and for carrying out their job. Regular intra-communications with the

company are not operationalised by considering the time that teleworkers spend at their office. The presence of teleworking policies which regulate teleworkers' interactions with their company, such as the presence of 'contact hours', 'office-based days' and 'internal training' assure a regular intra-communication with the company.

Research points out that the 'ability to work on one's own' is an important characteristic for developing a profile of the best teleworkers (Baruch, 2000). Workers who must continuously interact with their colleagues or supervisors are not be selected for being teleworkers. In contrast, no intra-communication with the company would automatically exclude employee teleworkers, the subjects of this research. Workers who have no intra-communications with their company are self-employed. Teleworkers should be able to work autonomously; however they still need to interact with their company. Isolation, particularly social isolation, is a relevant issue, and companies should help teleworkers to deal with it.

1.2.4 The time spent remotely

Table 1.4: The time spent remotely

TIME SPENT AT HOME	ONE DAY PER WEEK	MAINLY WORK AT HOME
	✗	✓

Current research (Huws, 1993; Huws *et al.*, 1999, ECaTT, 2000) also includes in the definition of telework as a variable the amount and proportion of time involved in the remote working arrangement. For example, according to Huws *et al.* (1999: 11) home teleworkers are those people who conduct their duties remotely from their workplace and stay at home a minimum of one day per week. Similarly, ECaTT (2000), which is a European project ('Benchmarking Progress on Electronic Commerce and New Methods of Work') led by Empirica GmbH,

defines home –based teleworkers as those people working at home at least one full day per week, or permanently, and employed in paid work for an employer.

These two definitions do not completely satisfy the requirements for this research. It has been assumed that teleworkers who work only one day per week do not experience the same problems, such as isolation, as those who regularly work at home. These aspects are considered particularly relevant for this research for this reason: teleworkers are defined as those who work mainly at their home during their main job. The definition included in this thesis is similar to that stated in *Labour Market Trends* (1999). According to this definition, ‘teleworkers homeworkers’ are those who work mainly in their own home in their main job.’ (*Labour Market Trends*, 1999: 528).

Four dimensions of telework enable us to specify the group under study. This research refers to **teleworkers as: employees who work mainly at home and carry out their duties via PC and telephone**. This definition of teleworking has been utilised for sampling the subject of this study and for setting up some of the research questions. After having clarified the subjects of this analysis, it is important to specify what this research aims to investigate. Section 1.3, will summarise the research questions of this thesis.

1.3 Research Questions

The main objective of this thesis is to investigate how control is exercised over teleworkers. This can be summarised in the following research question:

Through which methods is control over teleworkers exercised?

From this main research question, it is possible to generate other sub-questions:

1) What management strategies, practices and policies do teleworking employers use?

First, it is necessary to clarify what management strategies, practices and policies are. Teleworking management strategies are formalised techniques of control which are specifically utilised for increasing the productivity of the company. For

managers, it is not only important to manage teleworkers; they must manage them in a efficient way. For instance, previous literature on control in workplaces, showed to what extent new technological tools can be strategically utilised in order to increase workers' productivity (e.g. Zuboff, 1988). This thesis, for instance, will asses to what extent electronic devices and other managerial techniques of control are strategically used for assessing and increasing teleworkers' productivity. It will also explore whether these, as well as, teleworkers' resistance to them.

Teleworking management practices are the methods of control which are commonly used for managing this remote workforce. These methods have not been purposively designed, however they are commonly utilised for controlling teleworkers. Common practices of control are telephone calls and e-mails. These practices of control are commonly utilised among on site workers; however, they gained more importance for the exercise of control among teleworkers. Teleworkers are not physically present in the office, and telephone calls and e-mails are the only way to interact with them.

Teleworking policies are normally practices which have been formalised in teleworkers' agreements or in other recognised documents. Teleworking has introduced different policies, only some of them are relevant for investigating how this workforce is managed. Conventionally these policies aim to solve the typical problems that teleworkers experience, which are lack of organisational skills or self-discipline, social isolation and difficulties in career progression. An example of teleworking policy, which is relevant for this study is induction training. Induction training involves such different aspect, as how the teleworkers should plan their work, how they can contact their supervisors and colleagues, etc.

Another relevant sub-question is:

2) What is the impact of teleworking on companies' organisational and hierarchical structures?

One important aspect that this thesis aims to investigate is the interaction between the company and teleworking. It is important to analyse whether teleworking

causes structural and hierarchical changes in a work organisation. For instance, what will be the impact of teleworking if it is introduced into a rigid bureaucratic work organisation? What will be its influence if it is set up in a more flexible work organisation? Does teleworking widen hierarchies? Does teleworking lead to centralisation or decentralisation of the organisation of the work?

Another important aspect to be analysed is summarised by the following sub-question:

3) How do managers react to and resist teleworking?

Previous literature on teleworking noted that managers resisted the introduction of this new way of working (Olson, 1985; Huws *et al.* 1990, Huws, 1993, 1994). Managers had to control this new workforce differently, and this caused additional problems for them. This research aims to enrich the literature on teleworking by researching how the managers of the three different work organisations reacted to teleworking. These three research questions will be developed further along in the thesis, particularly through the development of a theoretical framework (Chapter 3).

1.4 The route map of the thesis

This thesis includes nine chapters which all attempt to give an answer to this main question: how are teleworkers controlled? As mentioned above, this simple question includes several aspects, which will be analysed in this thesis. The first chapter aims to introduce the purpose of this research, to define the subjects of this analysis, the teleworkers, and to address the research questions. Chapter 2 puts forward an analysis of current literature related to the exercise of control over teleworkers. An analysis of previous literature on telework has also allowed the construction of a theoretical framework. The theoretical framework of the 'Social Dimensions of Control' represents an important tool that guides the empirical research and data analysis and will be introduced in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 focuses on the experience of teleworking in Italy, with a particular emphasis on the legislative framework related to teleworking. Chapter 5 assesses the methodology utilised for organising the fieldwork and the data collection. This chapter will discuss the strengths and the limits of case studies research. It also outlines the research methods utilised and their implications. The politics and ethics of the research will be examined as well.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 deal with the empirical research carried out for this thesis. Chapter 6 explores the issue of control related to telework within *Servizi*, an Italian public body. Chapter 7, investigates the same issue within *Comunicazione*, a virtual call centre, which has introduced teleworking among its call centre operators. Finally, chapter 8 explores the introduction of this new way of working within a dynamic small-medium sized enterprise, *Informazione*. The final chapter compares the different methods of controlling telework and attempts to give a coherent answer to the research questions addressed in the previous section of this chapter. As mentioned, the next chapter aims to review recent literature on teleworking. Through the analysis of different resources on teleworking it will be possible to start researching how teleworkers have been controlled.

Chapter 2: Controlling teleworkers

2.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to investigate how existing literature on teleworking/homeworking can be helpful in exploring the issue of control. Several researchers deal with the matter. However, only particular pieces of research that focus on questions of control have been analysed. The main task of this chapter is, in fact, to select from the vast literature on homeworking and teleworking, research which explores the mechanisms of control and can provide significant contributions that can be developed within this thesis.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the term teleworkers has been chosen to define the subject of this thesis. In this chapter a range of different researches has been taken into account. Each research uses different terms for indicating people who work at home. When referring to these studies which explore similar aspects of this thesis, the authors' terminology will be used.

In addition, as it was mentioned in the previous chapter, this thesis draws upon the analysis of three Italian case studies. Although in Italy teleworking is a developing phenomenon, little academic research analyses the issue of control among this category of workers (Di Nicola, forthcoming). The majority of Italian academic research focuses only on the advantages and disadvantages of telework (Brognia *et al.* 1996; Cepollaro, 1986; Ceil, 1989; Di Nicola, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b, 1996f, 1996g; Rizzo, 1997). These pieces of research have not been included in this thesis. In Italy, the advent of telework has been coupled with new legislation which attempts to regulate the phenomenon and, much Italian literature dealt with this issue (Di Nicola, 1996d, 1996e, 1999; Gaeta, 1993, 1998; Scajola, 1998, Scarpitti, 1993, Zurla, 1999). This particular aspect has been considered relevant for this thesis and will be analysed in Chapter 4.

Thus, this chapter, by taking into account specific homeworking/teleworking literature attempts to examine the variety of methods of control. From the review of selected pieces of research have emerged some theoretical concepts, which represent a useful tool for analysing control among teleworkers and will be further explored in Chapter 3.

Each piece of research considered in this chapter focuses on specific aspects of control. The first draws upon Hakim's study (1987). By analysing the National Homeworking Survey (1981), she concludes that control exercised over homeworkers is mainly unilateral and exercised through external mechanisms, such as payment by piece rate and quality check. Similarly, Allen and Wolkovitz (1987), through their qualitative research, reach a similar conclusion. They also stress, how the internalisation of the 'myth' of free and autonomous homeworker reinforces these external and vertical mechanisms of control.

This last aspect is reshaped by Brocklehurst (1989), who in his early work, emphasises the rhetorical aspects of homeworking. In contrast, his recent research (2001), which considers Giddens' (1984, 1991) theoretical concept of power and identity, mainly focuses in internal control. Before Brocklehurst (2001), Haddon and Silverstone's research (1993) emphasised internal control. Through a qualitative study they aimed to portray how teleworkers organise their work day in terms of time and space.

Phizacklea and Wolkovitz's (1995) research represents a development of Allen and Wolkovitz's (1987) research. Both focus on gender, however, they introduce new elements. For instance, they argue that homeworking replicated the wider division of labour and, as a consequence this new type of work, does not improve women's opportunities. They also make a distinction between the type of control exercised over low-skilled teleworkers and that exercised over professional homeworkers. The first are monitored through external methods of control and are not involved in decision making. In contrast, the second ones are assessed by checking the results they have achieved. Thus internal control is important.

Olson (1983, 1987, 1989) highlights an important variable which affects control within companies that have introduced teleworking: the company's culture. Her findings suggest that the company's culture is the main obstacle for assessing teleworkers' jobs. Managers are not used to evaluating workers by results, and they are forced to utilise this method of control when they have to check teleworkers work.

Huws (Huws *et al.*, 1990; Huws, 1993, 1994) considers this last aspect as well. By taking the employers' point of view she tried to explain why employers find it difficult to control remote workers. She highlights how different categories of teleworkers, such as low-skilled teleworkers and professional teleworkers are controlled in different ways. She also notes how different dynamics, such as selection and training, contribute to manage teleworkers.

Di Nicola (forthcoming) shows how control is exercised among call centre phone operator teleworkers in Italy. This research points out that, even within work a environment in which teleworkers could be potentially monitored only through electronic surveillance, other mechanisms based on internal control, such as enhancing workers' commitments, take place.

Finally, Felstead and Jewson (1995, 1996, 1997, 2000) and Felstead *et al.* studies (2001, 2002, 2003) play an important role in analysing control among those who work at home. Particularly, in their recent research (2003), they demonstrate how home-located employees' 'visibility' and 'physical presence' are relevant for managerial control exercised over teleworkers.

2.2. Reviewing homeworking/teleworking literature

2.2.1. Hakim: a focus on external control

Hakim's research (1980, 1984, 1987) provides an important contribution for a further investigation of the mechanisms of control exercised over homeworkers. Her work derives mainly from an analysis of the 1981 National Homeworking Survey. As the author pointed out, the 1981 Labour Force Survey (LFS) was used as a sampling frame for the home-based workers survey. However the two surveys are separate from each other. The focus of the 1981 National Homeworking Survey was on people working at and from home, in particular those working for one particular employer or organisation. The author also decided to make a distinction between manufacturing homework and white-collar homework. Hakim's survey is based on home-based workers from England and Wales.

Hakim's (*ibid.*) study analysed several aspects related to homeworking. In this chapter the focus will be on how employers exercise control over a home-based workforce. Hakim, in her quantitative study, utilised a series of operational indicators for measuring the degree of control exercised by the employer. One indicator, for example, aimed to test whether the employer required a minimum amount of work. Thus, home-based workers were asked if they could lose their job if they did not do minimum amount of work. Two thirds said they would. Another indicator aimed to measure whether a employer requires continuity. Workers were asked if they could stop taking on work for a while without losing their job. Half said they would. Again, another aimed to test whether strict deadlines were set for completion of the work. Only a third of the home-based workers sampled said that nothing would happen if they were not able to meet deadlines. Two thirds said that they had never failed to meet their employers' deadlines or that a specific action would follow.

These indicators mainly aim to check how employers monitor the quantity of the work, others control the quality of the work. For instance, an indirect way of

obtaining a certain quality standard can be achieved by giving specific instructions on how the work should be done. Half of the interviewees said that employers left it all to the workers, half said that employers gave them specific instructions. Within the sample it appeared that the manufacturing homeworkers were subjected to the highest level of control.

Another important aspect is the extent to which employers evaluate the quality of the completed work. The majority of the home-located workers said that their work has never fallen below the stipulated quality, and, if it was, the employer would take action, such as returning the work or making deduction from pay. As Hakim's research revealed, quality control is widespread among homeworkers. Like Allen and Wolkovitz (1987) (see next section), she also discovered that when the production process is subdivided among different homeworkers, the person who produces the final stage is responsible for checking the quality of the other previous homeworkers.

Another indicator of employer's control dealt with the choice of work taken on and aimed to check if home-located workers could refuse certain types of work. One third of the interviewees said that they could not. Again, Hakim highlights a division between homeworkers doing manufacturing work and clerical homeworkers. The first type were less likely to refuse particular kinds of work, while white-collar workers said that they would not accept any type of work. She finds similar results in rush-jobs. Homeworkers were asked whether they had ever been asked by their employer to take on a rush job. Rush jobs are a typical characteristic of manufacturing homeworkers.

Hakim's research confirms that payment by piece rates is the most common method for manufacturing homeworkers. Piece rate payment is generally associated with variable earnings. As this research noted, some employers vary both the amount and the nature of the work they ask teleworkers to do. Consequently, many manufacturing homeworkers, since they do not have any fixed salary, are willing to carry out as much work as requested.

Hakim also considered the impact of new technologies on the home-located workforce. The result of the 1981 National Homeworking Survey confirms previous studies (Huws, 1984). Technologies 'are just as relevant to new technology home-based job as they are to more traditionally home-based job' (Hakim, 1987: 3). Consequently, new technologies do not increase home-located workers' freedom and autonomy (see next section Allen and Wolkowitz, 1987). As Hakim clearly pointed out: 'The types of control exercised by an employer over a flexible workforce will clearly differ in nature from the employer's requirements for a stable workforce, but it would appear that they are, on balance, no less stringent' (Hakim, 1987: 150).

This research suggested that control exercised over home-based workers acts mainly through *external control*. By establishing the amount of the workload, deadlines and payment by piece rates, employers direct the pace of the work. Also the control of the quality standard acts through external control; low quality work is returned for improvement or deductions are made from pay. *External control* is coupled with a *vertical control*, and there is no collaboration or planning between employer and the majority of the home-based workers. In addition, the work process follows a highly-segmented division of labour, as Hakim suggested. In many cases, employers give instructions on how work should be carried out (*vertical control*).

2.2.2 Allen and Wolkowitz: autonomy as a myth, exploitation as a reality

Within current literature on homeworking, Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) provide a valuable contribution. Their study analysed several important aspects of homework. First they consider historical and contemporary approaches to homeworking in terms of how these can provide an explanation to the persistence of this phenomenon. According to these authors, the persistence of homeworking cannot be understood in terms of gender or ethnicity. Although these variables play an important role, the persistence of homeworking must be explained in terms of relations between capital and labour and the conditions under which the surplus

value is produced. Starting from this perspective, they attempted to quantify British homeworkers as a labour force and their legal conditions.

Their study mainly focused on work done by women who are tied to their home by very young children or are members of ethnic minority groups. However, they wanted to specify that women do not become homeworkers just because of childcare responsibilities or their inclusion in ethnic minority groups. Using British data, including that collected in four different areas of West Yorkshire on homeworkers' socio-economic conditions and household composition, they discovered that the reasons for homeworking do not rely on the circumstances of individual women.

Other important aspects that the authors analysed in their book and which have been expanded in this chapter, are those related to the labour process in homeworking. It is in fact at this stage that Allen and Wolkovitz (*ibid.*) considered the issue of control. They pointed out that one of the attractions of homeworking is the idea that homeworkers have autonomy in organising both their working hours and their pace of work. In many cases the image of homework has been contrasted with that of the assembly line. Assembly line production is perceived as the extreme means by which control is exercised over labour. The pace of work is set by time of the line and the worker is subordinated to the machine. This form of control has often been chosen as the symbol of the subordination of the workforce and its lack of autonomy (Braveman, 1974). In theory, homeworkers represent the opposite scenario; they work in their homes with no supervisor or timekeeper. However, evidence suggests that the idea of their freedom and autonomy is only a myth. Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) stated that control does not only rely on direct supervision or to subordinating the workers to the machine. Employers can utilise a range of mechanisms through which they control homeworkers' performance and output. These mechanisms determine both homeworkers' pace and quality of work.

As the authors pointed out (*ibid.*), a way to exercise control over the homeworkers is to organise their work tasks. The homeworkers do not have the option of designing or choosing their tasks. Homeworkers' tasks are often standardised, leaving them only limited discretion in the work process. For instance, in the production of greeting cards, it is possible to find a group of homeworkers doing the decorations, another attaching them to the cards and the rest acting as quality controllers who can refuse payment to the others.

In addition to work tasks, the employer can also control homeworkers' output, through piece-rates payment. This means of payment is not only utilised in manufacturing but among clerical workers as well (Brown, 1974; Cragg and Dawson, 1981; Crine, 1979; Hakim, 1980). As evidence suggested, piece-work operates successfully from the employer's point of view. This is because, through payment by piece-work employers can decide when homeworkers can work and for how long. While suppliers are free to allocate workload as and when it suits to them, the homeworker is obliged to accept the work provided and to complete it on time.

The provision of the machine by the homeworkers' employer can be considered as another type of control. As a homeworker explicitly stated: 'He will provide £20 of work [weekly]. If you drop this he will take the machine away' (in Allen and Wolkowitz, 1987: 117). This means that homeworkers must accept a certain amount of workload otherwise they would lose their job. Homeworkers therefore frequently work to tight deadlines.

The idea of being able to organise their own time as they want is only a myth. The conventional idea that homeworking allows 'a more flexible, even easy-going day' than going out to work (Cragg and Dawson, 1981) was perceived only from a minority of homeworkers (Allen and Wolkowitz, 1987: 123, 124). A similar mechanism involves the supplier setting times for the delivery of materials and the collection of completed work. Checking the quality of the work is an important issue to consider as well. Since direct supervision is no longer possible, new

strategies for ensuring that good quality standards are met must be introduced. For instance, according to Allen and Wolkowitz, recruitment and training represents important tool for getting homeworkers used to the standards they must reach and making them more committed to their job.

Another mechanism for controlling output and retaining trustworthy workers relies upon a consensual co-operation between homeworkers and their suppliers. The supplier's compliance is a strategy which aims to gain homeworkers' co-operation and make them meet production targets. In exchange for homeworkers' loyalty, the 'understanding employer' (Freeman, 1982) makes occasional allowances to accommodate homeworkers' commitments. The strategy of the 'understanding employer' ensures that production requirements are met and gives the homeworkers the illusion of having a certain degree of autonomy. It is important to point out that, while for on-site workers holidays and sick leave are usually paid, this is not the case of homeworkers. Thus, homeworkers consider holidays and days off for illness as a special favour. Allen and Wolkowitz suggest that women are more likely to adopt the role of the 'understanding employer'. In their study the majority of homeworkers were women, thus women sub-contractors were able to sympathise with the stress experienced by the homeworkers, such as family intrusions and accepted delays in work. Research reveals that the use of compliance for controlling the labour force is very common among homeworkers. For instance, in many cases the quality of the work relies on kinship ties between supplier and worker (Young, 1981).

Freedom and autonomy are just an illusion. A homeworker noted that she initially saw the advantage of homeworking as being able to 'work when you feel like it' and to 'fit it in' with household and children. But she also commented that many days she ended up working until two o'clock in the morning and suffered pressure from her boss (Allen and Wolkovitz, 1987: 124).

Another aspect, which can be relevant for researching control over a home-located workforce, is the impact that the development of new technologies have

for people working at home. This aspect, which will be analysed in depth in this thesis, has been taken into account by Allen and Wolkovitz as well. Again, in this study the new technologies guarantee just an illusion of freedom and autonomy, as the authors say:

‘New technology by itself, even if its full potential is realised in shifting work from factory and office to the home, is no guarantee that there will be a change in the social relations between those who work with the new technology and those who control and own it’ (Allen and Wolkowitz, 1987: 56).

Thus, the introduction of new technology does not improve homeworkers’ conditions, in many cases; it just reinforces the ‘myth’ of free and autonomous homeworkers.

Important aspects regarding control among homeworkers emerge from Allen and Wolkowitz’s research. This research highlights *vertical* forms of control. This concept can be understood by referring to the hierarchical organisation of work and the organisation of work tasks. This piece of research clearly points out that only employers’ decisions count. It will be interesting to explore this aspect with a focus on white-collar teleworkers, the subjects researched in this thesis; for instance, to analyse if, in companies that introduced home telework, there is a clear division between supervisors and teleworkers, or are based on a more collaborative attitudes.

Vertical control is coupled with *external control*. Work tasks are standardised, and homeworkers have only a little freedom. This thesis will explore whether teleworking deskills the workers, even if we consider clerical or semi-professional employees or, increases workers’ autonomy and professional skills. In many workplaces workers are still controlled through direct supervision; in factories machines direct the pace of work, while among homeworkers the pace of work is directed through other management strategies. For instance, payment by piece work, the imposition of tight deadlines assures employers a minimum quantity of

productivity. If homeworkers do not produce a certain quantity of work, they can lose their job (*external control*).

In addition, the organisation of the work is strongly centralised (*central control*). If the demands of a certain product increases, homeworkers must work unlimited hours, in contrast, if the production decreases, they would not have any work. White-collar teleworkers should not experience these types of problems, because they work, according to contract, a specific number of hours and receive a specific salary. However it will be interesting to analyse if an increase or a decrease of demand for a certain product or service affects teleworkers' workload. From Allen and Wolkovitz's research it emerges that control acts mainly through *external* and *vertical* mechanisms, and these are reinforced by other mechanisms of *internal control*, which act mainly through homeworkers internalisation of the 'myth of autonomy' and the figure of the 'understanding employer'. Through these techniques, employers try to generate faithful workers who ensure a good quality and quantity of production.

2.2.3 Brocklehurst: Technology homeworkers: the 'rhetoric' and the re-construction of homeworkers' identities

Brocklehurst (1989) analyses the impact of new technologies on homeworkers and draws conclusions similar to previous studies (Allen and Wolkovitz, 1987; Hakim, 1987). According to this author, the 'electronic cottage' predicated by Toffler (1981) is more rhetoric than reality. Rhetoric has been defined as the art of using language to persuade, influence or manipulate (Hunter, 1984:1). A typical rhetorical technique is to ensure that a concept is perceived favourably by others. This can be achieved by linking a concept to another which already carries positive connotations. For example, in the image of the electronic cottage, the new technological homework is associated with a 'domestic rural bliss'. Moreover, as Brocklehurst pointed out, the positive idea of 'flexibility' is often juxtaposed to 'technology home working'. According to him, this is just a tactic to make 'technology home working' more attractive and thus acceptable. Although the

rhetoric communicates this positive imagery of 'technology home working', research reveals the opposite. He agrees with Allen and Wolkowitz's (1987) conclusion that it is a mistake to believe that working at home leads to freedom and autonomy and to an end of the supervision. As a consequence, it is wrong to think that the new technology automatically improves the position of homeworkers.

As Brocklehurst noted, new technology represents important instruments for precisely measuring the output (Brocklehurst, 1989). It also defines the nature of teleworkers' work tasks. The need for a precise definition and measurement of the output of the 'technology homeworkers' 'could mean that homeworkers tended to get the more routine work, using more old-fashioned machines and methods, and might miss out on the more exciting, newer developments' (Huws, 1984: 54). Low skilled teleworkers are more likely to experience a 'vertical disintegration of the process and task fragmentation' (Brocklehurst, 1989: 51). This means that they might not see the finished product. Previous research (Ramsower, 1985) on telework, when printers were still a luxury, pointed out how frequently the printing of a word-processing document would occur at the central office meaning that teleworkers never saw a "hard copy" of their final work. Ramsower said that 'part-time and full-time telecommuters experienced a drop in the commitment to the job and a decline of their sense of achievement in performing the job' (Ramsower, 1985: 62).

As Brocklehurst noted, the new technology entails both external and internal measures of control. IT can, in fact, precisely measure teleworkers output and direct their pace of work (*external control*). It also creates the belief among the teleworkers that they are more autonomous and freer (*internal control*). Since it is easier to monitor simple tasks, teleworkers are always confined to low skilled jobs.

In his recent research, Brocklehurst (2001) considers the issue of control among teleworkers from a different angle. He focuses on the experience of a group of professional employees who decided to work from home using new information

and communication technologies (ICTs). He analyses this 'new technology homework' by using Giddens' conceptualisation of power, identity and time/space (Giddens, 1979, 1979, 1984, 1991). Brocklehurst's (*ibid.*) research questions are strictly related to control and self-control. According to him, new forms of working, such as homework, raise new problems. From a managerial point of view, control is one of several crucial issues (Huws *et al.* 1990; Olson, 1989). The growing literature on 'surveillance theory' and 'electronic surveillance', which mainly derived from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) (see also Ball and Wilson, 1997; Lyon, 1993; Coombs *et al.*, 1992; Gray *et al.*, 1993; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; Zuboff, 1988) makes us think that these forms of surveillance by distance could theoretically solve the issue of control for remote workers. However, a UK survey (e.g. Huws, 1993) noted that the use of electronic surveillance for monitoring homeworkers is not very common. As a consequence, according to Brocklehurst (2001), control remains a problematic issue for managers, as well as the construction of self-identity of the homeworkers.

The author tries to explore these two issues by taking into account Giddens' theorization of power and identity. Giddens defines power by following his structuration theory (Giddens, 1976, 1979, 1984). According to this theoretical approach, power might be defined as the transformative capacity of people to change the social and material world. From this perspective it derives a definition of 'dialectic control', in which control can be defined as 'the capability that some actors, groups or types of actors have of influencing the circumstances of action of others' (Giddens, 1984: 283). Thus, according to Brocklehurst (*ibid.*), if we utilise this perspective for analysing homeworking phenomenon we might ask the following questions: 'To what extent was power implicated in the initial move to establish homeworking? Further, how did the dialectic of control shift as a consequence of the move to homeworking? Did homeworkers gain control at the expense of the managers?' (Brocklehurst, 2001: 448).

Sennett's (1998) concept of identity is an important feature that he considers in his research. According to him, one of the distinguishing features of modernity is

that individuals must constantly work at re-creating their self-identity. The concept of self-identity is closely linked to Giddens' analysis of time/space. Human experience in modern society is characterised by fragmentation. According to these authors, new forms of work, such as homeworking, are replacing Weber's 'iron cage of bureaucracy', which served to give meaning to workers in a number of ways. In temporal terms, it routinized day-to-day workers' time. In spatial terms, it made demarcations between work and the home, between public and private. As Sennett noted: 'routine can demean, but it can also protect; routine can decompose labour, but also compose a life' (1998: 43). He insists on the importance of habit and routine to maintain self-identity. By considering this perspective, Brocklehurst (*ibid.*) tries to find an answer to these question: to what extent does Giddens' theorisation of identity, with its focus on routine and habit, affect the creation of self-identity among homeworkers?

Thus, the author uses Giddens' (1976, 1979, 1984, 1991) concept of power and identity for researching homeworkers. His research was based on a case study. The company selected was a multinational computer manufacturer. It emphasises 'high trust' (Fox, 1974), and the value of 'teamworking' is an important aspect as well. All the homeworkers were sales trainers and all spent many years within the company, thus they were able to absorb the 'corporate culture'.

The first issue that the author investigated concerned the concept of power: do managers loose control at the expense of homeworkers who gained control? Evidence suggested that in this company, management lose control over homeworkers. First, homeworkers' belonging to team decreases enormously. As a homeworker noted:

'The team sense to a great extent has gone. I don't think there is much camaraderie as there used to be, you don't get that day-to-day banter which is what builds it up which I guess is something that happens when you have people working as isolated individuals. I have to be honest, I don't feel I am the member of a team anymore'. (in Brocklehurst, 2001: 455)

According to the managers, peer surveillance was drastically reduced. Managers tried to introduce regular meetings, however this initiative was unsuccessful. Consequently, management attempted to reassert control by other means. For instance, they tried to get homeworkers to use an electronic diary. Then managers insisted that homeworkers had to notify the secretaries of their location if they were not at home. E-mail was monitored, however this was mainly because managers were worried that homeworkers were overworking. As a manager pointed out:

‘If the time on the e-mail was 10.37 at night, I say, what the hell were you doing working on the terminal at that time?’. (in Brocklehurst, 2001: 455)

As the author noted, this evidence does not support his prior hypothesis linked to Giddens’(1976, 1979, 1984) definition of power. Managers do not lose their control at the expense of the homeworkers who gained control. These homeworkers seemed not to be engaged in a struggle with management. As evidence revealed, some homeworkers ended up working more than they are supposed to, and this was not due to external impositions of the management. Thus, a loss of control by management did not increase that of the homeworkers. As Brocklehurst (*ibid.*) noted, homeworkers did not direct their energies towards gaining control, but rather at recreating their own identities.

According to Sennet (1998), it is important to have a routine, some fixed points. The office space was one aspect of homeworkers’ routine that they wanted to keep in order to re-shape their own identity. For instance, some homeworkers would call in at the office, even if it was not required. As a homemaker noted:

‘I found it quite comforting to come into an office, the office. It’s a security thing, I think. Not saying hi, good morning and getting the comfort from everybody sitting here in the big office, being here almost like a second home. A belonging. Whereas at home, it’s just little old me in this big world.’ (in Brocklehurst, 2001: 456)

Another strategy used by some teleworkers, was to re-create the sense of workplace within the home. As a homeworker says:

‘I have my own room you need it. It acts as a discipline. You walk in the study, you feel you are going to work. I have even got my name badge stuck on the door.’ (in Brocklehurst, 2001: 456)

In addition, this homeworker, like many others, continued to dress up in office clothing while working from home. These elements show how homeworkers used space and physical artefacts to give a meaning to their life. Some others also tend to impose time structures to organise their work. Some others considered themselves as a self-employed entrepreneur:

‘Being home-based helps me to think Comp-U-like as a client- a very important client maybe, but still a client’. (in Brocklehurst, 2001: 458)

All these strategies were utilised to re-create their own image. Another way to re-create of their own identity was strictly linked to the techniques utilised for controlling homeworkers work. For instance, some homeworkers were not sure of accepting the idea that career development is solely based on achieved results; thus monitoring, appraisal and control would be unaffected by becoming homeworkers, or if, in reality, much depends on being visible, the choice of homeworking would have consequences on career and control-related issues. One homeworker clearly expresses this concern:

‘Those at home with less visibility, almost in social sense, it puts visibility back to pure job-related things. Reading a report, but not being able to put a face to the name could be a problem as far as getting known in the organization’. (in Brocklehurst, 2001: 456)

This research highlights important issues related to control. The first part, which emphasizes Giddens’ (1976, 1978, 1984) concept of power, reveals that the introduction of homeworking in the company analysed by Brocklehurst (*ibid.*) decreases *central control*. Homeworkers no longer feel part of the their own team.

They become more and more detached from their workplaces and more and more independent.

In the second part, which dealt with Giddens' (1991) concept of identity, control is mainly *internal* and takes the form of self-discipline. As the author noted, homeworkers re-shape their new identities by creating new routines in terms of space and time. In this way they can organise their own working days.

Another important aspect, which derives from this research, concerns homeworkers *visibility*. Control by result does not rely on workers' visibility in the labour process. Thus, in theory the location where the workers carry out their duties is not supposed to be important. However, this issue can be controversial. In fact, some homeworkers clearly pointed out that the fact of working from home could penalise them in terms of career advancement and in the evaluation of their work.

2.2.4 Haddon and Silverstone: self-discipline, self-management and the household

Prior to Brockleurst (2001), Haddon and Silverstone (1993) analysed similar aspects of teleworking. The initial aim of their project was to research the relationships between families and households and the use of ICTs. Afterwards they decided to focus on a distinct and important kind of household, that in which ICTs were been used for work. Thus, telework encouraged the focus of this research. The authors enquired into the dynamics of telework in different households environments. They compared both self-employed and employed, clerical and professional teleworkers. The study was drawn on a qualitative methodology based on case studies. The sample comprised those households, which included at least one teleworker. For the purpose of the research, the authors defined a teleworker as 'someone who used information and communication technologies to work at home: that is who used the telephone and the home computer as the basis for their main work activities conducted at home' (Haddon

and Silverstone, 1993: 59). The sample was restricted to those households in which two partners lived together in a single household with children. Nineteen households were involved in the research including two case studies of teleworking households without children.

Different themes were explored, among them the motivation for starting teleworking, the gender of teleworkers, teleworking as a career stage, the domestic boundaries of telework, the significance of ICTs within teleworking households, time/space and telework. Another issue which was explored was the exercise of control over teleworkers and their self-discipline.

In agreement with previous research, (Hakim, 1987, Allen and Wolkovitz, 1987) Haddon and Silverstone revealed that one way to exercise control is through payment by piece of work and by checking the amount of work sent to the teleworkers. This study thus confirmed the idea that teleworkers' freedom and autonomy is just a myth (Allen and Wolkovitz, 1987). Many home-teleworkers offer 24-hours service without ever knowing when their 'free-time' would fall. 'Self-exploitation' is common phenomenon among traditional homeworkers, reflects the interaction of market offer in conjunction with teleworkers' economic priorities. Alison, a self-employed typist, summarised this idea:

'I take as much as I can do. I go to the office and I regulate the amount of work that I do. We have a laugh at the minute because when I'll say "I want sixty pages" and she will say "Right, there's seventy-seven here". And I'll say: "No, I only want sixty". And she'll say: "Well, there're seventy seven". So I say: "Go on then". And then I have to get up at six o'clock in the morning to do that other seventeen pages and I think I didn't want this and I know I couldn't cope with this but I always get it done and I always take it back. So it doesn't matter how much I ask for, she always gives me more. It's because I can do it, that's why. She knows I can do it.' (from Haddon and Silverstone, 1993: 19)

In this case, payment by piece rates allows the supplier to exercise control over teleworkers' workload. Teleworkers cannot decide the amount of time they must work, and, since the workload is unpredictable, they cannot refuse the work

offered. Payment by piece rates clearly represents a form of *external control*, which directs the pace of work of the teleworkers. This case study also revealed the presence of *vertical control* in the distribution of the workload. Teleworkers' opinions do not count much in the majority of the cases. Employers have the last word. Employees workload depends mainly on company needs. If the company requires more work, teleworkers must work unlimited hours. In contrast, if the company has fewer requests, they do not work at all.

As previously mentioned, Haddon and Silverstone researched different kinds of teleworkers. The above example showed that low-skilled clerical teleworkers are subjected to more external control. Although professional teleworkers direct the organisation of their work through internal mechanisms of control, they face other constraints as well. Even among professional teleworking employees it is possible to find examples of self-exploitation. For instance, some professional teleworkers were so concerned with their career that they lowered the boundaries around home life. For instance, they accepted phone calls during out-of-hours work. This example shows that internal control is problematic as well. Teleworkers must learn how to organise their time, otherwise there is the risk of becoming 'workhaolics'. Through these two examples Haddon and Silverstone demonstrate that both clerical and professional teleworkers are subjected to exploitation.

Another interviewee, a computer conference mediator and a PhD student, revealed the risks of flexibility that telework entails. This interviewee noted that his lack of fixed working hours actually made it difficult to decide how to define time for work, time for study and the rest of his life. Although some teleworkers do not have to respects external constraints, they must develop self-discipline in order to organise their days. As this teleworker noted:

'The main problem, as far I'm concerned, is the danger of what people in workers' co-operatives I think call 'self-exploitation'. It is very difficult for me to draw clear boundaries round what I'm doing and it's the nature of my research that, I can't at the end of a specific time say, well, you know, I've done a day's work. When I was an administrator, quite a lot of the time I was actually employed to be at the office. If

you were doing some time in the college Admission Office, quite a lot of what they're actually getting you to do is to be there in case somebody rings. And so, if you were having an off day, got a touch of flu coming on or a really bad Monday morning, you can without too many pricks of conscience sit there a bit slumped at your desk and just react to whatever happens. When I'm working from home, it's not like that. Of course, one can slump but one is not being paid for slump. You haven't achieved anything apart from sitting, staring into space for half an hour.' (Haddon and Silverstone, 1993: 39)

As this quote revealed, in many cases teleworkers' jobs are more intense than a 'normal' office job. Telework introduces a new form of control. While in the past, control was exercised through direct supervision, with telework employers do not need to check if the workers 'are there' through direct supervision (*visible control*). Control is based on the objectives that teleworkers must reach.

As mentioned above, teleworkers experienced problems in organising their working times. In their study, Haddon and Silverstone (*ibid.*) discovered that teleworkers organised their working time by considering several aspects. Some teleworkers organised their daily routines by utilising external schedules, such as partners' or children's timetables or conventional mainstream structures imposed by industrial time; others organised their work by considering pre-industrial work patterns.

Many teleworkers organised their work times and their breaks according to their children's schedules. For instance, some teleworkers worked when children were at school or were asleep. However, this is not as simple as it appears. As one teleworker mentioned, she started experiencing some problems when her children were in their late teens:

'Things changed really when they didn't go to bed early, and when they started coming back from school. They go to the upper school which is just round the corner from there and they started deciding to come home for lunch. And then they sometimes come home at break, and they're always home at 3.30, so they're not away from the house, as far as I can see, for any length of time. And they're up until we go to

bed because they're obviously that much older'. (in Haddon and Silverstone, 1993: 31)

Consequently, the strategy of fitting work with children times is not always a successful strategy or at least as this example demonstrates, is not a permanent solution.

In addition to children's timetables, other examples of external schedules include taking lunch or breaks to coincide with the news, etc. Some teleworkers prefer to adhere to old routines which follow industrial work patterns. This strategy involves sticking approximately to the conventional working day, even if this may not be necessary for work. Another external timetable through which teleworkers impose temporal order on their work is to follow the working time of their co-workers or ex-colleagues who work according to organisational time. For instance, some teleworkers played squash in the dinner hours with on-site colleagues.

The strategy of adhering to external routines is mainly utilised by teleworkers who find difficult to be self-disciplined. According to this piece of research, other teleworkers prefer shifting outside of industrial time, since they realised they work best during non-office hours. For instance 'early bird' teleworkers started their working day at 7 AM, while others preferred to work at night. Some teleworkers varied their pattern of work on a seasonal basis, taking more on in the winter when the nights are longer and easing up in the summer when they can go out in the evenings. Others preferred to complete their work in advance. As Haddon and Silverstone (*ibid.*) noted this 'credit' approach to telework helped many teleworkers to deal with strict deadlines.

Haddon and Silverstone's study emphasises self-discipline and self-management, which can be considered as a form of *internal control*. *External control*, such as tight deadlines, still exists, and some teleworkers are still victims of this method of control. Others, by developing new methods of self-management and self-discipline, were able to organise their schedules in a successful way. In

addition, this study also noted that teleworkers' work organisation is not only directed by *external* measures of control (e.g. payment by piece-rates, tight deadlines). Many professional teleworkers tended to exploit themselves because they were so committed to their work (e.g. 'workaholism'), or because of their inability to organise their work. Many teleworkers noted that working at home is even harder than working in the office. Nobody is watching you (*visible control*), however there will be always somebody who is checking the results of your work (*invisible control*).

Again, for reaching certain results, self-discipline is fundamental. Self-discipline and self-organisation were the key features of teleworking in this particular study, as the authors suggested. In addition to company constraints, teleworkers must consider other aspects which affect the organisation of their work, such as family commitments and partners' timetables as well.

2.2.5 Phizacklea and Wolkowitz: women, homeworking and the new technologies

Phizacklea and Wolkowitz's (1995) book, *Homeworking Women*, provided a significant contribution to the homeworking literature. The subjects of the research were women who worked at home. For this reason, in order to create a national sample of homeworkers, they put a questionnaire in a women's magazine with a large circulation. Since the magazine was published in English, they adopted another sampling strategy for interviewing homeworkers from ethnic minorities. In addition, they also decided to study ICT homeworkers by considering some organisations in both the private and the public sectors, which have introduced this new type of work.

The authors explored different types of home-based work. They argued that 'homework in Britain reflects all the types of work carried out by women in the external labour market as well as the different experiences and material circumstances of women in a racialized and class-divided society.' (Phizacklea and

Workovitz, 1995: 2). Therefore, in this study gender, class, racism and ethnicity play important roles for describing the homeworkers' labour force. The authors also question whether new technology itself can lead to improved homeworkers' conditions, and, by assessing this aspect, they also focus on the issue of control. As they noted, much research has considered the development and the availability of new technology in the home as one of the 'potentially liberating developments of the so-called post-fordist and post-industrial society' (in Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995: 1, see also Bell, 1973; Gorz, 1985; Lytard, 1984, Toffler, 1981). André Gorz, in *Paths to Paradise*, describes this situation:

'So local production for local tastes and needs becomes possible again. Better still, thanks to teletext and computers, the majority of white collar jobs and extensive range of industrial jobs can be transferred to the employee's home and performed without any timetable constraint. Diversified and enriched these jobs can become group activities, for a family, for a group of neighbours etc.' (André Gorz, 1985: 88)

This positive image can be easily associated with Toffler's idea of the 'electronic cottage' and puts an emphasis on the free and autonomous teleworkers who are often perceived as the opposite of the 'exploited' manufacturing homeworkers (for instance Allen and Wolkowitz, 1987; 1985; Bisset and Huws, 1985; Brown, 1974). Starting from this perspective, two contrasting and extreme images of telework have arisen. The authors aim to put 'homework within the context of women's employment in advanced industrial societies, focusing afterwards on the particular situation in Britain' (Phizacklea and Wolkovitz, 1995: 3). This is the main contribution that Phizacklea and Wolkovitz (*ibid.*) offered to the overall homeworking literature.

This thesis is specifically concerned with control over teleworkers who use information technologies. Assuming this perspective, the focus will be on the methods through which teleworkers are controlled. According to Phizacklea and Wolkovitz (1995), information technology does not guarantee a more autonomous job, for this reason control among home-located workforce is central. As Phizacklea and Wolkovitz (*ibid.*) pointed out, control over the workforce can be exercised in different ways. One way of exercising control is through external

measures which aim to monitor an individual's work and productivity, such as the role of the supervisor and team manager, who have to allocate the work and fix deadlines for completed work. Another external measure is piece rate. As several researchers have noted (Allen and Wolkovitz, 1987; Hakim, 1987), homeworkers are paid only for the work that they have completed according to a specific quality standard.

Another aspect of control is self-discipline. Thus, one of the issues that Phizacklea and Wolkovitz (*ibid.*) explored is whether homeworkers, in particularly ICT homeworkers, have control over their work. This particular aspect has been previously analysed by Haddon and Silverstone (1993). In their study they focused on the ways in which ICT homeworkers managed their work within the home.

Again, the focus on self-discipline involves a decrease of external control and supervision. As Phizacklea and Wolkovitz (*ibid.*) pointed out, managers were reluctant to change their practices of control. For instance, they mentioned the episode of the London Borough of Enfield which started a homeworking scheme in the late 1980s. The assistant director of this project said to the managers: 'Managers have to overcome a fear of losing control unless they see an army of desks' (*Independent on Sunday*, 1992: 31). Many organisations which have introduced telework admitted that a different kind of management is necessary. The result was the creation of telework guidelines by the Treasury and Council of Civil Service Unions. These guidelines noted that control should no longer be based on direct supervision, but that managers must focus more on results. (IRS, *Employment Trends*, 1991: 3). Other research confirms these findings and also notes the difficulties that managers must overcome in order to change their ways of controlling the workers (Olsen, 1987, 1989; Huws, 1990).

Phizacklea and Wolkowitz (1995: 107) reported that, within their sample, they discovered different ways of controlling ICT homeworkers, which vary according to their professional skills. For instance, respondents to the *Prima* questionnaire, were mainly based on data entry workers who were paid for the work completed

and had no control on the quantity of work that they received. In many cases their work was on line; thus systematic electronic monitoring was possible. In this specific case control was mainly exercised via external methods, and homeworkers had little autonomy over their work.

In contrast, companies which have introduced homework among skilled employees, find that this way of working means an increase of autonomy and freedom. As the authors observed, many companies consider homework as a strategy to recruit and retain system analysts in a competitive labour market. Management realised that the usual company benefits, such as a company car, were no longer attractive. What employees really wanted was flexibility and autonomy, and homework was a solution to this emergent need. Consequently, these ICT homeworkers are freer to organise their work and are less subjected to external control. In another case study of a London Borough, the authors discovered that control was based on 'a system which combined both elements: flexible but agreed working hours and a supervisor's home visit three times a week' (*ibid.*: 108).

This study revealed that supervision tends to be less intense for the professional ICT homeworkers than for the lower-skilled clerical workers. In all the cases the employer/employee relationship remained the same. Employers always control the quality and the quantity of work carried out, even if, in many cases, direct control was substituted for indirect control.

The majority of the case studies that Phizacklea and Wolkovitz (*ibid.*) researched found that one of the main problems was for managers to use different mechanisms in order to control homeworkers. For this reason, most of the employers have developed guidelines for monitoring homeworkers schemes. These guidelines dealt with issues such as, setting goals, measuring homeworkers work time and their progress, planning the main method of controlling them (e.g. goals, time, results), setting their availability times and managers' home visits and organising communication needs. These guidelines were adopted by the case study

Bank Co., and at the end of six months' pilot study, the managers of this company honestly admitted that 'We've really learnt a lot about management during this pilot' (*ibid.*: 109). The success of this scheme for both employers and employees meant that 30 per cent of the organisation's staff decided to work at home.

As the authors noted, homeworking did not only bring changes in the ways in which managers should check workers' performance. Homeworkers 'police' themselves and self-discipline is, in fact, an important aspect of aspect of this new way of working. Guidelines have been introduced for homeworkers as well. The Treasury guidelines on homeworking suggest that homeworkers should hold the following characteristics:

- Self-motivation and discipline;
- Initiative and flexibility;
- The ability to cope with reduced social contact and be self-reliant;
- The ability to cope with additional pressures which arise as a result of working in the home where the demands of family are difficult to ignore (IRS *Employments Trends*, 1991a: 2)

Particularly by referring to this last aspect, women homeworkers, whatever work they are doing, have to organise their working day taking into account family responsibilities, and the timing of their activity is often linked to children's and partners' schedules. For this reason, many homeworkers did not have much control over their work schedules. These results have been confirmed by other research (Haddon and Silverstone, 1993; Huws *et al.* 1990).

The main point of Phizacklea and Wolkowitz's research is that information technology itself does not guarantee an increase of autonomy and freedom. Autonomy and freedom are mainly associated with professional homeworkers, and among these, external forms of control tend not to be exercised. This research noted, *internal* forms of control take place, such as planning and flexible organisation of work timetables. In addition, self-discipline is an important aspect of ICT professional homeworkers' daily routines. In contrast, low-skilled ICT

homeworkers were directed by *external* forces, such as a more rigid timetable, the unpredictability of the flow of work and control based on electronic monitoring.

Regarding the relationships between ICT homeworkers and their managers, this research revealed the emergence of *horizontal* forms of *control*. Managers cannot any longer exercise direct supervision. New strategies for controlling homeworkers must be introduced. Thus, companies, in order to help managers in their new role, introduced specific guidelines. The aim of some of these guidelines is to make managers realise that they have to adopt a more collaborative attitude towards this new workforce.

2.2.6 Olson: the importance of company culture

The American researcher Olson (1981, 1982, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989) carried out several researches on professional teleworkers. She showed that managers' and companies' organisational structures are the main reasons which prevented the development of telework. Several authors believe that managers' attitudes and rigid organisational structures represented the main obstacle for the development of telework (Gordon, 1985; Judkins *et al.*, 1985; Kawakami, 1983). She observed that one of the main features of American corporations is the encouragement of close identification with the company by its employees. The creation of a strong corporate identity and the provision facilities within the workplace discouraged the employees from abandoning the company. Thus, a decentralised workforce, such as telework, is considered a contradiction to this approach. Furthermore, she noted that management still relies on visual contact for checking if their employees are working. Management of remote workers requires trust and other supervisory methods, which, according to her are opposed to those utilised in these corporations.

According to her, strong organisational 'cultural' factors, such as traditional 'on-site' management styles, provide a major deterrent. In her study (1989) she interviewed professional teleworkers, mainly male, and their managers. The

managers reported that remote supervision was more time-consuming. They also depended on selected employees: self-disciplined, highly motivated, trustful employees. Although they were supposed to co-ordinate this well-organised workforce, they declared they were uncomfortable not being able to see their employees working.

She also evaluated three teleworking experiments and found out that employees and managers have different perceptions of work performance. Employees felt that the possibility of working on their own for several days a week enhanced their work performance, improved their work satisfaction and had no negative consequences on their chances for promotion or on their relationships with their supervisors. In contrast, many managers were more conservative towards the introduction of teleworking. In general they felt that telework would not imply a decrease of productivity, but that it entailed significantly more work for them because of preparing work assignments and monitoring progress. Thus, Olson's research puts an emphasis on *central control*. The introduction of teleworking affects the overall dynamics of the company and, in many cases, the companies are not prepared to deal with this new way of working.

2.2.7 Huws: Teleworkers' managers and other company dynamics

Huws (Huws, 1984, Huws *et al.* 1990, Huws, 1993, 1994, 1996, Huws *et al.*, 1999) provided an important contribution to UK and European literature on telework. She has extensively explored different aspects of teleworking, among them, the methods through which teleworkers are managed, which is the focus of this thesis.

Huws agrees with Olson (1989) that managing teleworkers is a problematic issue. This aspect has been reported by other literature on this phenomenon, which focused on the need for companies which introduce teleworking to change their organisational structure and management (Gordon and Kelly, 1986; Upton, 1984; Heilmann, 1988; Miller, 1986). Huws' main point is that a teleworking scheme should be prepared with caution. For instance, it is necessary to pay attention to

the selection of teleworkers. As her research revealed, not all employees can adapt easily to telework, so it is thus important to understand who among them has the right characteristics, skills and experience for teleworking (Olson, 1982; Gordon and Kelly, 1986; Judkins *et al.* 1985; Miller, 1986; Empirica, 1986). Training should also be considered as an important variable for both teleworkers and their managers. As many authors reported, training should not only consider the technical aspects of telework, but it should also include personal skills, such as learning how to organise one's time. (Huws *et al.*, 1990).

Managers have to learn new methods for controlling this remote workforce. With some tasks, such as work processing or data entry, the simplest method of controlling them is through the piece-rate system (Geisler, 1985). For professional teleworkers, managers should more disciplined in setting clear objectives and keeping records of instructions given (Lallande, 1984; DeSanctis, 1983). They should also develop ways of encouraging a task-orientated motivation among teleworkers (Heilmann, 1988).

However, as Huws *et al.* (1990) noted, the main point of remote management is that it requires a major change in both style and attitudes. For instance, managers' lack of trust in the employees they supervise is often considered as a serious constraint on the development of teleworking (Clavaud, 1981, 1982; Olson, 1982). Other authors shared this point of view. Miller argues that 'telework does not call for more trust; it calls for careful assessment and reapplication of trust that is necessary for organisational performance in the first place' (Miller, 1986 in Huws *et al.*, 1990: 31). Romero, suggested that a teleworkers' manager must accept more egalitarian relationships, becoming more a 'facilitator than a dictator' (Romero, 1983).

Another important aspect to consider regarding telework management is the communication between managers and teleworkers. Some authors claimed that telework should develop a more thoughtful communication (Hirschheim, 1985); others also reported that, in reality, communication between managers and

teleworkers is more depersonalised and teleworkers regret this (Craipeau and Marot, 1984). The main aspect regarding communication at a distance is that managers give regular and good feedback to their teleworkers (Gordon and Kelly, 1986).

According to Huws *et al.* (1990), teleworking will lead not only to changes in ways of managing this new workforce, but will also demand further changes in organisational structure and culture in the companies in which telework had been introduced. (Olson, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1989). For instance, Harvey (1982) considers that teleworking encourages lateral communication and that the use of e-mail, since it can accelerate decision-making, can break down traditional hierarchies (Harvey, 1982). Taylor (1982) and Brant (1983) agree and point out that teleworking will lead to a decentralisation of organisational structure. According to these authors, one of the consequences of teleworking is the break down of hierarchies.

However, other authors offered a different image of this phenomenon. According to them, teleworking is coupled with an intensification of Tayloristic methods of control over the work process through routinisation of work tasks and the imposition of pace of work through payment by the piece (Bjorn-Andersen, 1983; Gregory, 1983; Chamot and Zalusky, 1985). As Huws *et al.* (1990) noted, it is possible to reconcile these two approaches by assessing that different types of teleworking bring about different organisational consequences; for instance professional teleworkers can exercise a considerable amount of autonomy, while clerical teleworkers have little control over their work. She also added that this polarisation is not straightforward. A UK survey which compared traditional manufacturing and clerical homeworkers with home-based computer professionals found some similarities between the two groups, such as underpayment, strict monitoring by their employers and employment insecurity (Bisset and Huws, 1994).

Huws tries to assess the above issues in her empirical research. In 1987, Empirica carried out a survey of telework in 14 companies in Germany and the UK. The companies included in the sample covered different fields. Questionnaires were administered to both teleworkers and managers. Quantitative methods were coupled with qualitative methods, and personal interviews with teleworkers' managers played an important role in the overall investigation. Although this research covered various aspects of teleworking, the focus of my analysis will be on teleworkers' management.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, teleworking involves different strategies for controlling teleworkers. As Huws *et al.* (1990) revealed, in the majority of the companies considered, personal supervision tends to be infrequent. This is because the majority of tasks are performed in 'output' models. For this reason supervision of teleworkers' performance and productivity relies on their results. The length of the time worked was not measured in any organisations. Huws *et al. (ibid.)* reported that only two organisations used electronic monitoring. These organisations measured working times by considering the length of connection and log off. Other organisations did not utilise this method, since they thought that teleworkers would resist.

According to managers, (Huws *et al.*, 1990) control by results is not an easy task. As in previous research the issue of control from a distance emerged within the Empirica study. This research also compares teleworkers' and managers' opinions regarding new methods of supervision. The majority of teleworkers involved in the Empirica study consider these new methods of supervision an advantage: 42 per cent compare them favourably with the supervision methods utilised in their last job, while half do not see any difference from their former situation. Only a few of them see these methods of control as a disadvantage. Specifically, the lack of close supervision is seen as an important advantage by 80 per cent of the typists, compared with 56 per cent of professional teleworkers. As Huws *et al.* noted: 'this is perhaps more a reflection of the closeness of supervision

in the atypical office-based typing pool environment than that of the home-based programmer' (Huws *et al.*, 1990: 135).

Managers' perspective is slightly different. Many managers with no direct experience of teleworking reported problems related to supervision and control as the main reason for not introducing teleworking within their companies. However, only five managers of successful teleworking schemes see control as a constraint. According to the managers, the main constraints are: organisational difficulties, the need to train employees and lack of technical equipment. A central dimension of control emerges from these aspects; a part from being self-disciplined, teleworkers must also be trained, and this must be organised by the companies.

Thus control remains an open issue, which Huws tried to explore in other research (Huws, 1993; Huws, 1994). Other important research which dealt with teleworking was one commissioned in 1992 by the Employment Department from Analytica. The main aim of this project was to investigate the management of teleworking in a range of different organisational contexts. This would be extremely helpful in identifying good practices which might be utilised by other employers willing to set up teleworking schemes. Through this project many issues have been explored. First the survey considered the prevalence of teleworking according to different criteria, such as distribution of telework by industry, by size of the organisations, regional distribution of teleworking, occupations involved in telework and telework and gender.

Different aspects have been analysed and many of them are related to the issue of control. For instance, employers' attitude to telework and both its benefits and disadvantages have been explored. Reduced cost, flexibility, the solution of travel problems and facilitating staff with child-care opportunities, are acknowledged as the main advantages of teleworking. Even more interesting for a study of control is an analysis of the disadvantages of telework. Within the sample of her study, Huws considered potential teleworking employers, actual homework employers and non-homework employers. All these categories of employers cited as a

disadvantage the fact that telework is 'hard to manage', and that creates 'social isolation' and 'communication difficulties'.

The idea that teleworking is hard to manage has been noted by previous research. (Olson, 1989). Managing teleworking involves different phases, not only a day-to-day assessment of teleworkers job. First, it is necessary to delineate new strategies for recruiting teleworkers. According to Huws' (1993) research, the recruitment methods used for teleworkers are not so different from those used to select on-site employees. However the criteria utilised for recruiting teleworkers are different. The results of Huws research (*ibid.*) noted that the quality 'self-sufficiency' was regarded as one of the most important aspects for teleworkers. This was coupled with the quality of 'maturity'. Other criteria for the selection of teleworkers are: the requirement that the teleworkers were already trained; good communication skills, and a home environment which was suitable for teleworking.

Huws (*ibid.*) also tried to portray the image of the unsuitable teleworker. The results were the exact opposite of the suitable teleworker. By considering the qualities which render a person unsuitable for teleworking, the majority of the managers mentioned 'lack of self-discipline', 'needs of supervision' and 'lack of self-confidence'. These qualities can be read as the negative counterpart of 'self-sufficiency', seen as a necessary pre-requisite. The issue of control is thus questioned. Again, these results reinforce the idea that internal control plays an important part within telework. From this many questions can arise: can only self-disciplined workers become teleworkers? Or can companies which have introduced teleworking schemes teach their workers to become a teleworker, for instance through induction training? This question will be explored in this thesis.

Huws (*ibid.*) analysed the issue of training as well. According to her research, a third of the employers of her survey said that they did provide some training, while half said that they did not. Training differs from employer to employer; for instance, some organisations claimed to provide counselling to their employees.

However, in the majority of the cases, particularly among clerical teleworkers, the counselling appears to be no more than an informal chat with the manager. According to the teleworkers, during these induction sessions, managers give 'advice on how to deal with boredom' and advised them 'not to take much work'. A teleworker said that he had just one hour of induction training, and he summarised it as it follows: 'They give you some printed guidelines and teach you the basic functions you need, and they warn you that it isn't an easy job and that you have to be organised.' (in Huws, 1993: 30). This research (Huws, 1993) noted that a lack of adequate induction training was a frequent complaint of the teleworkers, particularly those who took part in initial teleworking schemes. A home-based programmer said that the initial training is 'one of the bug bears' of teleworking.

In another case a teleworker pointed out that in order to find some advices for organising himself he rang around local businesses and agencies and finally found some printed guidelines. These and other examples suggested that only a significant minority of employers take the preparation for teleworking seriously. In fact only nine companies of Analytica (1992)'s survey have developed formal induction training. The identification of the initial training and ongoing training varied according to the different companies. 12 per cent of the companies did not identify any training for teleworkers, while a further 8 per cent of cases employers said that their teleworkers were already trained. 16 per cent of organisations which have introduced telework have individual training plans, while in 31 per cent of cases there was a corporate training programme and teleworkers could discuss their problems only during the general appraisal procedure. In 14 per cent of the teleworking organisations training was provided in response to the introduction of new software technology, and, in 11 percent of the cases was dependent on teleworkers' requests.

In order to establish the importance of teleworkers training, Huws asked teleworking employers whether there was a difference between the training provided for teleworkers and that offered to on-site employees. In the majority of

the cases there was little difference, although in many cases it was impossible to make comparisons, since there were no comparable on-site employees. In two cases teleworkers took lower priority compared to on-site staff. However, in four cases teleworkers were given more training than internal staff.

As Huws (1993) noted, a successful teleworking scheme should not only involve a preparation for the teleworkers, but also a preparation for teleworkers' managers. Huws (*ibid.*) research discovered that 19.4 per cent of teleworking organisations provided such training. This means that, in a very high proportion of cases, teleworking managers have not received any formal training in remote managing.

The issue of training plays an important role in the issue of control. For instance, a focus on training leads to company awareness of teleworking, and thus strengthens *central control*. From Huws' (1993) research one can see that training is not considered important by teleworkers' managers. This is because, according to the teleworking employers interviewed, teleworkers should be 'self-disciplined' (*internal control*). This raises an important issue: is self-discipline a personal characteristic or something that can be learnt? And if self-discipline can be learnt, what is the role of the company?

In any case, self-discipline must be coupled with other management strategies. Although teleworkers should be able to organise their own work, their managers must also monitor the results they achieve. As mentioned over a quarter of employers of home-based workers regarded teleworking as 'hard to manage'. Consequently the ways in which teleworking was managed on a day-to-day basis was a central issue within Huws' research (*ibid.*)

As Huws (*ibid.*) noted, a range of different methods are used for managing teleworkers. The most common tool is a regular progress meeting between teleworkers and their managers. The second most common method of control was self-management. Other methods of managing the workforce are through regular

phone calls between teleworkers and their managers, analysis of teleworkers' output, checking the target set by the managers and payment by results. Less prevalent, but still practised by 10 per cent of employers, are targets which are mutually agreed between teleworkers and their managers: team meeting, feedback from clients and spot check. According to Huws (*ibid.*), diversity of methods of control depends on several factors, such as the differences in corporate culture, in the size of the organisations or the work occupation. For instance, payment by results is more common among certain occupational groupings: data entry and typing, translations, sales, marketing and secretarial work. As Huws (*ibid.*) noted, except in the case of sales and marketing, where payment by piece of work is made in addition to the basic salary, teleworkers rarely participate in face-to-face meetings. As the author showed, payment by results leads to a lack of trust between the teleworkers and their managers; the workers must reach certain targets in order to be paid. This method of managing teleworkers is mainly based on *external control*, and it represents the typical way of controlling traditional manufacturing homeworkers. As Huws (*ibid.*) pointed out, this management strategy is the opposite of other management styles that she identified within her research.

In addition to payment by piece-work, there is another mechanism for managing remote workers, which Huws (*ibid.*) calls the 'collaborative' style and which is characterised by frequent meetings between teleworkers and managers. The 'collaborative' style of management relies on team meetings and the setting of targets which are mutually agreed by both teleworkers and managers. By reflecting on these management styles it is possible to say that the concept of *horizontal control* emerges from the 'collaborative style'. In this case control is not unilaterally exercised by the management, but involves teleworkers as well.

New problems emerged among teleworkers who are normally managed through a collaborative management style. For instance, many professional or semi-professional teleworkers felt anxious because the work they carried out was not visible to managers and colleagues, and they feared they would not be perceived as

hard workers. Some of them decided to send regular reports to their managers, even if they were not asked to. For instance, one teleworker, on her initiative, has utilised an existing system for reporting on inspection visits and for showing her manager what she has completed of each day. This reporting system not only assured good communication but was also a means to protect herself from any doubts which might be cast on her work record. From these examples demonstrate that control at a distance is *invisible*. Whenever control at a distance is based on regular progress meetings, planning and analysis of output, the teleworkers achievements are *visible*. However, the process by which the workers produce these results, such as the time spent in front of the computer, is *invisible*. As Huws (*ibid.*) research noted, teleworkers suffer from this lack of visibility and independently develop new techniques, such as writing reports, for making themselves more *visible*.

Since this kind of management involved a collaboration between managers and teleworkers, managers, in many cases, found it difficult to ask for a detailed report of the work done. As Huws suggested, this hesitation may be a reason why managers often reported that teleworkers are hard to manage, even in teleworking schemes which are functioning efficiently. In the 1992-93 Analytica survey, the factor of teleworkers being 'hard to manage' was mentioned as a disadvantage by 27 per cent of the employers who currently employed home-based workers, and by 23 per cent of the employers who had no teleworkers in their company. As Huws noted:

'What managers appear to mean by the phrase 'hard to manage' is not that teleworking is actually unmanageable but that it requires a different managerial approach to the traditional face-to-face style still practised in many offices. This new style may, at least in the initial stages, require more conscious effort from the manager. Nevertheless, it is worthy to note that nearly three-quarters of practising managers do not report any major difficulties in the management of their teleworking scheme...In general, however, when compared with the management of office-based staff, the management of remote workers requires a more structured and formal approach, with a great emphasis on the attainment of specific targets and advance planning of meetings or telephone communications (Huws, 1994: 55)

Consequently, controlling remote workers must not be considered a problematic issue, but new management styles must be found. This issue is central for professional and semi-professional teleworkers, which are mainly controlled through what Huws (*ibid.*) classified as a 'collaborative management style'. As evidence suggested, this management style must be developed further.

Assessing white-collar functions, such as data entry, secretarial tasks can be considered as relatively easy, and in many cases this workforce is managed by payment by results; but control over professional teleworkers requires a more attentive approach. Consequently, it is not by chance that Huws (1994), in the 1992-93 survey, noted that the number of teleworkers in teleworkers' scheme, who carried out routine white-collar functions, was considerably higher than that of professional teleworkers.

In her research, Huws (*Ibid.*) points out several aspects of control which took place within a teleworking scheme. One of her main contributions to teleworking literature is the focus on employers' perspectives towards teleworking. Evidence suggested that that employers find it particularly difficult to control professional teleworkers, who are supposed to be assessed by objectives achievement, appraisals. This method of control involves the use of *internal* and *horizontal control*. Teleworkers must discipline and organise themselves in order to attain certain results (*internal control*); managers should allow teleworkers more flexibility, get them more committed to the company and be able to evaluate people by results (*horizontal control*). This is a complex process and many managers are not culturally prepared for remote control.

She also points out that control exercised over low-skilled, clerical teleworkers is less problematic. Normally these employees can be monitored through *external* mechanisms of control, since their task can be easily quantified and this requires less effort from the part of the managers. She also noted that teleworking implies

other changes in the central organisation of companies, such as selection and training, and these aspects should be considered as well.

2.2.8 Di Nicola: call centre operators are now working at home

As it has been suggested, teleworking in Italy is a more recent phenomenon than in the UK. The majority of Italian literature deals with the issue of the advantages or disadvantages of telework (Brognia *et al.* 1996; Cepollaro, 1986; Ceil, 1989; Di Nicola, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b, 1996f, 1996g; Rizzo, 1997). In addition, since in Italy there has been an attempt to regulate telework, much literature analyses teleworking from a legislative perspective (Di Nicola, 1996d, 1996e, 1999; Gaeta, 1993, 1998; Scajola, 1998, Scarpitti, 1993, Zurla, 1999). The ways through which telework is regulated from a legislative point of view will be explored in Chapter 4. Although the majority of Italian research does not provide an important contribution to the overall literature concerning control and telework, Di Nicola has dealt with the issue of managerial control. Di Nicola carried out several researches on telework, such as the advantages and disadvantages of telework, telework and legislation, telework and trade unions (Di Nicola, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996e, 1996f, 1996g, 1999).

In his recent piece of research (Di Nicola, forthcoming) he also explores the issue of the management of telework call centre operators. Conventionally, call centre operators are controlled through electronic monitoring. However, electronic monitoring is problematic in Italy. This aspect will be better explained in Chapter 4, which deals with Italian legislation on telework. The art. 4 Law 300/1970 of the Workers' Statute outlaws control from a distance through audiovisual instruments in order to protect workers' privacy. This means that call centre supervisors cannot listen to operators' phone calls. Electronic monitoring can be utilised only to check the overall productivity of the teleworkers, not an individual. This reinforces the previous hypothesis.

Di Nicola (*ibid.*) carried out a study in an Italian call centre and also tackled the issue of how to manage operators who work from home. Quantitative and

qualitative data revealed different orientations for controlling teleworker call centre operators. 13.4 per cent of teleworkers' supervisors are convinced that teleworkers can be managed in the same ways as internal call centre operators; on the contrary 20.3 per cent believe that teleworkers should be controlled through criteria which differ from those utilised for internal workers. The other 36.6 per cent are convinced that teleworkers should be controlled mainly through new management techniques. The final 29.7 per cent of the supervisors feel the necessity of introducing new means of control for checking teleworkers' output. Although nobody mentioned the increase in electronic monitoring as a means of control over the workers, we could assume that the last category of supervisors might have envisaged this solution for reinforcing external control over the workers. However, the issue of electronic monitoring is particularly controversial in Italy because of legal restrictions and cannot be perceived as an actual solution to managing teleworkers.

Supervisors can, in fact, check the quantitative output of teleworkers, but they cannot evaluate their qualitative standard or their interactions with the clients. Only clients' complaints can reveal unprofessional or rude behaviour by teleworkers. The new technological tools play only a small role in exercising control over the workers. Supervisors must trust teleworkers, therefore they must know them. So, teleworkers are required to spend a period in call centre before starting working from home. In the call centres, highly technological machines track the productivity of the operators, but even in the workplace, the control exercise by electronic monitoring is limited.

Face-to-face contacts, training sessions and personal meetings between operators and supervisors play an important role in managing the workers and in getting to know them. As a supervisor pointed out, not everybody can work from home. According to him teleworkers should be:

‘...reliable and serious persons, they are productive already in the call centre. This means that they work hard, they follow the contractual shifts, they are polite with the clients. If there is a person who already

received complaints because his/her impoliteness, or s/he is always having a break, it's clear that I wouldn't propose him/her for teleworking.' (Di Nicola, forthcoming: 108)

As supervisors pointed out, these characteristics can be checked mainly through day-to-day interaction. This research confirms that self-discipline is an important aspect of telework, and that it can be developed through individual training and individual meetings or even perceived as a personal characteristic of the workers. It is not perceived as the direct consequence of tight electronic monitoring. In order to reinforce self-discipline among teleworkers, they are asked to return regularly to the company in order to attend training. Office-based days are also a way to deal with isolation that teleworkers might experience and to reinforce their commitment to the company's culture (*central control*). This research reinforces the hypothesis that *external* forms of *control*, such as electronic monitoring must be coupled with other management strategies (Bain and Taylor, 2000; Frenkel *et al.*, 1998), such as commitment policies (Gallie *et al.* 2001), which are based mainly on *internal control*.

However, other research argues that 'commitment policies' must be taken as a new rhetoric of work intensification (Legge, 1995; Purcell, 1993; Willmott, 1993). Workers might think that this normative commitment does not lead to any real opportunity of participation or to any real increase of tasks role, they might respond in a negative way. In this case, coupling external forms of control, such as electronic monitoring, with internal forms of control, such as training, would cause tensions since teleworkers might understand commitments policies as an introduction of tighter forms of *external control*. This thesis will explore these hypotheses as well.

2.2.9 Felstead and Jewson/Felstead *et al.*: 'the technologies of the self', 'visibility' and 'physical presence'

Felstead and Jewson researched several home-located workforces, by using different research methods and focusing on different aspects of this phenomenon. Their early research (Felstead, 1996; Felstead and Jewson, 1995, 1996, 1997),

concentrated on 'homeworkers'. They did *low discretion* work, which is conventionally defined as predictable, routine, standardised and rule dominated (Felstead *et al.* 2000, emphasis of the authors). They represent the conventional manufacturing homeworkers. Felstead and Jewson's (1995, 1996, 1997) first research was mainly quantitative and aimed to give a national picture of telework in the UK as well as to define this concept by considering large scale national data.

After, their book *In Work at Home* (2000), switched both research methods and focus. The research (*ibid.*) was mainly based on both quantitative and qualitative methods. One of the aims of this research was to show the ways in which self-employed and employee homeworkers were able to organise their work despite spatial and temporal constraints. In order to describe these processes of self-organisation and self-discipline Felstead and Jewson utilised the concept of the 'technologies of the self'. This concept has been developed by M. Foucault, particularly in his later work (Foucault 1979, 1987, 1988, 1990; Gordon, 1887), and has been expanded by several authors (Rose, 1990; Giddens, 1991, Sennet, 1998). These 'technologies of the self' refer to ways in which people organise their own practices in the course of their every day lives, including techniques of self-management and self-discipline which are crucial for homeworkers' lives. The aspect of 'technologies of the self' has been utilised particularly for co-ordinating homeworkers' earning activities with those which entailed being a member of the household. The home is the realm of domestic labour, kinship, family, children, personal intimacy, and so, several strategies have to be adopted in order to introduce a work activity into the home environment. Felstead and Jewson (2000), therefore, utilised the concept of 'technologies of the self' for guiding their qualitative research on the self-driving process of home-located producers and employees. This concept has been particularly useful for defining homeworkers' day-to-day practices within the household in terms of time and space.

From empirical data Felstead and Jewson (*ibid.*) generated two typologies of 'technologies of the self' which home-located producers adopted in the household. The first typology includes the 'technologies of the self' directed to managing

divisions within the household, which have been classified as: 'marking', 'switching', 'defending', 'intruding'. The second includes the technologies of the self which attempt to regulate the interface between the household and the outside world. These technologies of the self are concerned with 'managing social and geographical isolation', 'managing working encroachments within the household', 'managing the unpredictability and variability of work' and, 'managing invisibility'.

The focus of Felstead and Jewson's research on *internal control*, which takes the form of self-management. It will be interesting to see if employee teleworkers, even if they did clerical jobs, have acquired this professional attitude towards the organisation of their daily activities.

The research team Felstead *et al.* (2001), further explored the issue of working from home. As a starting point of their research they considered, from statistical evidence (*Labour Force Survey*), seven hypotheses which are: the extent of the growth of working from home, the reliance on information and communication technology, the prevalence of low paid salary rates compared to their office-located peers, the predominance of women, particularly women with children, and ethnic minorities who work at home. The conclusion of this analysis suggested that those who work at home do not comprise a homogeneous group. This paper highlights particularly the difference between non-manual and manual employees who work at home and between those who work mainly, partially and sometimes at home. This heterogeneity of employees who work at home indicates that there will be several techniques and several approaches for controlling this workforce and assessing their work.

In subsequent research, they also tackle the issue of control, while analysing the linkage of working at home and work-life balance theories. Felstead *et al.* (2002) identified four theoretical approaches that seek to explain the different factors associated with the adoption of work-life balance practices. As Felstead *et al.* (2002) suggested the particular techniques through which teleworkers are managed

varied according to working environments. For instance, in low-trust environments, work is assessed through payment by result, so that if workers produce less they receive less money (Felstead and Jewson, 1996, 1997 and 2000). In contrast, in high-trust working-at-home environments, where the work-life balance is more commonly implemented, there is more co-operation between employees and management, work is assessed through frequent progress meetings and the setting of targets agreed by both employees and managers. Appraisals are also considered an important method for controlling the workforce (Employment Department, 1995).

In another recent paper, Felstead *et al.* (2003) explore the exercise of managerial control exercised over employees working at home. The paper draws on 202 qualitative in-depth interviews with managers and home-located employees of 13 case-study organisations. These include white-collar and professional/managerial teleworkers, directors, policy-makers, facilities planners, line managers and trade union representatives.

Two main variables have been considered relevant for exploring managerial control: 'visibility', defined as the 'possibility for supervisors and others to observe workers' (*ibid.*: 241) and 'presence', identified as 'the ability of workers to participate in relations with co-workers and others' (*ibid.*: 241). The workplace facilitates both management of workers' visibility and their presence. For this reason, according to these authors, working at home creates problems. Felstead *et al.* (2003) explore the different devices and strategies that managers generate to compensate for the lack of visibility and presence of home-located workers. First it will be assessed the issue of 'visibility', then that of 'presence'.

According to Felstead. *et al.* (2003) there was a consensus among the managers interviewed that real-time visibility within the office acts as a source of self-discipline and mutual surveillance by others. For this reason the loss of workers' visibility was considered a serious problem. As a managers pointed out:

There's a real tension actually. Some managers just can't cope not seeing people; they believe that they can't measure their outputs if they're not around...(Manager 1, Local Authority 1 in Felstead *et al.* 2003: 244)

Some managers described this lack of visibility as a technique for 'skiving'. Others revealed that they inadvertently excluded home-located workers from the office when disseminating information. Felstead *et al.* also showed that the loss of real time visibility was a more serious problem in work organisations with poor ICT conditions, as virtual visibility was restricted.

The research suggested that managers responded to the reduced visibility of the home-located workers in different ways: 1) by introducing new surveillance devices; 2) by activating the surveillance capabilities of existing managerial devices; 3) by setting short-term or medium term output targets; 4) by introducing managers' home-visits; 5) by emphasising trust.

As mentioned, the first managerial response for recreating visibility of routine work activities was through new surveillance devices, which act via electronic technologies. However, interviews suggested that relatively few work organisations invested heavy expenditure in such technologies. In fact, many work organisations introduced teleworking only for reducing costs. Many of them just introduced simple devices, such as electronic diaries accessible to all. Most sophisticated devices have been introduced in telecommunication companies.

Recent studies analysed the intrusiveness of electronic surveillance. Some authors over-emphasised the panoptic effect of electronic surveillance, while others stressed workers' resistance to these devices (Fernie and Metcalf, 1998; Bain and Taylor, 2000; Taylor, 1998; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). Other researchers noted that sometimes surveillance is Janus-faced and can generate emotional benefits for those subjected to it (Lyon, 2001). In addition, many employees may accept the legitimacy of routine surveillance as an unavoidable aspect of the wages-effort bargain (Mason *et al.* 2002; Lankshear *et al.* 2001).

According to Felstead *et al.* (2003), very few home-located workers complained about the intrusiveness of electronic surveillance or felt subjected to an electronic panopticon. Many home-located workers complained of the inadequacy of ICT and technical support which enhance the problem of isolation.

A second managerial strategy, which attempted to recreate the visibility of home-located workers, acts through the use of technological instruments which activate surveillance devices. Felstead *et al.* (2003) make a distinction between 'devices that are explicitly designed for surveillance purposes (such as CCTV or clocking in) and those that have the capability of enhancing surveillance but were not necessarily created for this purpose.' (2003: 247). In fact, many technologies concerned with information processing have surveillance capabilities (such as e-mail, PC, electronic files). Managers attempted to recreate visibility by reshaping the ways existing technological devices were used. For instance, many respondents commented that telephone calls change their functions. Many managers admitted to consciously introducing gossips and jokes when giving early warnings of problems. Although these devices can successfully recreate workers' visibility there were practical limitations. For instance, large numbers of daily telephone calls to each home-located employee could be too demanding for managers.

A third strategy which compensated for the lack of home-located workers' visibility in the office was to monitor outputs rather than inputs (Department of Trade and Industry, 2000; Dwelly, 2000). This method of control involves setting short- to medium-term targets. As Felstead *et al.* (2003) suggested, this strategy was deployed in several case studies, however it was not successful all the time. In many cases managers experienced difficulties in defining relevant targets that could be easily measured and compared.

A fourth response to the reduced visibility of home-located workers was given by introducing managers' visits into remote employees' homes. Many respondents, both home-located workers and managers, described these home visits as informal and unproblematic. However, this method of surveillance involves some problems.

First, the geographical dispersal of the home-located workers was the a practical limitation. Second, these home-visits were considered intrusive by both home-located workers and their partners. Third, the personal and informal characteristics of these home visits biased the established worker-managers encounters. Managers were now a guest at the homes of their subordinates. This caused ambiguities in terms of power, authority and status.

The fifth response to the lack visibility was trust. Trust was considered an unavoidable element for supervising home-located workers. However, the use of trust as a managerial strategy created problems. For instance, one particular aspect that emerged during the research was that many managers suggested that not all workers could be trusted. According to Felstead *et al.* (2003) managers considered trust 'to entail a capacity on the part of workers for individual self-discipline and self-management. In absence of visibility, trusted workers were required to watch themselves' (*ibid*: 2003). This involves restricting the selection of home-located workers to those in the highest grades and those with certain personal characteristics (Felstead *et al.* 2002).

Another important aspect that Felstead *et al.* (2003) took into account in their analysis of managerial control was the lack of workers' presence in the office. If we consider that corporate culture and normative control have become more and more an instrument for ensuring managerial control in work organisations (Kunda, 1992; Wilson, 1999; Grugolis *et al.*, 2000; Casey, 1995), participation in company culture becomes a requirement. All the work organisations included in the sample recognised the importance of organisational culture, induction training and team working. For instance, some managers explicitly said that working at home could be a potential threat to the integration of teams and the internalisation of corporate cultures. It was suggested that home-located workers tend to focus on their own personal achievements, neglecting corporate objectives and participation in team activities. Many managers suggested that, as a consequence home-located workers can detach them from the technical and emotional support of their colleagues.

Others said that home-telework was responsible of generating resentment among on-site co-workers leading to tensions in team integration.

Managers in the Felstead *et al.* (2003) case studies developed a series of responses in order to compensate for the absence of home-located employees. They can be summarised in two main approaches: 1) inducting employees into corporate culture and teamworking prior to working at home; 2) introducing new channels of sociability which aim to engender a sense of team and corporate belonging among home-located employees.

Referring to the first aspect mentioned above, Felstead *et al.* (2003) noted that, in the majority of the case study organisations, workers were required to spend a period on-site before starting to work at home. This practice aimed to inculcate a sense of belonging in corporate culture and values among home-located employees. As managers suggested, this initial period spent on-site was useful, and offered home-located workers a reference point, but it was not able to solve all the problems. For instance, this reference point could become dated. In addition, many companies attracted staff mainly because of the option of working at home. For some of the new recruits to spend a period of several months on-site was perceived as a problem.

The second strategy aimed to counterbalance the loss of physical presence of home-located employees by introducing new channels of sociability. The main practices deployed were one-to-one telephone calls, e-mails, conference calls, virtual meetings and face-to-face meetings. Interviews revealed that many managers, in order to compensate for the lack of physical presence of home-located workers, changed the forms and the contents of phone conversations. Telephone conversations tended to mix business with gossip. In order to strengthen home-located employees' sense of belonging to their company, managers organised a range of meetings and return visits. Some of them were business related, while others were purely social gatherings (dinners, pub visits). These arrangements had a positive impact on home-located workers, but in some

cases weakened the social integration of the organisation. For instance, the home-located become closer to each other, and this increases their separation from their colleagues.

Both managers and employers in the case studies researched expressed the view that home-located workers were self-sufficient and independent and, by working from home, became task-oriented and more focused on their achievements. However, these qualities have their own downside as well. For instance, instead of gaining satisfaction from the success of their team they enjoyed their own personal achievements. Research conveyed a general agreement that home-located workers developed new habits, disciplines that have been previously described as 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988; Felstead and Jewson, 2000: 107-142).

The piece of research reviewed above (Felstead *et al.* 2003) gave an important contribution to a further analysis of control exercised among home-located employees. From this research a series of dimensions of control emerged: *visible /invisible control*, *internal control* and *central control*. While, in the past, managerial control relied upon the visibility and the presence of workers in their workplaces (Baldry, 1999; Baldry *et al.*, 1998; Marglin, 1976; Marcus, 1993), this method of control is no longer possible with employees who work at home. As Felstead *et al.* (2003) noted, managers utilised a new series of devices, such as new technological forms of surveillance, or reshaped the ways conventional technological instruments were used for making home-located workers more visible (e.g. more frequent and informal telephone calls) or introduced home-visits. All these strategies attempted to compensate for the lack of workers' visibility and tried to make them more visible.

Another important aspect of this research is that managers have to learn to cope with the lack of workers' visibility (*invisible control*). One strategy has been to set short or medium term targets. In this case the results became visible, but not the workers. Another form of control, which does not rely on the visibility of the workers, is control based on trust. This relies mainly on *internal control*. Trustworthy workers are only those self-disciplined.

Control in the workplace is also reinforced by the physical presence of employees in the work organisation. Here normative control plays an important role. From this perspective the dimensions of *central* and *internal control* become relevant. Managers must reinforce home-located commitments in different ways (*central control*). Several managers tried to facilitate the internalisation of company values by introducing a compulsory induction training on site (*internal control*). Others attempted to raise corporate values by organising a series of social events (*central control*).

2.3. Conclusion

Current literature on homeworking/teleworking reveals that there are several mechanisms through which control can be exercised over a remote workforce. In all this literature a common tendency emerges: low skilled and professional homeworkers/teleworkers are controlled through different and opposite techniques of control (Hakim, 1987, Brocklehurst, 1989, Huws, 1993, 1994; Phizacklea and Wolkivitz, 1995; Hamblin, 1995). Low-skilled homeworkers/teleworkers are more likely to be controlled through *external* forms of *control*, such as payment by piece of work. In many cases these homeworkers/teleworkers do not receive a fixed workload. If requests for certain goods are low they will receive less work (*central control*). Since the job is quantifiable, control from a distance is not considered a problem.

In contrast, professional teleworkers are more likely to be assessed through an evaluation of results achieved, so *internal control* is central, since they must be able to organise their own work. These teleworkers have more autonomy and play a more significant role in the decision making of the company (*horizontal control*). As evidence suggested, managers found it more difficult to control these remote workers. Professional teleworkers, in turn, also suffer from the problem of becoming 'invisible' to the company (*invisible control*).

However, this distinction between low-skilled and professional homeworkers/teleworkers is not straightforward. Recent research (Di Nicola, forthcoming) demonstrates that low-skilled teleworkers, for example of these can be illustrated by home-located call centre operators, are monitored through both *external* forms of *control* (electronic surveillance) and *internal* ones (training, appraisals). This last aspect of internal control should be expanded further. Many analysts, in fact, see the implementation of training, appraisals and team meetings in terms of management strategies. Some researchers (Legge, 1995; Purcell, 1993; Willmott, 1993) regard these 'empowerment' policies as a new rhetoric for disguising the re-assertion of managerial control and for an intensification of work effort.

In addition, other research (Olson, 1987; Huws, 1993, Barouch, 2000) pointed out that control among teleworkers cannot be explained purely in terms of the relations between managers/teleworkers; other company dynamics, such as the company culture, selection and training should be considered as well. Companies which decided to introduce telework should be culturally prepared for confronting this new phenomenon and should be prepared to transfer the company culture. Managers should be able to evaluate teleworkers by checking the results they have achieved. This involves a focus on planning and more co-operation between teleworkers and managers (*horizontal control*). The selection of teleworkers should go beyond the traditional logic which relies on workers' expertise and technical qualifications. Selectors should look at other characteristics, such as self-discipline, autonomy and problem solving ability. In addition training should help teleworkers to develop such characteristics and deal with cultural problems that telework involves (*horizontal /internal control*).

Some teleworking/homeworking literature focuses specifically on teleworkers' self-discipline and on the ways through which they organise their daily work in terms of time and space. (Haddon and Silverstone, 1993; Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Brocklehurst, 2001). The idea of *internal control* emerges specifically from this aspect of telework.

The *visibility* of teleworkers and the work they do is another dimension, which comes to light in recent telework literature (*visible/invisible control*). The issue of visibility is controversial. The development of new technologies allows electronic surveillance. Employers can technically see when teleworkers log in and log off, as well as which activities they executed at any time and from anywhere. However, electronic surveillance cannot solve all the problems related to the control of teleworkers. Again, research revealed that national pressures limit this type of control in different ways (Di Nicola, forthcoming). Several researchers noted that electronic surveillance is not widely utilised (Huws, 1993; Brocklehurst, 2001), particularly in reference to clerical teleworkers, because it has been considered unproductive. Recent research on home-located employees (Felstead *et al.*, 2003) points out, that, since the advent of industrial capitalism, managerial control has relied on workers' visibility and their presence in the workplace (Baldry, 1999; Baldry *et al.* 1998, Marglin, 1976; Marcus, 1993). Creating new managerial strategies for controlling home-located workers has become more difficult.

On the other hand, telework does not rely on the *visibility* of the work process. Teleworkers are evaluated according to the results they achieved. The workers do become 'invisible', what they produce is more important. However, evaluating teleworkers through their outputs is a difficult task (Huws, 1994, Hamblin, 1995). As research revealed (Huws, 1993; Brocklehurst, 2001) many teleworkers struggle for make themselves more 'visible'. As one can see from the different pieces of research analysed, different dimensions of control emerge: *vertical/horizontal control*, *central/decentred control*, *internal/external control*, *visible/invisible control*. These will be clarified in the next chapter (Chapter 3).

Chapter 3:

The theoretical framework: The Social Dimensions of Control

3.1 Introduction

Control in the workplace is a complex phenomenon. It varies according to the different historical periods and different workplaces. The primary aim of this research is to investigate how control is exercised in today's labour market, especially among Italian teleworkers. Consequently, the first step will be to give a brief and general definition of the concept of control in workplaces and then, to develop the theoretical tools through which control will be explored.

Control may be defined as 'the ability of capitalists and/or managers to obtain desired behaviour from workers' (Edwards, 1979: 17). Edwards uses his definition in order to investigate the issue of control within the industrial period; however we can use a similar one for exploring the new techniques of control today. Industrial period (late 1700s-early 1800s) differs in many aspects from post-industrial period (from the 1970s on). The ruling principles of industrial period were economies of scale and centralised workplaces. The labour was divided and rationalised along lines; these organizational transformations became possible only through a close supervision and a hierarchical structure of control and vertical integration. The accompanying technical systems for these forms of organisations were based on sequential flow, which led to systems of mechanisation and automation.

In contrast to this, during the post-industrial period the main focus was on: distributed workplaces and flexibility of scale and place. This different economic situation derived from the fact that economies of scales were not able to face the increasing global competition. These economic changes are accompanied by other organisational transformations: temporary agreements, group responsibility, flatter structure, professionalism culture and horizontal integration. All these innovations were linked to the new technological changes. One such example was the diffusion

of information systems, which enable communications functions and distribution of work within the firm (Greenbaum, 1998). Even if these two different paradigms involve different ways of exercising control, this thesis will suggest that the essence of control has not changed, what has changed are the ways in which power is exercised in order to control the workers/employees. Moreover, another aspect that this thesis wants to demonstrate is that, in many companies industrial and post-industrial methods of control and organisation of the work coexist.

An analysis of the existing literature on teleworking has revealed a series of techniques through which control can be exercised. These have been labelled 'Social Dimensions of Control', they can be considered as conceptual tools for analysing control in workplaces, in this specific case in our contemporary workplaces which have introduced teleworking as a new way of working. While the previous chapter was based on empirical evidence and these dimensions emerged in its 'primitive' form, by addressing the different mechanisms through which homeworkers/teleworkers were controlled, this chapter aims to reinforce the theoretical relevance of these conceptual tools. The social dimensions of control are: *vertical/horizontal control*; *central/decentred control*; *external/internal control*; *visible/invisible control*.

The discussion on the 'Social Dimensions of Control' is purely conceptual and these dimensions can be seen as ideal types. This means that in workplaces control is not exercised by following a single dimension of control. They are conceptual tools, which will be utilised for exploring some of the different modes of exercising control. Consequently, even if at their conceptual form they follow a strict dichotomised structure, when they are utilised for a more empirical application, they can coexist and complement each other. In other words they are not mutually exclusive. These dimensions of control, which will be utilised for analysing the data collected, will be theoretically defined by exploring a series of different forms of control and organisation of work that are widespread and in both managerial and academic analysis of workplaces.

3.2 The ‘Social Dimensions of Control’ and their dichotomised structure

The ‘Social Dimensions of Control’ have to be considered as conceptual tools for analysing the different modes of exercising control in workplaces.

Table 3.1: The ‘Social Dimensions of Control’:

THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF CONTROL	
Vertical	Horizontal
Central	Decentred
External	Internal
Visible	Invisible

From an analysis of previous literature on teleworking emerged different dimensions through which control can be exercised. The previous chapter addressed a discussion on control based on empirical experience; in contrast this chapter aim to give theoretical relevance to the issue of control.

From a conceptual point of view, each dimension of control maximizes a characteristic through which control can be exercised. In their pure form, the social dimensions of control follow a dichotomised structure, which reinforces their conceptual difference. Even if conceptually they may look distinct, they are not mutually exclusive in practice, each form of exercising control may entail all these dimensions. Each social dimension of control will be explained following their dichotomised structure.

3.2.1 Vertical control/Horizontal control

Vertical control entails a hierarchical dimension of control. Thus, vertical control may be defined as the ability of managers/employers to obtain certain results from workers/employees by means of a hierarchical organisational structure. Vertical

control is characterized by a hierarchical distance among the people (or the apparatus) in charge of control, and the individuals subjected to control.

While vertical control is closely linked to hierarchical organisation, ***horizontal control*** may be associated with flatter organizational structure based on lateral relations among peers. Consequently, horizontal control may be defined as the ability of managers/employers to obtain a certain result from workers/employees in a workplace where there is not a hierarchical distinction between supervisors and workers and work tasks are distributed following lateral relations. Apparently both employers and workers can exercise control and at the same time be controlled. From a conceptual point of view this mechanism seems to work via democratic rules; however in workplaces the process of sharing responsibilities via lateral relations, does not necessarily involve an equal distribution of power.

3.2.2 Central control/Decentred control

Central control entails the existence of a single source of control within a work organisation. Thus, central control may be defined as the ability of managers/employers to obtain a certain result from workers/employees, through an organizational structure, which converge into a principal source of power. This process of centralisation does not assume the fact that all the work is carried out under 'one roof'. A work organisation may be composed by several units, however these units depend on a principal one. Central control can be exercised in various ways, for example by transmitting corporate values and organisational culture to employees/workers.

While central control is based on a single source of power, ***decentred control*** draws on multiple sources of control. Each source of control keeps its autonomy and independence. It is assumed that decentred control is external to the company. Thus, it can be defined as the ability of social actors or other social institutions, which are separated from the main work organisation and, to exercise control, with the managers' consent, over workers/employees.

3.2.3 External control/Internal control

External control may be defined as the ability of managers/employers to obtain the conformity, obedience, and consent of the workers via imposed constraints. The main point of external control, is that it does not aim to affect the emotional and mental processes of the workers in order to obtain certain behaviour. When control is exercised entirely via external techniques of control, workers are no longer conceived and treated as human beings, but as machines, they do not have to think to what they are doing.

Conversely to external control, *internal control* acts through internalised consent. Thus, internal control may be defined as the capacity of managers/employers to obtain certain objectives, such as workers' commitment in the company goals or workers' loyalty, by influencing in a direct or indirect way their emotional and mental processes. Consequently, the main focus of internal control is on individuals' motivations and orientations. Through internalised techniques employees' commitment is rewarded with a sense of 'empowerment'. Although these mechanisms of internal control seem to enhance workers' freedom and self-expression, they may also introduce hidden and techniques of control. In many cases, workers are satisfied about their job, because their minds have been manipulated. Internal control can also take the form of self-discipline and self-management. Employees, with the consent of their managers, might be requested to organise their own activities.

3.2.4 Visible control/Invisible control

Visible control is based on forms of control that rely on making the worker visible during the labour process. Thus, visible control may be defined as the ability of managers/employers of rendering the workers, or workers' tasks visible via personal and direct supervisions or through other tools. In the discussion on visible control it is also important to take into account workers' awareness of being

visible. The diffusion of the new technologies allowed managers to render visible workers through invisible mechanisms. For instance, through electronic surveillance, workers do not know to be monitored. This originates further processes of self-discipline and resistance among workers.

In contrast to visible control, *invisible control* entails forms of control that do not require the worker to be visible during the labour process. Managers control outputs rather than inputs. Invisible control, may thus defined as the ability of managers/employers to obtain certain results from the employees/workers without watching them or watching what they are doing at any moment. Control is based on the results.

3.3 Control in work organisations and the ‘Social Dimensions of Control’

The dimensions of control outlined above is developed from previous theoretical approaches on work organisations. An analysis of these approaches will increase both the theoretical relevance and the empirical focus of the theoretical framework.

3.3.1 Weber’s bureaucracy

The concept of *vertical control* and *external control* is closely associated with Max Weber’s definition of bureaucracy. According to Weber (1968) bureaucracies had the following characteristics:

- *Job Specialisation*: Jobs are broken down into simple, routine and well-defined tasks.
- *Formal Selection*: All organisational members are selected on a basis of their expertise, which depends on technical qualification, education and training.
- *Hierarchy*: There is a hierarchy of office, with continuous and fully regulated activities. It is expected that official holding higher positions have authority over

those lower down. Within a chain of command there is a division of labour based on defined responsibilities, commands and duties.

‣ *Formal Rules and Regulations:* To ensure uniformity and regulate the actions of employees, managers depend heavily on formal organisational rules. Written documentation is the basis of management of the office.

‣ *Impersonality:* Calculable, impersonal rules and modes of conducts govern the conduct of work, avoiding any involvement with personal preferences of employees.

‣ *Career:* A career structure is provided accordingly to the organisational hierarchy. Officials have a full time, permanent job with fixed salary and pensions rights. Their promotions are regulated through seniority.

For the creation of this theoretical framework, Weber's bureaucracy highlights some important aspects regarding both *vertical* and *external control*. This ideal type of *bureaucracy* is linked to Weber's wider theory of rationalisation. According to Weber, rationalisation is the key modernising characteristics of the development of industrial societies. Authority in industrial societies was rational because it was based on precise and predictable rules. In this context, bureaucracies are a specific type of rational-legal authority. *Vertical control* is based on the concept of rationalisation. The division of labour is put to practice through objective criteria. There is no co-operation between managers and employees, because hierarchy built up a firmly order system where those in lower offices are under command of those in higher office. There cannot be any forms of informal co-operations between managers and workers, because the feelings are banned from bureaucracy.

Weber himself recognised that bureaucracies can become an 'iron cage' and officials use their power for subjugating the employees. Other authors, for example Merton (1949), Gouldner (1954) and Selznick (1949), addressed the dysfunctions of the bureaucratic form. The routine and oppressive aspects of bureaucracies can develop an opposition between the organisation efficiency and the denied human factors. In addition, as Gouldner (*ibid.*) noted, this resistance involves impersonal

bureaucratic rules. However, these impersonal rules just generate an apparent informal co-operation between managers and workers, the real reason for their development is to cope with low motivation of the workforce.

Weber's theories are not as separate from production as it might appear. Weber argues that the capitalist enterprises were becoming 'unequalled modes of strict bureaucratic organisations' (Weber, 1984: 32). For this reason he was aware and approving of the role played by the scientific management in this process. According to him, Tayloristic methods of work, which specified the daily routines of employees, were the ideal vehicles of bureaucratisation. Weber's ideas of bureaucracy can be associated to Taylor's idea of scientific management, which will be expanded further in the next section. According to Weber, a hierarchical organisation facilitates tasks fragmentation and labour discipline, while an emphasis on predictable performance minimises the discretion of employees.

3.3.2 Taylorism and scientific management

The above section on *vertical control*, specified that functional specialisation, task fragmentation and low tasks discretion, can be a consequence of a hierarchical organisation. This section aims to explore these aspects by following the tenets of *scientific management*. The most famous exponent of *scientific management* was the engineer Frederick Taylor (1947), whose ideas can be summarised as it follows:

► *The development of a science for each element of work*: Work should thus scientifically studied in order to define the best way of performing a task, the precise movement required and the time that it should take. This involves a high subdivision of work.

► *Scientific selection and training*: Workers should be selected according to their ability to follow these scientific instructions necessary to carry out a particular task to the letter. The training teaches them the best way to carry out a specific task.

▸ *Motivation and reward*: Taylor did believe that workers were motivated by the pursuit of rational self-interest and that incentive wages, in the form of a piece-rate system, were the solution to most labour problems.

▸ *Co-operation between management and workers*: This co-operation is necessary in order to ensure that work is done according to the science. According to Taylor, management could ensure co-operation on the basis of a consensus obtained by objective work measurement. According to him economic incentives could be utilised for overcoming the hostility between workers and employers. Taylor was thus interested to keep to minimum the social contacts between workers. He aimed to remove the collective bargaining through individualistic payment systems.

▸ *Separation of work and responsibilities between management and workers*: There should be a division of work between management and workers. According to Taylor, management should be separated from labour. This separation of conception and execution is particularly clear in Taylor comments, such as: 'all possible brain work should be removed from the shop floor and centred in the planning and lay-out department' (quoted in Braveman, 1974: 113).

By following the above principles, the assembly line represented one of the main achievements of Henry Ford's scientific management. It typifies the development of continuous and controlled movement, of both mechanical parts and human labour. The assembly line embodies the core principles of industrial culture: rationality, mechanisation, standardisation, efficiency, order, constraint and continuity. The assembly line imposes on workers rigid constraints on physical and mental movements. This is because, in order to achieve its ultimate objective, the assembly line requires the subjugation of the human body to the power of the machine.

Taylor's idea of scientific management mainly emphasises the dimension of *external control*. Workers are de-humanised and seen as individual units motivated by economic interests. The removal of brainwork from the execution of tasks rendered the labour of the workers more expendable. The vision of "workers as a machine" allowed the rationalisation and bureaucratisation of knowledge become

the basis of control over production and workers. Workers had to become increasingly disciplined by the inexorable rhythms of the machines imposed upon them. They are forced to carry out repetitive, routinised and fragmented tasks. In contrast to *internal control*, *external control* does not consider the psychological aspects of the workers. The workers become increasingly alienated from their labour and their products.

Vertical control is present as well, workers have no role in decision making. Their opinions do not count, since workers are not supposed to think. There is a strict separation between managers, who conceptualise the work process and, the workers, who execute. Although, this approach involves a co-operation between managers and workers, this co-operation is purely instrumental, managers and workers do not share ideas and ideals.

3.3.3 Organisational culture and control

Organisational culture can be defined as the system of shared meanings held by members which distinguishes the organisation from others organisations (Becker, 1982). It includes a combination of values, language, rituals and myths which make a company 'what it is' (Kunda, 1992). Interest in culture has been first introduced by Japanese business success, which was thought to arise through a national and corporate culture (Ouchi, 1981; Pascale and Athos, 1982). From the successful experience of the Japanese experience there has been an explosion of the idea that culture can be changed to improve organisational effectiveness. This leads to the view that organisational culture can be designed and managed through the 'hearts and minds' of employees.

Some authors noted that corporate culture has ancient roots: 'it is in the various writings of Durkheim that a conceptual framework for discussions of corporate culture may be found' (Ray, 1986: 290). Ouchi and Johnson (1978) drew directly on Durkheim's framework which sees in the modern division of labour a loss of moral community and mutual obligation, which derives from a decline in the role

of the church, family and other institutions. Durkheim argued that professions and professional groups could have an important role in the re-creation of the function of social cohesion. Ouchi and Johnson argue that Japanese work organisations have provided these social functions. Ray (1986) extended this analysis and by emphasising that corporations are expected to re-create the realm of the sacred, embodied in Durkheim work. Hence the corporate culture is based on myths, rites and rituals. Recent literature (Casey, 1995) noted that different social constructions build together a specific corporate culture, myths can be couple with the image of the family, the team, the excellence in customer satisfaction and in the technological leadership.

Although corporate culture acts through different tools, the mechanism though which acts is the same: the internalisation of values, rituals, social meanings. This internal mechanism develops workers' commitment towards their company and ensures faithful and loyal workers. From this arises the question, what are the consequences of corporate culture? Commitment or control? (Thompson and McHugh, 1995: 212). These two issues are strictly related. Employees, by internalising organisation's goals and values do not longer required rigid control. This mechanism is the hearth of 'normative control' (Etzioni, 1961), which can be summarised as the attempt to direct the efforts of employees by controlling their thoughts and feelings which guide their actions (Kunda, 1992: 11). Cultural or 'normative control' deals mainly with the development of an appropriate social order which provides the basis for desired behaviour (Deal and Kennedy, 1982: 15). It is thus a common opinion that the 'strengthening' of corporate culture enhances organisational performance by securing great commitment from employees (Davis, 1984; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Goldsmith and Cluttermbuck, 1984; Kanter, 1984; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale, 1985; Watermann, 1988). By following this paradigm inherent conflict between employees and employers can be transformed in co-operation.

As Willmott (1993: 519) noted the transition from Fordism to a more flexible regime of accumulation, emphasised the roles of corporate culture (see also

Harvey, 1989: 171). The organisation of labour through flexible structures of accumulation requires employees to internalise the new values of 'quality', 'flexibility' and 'value-added'. Within this context corporate culturism can be seen as an ideological element within a global restructuring of capital labour and products markets.

From this discussion of corporate culture, two dimensions of control emerged: *internal control* and *central control*. These two dimensions of control act together. Corporate culture acts in fact through the internalisation of values, myths and rituals. Through this process workers become more committed to their company (*central control*) and thus more productive. Control is no longer based on *external* stimuli, by focusing on workers' thoughts, emotions and feelings (*internal control*).

The *central control*, the control which relies on the company decisions, has been reshaped by the transition from industrial/fordist to the post-industrial/post-fordist period. According to the logic of Fordism, mass-production was achieved through *external control*, the company could in fact regulate alone the production of goods.

During the post-industrial period, 'flexible accumulation' can be managed through the introduction of the human element, which can only be assured through the internalisation of specific values. The central control of the company needs in fact to assure the co-operation of the workforce in order to regulate the *decentred* needs of the customers. Fordism cultivated acquisitive customers, in post-fordist organisations, customers must be conquered and in order to achieve this objective, workers have to internalise specific values.

3.3.4 Network organisations

One aspect which, also emerged in the previous section is that post-fordist companies needed to introduce corporate culture in order to reinforce their central control. Similarly, the creation of network organisations derived from the

disappearance of economies of scale and despite, their decentred organisation of work, in many cases they reinforce the central control of the company. The guiding principle of the factories of early industrial capitalism was that of the economies of scale. Work was situated under one roof and this formed the basis of the development of managerial practices of control. These managerial practices aimed at disciplining and supervising large number of workers into producing standardised products at a faster pace. As a consequences labour was divided and rationalised along lines, this organisation of work necessitated close supervision and a hierarchical structure of control for management.

The advent of information technology brought changes in both economic and organisational characteristics. The advent of information systems by the late 1980s enabled companies to handle communication functions and distributed work (Greenbaum, 1996). These technical requirements reflected the economical changes towards flexibility of scale as well as distributed workplaces. These changes led to a separation of the work from place. Network organisations represented the new organisational realities, which operate on the basis of the market, rather than rational and bureaucratic coordination. Through computer networks, companies can subcontract work to self-employed teleworkers or external consultants, whenever they need a particular service.

However, this *decentred* organisation of work does not enhance the strength of every single decentred unit, but supports the *central control* of the company. This idea is supported by further research on self-employed workers (e.g. Rainbird, 1991) and self-employed teleworkers (Baines, 2002; Stanworth, C and Stanworth J., 1997; Stanworth, C, 1998), any autonomy was largely lost in longer days, intensified labour and other signs of self exploitation. Other decentralised organisation of work, such as franchising reach the same conclusion. Case studies in this area (e.g. Felstead, 1993) demonstrate that business formats are imposed by the central company which, determines precise procedures and criteria administrating operations, finance and transfer of 'know how'. Benetton is the most common example of network organisation. Wood (1989) noted that if we

analyse Benetton, we can observe a new extended hierarchy that emerges in decentralised and disaggregated units, but the power is still exercised from the central firm.

From this analysis on network organisations emerges a discussion of *central/decentred control*. Network organisations developed for handling flexibility of scale, and as evidence revealed, their decentred form does not reflect a decentred control. Networks, in fact reinforce the central power of the company. However, a reflexive analysis on company's need to centralise control will bring a discussion on decentred force. The above discussion on industrial/post-industrial period has clarified this issue, implicitly the company needs to reinforce its *central control* because it needs to face decentred forces, which can be summarised by the new customers's needs.

3.3.5 High Commitment Theory

Similarly to previous discussion on corporate culture, other research emphasised the need for a shift from control to commitment (Gallie *et al.* 2001). The increase of commitment in management practices can be explained in different ways. First, control based on Taylorist methods of management, which emphasises a high degree of division of labour and a tight supervision, generated a de-motivation among workers. It was also noted that the high quality standards attained by Japanese industry have been partially influenced by policies which encourage employment commitment (Legge, 1995; Lincoln and Kalleberg, 1990; Womack *et al.*, 1990).

As Gallie *et al.* (2001: 1082) argue, three main aspects of employment relationships can enhance commitment among the workers: job enrichment, 'longer distance' forms of control and employees involvement. Job enrichment can be achieved through skill development and by increasing tasks discretion; these two aspects are interlinked to each other. Companies, which aim to develop commitment among their workers, pay attention to skill development and thus try

to offer more interesting jobs, the possibility of career advancement and increase workers responsibility for work task decisions. An increase of task discretion will have the same result, since it will generate greater satisfaction with the work tasks and thus workers will feel more committed to their company (Gallie *et al.*, 1998; Lawler, 1986; Lawler *et al.* 1995). An increase of task discretion also involves changes in the way through which control is exercised. Control by direct supervision by monitoring and pacing worker's task is no longer appropriate. 'Longer distance' forms of control best suit these policies. Workers thus must be evaluated by checking the results they have achieved through periodic appraisals.

In addition, according to Gallie *et al.* (2001) 'High commitment organisations' tend to foster greater co-operation between management and workers and by involving employees in wider decision-making (see also Felstead and Ashton, 2000). Workers will be involved in problem solving groups and will be able to express their own judgements. The development of 'commitment policies' in workplaces can be thus testified by recent increase in training, making workers more responsible for their own quality, teamworking, team briefing (Wood and Albanese, 1995) and an increase of involvement mechanisms such as newsletters, meetings between the management and the employees (Cully *et al.* 1999).

However, other research argues that 'commitment policies' must be perceived as a new rhetoric of work intensification (Legge, 1995; Purcell, 1993; Willmott, 1993). Workers may perceive that this normative commitment does not lead to any real opportunity of participation or to any real increase of tasks role, they thus respond in a negative way.

A discussion on high commitment theories brings to light the presence of *horizontal control*. Workers co-operate with their superior and can exercise more autonomy over their work. Workers are not treated as machines, but as individuals with motivations and personal capabilities. For this reason, *external* forms of *control* are not considered appropriate. In fact, *control* is mainly *internal*, employees internalise a positive image of their company, which is more

understanding with their needs and gives them more autonomy. However, as recent research reveals, these commitment policies are only a *façade*, management practices and policies, such as teamworking and training, which are supposed to be based on co-operation, lateral relations and personal development are utilised as strategies utilised to assert existing hierarchical positions (*vertical control*) and work intensification (*external control*).

3.3.6 From the Panopticon to electronic surveillance

Surveillance is one of the oldest forms of control which took place in prisons, hospital and factories. Discussion on surveillance and self-discipline have been often associated with Foucault's writings. Foucault (1979)'s metaphor of Panopticon has been widely utilised in order to explore control in workplaces. Panopticon consists of a central elevated watch-tower surrounded by a circular disposition of cells with an inspection lodge at the centre. This architectural structure allows therefore the guardians to observe the prisoners without being perceived from outside the tower. Consequently, individuals, understanding that they are constantly watched, regulate their own behaviours and discipline themselves. According to Foucault (1979), the Panopticon prison summarised disciplinary techniques of modern society. These disciplinary techniques are not only used in penitentiaries, but by many other institutions, such as schools, hospitals, psychiatric institutions and factories. The Panopticon, thus, was not only an ideal prison, but it represents a model in which many disciplinary strategies are concentrated: it is an archetype of a disciplinary programme. According to Foucault, thus, the disciplinary mechanisms have reached a significant role in many spheres of our social world.

The way of exercising power within the panoptic system plays an important role for explaining the issue of control in workplace. A good example of this is in the 'panoptic power' of surveillance provided by modern information technology. Zuboff in her book *The Age of the Smart Machine* (1988) talks about the 'information Panopticon' and discusses the 'psychological visibility' (1988: 342-

55). She examines the techniques of resistance to and coping with the new 'panoptic power' within work settings which introduced new systems designed to control behaviour and increase managerial certainty.

Although the 'Information Panopticon' is based on *visibility*, other dimensions of control emerged. For instance, the introduction of new technological systems tended to substitute personal supervision, because it allowed managers to distance themselves from their subordinates. In fact, technology enables a complete visibility of workers' tasks; it is therefore unnecessary for the managers to interact with them. As Zuboff points out the issue of the distance created by technological systems is often controversial. The introduction of these technological systems have absorbed the supervisory function and diminished the necessity of and opportunities for face-to-face engagement. Many managers feel more empowered because they can avoid confrontation with their subordinates. Thus, for many aspects these new technological tools reinforce the hierarchical mechanisms of control (*vertical control*). As a manager foreman pointed out:

'Back in the old days, if a guy says he didn't want to do something, you had to start trading favours with him. Now it doesn't work that way. The computer says, 'Bingo'-you got this assignment Tuesday night. Here is the information, do it!... There are a lot of people we do not want to confront. If it is the kind of person that may give you hard time, you can just ignore it. The computer is just a bluffer to me as a manager that I can call up the more pleasant people and deal with them. If the others do not do their work, I will know from the computer. I can go around their back and write things about them and turn them in and never really have to confront them.' (in Zuboff, 1988: 334)

This example shows that the new systems increase managerial certainty and reinforce their hierarchical position (*vertical control*). However, within monitored workplaces, there exist also *horizontal* forces. Within one case study, for example both managers and workers had access to the data of the monitoring system. According to Zuboff, the presence of these shared information reflect an evolution of the original concept of Panopticon, 'it rests on a new collectivism in which "the many" view themselves and each view "the other". Horizontal visibility is created even as vertical visibility is intensified...Instead of a single omniscient overseer,

this Panopticon relies upon shared custodianship of data that reflected mutually enacted behaviour' (1988: 351). However, this shared knowledge did not reflect an equal distribution of social power. The policy of open access of data was in fact a managerial strategy. Managers believed that universal access associated with universal transparency, diminishes the feeling of oppressive surveillance and creates a sense of collective responsibility.

'Everything that anyone does is documented. Anything you do that interfaces with the equipment is recorded. It is our data, even if we don't have a need for most of it or wouldn't even know how to use it. Because we all have access, it is like we are all watching each other, not just management watching us...It creates a joint awareness. We end up working together more than fighting over what really happened'. (in Zuboff, 1988:347).

This mutual visibility enables the peers to assert control within their own sphere of influence. In addition, this research noted other controversial dynamics, for instance, the 'cheating' on performance appraisal was a common phenomenon at one site studied. It happened that foremen released their access code to allow operatives to maintain efficacy ratings by changing the time 'pricing' of tasks.

More recent research on call centre (Ferne and Metcalf, 1998) demonstrates that many workplaces are characterised by panoptic mechanisms. According to Ferne and Metcalf, electronic surveillance in call centres follows the same panoptic mechanism; moreover within call centres, visibility is optimised by IT. Following the 'panopticon' surveillance principles the real-time monitoring screen displayed information on the operators' work status, rendering them visible remotely by their supervisors. Ferne and Metcalf's research posits that because of this constant and perfect visibility and, the workers' perception of this visibility, it would not be necessary to exercise control. Similarly to the Panopticon constant visibility ensures internal disciplinary processes.

In contrast to Ferne and Metcalf (1998), Bain and Taylor (Bain and Taylor; 2000, Taylor and Bain, 1999) focus their research on the issue of control in a highly-monitored call centre, but they reach completely different conclusions.

Within the call centre researched, both computer and telephone technologies and managerial intervention create a comprehensive pattern of control and surveillance methods. Three main aspects underline the weakness of the realisation of a perfect panopticism of control.

First, the concrete management of employment relationships does not follow the simplistic model of 'total control'. In many call centres, management has to cope with several problems which include staff turnover, employee absenteeism, low motivation levels, low promotion chances for supervisory staff in flat structured organisations (Taylor and Bain, 1999). In addition to this, it is also important to underline the different duties that the supervisors have to carry out, such as to interpret statistics generated from electronic monitoring, to implement additional forms of disciplinary or coaching measures. Thus, the main issue of management is to introduce diversified forms of control not merely surveillance.

Moreover, the panoptic mechanism in call centres is not as perfect as it appears. In the case study considered, even remote observations cannot introduce a perfect carceral gaze. As some workers have pointed out during the interviews:

'You could see a supervisor plugs in and looks about, perhaps looks at you, and then you had a rough idea that it was you who was being "obed", especially if it was your team leader.' (Interview 22.2.99, from Bain and Taylor, 2000: 12)

Thus, conversely to the 'perfect' Panopticon, within this call centre not only the workers' actions were visible, but also the supervisors' moves. The fact that workers can be checked by their supervisors can generate forms of resistance. Some of these forms of resistance take the form of collective trade union activities. In fact workers are not 'docile bodies', but individuals with their plans and orientations.

In addition to this, within this call centre, evidence shows that the disciplinary power acts in a contradictory way. Because the supervisors' bonus is calculated on team members' performance, the supervisory data is distorted; supervisors have all

their interest in giving a good impression of their team. Supervisors, in order to reach their personal interests (increase in value of the bonus), hide the low performance of the workers of their team. Even the employers have no benefits in following the sterile vertical panoptic mechanism. Again, this point shows clearly the fact that a total control is impossible, supervisors do not aim to assure 'perfect' discipline within the workplace, other economic interests are involved in the process of surveillance. In many ways, Taylor and Bain (1999) adds evidence to the rejection of an electronic Panopticon mechanism of surveillance. Control over call-centre operators is exercised through other different strategies.

From these studies drawn on the Panopticon metaphor different forms and strategies of control emerge. In its pure form panoptic surveillance acts through two main forces: surveillance (*visible control*) and self-discipline (*internal control*). Individuals' awareness of being watched instils self-discipline. New technologies can render these panoptic mechanisms almost perfect. However, in workplaces electronic surveillance in workplaces involves other mechanisms. For instance, it can develop workers' resistance and workers'/line managers' implicit co-operation (*horizontal control*). In many cases, electronic surveillance replaces personal control and, by substituting face-to-face relations, creates a distance between managers and employees and reinforces managers' hierarchical position (*vertical control*). In the past managerial control relied upon the visibility and the presence of the workers in the workplaces (Baldry, 1999; Baldry *et al.*, 1998; Marglin, 1976; Marcus, 1993). Thus it is important to explore further the role of electronic monitoring.

3.4 Conclusion

The previous analysis of past and present approaches for exercising control in workplaces, draws on the 'Social Dimensions of Control'. This will provide a conceptual grid for researching the exercise of control among teleworkers. Section 3.2 provides a conceptual definition of these dimensions of control in their pure forms. These definitions imply the exercise of control of managers over

employees. These definitions do not consider 'deviant' dynamics which take forms in workplaces, such as workers' resistance, derived from section 3.3. These new dynamics will be considered in the analysis of this study.

From the discussion on *vertical* and *horizontal control*, different issues have been considered for analysing control over teleworkers:

- ▶ The impact of teleworking on the hierarchies of the companies.
- ▶ The impact of teleworking on managers.
- ▶ The impact of teleworking on the relations managers/ teleworkers.
- ▶ The impact of teleworking on workers' autonomy and their career progression.
- ▶ If teleworking generates teleworkers' resistance to a hierarchical organisation of work.

From the discussion on *central* and *decentred control*, different issues have been judged relevant for exploring control over teleworkers:

- ▶ The impact of teleworking on the organisational structure.
- ▶ The different strategies, practices and policies introduced for strengthening the central control of the company.
- ▶ The ways through which managers and indirectly, the workers respond to decentred forms of control.

The discussion on *internal* and *external control* has raised various questions that have been judged relevant for exploring control over teleworkers, namely:

- ▶ Do the different strategies and practices through which managers check the quantitative or qualitative outputs of the teleworkers consider teleworkers' motivations, values and orientations or are they solely based on external forms of control?
- ▶ Do companies combine external and internal forms of control for controlling the teleworkers?
- ▶ Do work organisations develop self-discipline among home-teleworkers and, if so, how?
- ▶ How do teleworkers develop self-discipline and organise their own work days?

- Does teleworking generate teleworkers' resistance to external forms of control?

From an analysis of *visible/invisible control* the following aspects have been considered relevant for studying control over teleworkers:

- The different strategies, practices and policies which rely on visibility (both visibility of the workers and the visibility of workers' output) in order to control teleworkers.
- How managers utilise ICTs for monitoring workers' productivity.
- If electronic monitoring creates self-discipline.
- If teleworkers resist control based on the visibility.

These concepts will be developed along with the analysis of the empirical data and will be summarised in the conclusion, which aims to give a final answer to the research questions stressed in the introduction.

Chapter 4: Teleworking in Italy

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to focus on teleworking in Italy. The first section shows statistical estimates of teleworking based on the ECaTT project (Electronic Commerce and Telework Trends, 2000). Through this preliminary statistical data it is possible to locate the Italian experience of teleworking within the European framework. Afterwards, the analysis will focus on the present situation of teleworking in Italy, its recent development and the main problems that still need to be solved.

The second part of this chapter deals with the different mechanisms which attempted to regulate teleworking. In Italy, there has been a particular effort to create laws which aim to regulate and implement teleworking. As it will be explained in this chapter, formal laws and law proposals have important implications concerning methods of controlling teleworkers.

4.2 Italy and teleworking: constraints and hopes

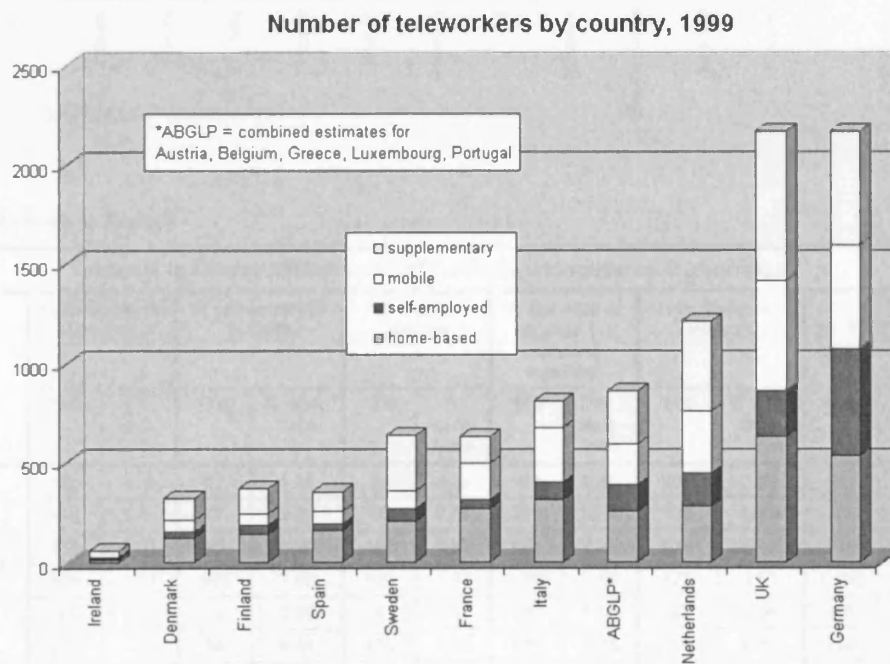
Estimates of teleworking vary widely because of the differences in definitions and methods of collecting data. Recent estimates of teleworking are provided by ECaTT. ECaTT consists of a European project ('Benchmarking Progress on Electronic Commerce and New Methods of Work') led by Empirica GmbH. The estimates are based on telephone interviews in 10 European countries (about 1,000 people in each of the larger countries and 500 in the smaller) and extrapolation for the remaining five countries. The survey considers four categories of teleworkers:

- ▶ *"home-based"*: working at home at least one full day per week, or permanently and employed in paid work for an employer (not self-employed or temporary workers).

- ▶ “self-employed” /SOHO”: self-employed whose the normal place of work is in a home based office.
- ▶ “Mobile”: those workers who spend at least 10 hours per week away from home and/or the main place of work.
- ▶ “Supplementary”: working at home less than one full day a week.

By considering these parameters in the charts below we can find up-to-date estimates on teleworking in different European countries.

Figure 4.1: Number of teleworkers by countries (from ECaTT surveys undertaken by © empirica)



Source: ECaTT Survey, 1999

Figure 4.2 Teleworkers as a percentage of the workforce (from ECaTT surveys undertaken by © empirica)

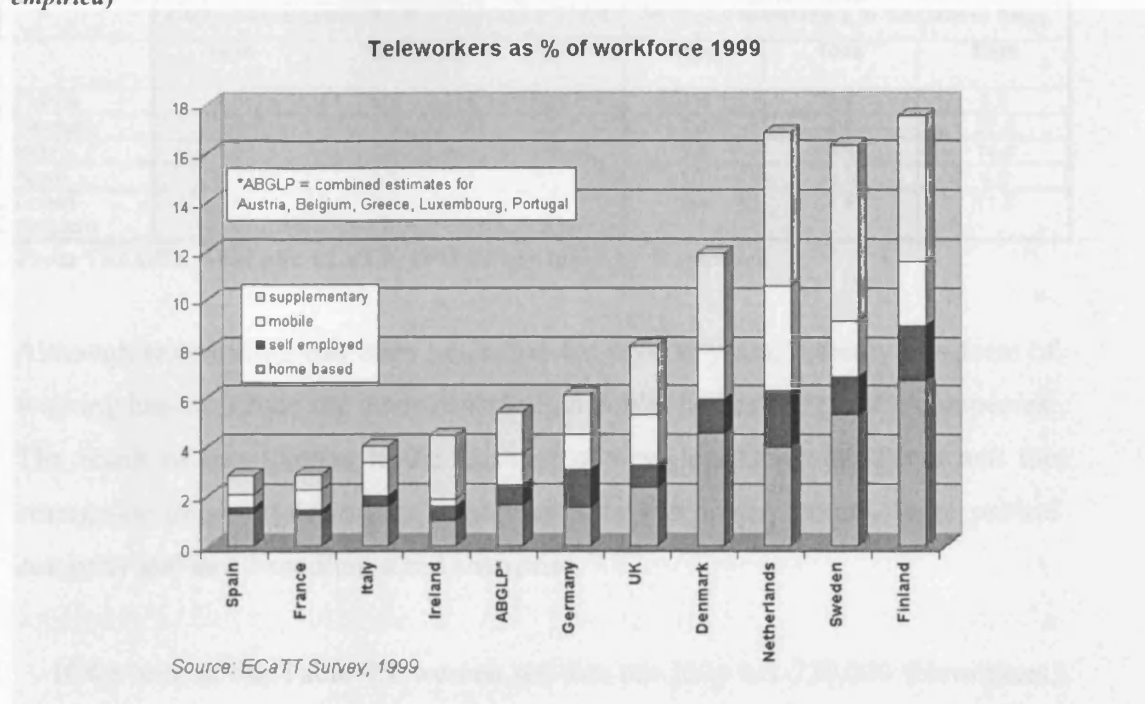


Table 4.1 Telework in Europe

Telework in Europe 1999 (from ECaTT surveys undertaken by © empirica)												
	1) home-based telework		2) self-employed in SoHo		3) mobile telework		4) Sub-total of columns 1-3 excluding overlaps ¹		5) supple-mentary telework		TOTAL TELEWORK (sum of columns 4 & 5)	
	'000	% work-force	'000	% work-force	'000	% work-force	'000	% work-force	'000	% work-force	'000	% work-force
Denmark	121	4.54	37	1.38	56	2.08	176	6.58	104	3.90	280	10.48
Finland	142	6.71	47	2.24	55	2.61	229	10.80	126	5.96	355	16.77
France	272	1.23	45	0.20	182	0.82	499	2.25	136	0.61	635	2.87
Germany	538	1.53	536	1.52	520	1.47	1,562	4.43	570	1.61	2,132	6.04
Ireland	14	1.01	8	0.56	4	0.31	26	1.88	35	2.56	61	4.44
Italy	315	1.57	90	0.45	270	1.35	584	2.92	135	0.67	720	3.59
Netherlands	285	3.96	166	2.31	308	4.29	593	8.25	451	6.27	1,044	14.53
Spain	162	1.28	32	0.26	65	0.51	259	2.04	97	0.77	357	2.81
Sweden	207	5.29	61	1.55	90	2.31	313	7.98	282	7.19	594	15.17
UK	630	2.37	234	0.88	550	2.07	1,273	4.78	754	2.83	2,027	7.62
estimate ² ABGLP	259	1.62	129	0.81	205	1.28	534	3.34	270	1.69	804	5.03
TOTAL EU	2,946	1.96	1,386	0.92	2,305	1.54	6,049	4.03	2,960	1.97	9,009	6.00

From ECaTT surveys undertaken by © empirica-in European Status Report, 1999.

¹ Note that category 3 is not mutually exclusive with categories 1 and 2. Individuals who are either home-based or self-employed teleworkers can also appear in the mobile category if they satisfy the relevant criteria. This means that the sub-totals data (column 4) are less than the row totals in columns 1-3 to avoid double counting.

² ABGLP represent the combined estimates for Austria, Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal.

Table 4.2 Teleworking past and future³

	Home-based teleworkers in %of labour force			All based teleworkers in %of labour force		
	1994	1999	2005	1994	1999	2005
France	0.8	1.2	1.9	1.8	2.9	5.0
Germany	0.4	1.5	7.1	1.4	6.0	22.8
Italy	0.5	1.6	6.3	1.0	3.6	14.4
Spain	0.8	1.3	2.1	1.7	2.8	4.9
United Kingdom	1.7	2.4	3.4	5.4	7.6	11.2

From TELDET, 1994 and ECaTT, 1999 survey taken by © *empirica*

Although teleworking has been neglected for several years, recently this form of working has awakened the interests of Italian public bodies and private companies. The result of this interest is the increase of new legislative initiatives and the emergence of new teleworking experiments in the public sectors, large private company and small-medium sized enterprise.

If we look at the Table 4.1 we can see that our Italy has 720,000 teleworkers, which equals 3.6 per cent of the Italian national workforce. From the total number of Italian teleworkers 315,000 work at home for at least one day per week (1.6% of the Italian workforce). Table 4.2 summarises the research carried out by Gaires and Kordey (2000), who aim to predict the spread of teleworking in 2005. For the five biggest European member states, ECaTT data can be compared to the results of a set of 1994 surveys (TELDET also conducted by Empirica) that used the same survey design and question phasing. If we look at Table 4.2 we can see that home-based telework increased from 0.5 per cent in 1994 to 1.6 per cent in 1999, and it has been predicted that in 2005, 6.3 per cent of the Italian workforce will telework from home. According to Gaires and Kordey (2000), the other types of teleworkers will follow the same trend as well.

The growth of this phenomenon in Italy is due to several important developments. In 1998 the Italian Government released a bill that, for the first

³ The future trends of teleworking are based on the assumption that it is possible to extrapolate trends in telework diffusion, as the growth of telework is supposed to follow the usual pattern of adoption of a new technology, i.e. an "S-curve" with very small growth rates in the beginning of the diffusion process up to some kind of "take-off point", followed by a period of exponential growth and finally an outlevelling of the growth curve when it approaches what is called the saturation level. (in Gareis and Kordey, 2000)

time, introduces telework into Italian public administrations. According to this approved law, all civil servants can adopt “distant work” practices, which include home-telework, mobile work and telecentres-based work (see Section 4.3.2). Following the approval of the law, some public administrations launched teleworking pilots. Public authorities which have recently introduced telework as new way of working are: the County Administration of Perugia, the National Pension Board, the Regional Government of Lombardy, the Scientific Institute of Cancer Research, the Regional Government of Emilia Romagna, the City Administration of Naples, INAIL (the National Work Insurance Board).

In the same year the Authority for Informatics in Public administration released a “Guideline for Electronic Commerce Policy”. This legal document dealt with the usage of electronic signatures and the optical disk storage of legal documents, which give legal status to contracts signed over the Internet and facilitate take off of e-commerce and e-business. All these innovations have indirectly prompted the widespread diffusion of teleworking.

In addition, following the presentation of a series of proposals made to parliament 1996-1996, the Italian Senate recently unified them in the so called Proposition 2305: *Norme per la promozione e l'incentivazione del Telelavoro* (Rules for the promotion and the encouragement of Telework). This proposition will be discussed in section 4.3.5. For many reasons, the introduction of laws which regulate teleworking is controversial. Many teleworking consultants prefer introducing teleworking best practices rather than laws, since the former allow more flexibility. However, *art. 9 Law 53 March 2000*, which regulates the allocation of contributions to small enterprises which introduced telework as a method for facilitating flexibility in the labour process, seems to facilitate the evolution of this phenomenon.

In addition to these legal innovations, other factors appear to facilitate the advent of teleworking in Italy. Telecommunications liberalisation is speeding. There are now new operators for fixed and mobile phones which are competing

with Telecom Italia and Telecom Italia Mobile. This competition brings important benefits for citizens, for instance the prices of long distance calls in 1999 were reduced by an overage of 30% compared to 1997 (see *Status Report on European Telework: New Methods of Work 1999*). The use of the Internet is spreading fast; Tiscali a new entrant operator launched free internet access for all its customers in mid-1999. Nowadays Internet access is a common phenomenon. In addition, the Government introduced a fiscal bill for 1999 which gave a fiscal bonus to firms who reinvest part of their income in new technology, such as PCs. This led to a growth in hardware expenditure.

Although these changes predict an increase of teleworking, in the Italian context there are still problems (see Ciaccia and Di Nicola, 2001) which impede rapid growth. Competition among the telecom operators is only a recent phenomenon and the telecommunication tariffs are still high compared to other European countries. We find a similar scenario regarding the costs of telecommunication infrastructure and the costs for maintaining these infrastructures. In addition, specifically if we refer to home-teleworking, companies suffer different constraints. The legal and insurance aspects, particularly those linked to the location of work, impede the development of this new form of working. The work location should be sufficiently isolated from the other rooms and should fulfil the ergonomic codes (adequate light and security standards...). As research suggested, the average Italian home does not fulfil these requirements (*ibid.*).

In addition, Italy has another important problem, which is less linked to technical and legal limitation. The Italian entrepreneurial culture has always been opposed to the new forms of work based on a flexible organisation of work and a more 'flexible working-time', which contrasts to the conventional 'industrial working time'. (La Rosa, 1997). The remaining analysis of this chapter will focus on the different legislative and legal aspects related to teleworking, which have important consequences for the ways in which teleworkers are managed.

4.3 Regulating teleworkers

4.3.1 Different sources for regulating teleworking in Italy

Work relations in Italy are regulated through a series of legislative procedures. These apply to telework as well. The '*Costituzione Italiana*' (the Italian Constitution) says 'The Republic protects work in all its forms and applications' (*art. 5, comma 1*). This principle is also present in the '*Codice Civile*' (Civil Code): 'Work is protected in all its organisational, executive, intellectual, technical and manual forms' (see *art. 206*). These general statements include teleworking as well as other types of work. However, similar to other European countries, Italy, apart from the public sector, has no specific laws on teleworking.⁴ Consequently, telework disputes evolve around existing juridical law. For example, for the regulation of employee teleworkers, we must refer to *Art. 2092* of the '*Codice Civile*' (Civil Code), which conventionally regulates employees. In addition, the '*Disposizioni Generali della Legge*' (General Dispositions of the Law)⁵ says that 'If a dispute cannot be judged by referring to a very specific disposition, it is necessary to take into account dispositions which regulate cases or analogous matters, and if doubts remain, the judgement should be in line with the general principles of the legal system of the State'.

Until now, only *art. 4* of the law 191, '*Bassanini Ter*', regulates telework in the public sector. In addition *art. 9* of the law 53⁶ aims to facilitate the introduction of teleworking in SMEs. Several law proposals on telework have been written, but none of them have yet been transformed into a law. There are also some legislative

⁴ *Art. 4* of the law 191, approved on 16th June 1998 regulates teleworking in the public sector. This law is commonly labelled '*Bassanini Ter*', since it has been presented by the Minister of the Public Function, Franco Bassanini. For the original Italian text of the law 191, *art. 4*, see: <http://www.parlamento.it> or <http://www.telelavoro.rassegna.it/default.htm>

⁵ See: *Disposizioni della legge in generale, art. 12, comma 2*.

⁶ For the original text of *art. 9* of the law 53, approved on 8th March see: <http://www.parlamento.it>

texts, such as *art. 4 Law 300/1970 of the 'Statuto dei Lavoratori'* (Workers' Statute)⁷, which indirectly influence teleworking regulation.

Another source of regulation derives from the case law. For instance, whenever employees apply to a magistrate and notify inappropriate behaviour by their employer, the magistrate's trial makes a judgement. However, there is no evidence of case law regarding telework (Di Nicola, 1999).

Collective agreements play a very important role among teleworkers. These regulate work relations among employees, specifically teleworkers, who work within the same company or within the same productive sectors. These can relate to individual companies or to entire sectors. The companies' agreements are stipulated by company representatives, the second ones by external bodies which deal with industrial relations (National Trade Unions, Confcommercio, etc.).

The following section will be focused on telework legislation. First will be discussed telework and the public sector. The so-called '*Bassanini ter*' analyses the first law which regulates teleworking in the public sector. Afterwards it will be analysed *Law 8th March 2000, n.53*. This law facilitated the spread of teleworking, by providing financial contributions to small-middle sized enterprises. Subsequently there will be a discussion on workers' privacy in workplaces, these aspects may be considered relevant for exploring the exercise of control over teleworkers (e.g. *art. 4 Law 300/1970 Statuto dei Lavoratori*). The chapter will end with a summary of the most recent law proposal on teleworking.

4.3.2 Teleworking and the public sector: the 'Bassanini Ter' law

In June 1998 the first law regulating telework in the public sector was introduced. *Art. 4 of the law 191*, known as the '*Bassanini Ter*' law explicitly introduced the first tenets which regulate teleworking in the public sector. This represents a

⁷ Art.4 of Law 300- Statuto dei lavoratori can be found at:
<http://www.lomb.cgil.it/leggi/legge300.htm>

novelty for legislation on telework. Notwithstanding the several law proposals on telework, this is the first law, which regulates this form of working. *Art. 4* of law 191, points out that public administrations ‘can utilise forms of work by distance’. Since it does not specify the exact location where the work should be carried out, this law allows public servants to conduct their own work from different locations, not only from their home. As a consequence, public servants can conduct their work as mobile teleworkers and from telecentres as well. Many researchers (Di Nicola, 1999: 37) appreciate the flexibility of location stressed by this law. In fact, it allowed the introduction of different forms of teleworking within the public sector.

Consequently, public organisations ‘with regard to their budget availability⁸, can install the necessary ICTs’ (see *art. 4*, law 191⁹) for conducting this new form of working. As the chapter 1 confirmed, the use of ICTs played an important role in defining this phenomenon. In this specific case, the instalment of ICTs represents an important requirement. Without this, it would be impossible to start a teleworking project.

Having considered these technological aspects, public bodies ‘can authorise their own employees to carry out their own work in a place which differs from the work organisation. The employees will carry on receiving the same salary as before teleworking, on the condition that the methods for verifying the work performance must be fixed’ (see *art .4*, law 191, *ibid.*). Consequently, this agreement ensures teleworkers receive their previous salary. This tries to prevent the exploitation of teleworkers and piece-rate payment. In addition, this basic law also questioned the issue of control. Distance work involves new ways for checking workers’ productivity, which must be analysed before starting any telework project. In Italian public companies control is mainly based on checking the presence in the office of the employees. Therefore, it is important to consider

⁸ This means that the State does not provide public bodies which start telework project with any additional funding.

⁹The full text of this law is in <http://www.parlamento.it> or <http://www.telelavoro.rassegna.it/default.htm>

these new forms of control. It is significant that this law took into account this specific aspect. It will be interesting to check through empirical research if public bodies do take into account these aspects. Teleworking involves new methods of control and new ways of organising the work process.

The '*Bassanini Ter*' law stated that the main aim of introducing teleworking in the public sector was 'the rationalisation of work organisation and the achievement of a management economy through the flexible management of human resources' (*ibid.*). Conventionally companies in the public sectors are managed in a very bureaucratic way. It will therefore be interesting to explore whether the introduction of teleworking brought any relevant changes in companies' organisational structure. Public administrations must also adapt their own regulations and their organisational arrangements in order to reach the objectives established by the law.

In addition, this law defers to a future '*Regolamento*'¹⁰. the discipline of the organisational procedures for the introduction of telework. This '*Regolamento*' should be play an important role regarding the inspection of the fulfilment of work tasks and the abrogation of laws which might be opposed to this new form of employment.

On 25th May 1999 (DPR n.70, 8/3/1999), the Council of Ministers passed the '*Regolamento*' on telework within the public sector. This '*Regolamento*', by considering the '*Bassanini Ter*' law, recognises that telework can take various forms. It can be conducted 'from any locations outside the workplace which may be considered suitable, and the work should be technically possible'. Again the focus is on flexibility of work location and on the technical instruments necessary for teleworking. This '*Regolamento*' states that in order to introduce teleworking, public administrations should create a teleworking project. This project must

¹⁰ *Regolamento* can be translated as: a series of formalised rules. The original text of this '*Regolamento*' can be found in '*Gazzetta Ufficiale*' June 1999. See also: <http://www.telelavoro.rassegna.it/default.htm>

clearly state the teleworking objectives, the activities taken into account, the technologies utilised, the methods of conducting the work from a distance, the employment status, the number of employees involved in the project, the times and the ways for conducting the project, the criteria for verifying if the project gives positive results, the organisational changes which might occur and their costs and benefits (direct and indirect). This project must also clarify how the managers should check the quantity and quality of teleworkers' tasks.

According to this '*Regolamento*', teleworking can only be introduced through a project. This is a very important starting point. This new way of working should not be perceived as a 'bonus' for the teleworkers; it should be an advantage for both the public administration and its employees. For this reason it is necessary to identify 'the methods for rationalising and simplifying the work, the administrative and ICTs procedures, in order to improve the organisation of the work, the quality and the savings which this service brings, by considering norms, organisation, technologies and human resource management' (*Regolamento: Art. 3- paragraph 3*). This '*Regolamento*' also specifies that teleworking should also deal with some formative aspects. The workers must develop new competencies and adapt themselves to new organisational and technological developments.

The final part of this document also clarifies a series of aspects regarding the work instruments (which have to be provided by the public administrations and must be utilised only for work reasons), the suitability of the new work location and teleworkers' right to return to their previous office. It refers to a collective agreement for the issue of workers' economic treatment.

As is evident, the '*Bassanini ter*' law and its '*Regolamento*' focus on the organisational aspect of teleworking. Teleworking should be seen as a strategy which will facilitate the development of a renewal of the work organisation in the Italian public sector. The introduction of teleworking should be planned in advance and monitored. Therefore teleworking not only brings changes in terms of work location, but also in the ways through which work is organised. The

organisation of work in the public sector is highly bureaucratised, and control is maintained mainly by checking employees' presence in the office. Although these two documents do not specify the ways in which remote public servants will be controlled, they implied that control will be based more on objectives achieved, than on external techniques of control such as electronic monitoring. Thus, from a macro perspective, teleworking is seen as one factor which can introduce a more flexible organisation of work in Italian public bodies.

4.3.3 Supporting teleworking

The *Law 8th March 2000, n. 53* dealt with the 'dispositions which aim to sustain motherhood and fatherhood, the right to health care, the right of attending ongoing training and the co-ordination of urban times'. It also aims to develop the spread of teleworking (*art.9*). This law should be applied to other work-life balance initiatives.

The first part of this law concerns the new introduction of motherhood and fatherhood leaves and the extension of leaves for parents with disabilities. Other sections deal with the extension of leaves for further training. *Art. 9* deals with the 'co-ordination of urban times' and is directly related to the promotion and development of teleworking. It is, in fact believed that this new method of working increases time flexibility among workers. *Art. 9* of this law establishes that from the year 2000 at least 50 per cent of 40 billion of Lire from the Employment Funding will be allocated yearly to companies which have a maximum of fifty employees and which takes steps aiming to increase flexibility. Teleworking is considered one of these actions.

This law indirectly developed the spread of teleworking in small-medium sized enterprises, the heart of Italian economy. It mainly aims to provide financial help, and does not mention, for instance, how a teleworking plan should be formulated. One of the fears of teleworking experts and consultants is that the development of a legislation of teleworking could possibly restrict employers' actions and

consequently impede the full development of this phenomenon. This law does not aim to give particular directions to teleworking companies, its main objective is to sustain employers with ICTs costs necessary for the introduction of new methods of working.

4.3.4 Workers' privacy: the relevance of art. 4 Law 300/1970

The '*Statuto dei lavoratori*' (the Workers' Statute) comprises a series of norms whose aim is to protect 'the freedom and dignity of the worker'. These norms strongly restrict the powers of managers to discipline and control, which the '*Codice Civile*' (the Civil Code) allow to them as 'heads of the firm' (*artt.* 2086 and 2104). This is particularly true if we refer to the employees who, by agreement, 'are employed at the manager's premises and under his/her direction' (*art.* 2094).

Art. 4 of the Law 300/1970 of '*Statuto dei lavoratori*' (Workers' Statute), represents one of the most important norms, that protects the workers' privacy. (Carnici, 1985: 222; Fannelli, 1986: 32-33; Pisani, 1987: 130). This article forbids 'the use of audiovisual aids and of other instruments which aim to control from a distance workers' activities' (*Statuto dei Lavoratori*: sub-section 1), and it also adds that the above instruments can only be utilised in the case of 'organisational and productive requirements or for the security of the work' (*ibid.*). In this case as well the company should stipulate an agreement with the Trade Unions or, in default of this, with an internal commission (*ibid.*: sub-section 2). Otherwise the employers should be authorized by the Inspectorate of Work, which takes decisions over the installation and use of these technological instruments.

Privacy is a particularly delicate issue for teleworkers. Teleworkers' instruments of work, such as the PC and telecommunication networks can undermine their privacy. All the functions of these technological tools, which are necessary for communication from a distance, are recorded by a central PC. The central system records who sent the information and how. Potentially teleworkers

are always subjected to their employer's control (Colotto: 105 in Scajola, 1998). It is important to point out that when *art. 4* was introduced, these ICT systems did not exist, so control referred mainly to surveillance exercised through a video camera (CCTV). This law was later extended to include more advanced technological equipment such as ICTs.

This law, when first introduced, only considered technological equipment which allows the visualisation of the worker. While in the past it was impossible to separate the visualisation of workers' strictly work-related activities and other workers' behaviour in their workplaces, the advent of ICTs enabled the separation of these two phases and, ICTs allow employers to monitor workers' productivity, without seeing them. According to many researchers (e.g. Pisano, 1987) *art. 4* should be reinterpreted.

This specific law seems to protect the workers from indiscriminate personal control, but it also generates a series of implications. For instance, in call centres supervisors can utilise technological tools only for checking the collective productivity of the workers. They are not allowed to control the personal productivity of individual teleworkers (Di Nicola, forthcoming). In the UK companies are not required to follow similar restrictions and it is possible to control the individual productivity of every single teleworker. This leads to a different form of control and to workers' resistance. *Art. 4* represents an excellent example of how legislation can affect control from a distance.

4.3.5 Law proposals on teleworking

Italy, conversely to other EU countries, has been very active in terms of telework legislation. In January 1999, Senator M. De Luca unified in an law proposal Law proposal 2305, other three law proposals¹¹ on teleworking (N. 3123, N.3189, 3489). The first paragraph of this law proposal defines the concept of teleworking. Teleworking can be defined as 'any type of work conducted via telematic tools

¹¹ All these law proposals have not been approved yet, and they do not have any legal validity. Their original texts can be found at: www.parlamento.it

from a location which differs and is distant from the original workplace' (*art.1*) Therefore the two elements which characterize teleworking are the use of ICTs and distance from the original workplace. These two elements were also included in the '*Bassanini Ter*' law. The main point is that, from a spatial point of view, teleworkers are external to the company; however they are integrated to it via ICTs. As many researchers have pointed out, the fact that teleworkers are geographically external to the company does not involve an increase of autonomy. On the contrary, subordination may be accentuated by ICTs (Scarpelli in Gaeta 1998: 261). For this reason, legislation should protect teleworkers from potential indiscriminate control.

This unified law proposal includes employed and self-employed teleworkers (*art.1*) and defines their fundamental rights (*art. 2*). First, teleworkers have the right to be informed about all the changes taking place within the company, such as its dimensions, its productive units, the occurrence of internal training courses and trade union meetings. Teleworkers must have the same rights to receive this essential information as the other employees. This aspect is particularly important from a trade union perspective; if teleworkers do not receive the company's information, they will become more isolated from it and thus more likely to be exploited. In addition, such information is essential for teleworkers in order to conduct their daily work.

Teleworkers' second essential right is the right to sociability (*art. 3*). Therefore, the company must provide them with suitable ICTs. In this case, ICTs are perceived not only as mere instruments of the company's productive process, but also as a means of informal communication and socialisation between teleworkers and internal staff. Both these issues will be regulated by a collective agreement. These two first teleworkers' rights raise two interlinked problems which teleworkers might experience: workers' separation from the workplace and their sense of isolation. These aspects are particularly important for exploring the issue of control of teleworkers.

According to this law proposal, the introduction of new ICTs is considered as a medium for compensating for the lack of workers' presence in their offices. In order to facilitate teleworkers' participation in company issues, this law proposal also aims to introduce 'net-meeting' (*art.* 6). As many researchers pointed out (Di Nicola, 1999), the costs will be too high and the introduction of the 'net-meeting' will be very unlikely to occur, therefore alternative procedures must be introduced. *Art.* 7-8 concerns 'bill-posting rights' (*art.* 25 Workers' Statute) which will be exercised via ITCs. A telematic board will need be introduced. Again, these last points (*artt.* 6,7,8) illustrate one potential risk of telework: teleworkers' isolation from the company. The enhancement of communication with the trade unions and the company can reduce this risk. In this case (see *artt.* 2, 3) ICTs are perceived as the main medium to strengthen communication.

A very important aspect of this law proposal (*art.* 4) concerns the exception to the prohibition of workers' personal control from a distance (*art.* 4 law n.300, 1970), which has been explained in section 4.3.4. According to this law it is possible to exercise control from a distance whenever this is necessary to enable teleworkers to conduct their work or it is considered as indispensable for employers in order to guarantee teleworkers' security, or if it is the only possible way for exercising control over the teleworkers. However, employers must inform teleworkers about the methods through which control will be exercised. As it was pointed out before, when *art.* 4 law 300/1970 was introduced the current ICTs did not exist, so it was meant to forbid audiovisual control. According to many researchers (Pisani, 1987: 135-136), distance control may be considered legitimate, and for many reasons *art.* 4 restricted the development of teleworking. It is also true that the potential exception to *art.* 4, may lead to several risks, such as a constant and strict surveillance and an intensification of work. These risks have been thoroughly explored in current UK literature on call centres. (e.g. Bain and Taylor, 2000; Taylor and Bain, 1999)

Art. 9 concerns norms on health and security of the de-centred location of work. *Art.* 10 tries to discipline any form of telework carried out by non-EU workers.

The government must in fact issue some decrees-law in order to regulate this issue. This decree-law must be in line with the politics of EU rules and provide a specific authorization of the Ministry of Work. This authorisation could be suspended if, after investigation, it emerges that the fundamental rights of the teleworkers are not respected. *Art. 10* has been introduced for avoiding workers' exploitation particularly regarding juvenile work. However it is quite difficult to regulate teleworking in this sense. First, the EU and its member states are not likely to submit telework to mechanisms of authorisation. This will slow down the expansion of this phenomenon.

Art. 11, 12, 13 are designed to give equal treatment to workers irrespective of new place of work. Teleworkers should thus be counted as internal workers (*art. 11*). In addition, teleworkers must receive the same salary as their internal colleagues of the same category (*art. 12*). This law proposal also considers the possibility of extending collective agreement to self-employed teleworkers (*art. 13*).

The last part of this law proposal clarifies under which circumstances telework programs can receive incentives (*art. 14-18*). Incentives are provided only if teleworking is evaluated as a tool for creating new occupational opportunities, a new method for people with disabilities or otherwise disadvantaged subjects to overcome any difficulties in entering or maintaining their post and, a concrete opportunity to reduce air pollution levels. In addition, financial help will be provided with new experimental telework projects. It will be the Government's duty to introduce a particular administrative body, the so called 'Telework Observatory', which aims to monitor, do consultancies and research on teleworking and to introduce a specific funding for stimulating telework activities.

The current legislative activities related to teleworking have a twofold objective: to preserve teleworkers' fundamental rights and to stimulate new telework developments. These law proposals provide important hints regarding the exercise of control and other related issues, such as teleworkers' rights of

information, sociability and the possibility to have access to trade union activity from a distance. The aim of this law proposal is to create a teleworking law which does not restrict the implementation of teleworking, but at the same time preserves teleworkers rights.

4.4 Conclusion

Legislative texts aim to preserve teleworkers' rights, to safeguard a company's productivity and to promote this new way of working. All the texts analysed provide interesting hints regarding an evaluation of the new methods of exercising control over teleworkers. For example, if we consider the '*Bassanini Ter*' law, which regulates telework within the public sector, the following questions arise: did telework bring any organisational and management changes within this public body, as this legislation suggested? If not, why?

Art. 4 of the Workers' Statute explicitly shows how legislation can affect control in the workplace and puts forward a comparison between UK and Italian methods of control from a distance. Recent law proposals emphasise the technological aspects linked to telework. This emphasises the introduction of ICTs as a solution for these problems. However, can we really say that poor technological conditions are the only factors which affect communication and social interaction between teleworkers and their company? Are the problems of lack of communication and isolation caused by other factors? We cannot give an unequivocal answer to these questions. Legislation aims to safeguard essential workers' rights, and the introduction of good ICTs can be seen as an initial solution. Telework is a more complex phenomenon. For this reason, in addition to the introduction of new legislative procedures, further research is necessary.

Chapter 5:

The methodology: researching teleworkers

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to clarify the methodology utilised in the thesis. The research reported here is based on three case studies, and draws on qualitative research methods. Therefore, the strengths and the limits of qualitative case study research are assessed. The chapter moves on to consider the sampling strategies utilised for selecting the three case studies and the interviewees.

Since the main research method utilised was semi-structured interviewing, a brief description of the process of building up the interviewing schedule will be summarise. Entering the field involves many ethical and political considerations, which are considered in this chapter. The chapter ends with a discussion of how the data collected was subsequently analysed.

5.2 The strengths and the limits of case study research

The case study was extensively adopted in the United States by social workers and early American sociologists at the end of the Nineteenth and the beginning of the Twentieth centuries. American sociology, was in fact, substantially influenced by case studies produced by the Chicago School. The principal interests of the exponents of this School concerned social problems provoked by urbanisation and immigration. According to this approach, the city was considered as a veritable laboratory, providing a miniature replica of problems commonly encountered within society as a whole. This perspective gave rise to the so-called *urban ecology*. The case study was considered the best way for exploring these issues as part of an inductive approach. On-site observations, open-ended interviews and collection of a wide range of documents were the media for reaching this goal. The Chicago School was the leader in intellectual life and activity in American sociology until 1935, and the case study was considered the most appropriate

methodological tool. Consequently, because of the Chicago School tradition, case study research was mainly associated with a qualitative methodology. However, as it will later be explained, case study methodology, in its recent development, also involves quantitative methods.

Subsequently, surveys gained ground in sociology, principally at Columbia University in New York, and this new sociological approach was characterised by anti-Chicago sentiments and a marked preference for statistical methods over case studies. Ogburn, one of the principal exponents of this sociological approach, clearly pointed out that:

an idea of values of science must be formulated in some sort of form capable of demonstration or proof...verification in this future state of scientific sociology will amount almost to a fetish...all sociologists [must] be statisticians. (Ogburn, quoted by Bryant, 1985: 137)

This preference for validation would rapidly give rise to a new method of study in sociology based on testing a theory. This involves a deductive process which aims to demonstrate the accuracy of a theory, while eliminating any bias on the part of the researcher or the empirical context. Emphasis was thus placed on the ability of sociological models to validate theories in order to prove their generality.

The case study, like any other qualitative method, has been criticised for its lack of representativeness. The major reason for the loss of faith in the Chicago School methodology based on case study was the lack of validity, rigour and objectivity of the qualitative approach, particularly with reference to ethnographic research. In addition, the main criticism made of case studies was that it was not possible to generalise the results of research deriving from just one case. The case study, built on a single case, encounters difficulties for measuring a theory's generality, apart from assuming other cases to be similar. Although case studies were widely attacked for the limitations pointed out above, research based on case studies is widely utilised and well recognised. In fact, case study research has in fact many other advantages.

The present research is based on three case studies and is mainly carried out using qualitative methods. However, being aware that case study research can be conducted through surveys and other quantitative methods, the section below will review the strengths and the weakness associated with qualitative work.

The first accusation made against the case study was its lack of validity. How credible are the particular findings of the study? Lincoln and Guba (1985) demonstrate that the conventional positivistic paradigm based on internal and external validity is inappropriate for a qualitative enquiry. The primary aim is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner, as to ensure that the subject is precisely identified and described. The enquiry must be 'credible to the constructors of original multiple realities' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 296). The strengths of qualitative case study research are in-depth descriptions of the setting and, the processes and interactions of the social groups under investigation.

The present research focuses three organisations which have recently introduced telework. The fieldwork was based on semi-structured interviews and observations in the field. The principal aim of this study is to investigate how control is exercised over teleworkers. However, telework has not been treated as an isolated phenomenon, but it has been analysed by considering further company dynamics. For instance, the ways of controlling on-site employees have been taken into account and, have been compared to the new methods of controlling teleworkers. Through case study research, conducted via interviews, it is possible to gather detailed and precise data.

The theoretical framework of the 'Social Dimensions of Control' (see Chapter 3) played an important role in shaping the research process. First, it facilitated the generation of questions which were asked to both teleworkers and their managers (see 5.4.1). Theoretically defined questions allowed the creation of significant categories for each case study, which facilitated the analysis of the qualitative data and allowed comparisons to be made among the three cases studies (see 5.6.2). As in much qualitative research, the process of theory generating is strictly linked to

the process of reflexivity. During and after the fieldwork, the results of the research allowed further questions and categories to be generated from theoretically defined questions through the process of reflexivity thus ensuring the validity of the research.

Another criticism of the case study method refers to a lack of generalisability. However, this problem can be easily overcome. Mitchell (1983) and Yin (1984) put forward the argument that the purpose of the case study is to permit the generation of theory. Therefore, a case study should not be considered as a sample of one. The accusation of limited generalisability entails a misunderstanding of the nature of case study research.

Other researchers argue that the problem of generalisability can be easily solved (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Case study research can be based on one or two or more sites. The reason for including a second or multiple case studies is twofold: the generalisability of the research might be enhanced, and comparison allow the special features of cases to be identified much more readily. As Burgelman (1985: 12) writes, 'Field studies in one setting raise questions about the external validity of the findings'. Therefore, multiple case studies represent a conscious attempt to increase the range of types of organisation investigated and this might mitigate this point.

Moreover, Giddens defends case study research:

'Pieces of ethnographic research like the traditional small-scale community research of field anthropology are not in themselves generalizing studies. But they can easily become such if carried out in some numbers, so that judgements of their typicality can justifiably be made.' (Giddens, 1984: 328).

The problem here is to determine how many cases are needed and, to justify the choice of the cases in terms of their representativeness. Consequently, it is very important to select the studies which are suitable for the aim of the research. What are these cases intended to explain? In other words, although the number of studies

conducted is important, the main issue is to select case studies which are significant for our research question. The research presented in this thesis is based on a collection of case studies. As Stake pointed out:

...researchers may study a number of cases jointly in order to inquire into the phenomenon, population, or general condition. We might call this *collective case study*...They may be similar or dissimilar, redundancy and variety each having voice. They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorising, about still larger collections of cases (Stake, 2000: 237- emphasis of the author).

Three case studies have been jointly analysed in order to investigate the issue of control within teleworking. Each case study represents a specific working organisation, where a teleworking program has been introduced. Each one also entails a theoretical relevance (see Section 5.3.2, 'Sampling the case studies'). Differentiation in cases allows a comparative analysis. Comparisons will lead to a better understanding and, better theorising about a larger collection of cases. Triangulating data which derives from multiple cases, can enhance generalisability. In addition to multiple case studies, the strategic choice of triangulation is enhanced by using more than one data gathering method. In this research, semi-structured interviewing is accompanied by a documentary analysis of legal data. Data from different sources, in addition to strengthening generalisability, was also particularly useful for elaborating and illuminating the research question (Rossman and Wilson, 1985).

By triangulating different research methods, such as interviewing and documentary analysis in a case study investigation, generalisability is achieved to a large extent. However, the strategic choice of a collective case study does not aim only to reach generalisability. Campbell (1975) argues that the case study can be helpful for grand generalisation; however, generalisation should be the principal aim of all research (Simons, 1980).

Case study investigation itself has its own features which are beneficial for social research. First, it is unique (Stouffer, 1941). Each case study has its own

historical background and, is linked to a particular economic and political context. For these reasons, it is not unusual for qualitative research to let the case 'tell its own story' (Carter, 1993; Coles, 1989). It is important to stress the peculiar traits of each case study, as this will lead to comparisons with other case studies which have other particular characteristics. As Stake (2000: 242) argues, 'I see comparison as an epistemological function competing with learning about and from the particular case'. Comparison from different case studies will lead to generalisation and theory generating.

Each of my case studies tells of an experience of introducing and managing teleworking. Since each case study has been chosen according its diversity, at the end, we will have three diverse stories to compare. In each company teleworking involves different implications linked to the methods of controlling the teleworkers. In the first stage of my analysis, the methods of control have been considered singularly. Afterwards other company dynamics, such as hierarchical structures, teleworkers' career opportunities, teleworkers' interactions and communication with the company, the organisation of training courses and office-based days, and many others are taken into account. It was possible to generate comparisons about the different strategies and methods of exercising control over teleworkers among the three case studies. The story told by each case study reveals specific characteristics and the their consequences regarding the implementation of teleworking. However, the analysis of each case study, also generates comparisons among the three companies. Comparisons have a twofold aim: evaluating the specificity of each case study and creating generalisations.

In examining the impact of policy-making, case studies are increasingly recognised as having a relevant role, since they are able to illuminate the effects of implementations on everyday activities (Patton, 1987). This aspect was particularly important for this research.

5.3 Sampling

5.3.1 Sampling the case studies

Quantitative and qualitative research involves different strategies for sampling the units of investigation. In quantitative research the main aim of sampling is to study a representative subsection of a defined population in order to make more general inferences about the whole population. This objective is normally achieved by statistical sampling procedures (Arber, 1993).

Such sampling procedures are, however, not applicable in qualitative research. In research based on qualitative methods, the data is often derived from one or more case studies, and conventionally these case studies are not selected on a random basis. This also occurs because, even if qualitative researchers were able to construct a representative sample of cases, the sample size would be too large and would preclude the kind of intensive analysis normally utilised in qualitative research (Mason, 1996). For these reasons, qualitative research is more likely to use 'purposive sampling' or 'theoretical sampling'. As Denzin and Lincoln point out:

'Many qualitative researches employ purposive, and not random, sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where...the processes being studied are most likely to occur.' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 202).

This form of non-probability sampling involves the selection of actions, events and people. The researcher should have a deep knowledge of the universe from which s/he will select informants or groups of people to be analysed.

Patton (1990: 169-81) describes some strategies for proceeding with the selection. These strategies have been adopted for the selection of the case studies of the current research. According to Patton (*ibid.*), it could be helpful to integrate purposively *extreme* or *deviant cases*. For example, one option could be a study of why teleworking failed in a particular organisation.

Another suggestion is to select *representative cases* (or *typical cases*). For instance, selecting companies where the introduction of teleworking is common. For example, telecommunications companies can be considered as typical case studies to be analysed for researching teleworking.

Additionally, *critical* or *crucial cases* refer to those which are particularly important for evaluating how a program functions. For instance, in an overall evaluation of teleworking, the choice of a company in the public sector can be considered as a critical case. It is, in fact, important to assess the impact of teleworking in a public sector organisation or in small-medium sized enterprise, even if this new way of working is not 'typical' of these kinds of organisations.

Another selection strategy aims at the *maximal variation* in the sample. According to this strategy, only the cases which are as different as possible are integrated in the sample. An example of maximal variation of the sample could be identified in the choice of one company which introduced teleworking among its professional staff and another company whose teleworkers are low-skilled employees. The introduction of teleworking both in the public and the private sector could be considered.

It might be relevant to select politically important or *sensitive cases*, for example, the study of teleworking among people with disabilities. Sometimes these sensitive cases can endanger the overall research, thus it has been suggested to avoid them (Patton, 1990).

Finally, Patton (*ibid.*) suggests *convenience sampling*, which can summarise all the cases which are easiest to access under given conditions. An example of convenience sampling is to choose a case study because it is geographically close or because it provides an easy access. This sampling strategy may have the disadvantage that the selection of the cases may not be really relevant to the

research question. One strategy does not exclude another. In fact, in the selection of my case studies, more than one strategy has been adopted.

This research aims to give a national picture of teleworking in Italy. Thus it is relevant to consider case studies which could better represent the development of teleworking in Italy (*crucial cases*). Chapter 4 reviews laws and law proposal, which have been introduced in Italy for regulating teleworking. A law (*Bassanini Ter*) has been drawn up for regulating teleworking within the Italian public sector. This implemented the development of teleworking schemes within public bodies, because it was thought that the choice of a public organisation would provide a better understanding of Italian teleworking experiences.

Before starting the fieldwork, it has been attempted to gain a better understanding of teleworking in Italy through an analysis of different sources (web sites, academic publications, companies' reports). This preliminary research made clear that the majority of organisations, which have introduced teleworking were large telecommunication companies, so it was decided to select one case study among those which have traditionally introduced teleworking schemes (*typical cases*). Examples of these are companies in the telecommunication sector. It was considered relevant to choose a telecommunication company which has recently introduced teleworking. Among the telecommunication companies, which have introduced teleworking, a virtual call centre was selected (*crucial cases*).

Following the sampling strategy of *crucial cases*, another case study has been added to these. In Italy small medium-sized enterprises play a relevant role within the national economy, thus it has been decided to study one such enterprise. These work organisations have been chosen mainly because they are very different from each other (*maximal variation*). The sampling strategy also followed a theoretical logic.

Other researchers (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Mason, 1996) choose their case studies following a theoretical logic. Theoretical and purposive samplings are

often treated as synonyms. However, the main difference is that purposive sampling is not theoretically defined. Mason describes the link between theory and sampling as follows:

‘...theoretical sampling means selecting groups and categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position... and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample ...which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation’. (Mason, 1996: 93-4)

As Glaser and Strauss (1967) pointed out, through theoretical sampling, research can extend and broaden the scope of an emerging theory. This kind of sampling involves choosing the case study and the people to interview. With this approach the researcher, with a view to the new findings, should be ready to change the pre-existing theory in order to incorporate the new phenomena.

According to Glaser and Strauss (*ibid.*), the primary concern of theoretical sampling is the generation and the elaboration of theory. They argue that the selection of cases should aim to generate as many categories as possible and then to relate the categories to one another.

The selection of the three case studies also followed a theoretical logic. The main categories, which have been taken into account can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Ownership (public *versus* private)
- 2) Size (large *versus* SME)
- 3) Labour process (fordist *versus* post-fordist)
- 4) Organisational form (bureaucratic *versus* non-bureaucratic)
- 5) Workers status (semi-professional/clerical/low skilled workers)

The categories, considered relevant for the selection of the case studies are summarised in the Table 5.1.

Table: 5.1 Selecting the cases: relevant categories

	OWNERSHIP		SIZE		LABOUR PROCESS		ORGANISATION		WORKERS STATUS		
	public	private	small	large	Fordist	Post-fordist	Bureaucratic	non-bureaucratic	Semi-professional	Clerical	Low-skilled
Servizi	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×	✓	×
Comunicazione	×	✓	×	✓	×	✓	✓	×	×	×	✓
Informazione	×	✓	✓	×	×	✓	×	✓	✓	×	×

The sampling strategy consists in choosing three case studies which have contrasting profiles across these theoretical dimensions. The choice of these categories has been made in conjunction with the already mentioned sampling strategies: *typical case*, *crucial case* and *maximum variation* research strategies.

The author was able to recognise some of these categories before entering the field (e.g. 'ownership' and 'size'). In order to identify the remaining categories, the author analysed some documentary data of several of the Italian work organisations which have recently introduced teleworking (e.g. companies' reports, teleworkers' agreements).

Initially work organisations were contacted by formal letters which briefly summarised my research. Only four work organisations showed an interest in the research. Two of them were large telecommunications companies, and the other two were public bodies. An introductory interview with the manager in charge of the teleworking project was arranged in each case. This introductory meeting had a twofold aim: to verify the existence of the other theoretical categories and to evaluate other practical issue before carrying out the research. Examples of empirical matters that have been taken into account are the numbers of teleworkers which are involved in the project, the duration of the teleworking project, its preliminary results and the access to the field.

After the first introductory meeting, the two public bodies under consideration showed similar characteristics: they were both large, bureaucratic organisations and, in both, teleworking has been introduced among clerical teleworkers. Between them, *Servizi* has been chosen for two main reasons: first it was more willing to co-operate, second, teleworking has been successfully introduced prior to the other working organisations.

As mentioned, *Servizi* has been chosen because it was considered relevant to explore the introduction of teleworking in a public organisation (*crucial cases*). As many public organisations, *Servizi* is highly bureaucratic and follows a fordist organisation of work. *Servizi* (see Table 5.1) is a public administrative body whose aim is to provide social benefit to the inhabitants of a specific area in Italy. It is composed of 4,800 civil servants. Among these twenty four were teleworking at the time of my fieldwork. The majority of them do clerical and administrative jobs and few of them carry out semi-professional activities. The telework project started in 1997, and during the experimental phase only 12 teleworkers were involved in the project. Participation in the project was voluntary and teleworkers were able to return to their in site office if they felt uncomfortable working from home. This case study stresses the social benefits that telework can bring. Employees who must commute, look after their children or cope with physical disabilities have priority to telework. The focus on social benefits has many implications regarding the issue of control.

After having selected the first case study, two other telecommunication companies (*typical cases*) showed an interest in the research. *Comunicazione* was chosen because, in addition to being a telecommunication company, it is also a virtual call centre and it seemed important to explore how control is exercised among call centre operators (*crucial case studies*), since little research has been done.

This case study shares some points with the first one. They are both large companies with bureaucratic structures. But there are some contrasting aspects.

First, it is a private company. Second, it also shows some post-fordist elements (customers' satisfaction, decentred locations). Moreover, in contrast to the first case study where teleworkers were clerical employees, this company introduced teleworking among call centre operators (low-skilled skilled workers see Table 5.1). As previous research on teleworking noted the different status of teleworkers affects the methods of controlling them. The similarities and differences of these two companies generated comparisons.

Comunicazione employs around 4000 operators and is one of the largest call centre for directory enquiries in Italy. *Comunicazione*'s operators supply the clients with a requested telephone number. This work organisation is composed of 104 centres, which are clustered in 33 branches located all over Italy. The introduction of telework officially took place in July 1998, when *Comunicazione* and the trade unions signed a preliminary agreement on the applicability of telework for providing directory assistance. In March 1999 *Comunicazione*'s operators started teleworking. From 2000 three hundred operators started working from home, and the company is willing to develop further this new method of employment. The introduction of teleworking brought many organisational changes in *Comunicazione*. Since more and more operators started telework, many call centres shut down. This forced a reorganisation of the whole company.

While the two first cases have some common aspects, the third differs greatly (*maximum variation sampling strategy*). Documentary research revealed that teleworking was not very common among SMEs. However, this type of company represents the heart of the Italian economy, so it was judged relevant to include a SME in the sample (*crucial case sampling strategy*). This case study was selected through the help of an Italian teleworking consultant who facilitated the access in the field.

In contrast to the to previous case studies, particularly *Servizi, Informazione* is a small company and the work is organised in a flexible way (non-bureaucratic/post-fordist). In addition, the teleworkers are semi-professional. This aspect

reinforces the difference from the previous two case studies. Such a combination of categories would assume a completely different way of controlling the teleworkers (see Table 5.1)

Informazione is a small medium enterprise, whose main task is to supply business information. It provides: legal data on Italian companies registered at the Chamber of Commerce, financial data, rating, and local investigation. *Informazione* now has 101 employees, of which 18 are teleworking from home. 60% of its employees work in business information. They must verify whether a company information provided by local investigators is correct.

In the last ten years *Informazione* underwent many organisational changes. In 1991 it introduced teamworking. Each team represents a geographical area of Italy: North, Centre and South. It also spread customer orientation culture among its employees through training courses. In 1993 the 'Paperless Project', that is, working on line was introduced. A management system based on applicative software enabled the company to eliminate paper documents from the productive process. The main reason for introducing telework was to avoid a loss of human capital. In the previous years many employees gave up working because of family commitments. In order to achieve a high level of professional skills, employees must undergo specific training and acquire a certain number of years experience. For this reason, employees' turnover led to a decrease in productivity. In addition, the introduction of teleworking occurred at the same time as *Informazione* moved offices. This, too, brought savings in terms of property rents. In 1997 the experimental phase of telework began. fourteen employees –eight women and six men–decided to telework. As mentioned above, for achieving valid findings in research, it is important to select case studies which are significant for our research question. This section has underlined the sampling strategies adopted for reach this aim.

5.3.2 Sampling within the case studies

After selecting the case studies, it was necessary to generate a sample of interviewees within each. The use of non-probability sampling allows the researcher greater flexibility in the process of selection of the interviewees (Glaser and Strauss 1967). In each case study the same strategy for sampling the different interviewees (non probability sampling) is utilised. However, in practice the selection of the interviewees varied within each work organisation.

It was planned to interview teleworkers, teleworkers' managers, telework organisers and trade union representatives. The research is based on a realist epistemological position. By following this approach, it was thought that selecting different groupings of people could better represent both macro and micro aspects of teleworking. Interviews with teleworkers aimed to reveal the micro aspects of teleworking, such as teleworkers' perceptions of this phenomenon and its effects on everyday life. Interviews with teleworkers' managers, teleworking organisers and trade union representatives were more focused on the macro aspect of this new way of working, such as the implementation of the teleworking project, the new organisational changes occurring within the company and teleworkers' agreements.

Teleworkers have been selected according to their gender. The objective was to sample an equal number of male and female teleworkers. However, it was not always possible to adopt this sampling strategy, because case studies revealed that female teleworkers were more numerous than male teleworkers. The criteria of selection of teleworkers' supervisors and telework organisers varied within each company. (see Table 5.2 and Table 5.3)

Table 5.2: Sampling within the cases

	Servizi	Comunicazione	Informazione
Researcher's choice	✓	×	×
Company's choice	×	✓	×
Snow-ball sampling	×	✓	×
Self-selection	×	×	✓

Table 5.3: List of the interviewees

	Teleworkers	Managers	Telework organisers/ Trade Unionists	Total
Servizi	8 (6 women, 2 men)	6 Managers	2 1 internal organiser 1 external consultant	16
Comunicazione	8 (7 women, 1 man)	7 Line managers (‘capi turno’)	5 2 call centre managers (‘capo sala’) 1 general directors 1 academic researcher 1 Trade Unionist	20
Informazione	7 (4 women, 3 men)	2 Team managers	2 1 Company director 1 Trade Unionist	11
Pilot Study	4	2	0	6
				53

During the field-work, the population of *Servizi*'s teleworkers was composed of 24 units. A complete list, containing information about teleworkers' gender, their job, the department in which they work, was provided by the teleworking director of this company. According to these variables eight teleworkers were

selected, two men and six women. Six teleworkers' managers were interviewed. Two other teleworking organisers have been included in the sample (see Table 5.3). Within this case study the researcher was able to select the future interviewees (*researcher's choice*, Table 5.2).

The total number of *Comunicazione* teleworkers at the beginning of the fieldwork amounted to two hundred. *Comunicazione* introduced teleworking among its several call centres located in different Italian regions. One call centre in the North of Italy was selected by the researcher. In this call centre twenty-two operators were working from home. Eight teleworkers have been interviewed, seven women and one man. The selection of the teleworkers was guided by an informal gatekeeper, who was the first teleworker interviewed (see Table 5.2). This is because the company did not allow teleworkers to be interviewed during working time. This involved some implications in terms of the politics of the research (see Section 5.5.3). Seven other teleworkers' supervisors and five telework organisers were interviewed and, these were chosen by the company (see Table 5.3).

In the last case study, *Informazione*, eighteen employees currently work from home. Among them seven teleworkers have been interviewed, three men and four women. In this case, the company sent an e-mail regarding my research to all its teleworkers, some of whom volunteered to be interviewed and the sampling strategy of self-selection was adopted (see Table 5.2). All the interviews were conducted within the company offices, during teleworkers' work hours. *Informazione* is a SME and employs only three office managers, who also supervise the teleworkers. Two of them have been interviewed. In addition, the director of the company and one trade union representative have been included in the sample (see Table 5.3).

Before starting the empirical work in the three case studies selected, interviews were carried out as part of the pilot study. Four teleworkers and two teleworkers'

managers were interviewed. (see Section 5.4.2). The total of interviewees was fifty three (Table 5.3).

5. 4 Research preparation

In order to explore the issue of control among teleworkers, semi-structured interviews have been conducted. The construction of the research questions was based on the theoretical framework of the ‘Social Dimensions of Control’ and, this structured the analysis of the collected data. A step-by-step guide to this process will be outlined below.

5.4.1 The process of building up questions

Before starting the field work, the interviewing schedule was prepared. One of the objectives of the theoretical framework, the ‘Social Dimensions of Control’ (Chapter 3), is to establish a link between theory and research. In order to originate empirical questions, the following proceedings have been utilised:

Step 1) Specific research questions have been spelled out for each social dimension of control.

Step 2) These research questions have been linked to specific aspects of employment.

Step 3) Each aspect of employment has been considered, and more empirical and specific questions have been originated.

This process can be explained by considering, for instance, the social dimensions of *vertical/horizontal control*. First, analytical research questions have been originated from the social dimension of *vertical/horizontal control*:

- What is the impact of teleworking on the organisational structure of the company?
- What is the impact of teleworking on the relationships teleworkers/supervisors?
- Does teleworking reduce or increase the hierarchical distance between supervisors/teleworkers?

These questions had an analytical purpose and therefore were not utilised during the interviews.

Afterwards, by analysing other questionnaires about labour market studies (e.g. *Workplace Employees Relations Survey*, 1997; *Labour Force Survey* ; Huws, 1993, Hakim, 1987), some specific aspects of employment were chosen. Examples related to vertical/horizontal control might be: relationships between teleworkers/supervisors, promotion system, teamworking, trade unions, organizational/hierarchical structure of the company, reporting lines, participative culture, decision-making, methods of payments. Finally, by considering each aspect of employment, focused questions were originated. For example, the following questions are related to the issue 'relationships between teleworkers/supervisors':

- 1) Now I'd like to talk about your relationship with your supervisor. Have you noticed any changes since when you have started teleworking?
- 2) For how long have you been working with the same supervisor? Have you got more than one supervisor?
- 3) Do you organise your own work with your supervisor?
- 4) Do you think that since you have started teleworking you are collaborating more with your supervisor?
- 5) As a teleworker, do you have more autonomy in the way you organise your work?
- 6) How regularly does your supervisor contact you? What means does s/he use? What is discussed? (before/after teleworking)
- 7) How does your supervisor give you feedback on your work? (face-to-face, via e-mail...) /Before/after teleworking)

Once the questions were compiled, the interviewing schedule was built up with only the most relevant questions included in it. Within semi-structured interviewing, the interviewer has both to direct the interview and to let the

interviewee to speak freely. The interviewing schedule has been organised as follows:

- 1) From general to specific questions.
- 2) By following a chronological order.
- 3) By linking similar aspects.

Two interviewing schedules were created, one for the teleworker and another for teleworkers' supervisors and teleworking organisers.¹

5.4.2 The pilot study

Before starting the field work in Italy, a pilot study, which was conducted partly in Italy and partly in the UK, was carried out. The main objective of the pilot study was to check the appropriateness of the interview schedule. Consequently, through the pilot study it was possible to add new questions and to time the interviews. The initial interviewing schedule was in fact too long, so some irrelevant parts were deleted. The pilot study also provided an opportunity for the researcher to get used to the research methods.

The pilot study was composed of four teleworkers and two teleworkers' managers. Apart from one interview which was conducted in English, all the others were in Italian. The selection of the pilot study's interviewees was not theoretically defined. Italians or Italian speaker teleworkers and teleworkers' managers have been selected mainly by writing to UK translation agencies or by personal contacts. The language was one of the main requirements, because, since the overall field work was based in Italy, it was necessary to practice the interviewing schedule in Italian.

¹ Both teleworkers' interviewing schedule and managers' interviewing schedules have been included in the Appendix, at the end of the thesis.

5.5 In the field

5.5.1 Ethical features in qualitative research

The majority of quantitative and qualitative research presents the same dilemma: researchers are willing to give full information to their subjects, but they do not want to 'contaminate' their research by telling the subjects too much about the specific issue being studied. In addition, researchers also have responsibilities towards the people that they are going to study.

The most important ethical issues of qualitative research can be summarised as follows: consent, deception, harm, privacy and confidentiality of data. Ethical procedures can be better clarified by consulting ethical guidelines of professional associations. All these guidelines stress the importance of 'informed consent' where possible (Punch, 1998).

Kent (1996: 19-20) describes 'informed consent' as:

- Giving information about the research, which is relevant to the subjects' decisions about whether to participate.
- Making sure that subjects understand this information.
- Where subjects are not competent to agree (e.g. small children) obtaining consent by proxy (e.g. from their parents).

In this research informed consent has been adopted. Before starting my fieldwork, a letter which summarised the research was sent to each company. Before starting the interviews, the current research was explained to the interviewees.

Ethical codes embrace the view that various safeguards should protect the privacy and identity of research subjects. Conventionally identities, locations of individuals and places are concealed in published results. The data collected are supposed to be anonymous and strictly confidential (Punch, 1998). This anonymity and confidentiality will safeguard the research subject from harm or embarrassment as a consequence of the research. This research respected these ethical codes.

5.5.2 Data collection

After a long period of preparation, the field work was carried out in Italy between January and September 2000. First, an interview with the director of each case study was organised. These first interviews allowed me to check the validity of the case study and the access to the company. Afterwards, interviews with teleworkers, teleworkers' supervisor and telework organisers were planned. Each interview lasted for between forty minutes and one hour in duration and were tape-recorded and fully transcribed.

The majority of the interviews were conducted within the on-site offices and during work hours. Only in the case study of *Comunicazione*, were some interviews organised at teleworkers' homes, during their spare time (Section 5.5.3). One teleworking policy which is found in all three case studies is that of 'office-based days'. During these 'office-based days' teleworkers had to return to their workplaces for training purposes or for other reasons. *Servizi*, the public body, introduced two compulsory 'revisiting days' per week, while in the two other work organisations, teleworkers were asked to come back on specific occasions; however, they could return to their workplace whenever they wanted to. At the suggestion of the work organisations, the interviews were held on these 'revisiting days'. Teleworking, apart from *Comunicazione*, the virtual call centre, where teleworkers still follow strict shifts; was understood as a tool for increasing time flexibility. According to the managers, my presence at teleworkers' homes could have been considered as intrusive and could have disturbed the organisations' working routines.

Throughout the field-work, interviews were transcribed. This facilitated the process of reflexivity, which is typical of qualitative research. In this way new questions have been re-formulated according to the new findings which emerged from the research.

Semi-structured interviewing was the main method of research. This form of interviewing lies between open interviewing and structured methods. Normally, the questions are specified. However, this research method, while revealing to the interviewer detailed data about interviewees' own experiences, still provides a structure for comparability. As with all of the interviewing methods, interviewers should not only be aware of the content of the interview, but also pay attention to the nature of the interviews and the ways in which they asked the questions. In addition, observations in the field have been made. The author participated in some of the teleworkers meetings. Through these research methods, it was possible to collect in depth and detailed data.

5.5.3 On the politics of field work

By politics we mean everything from the micropolitics of personal relations to the different cultures, powers and policies of different social institutions, universities, public bodies, private companies or the central state itself (Bell and Newby, 1977; Hammond, 1964).

The debate on politics in social research has long origins. Since his first essays written between 1904 and 1917, Max Weber stressed the distinction between value freedom and value relevance (Weber, 1949a, 1949b). He argues that in the discovery phase, 'personal, cultural, moral or political values cannot be eliminated;...what social scientists choose to investigate...they choose on the basis of the values' (Root, 1993: 33). However he argues that the findings of social research should be value-free; they ought not to express any judgements of a moral and political nature.

For many reasons, recent research argues that value neutrality is an unreachable objective for social scientists. To a greater or lesser extent, politics affects all social research (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). The different contexts in which the research is located and others factors may influence the design, implementation and outcomes of research (Gubrium and Silverman, 1989). As Denzin and Lincoln

argue, 'fieldwork is definitely not a soft option, but, rather, represents a *demanding* craft that involves both coping with multiple negotiations and continually dealing with ethical dilemmas.' (1998: 159, emphasis Denzin and Lincoln). The politics of research can be summarised in different general features that have a material impact on qualitative research:

Nature of the research object

The nature of the research object entails an important significance for the access and potential conflict in the research setting (Punch, 1989; Spencer, 1973). This research involved some problematic issues. The focus was on the exercise of control over teleworkers. As it was mentioned in the Chapter 4, the *art. 4 Law 300/1970 of the Workers' Statute* outlaws the exercise of personal control from a distance. This limitation, which could have hindered access to the field, has been taken into account.

Researcher's persona: gender, age, nationality, status and institutional background

Research has shown that researchers' gender, race, status and institutional background play an important role for gaining access to certain organisations and for conducting research (Hunt, 1984, Martin, 1980, Platt, 1976, Reinhartz, 1992). The author of this thesis was a 29 year old Italian woman, doing a PhD in a British University; all these factors might have influenced this research in many ways.

The fact that the author is Italian has facilitated the access to the field and the overall research. The knowledge of Italian, was an advantage, but not the only one. The author has been living for more than twenty years in Italy and this was helpful for many reasons. Being aware of the Italian culture is a significant advantage, for acquiring access to the field.

In addition to being Italian, the author is also a young woman and this factor also influenced the research. As some researchers argue, women often have to cope with the conflicting situations between their need to continue the research

and their encountering 'sexual harassment, physical danger, and sexual stereotyping'. Furthermore in a society which is 'ageist, sexist, and hetero-sexist, the young, female researcher may be defined as a sexual object to be seduced by heterosexual males' (Reinharz, 1992: 58). This was not the case and, the author's gender did not bias the overall research. However, for cultural reasons, in Italy women are taken less seriously than men. On one occasion when a teleworker was interviewed, it became obvious that he was not interested in the research. He agreed to be interviewed just because the interviewer was a young woman. Luckily this was an isolated phenomenon.

The author's age and her status as a PhD student affected the conduct of the research. Many researchers argue that a young student 'may be perceived as non threatening and may even elicit a considerable measure of sympathy from respondents but...one could also argue that advancing age and increased status can open doors to fruitful areas of enquiry, such as senior management in business' (Punch, 1998: 165 in Denzin and Lincoln). Being a 29 year old PhD student facilitated access to the field. The author of this thesis is young, but not young enough to be underestimated. In addition being a PhD student gives you a higher status than an undergraduate student, particularly in Italy, where PhD studies are rarer than in the UK. Moreover, the fact that the author was a PhD student in a British University proved to be an advantage in terms of access to the field. Many teleworking companies find it quite attractive that a foreign University is interested in their story.

Feedbacks/ Co-operation

Many policy oriented researches are funded by the companies in which field work is carried out. This can bias the overall research. But in this case, the author's PhD was in fact partially funded by the ESRC (Economic Social Research Council), an independent body. However, some negotiations have been made with the companies under study, in order to have access to the field. For example, the author promised to send a copy of the thesis to the companies which collaborated

in this research. The author was also asked to send general feedback about the research and to organise a teleworkers' meeting.

The manager of one case study, *Comunicazione*, asked the author to carry out research, for the company regarding a specific issue that he aimed to investigate further. It has been decided to co-operate informally with the company, by sending a general report about this research. It was judged compromising to carry out paid research for the company itself.

Gatekeepers

For many reasons, gatekeepers play a crucial role in terms of access to the field. During the research process both personal and impersonal gatekeepers have been utilised. An Italian Professor, who is doing research on teleworking, facilitated the access in two of my case studies. He personally introduced this research to other formal gatekeepers, who were very helpful for the planning of the field-work. Two companies, *Informazione* and *Comunicazione*, helped me to organise the interviews with the teleworkers. As mentioned in section 5.3.2, , the strategy of self-selection was used to select the interviewees within the case study *Informazione*.

In contrast, within the virtual call centre, *Comunicazione*, all the teleworkers that I was supposed to interview were selected by the senior management. This could have biased the research because the company might have selected only teleworkers who did not experience any problems regarding this new way of working.. However, field work is full of unexpected circumstances and, after a few interviews, the formal gatekeepers of *Comunicazione* restricted access to the company, saying that it had become problematic to organise the interviews with the teleworkers within the workplace because of an alleged 'loss of productivity of the company'. Fortunately, it was possible to carry out the research through an informal gatekeeper, a teleworker who had been previously interviewed. Through this new gatekeeper the author organised all the interviews with *Comunicazione's* teleworkers during their spare time. All the teleworkers who were interviewed

were happy to cooperate in the research by talking about their experience during their spare time; however, all of them revealed an antagonistic attitude towards their company. They were aware that the company did not allow interviews during working hours, because of productivity standards. This contingency helped me indirectly to get a more balanced sample of views. The first teleworkers, the ones chosen by the senior management of the company, emphasised slightly the positive aspects of this new way of working; in contrast, those who were interviewed during their spare time stressed the problematic aspects of this phenomenon.

This experience showed that a researcher has to face a series of unexpected circumstances. It is thus important to plan in advance a strategy for selecting cases, but it is also necessary to be able to cope with the multiple contingencies of the 'real world'.

5.6 Giving meaning to qualitative data

5.6.1 Transcribing and translating

All the interviews were taped and then transcribed. Transcribing was not only a long process, but also a complex and problematic one. This was mainly due to the fact that all the interviews were conducted in Italian. Consequently, all the interviews had to be first transcribed and then translated. Literal translation is not possible in all the cases. This placed many constraints on the author. The data analysed was based on qualitative interviews, whose English version also appears in the analysis chapters of the three case studies. Thus, at the beginning, the author aimed to generate a very literal translation of the Italian interviews. The principle fear was to change the interviewees' meanings, while changing the grammatical structure of the sentences.

Literal translations proved to be an unsuccessful strategy, since in many cases it was difficult to understand the overall meaning of the quotations. Therefore, some corrections needed to be done. The structure of the sentences needed to be

changed; however every effort was made to transmit the interviewees' original meaning. Consequently, the final quotes included in the thesis were the results of a long and complex process, providing the British literature of teleworking with a remarkable contribution. Transcribing the interviews also revealed an important process which facilitated data analysis.

5.6.2 Data analysis

The final analysis of the data collected from the interviews took place once all the interviews were transcribed. However, the data analysis followed the overall research process. This is because of the reflexive approach adopted. Each interview generated new questions and re-shaped the previous ones.

In addition, the theoretical framework of the 'Social Dimensions of Control' guided both data collection and analysis. Once all the interviews had been transcribed, all the different quotes were coded according to this theoretical framework. The process of coding was facilitated by the previous procedure for generating the questions, which was also theoretically defined. As mentioned in section 5.4.1, the theoretical framework of the 'Social Dimensions of Control' played an important role for the preparation of the interviews. Each dimension of control highlights themes related to aspects of employment. For instance the dimensions of *vertical/horizontal* highlight the following themes: relationships between teleworkers/supervisors, promotion system, team working, organizational/hierarchical structure of the company, reporting lines, decision-making. The dimensions of *central/decentred control* focus on: corporate culture, training, teleworking policies. The dimensions of *internal/external control* highlight: training, reward system, workers' self-discipline. The dimensions *visible/invisible control* stress: organisation of work through output, promotion system.

Each theme generated some categories, for instance the theme 'relationships teleworkers/managers' was coded into the following categories: 'increasing

autonomy', 'collaborative style', 'vertical relations', 'difficult management'. These categories allowed the researchers to build up theoretical concepts such as 'innovative managers'('increasing autonomy', 'collaborative style'), or 'reluctant managers ('vertical relations', 'difficult management'). Consequently, the theoretical framework of the 'Social Dimension of Control' was utilised as a 'guide', which enabled the research to originate new theoretical concepts through the process of reflexivity.

5.7 Conclusion

This research draws on case studies research, and this chapter aims to demonstrate all the aspects and strategies that a researcher should consider for selecting the cases to be explored. After having reviewed the strengths and the limits of case studies research, and the different sampling strategies in general, the author summarised all the aspects related to the present research.

The author would like to say that, in order to carry out empirical research different aspects should be considered: those related to the methodology of the research and those related to the social factors. Although the latter can be planned, the researcher should be able to cope with the unexpected contingencies of the research process.

This chapter should help to introduce the three case studies, which, with their own stories, represent the guidelines of this research. The author is convinced that these three companies not only have a story to tell but a lesson which can be learned. All efforts have been made to give a realistic picture of the teleworkers, their labour process, how they are controlled and how they discipline themselves.

Chapter 6:

Introducing teleworking in the public sector

6.1 Introduction

This chapter puts forward an analysis of the different managerial devices utilised for controlling teleworkers in *Servizi*, an Italian public body. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the *Bassanini Ter Law* is the first approved law which aimed to regulate teleworking in the public sector. This law was chiefly concerned with protecting the teleworkers, helping them deal with social problems and increasing flexibility in public administration. After this legislation, several public bodies implemented teleworking schemes (Ciacia and Di Nicola, 2002). It therefore seemed relevant to select a public body, especially *Servizi*. This work organisation, similarly to the majority of the bureaucratic organisations has a very rigid structure. What will be the impact of teleworking on *Servizi*? Will it create a more flexible organisation of work?

First, there will be a discussion of *Servizi* and how this work organisation settled its Teleworking Project. Afterwards, this chapter will analyse how *vertical* and *horizontal control* operates within this public body. Although teleworking consultants attempted to introduce a type of control based on output via the introduction of a weekly report, some managers resisted this new form of control. Through qualitative data it was possible to identify a typology of teleworkers' managers. This typology reflects the ways in which managers control teleworkers. The overall findings showed a prevalence of *vertical control*. This public body relied on a hierarchical organisational structure and was culturally unprepared to manage teleworkers efficiently.

Subsequently, the focus will be on *central* and *decentred control*. Central control prevails and can be summarised in several management strategies, policies and practices, such as office-based days, team working and daily contact hours and

telephone calls. This will be followed by an analysis of *external* and *internal control*. Self-discipline and self-organisation play a major role among teleworkers. The company was not culturally prepared to cope with the new social and cultural aspects linked to telework, so teleworkers had to create their work routines by themselves.

Finally, the last section will analyse the ways in which this public body relies on *visible control*. Control based on workers' presence in the office and the possibility of watching them while working is still common within public bodies. This research tries to explore how managers cope with this issue and how teleworkers attempt to make themselves 'visible'.

6.2 Background of the study

6.2.1 *Servizi*: a complex bureaucratic body

Italy has twenty-one Regions. *Servizi* is an administrative body of one of these Regions. They are autonomous territorial bodies and exercise legislative and administrative functions over Agriculture, Health, Transport etc. However, they do not have jurisdictional powers. Each Italian Region is constituted by its territory, its population and its juridical personality, which means that each Region has its own treasury and its own budget. *Servizi* was born in 1970 as a Region with an ordinary Statute. It manages a territory of 9 million inhabitants and is divided into 11 districts and 1,546 councils.

Servizi, like other Italian Regions, acts through three main organs: the Regional Council, which is the government of each region, and the President of the Council, who is head of the Government and the Regional Board, which is the Parliament of the Region. The Regional Council brings in bills and administrative acts. It is composed of the President and several councillors. The offices of the Regional Committee are arranged into different Administrative Departments, comprising Organisational Units and Structures. These main administrative offices employ

4,800 people. Teleworking has been introduced to the Departments of Agriculture, Welfare, Culture, Transport, Environment and many more. Each acts autonomously and is managed by a general director. However, all are interlinked, since they aim to provide public benefits for all the habitants of the geographical area in which *Servizi* operates.

6.2.2 *Servizi*'s Teleworking Project

Servizi Teleworking Project began in 1997 and aimed to reach four main objectives. The first was to verify the applicability of teleworking within the bureaucratic structure of this public body. The Regional Institute of Research has thus introduced a strategic experimental project. Second, telework should also improve the workers' quality of life. The introduction of teleworking was expected to decrease commuting hours, reduce workers' transport expenditures and the stress of travelling to work. In addition, the workers would have more spare time and would be able to organise their own working day according to their personal commitments. At the societal level, teleworking would ease traffic congestion and thus, reduce pollution. Third, teleworking should increase the efficiency and the flexibility of the regional administration. From the point of view of the public administration, teleworking would reduce the management costs through a desk sharing option, which will also increase flexibility and efficiency. Finally, teleworking would create new working opportunities. Those who will benefit from teleworking will be: people with disabilities, those looking after children, the elderly and those who are culturally attached to their native villages or towns. In addition, it would create an occupational re-balance of the Region.

Not all these objectives mentioned above, have yet been achieved, but are a part of a long-term teleworking project. Now the aim of the project is to determine whether teleworking is a realistic option and can be implemented on a larger scale in the future. The *Servizi*'s Teleworking Project was conceived according to a 'cost-benefit' analysis. Normally, only two variables would be considered: the organisation and the workers. However, this project, includes another component,

the whole society. In other words, both private and public costs and benefits were considered. A specific Teleworking Project Team has been constituted in order to co-ordinate the Teleworking Project. This team is composed of external consultants from a private company, managers of the telecommunication sector, staff from the Regional administration and trade union representatives.

The Teleworking Project Team was in charge of several arrangements prior to the introduction of teleworking¹. The first step was to select the potential teleworkers among *Servizi*'s employees. One of the objectives of this teleworking project was to decrease commuting times, in order to select civil servants potentially interested in the teleworking experiment, it was necessary to have a general knowledge of the geographical location and dimension of their commuting movements. These studies revealed that 1,219 *Servizi*'s civil servants are commuters; 781 live in the chief Council of *Servizi* and 438 in other Councils.

The next step was to calculate the number of future teleworkers who were willing to take part in the experiment. The organisers of the Teleworking Project decided to start with a limited number of teleworkers. In this way it would be possible to check the impact of teleworking within the organisation, avoiding the problems of a larger group.

In order to select the future teleworkers, it was also necessary to acquire the consent of *Servizi*'s civil servants. *Servizi* distributed a semi-structured questionnaire to potential teleworkers, chosen from the above analysis. These questionnaires aimed to investigate both professional duties and availability to telework. The results were very encouraging: more than 86% of the workers were willing to telework. However, some of these workers did not have the minimum requirements to carry out work from a distance. For example, some of them were unsuitably employed; others lived in very small houses which did not provide the minimum space for teleworking. The teleworkers for this experiment were chosen

¹ The summary of *Servizi*'s Teleworking Project derives from a series of reports provided by this public body. For the sake of privacy, these reports are not acknowledged in this thesis.

according to the following factors: the levels of interaction with their colleagues and superiors, the degree of interdependence and work autonomy, the need to consult information, resources, documentation in the office, and the availability of space for working at home. All this information was collected via questionnaires and personal interviews with the teleworkers and teleworkers' supervisors, and the number of potential teleworkers was reduced to eighty-nine.

The next step was to acquire the consent of office managers. Their point of view was important in order to confirm what the workers had written in the questionnaire about their suitability for working from a distance and to verify if they were willing to accept the introduction of teleworking to their organisation. The general attitude of office managers revealed a major obstacle. Although these managers were proud to take part to this initiative, they were worried about adopting this new form of control based on results. This aspect will be analysed in section 6.3.1.

Before starting the experiment, the Teleworking Team submitted the working agreement to the future teleworkers and the Trade Union. The main aspect of the agreement was the voluntary participation of the teleworkers. It was also made clear that telework would not involve any changes in their previous hierarchical status or their previous salary. Moreover, no reimbursements would be made for the domestic space utilised for overtime work. Another important aspect is the reversibility of the contract. Teleworkers could interrupt the experiment and to return to their previous office whenever they wanted. Teleworkers could organise their own time. However, they had to guarantee a minimal availability of two hours per day. The company also introduced two office-based days per week. This means that teleworkers must return to their office at least two days every week. During these two days, they could also attend ongoing internal training.

In addition, some meetings were organised in order to check the Project. The teleworkers, managers and the Team Project had to participate in these meetings. In order to monitor the experiment, both teleworkers and the managers had to fill

in a weekly report. This made it possible to control regularly the activities of the teleworkers. The issue of a reporting system will be analysed in depth in section 6.5.1. *Servizi* had to take responsibility for the maintenance of the technological instrumentation. It provided each teleworker with a workstation, software, a printer, a telephone, a telephone line ISDN, a modem and an e-mail address. In addition, *Servizi* verified the safety of the workplace and offered an insurance policy. It also guaranteed access to trade union activities.

The teleworkers' agreement also states that, before starting the experiment, teleworkers must take a training course. This offered a general acquaintance with e-mail and database. Since the training that teleworkers received was mainly technological, teleworkers had to cope alone with the psychological and social problems linked to telework. This aspect will be better explored in Section 6.5.

The first twelve civil servants started teleworking at the end of December 1998 and the remaining twelve at the end of November 1999 (see Table 6.1). In November 2001 other twenty employees started teleworking. These teleworkers are not included in the Table 6.1, since they did not take part in this research.

Table 6.1: *Servizi*'s teleworkers

ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS	1°PHASE TELEWORKERS	2° PHASE TELEWORKERS	TOTAL TELEWORKERS
MANAGERIAL OFFICE	1	2	3
'GENERAL BUSINESS'	3	1	4
LOCAL AGENCIES	1		1
WELFARE OFFICE	2	2	4
TRAINING COURSES & WORK	1	4	5
AGRICULTURE		1	1
HANDICRAFT	1		1
ENVIRONMENT		1	1
PUBLIC BUSINESS	1		1
TERRITORY & BUILDING	2	1	3
TOTAL	12	12	24

The Teleworking Project was constantly checked through the reports filled in every week by the workers. During the experiment the Teleworking Team monitored 2,500 working days. Through this analysis, the Teleworking Team discerned that there had been a growth in productivity. According to the external consultant company, both the managers and the teleworkers were satisfied with this experience. The external telework consultant company revealed that, after an initial resistance, managers agreed that telework had many benefits. For instance: an increase in the productivity and autonomy of the workers, an opportunity to work by objectives, a decrease in absences due to illness and an expected decrease of cost by adopting the desk sharing option.

Teleworkers also confirmed multiple benefits. Examples of these are: better time management because of no longer commuting, a decrease of costs, a decrease of stress, better concentration, an increase of autonomy due to a better organisation of both work and family commitments. No teleworkers felt isolated. The results of the *Servizi*'s telework Project have shown that teleworking can be successfully introduced within the public sector. The positive aspects of teleworking had been already stressed by the '*Bassanini Ter*' law, which had legally introduced teleworking in the public sector.

This section has had a twofold objective: to describe the different stages that *Servizi* followed for introducing telework and also to emphasise the complexity of the phenomenon. Teleworking has been introduced in a highly bureaucratised and rigid organisation and, as it will be stressed later in this chapter, this will raise many implications in terms of issues related to control. In the next four sections, the theoretical framework of the 'Social Dimensions of Control' will be utilised in order to discover the ways through which teleworkers are controlled and other aspects which are relevant for analysing this issue. Examples of these issues are, the impact of teleworking on the hierarchical structure of *Servizi*, on its middle management and on the teleworkers' careers. In addition to the different strategies and practices introduced for managing the remote workforce, there will be a discussion on several teleworking policies such as training and office-based days

in the workplaces, which affect how teleworkers are managed. This chapter will tackle the problems teleworkers' managers experienced for controlling this new workforce from a distance as well as any difficulties teleworkers might experience in managing themselves.

6.3 Teleworking in a bureaucratic organisation: the prevalence of vertical control

This section aims to analyse how *vertical* and *horizontal control* operates within *Servizi*, a highly bureaucratic organisation in the public sector. The advent of a new flexible way of working, such as teleworking, should create more collaboration among teleworkers and managers and widen the hierarchical structure of the work organisation. In *Servizi*, teleworking introduced new methods through which teleworkers are controlled and evaluated. The 'reporting system' represents the main method through which managers and teleworkers plan their work and achieve their objectives. In theory this instrument should facilitate the co-operation between managers and teleworkers. However, many managers resisted teleworking and its new methods for controlling a remote workforce, since they were not adequately prepared for a form of control based on objective achievement (Huws, 1994). As in other research (Huws, 1993, 1994; Phizacklea and Wolkovitz, 1995) managers' opposition to teleworking is also present in this thesis. Teleworkers' managers reacted to this new phenomenon in different ways, and it was possible to create a typology of teleworkers' managers. Each ideal type represents a different way of addressing teleworking and involves a distinct way of controlling teleworkers.

Managers' resistance to a form of control based on objectives, and to teleworking in general represents a form of *vertical control* which prevents the development of lateral relations among teleworkers and their managers. In addition, as several respondents noted, the strong bureaucratic structure of the public body impedes relevant hierarchical and organisational changes within *Servizi*. As the interviewees remarked, teleworking is a recent phenomenon, and

this justifies the lack of transformations. The research also points out teleworkers' lack of career opportunities. This finding reinforces the previous hypothesis that *vertical control* prevails.

6.3.1 Control by objectives and managers' reactions: a typology of teleworkers' managers

Work reports represent the main instruments of planning teleworkers work. The Servizi Team introduced a 'reporting system' whose main aim is to regulate teleworking. It acts through two different phases. First, managers and teleworkers, during their meetings, had to fill in a report together and write down all the activities that the teleworkers should accomplish in a week's time. Afterwards, at the end of the week, the teleworkers have to fill in another report, identical to the previous one, in which they should note the tasks and the activities that they actually completed. The data of all these reports is collected and analysed, and through this method, external consultants were able to monitor the productivity of the teleworkers. Their productivity was monitored only during the initial phase of the project. According to external consultants, this method of control should enhance the collaboration between management and instil self-discipline among teleworkers. Some managers and teleworkers utilised these reports as important tools for organising their daily activity.

We plan the work together, me and my boss; I return to the office one day and half, and we have time to organise the work. We fill in the report together. (Servizi, Teleworker 4)

However, not all the managers utilise these reports for effectively controlling their remote employees. External consultants had foreseen a certain resistance from middle management. As many public bodies, control in *Servizi* mainly relies on checking the presence of the employees in the office. Consultants thought that the common activity of filling in the report would facilitate the shift from a form of direct and personal control to a form of control based on lateral relations. Ideally teleworking should develop a *horizontal* widening and generate more collaboration

between managers and teleworkers. However, the organisational structure of *Servizi* is too bureaucratic and hierarchical. Teleworkers' managers are normally chosen according to their specialist expertise, and, officials holding higher positions have authority over those lower down. An organisation of work based on objective achievement means a bypass of hierarchical relations and can be translated into a loss of power from the managers point of view.

However, control by objectives was not the only problem for teleworkers' managers, an insufficient cultural preparation also impedes the development of new methods for controlling the teleworkers. It was possible to generate a typology of different teleworkers' supervisors: the 'innovative managers', the 'charitable managers', the 'bequeathed managers' and the 'resistant managers'. Each category of managers reflect a different attitude towards teleworking and different managerial styles.

► **The 'innovative managers'**

The 'innovative managers' are in favour of the further development of telework. These managers think that telework should increase not only because it is beneficial for *Servizi*'s employees, but also because it can be profitable for the whole organisation. They are in favour of a more attentive planning and an increase of work flexibility. As a manager affirmed, flexibility and attentive planning have an important role for controlling teleworkers:

The main issue is flexibility. I perceived that among my colleagues there is no flexibility at all! Many managers are still stuck in a controller role. Teleworking requires a managerial role, and control should be based on results. (Servizi, Manager 1)

These managers utilise the weekly report as a valid instrument for planning the workload with their teleworkers and for checking if they have accomplished their work. Some teleworkers expressed their satisfaction in the way they have been managed.

My boss is a really clever person. I have never had the feeling of being controlled. When he phones me it's just because he needs something urgent. He is the main organiser of telework, he believes in this and he's really flexible. We meet together once a week and we fill in the report together. That's all, I haven't experienced any problems. (Servizi, Teleworker 2)

Respondents suggested that the 'innovative managers' are just a minority. This confirms the findings of previous research which pointed out that teleworkers' managers find it difficult to control teleworkers by setting up targets and monitoring the completion of the work by checking objectives. (see Huws, 1994; Phizacklea and Wolkivitz, 1995; Felstead *et al.* 2003). In addition, managers also fear losing personal control over their employees.

► **The 'charitable managers'**

Control by objectives is a difficult task. Some managers do not resist the introduction of teleworking, however they try to avoid control by output. These are the 'charitable managers'. They have accepted teleworking because they wanted to help their employees and regard teleworking as a charitable intervention. The main telework organiser stressed this point:

I talked to some teleworkers' supervisors, and I realised that in many cases they accepted teleworking because they wanted to satisfy their employee's needs. Probably his/her employee had family commitments or personal problems. I don't think this attitude is correct. It's true, it is necessary to consider employees' needs, but this is not the right approach. If we want to talk seriously about teleworking, we must take into account the whole organisation, not the single individual. (Servizi, Manager 1)

It must be said that the whole Teleworking Project emphasises these social aspects of teleworking. For this reason some managers expressed this 'charitable' attitude.

In Servizi teleworking is mainly organised by considering employees' personal needs. She [the teleworker under her supervision] had a series of personal commitments; consequently she needs to work from home. (Servizi, Manager 2)

She decided to do teleworking because she had family problems, so we have tried to help her. Since telework is a recent phenomenon, we had to find a new job for her. So, she started to file documents. (Servizi, Manager 3)

This perception of teleworking as a charitable initiative is not a completely misguided approach. However, it does not represent a realistic and positive attitude for promoting teleworking. These managers do not consider this new form of employment as profitable for the whole institution. For this reason, they do not want to increase the number of teleworkers in their own office. As a telework organiser affirmed:

Many managers have accepted teleworking in order to make their employees happy. The majority of them perceive telework as a charity. 'Poor ladies', they said, and then they allowed them to telework. They didn't see the organisational aspect of this issue. (Servizi, Manager 4)

Many managers claimed that it would be impossible to manage more than one or two teleworkers.

I don't think I will be able to increase the number of teleworkers. I think that two teleworkers will be too much in this department. They will impinge too much on the efficiency of this structure. Telework creates a loss of efficiency. It's not because the teleworker is not working, or is not well organised, but because there are blackouts or the PC stops working. If you are in the office we can immediately solve the problem. It is different when you work from home. (Servizi, Manager 5)

Regarding teleworking as a social help for employees also affects the ways in which supervisors control their own teleworkers. These managers allow their employees to telework because they want to help them. Consequently, control is based on trust.

I leave the teleworkers free to do their own job. They've worked with me for several years. I trust them. I think it's important for them to think that their supervisor trusts them. (Servizi, Manager 3)

Yes, how can I control her? Actually I don't have the time to control her. It's several years that I know this employee. I know that she is a responsible person. I don't even consider the issue of control, I trust her. (Servizi, Manager 3)

'Trust' can represent an aspect of control by distance, but it has to be coupled with other aspects, such as planning and objectives attainment. Teleworkers must send in a weekly report. This was meant to be the standard way to evaluate teleworkers; the report was compulsory during the experimental phase. Now, many managers no longer ask for these reports, or they do not read them. They claim that they do not need them because they trust their workers. Qualitative interviews suggested that control based on trust is mainly typical among managers who perceive telework as a charitable initiative. These managers are not against teleworking; however they are not personally committed to the telework project. They involuntarily resist the project in two ways: first they do not want to increase the number of teleworkers under their control; second, they do not want to change their method of control. For them, control is based mainly on trust.

► **The 'bequeathed managers'**

The third category of teleworkers' managers is composed of 'bequeathed managers'. These managers accepted teleworking, since they happened to have a teleworker in their office. Normally, these managers just moved to another office and discovered only later that they had a teleworker to supervise. Similarly to the 'charitable managers', they tried to avoid a form of control based on objective achievement.

Some of them, honestly revealed their fears and suspicions about teleworking when they first moved into the new office. In one department a teleworker was ready to start, her supervisor gave informal consent, then he moved to another office and the new manager was forced to accept the situation. The manager did not hide his initial fears of teleworking and supervising an experimental project.

They asked for my consent. Basically they needed it to start the telework project. Teleworking was like a bomb for me. I didn't even

know my employees and I had to organise teleworking activities, which was a new thing for everybody. Everything was ready to go. They were just waiting for the manager's signature. (Servizi, Manager 4)

The 'bequeathed managers' have a neutral attitude towards telework. They are not committed to it, however they are not against this new way of working. Even if these managers accepted telework, they do not want to increase the number of teleworkers in their office. In addition, some of the 'bequeathed managers' would prefer to have teleworkers back in their office. So they asked teleworkers to return to the office for a longer stay.

Yes, this month I don't telework. My boss asked me to work here because my colleague is on holiday. There is no problem for me to come back if it's necessary. (Servizi, Teleworker 5)

The increase of office-based days revealed a hidden rejection of teleworking and of control based on outputs. These managers do not want to stop teleworking, but they prefer to have teleworkers in the office more often. By having their employees present in their office it becomes easier avoiding a more attentive planning and the organisation of short-term targets.

The 'bequeathed managers' conceive the development of telework as something outside their will. Consequently they do not really want to introduce substantial changes to their ways of managing their employees.

I treat him in the same way I treat my other employees. There is not much difference. We organise a meeting where we plan all the activities together. (Servizi, Manager 5)

The managers who belong to this category were new in the office. When they first arrived they did not know their employees, teleworkers included. Consequently, their method of control was not solely based on trust like the 'charitable managers'. They prefer to control teleworkers by using more professional techniques such as planning and appraising teleworkers' reports. However, control based on trust still exists, and it becomes more common when managers start to know their employees better.

At the beginning I didn't know anybody. I was reading her reports. Now she carries on sending her weekly reports, I don't read them anymore. I trust her. (Servizi, Manager 4)

Like the 'charitable managers', the 'bequeathed managers' did not introduce many organisational changes for managing teleworkers. Many of them used the 'report system' only during the initial part of the project and then utilised more traditional forms of control.

► **The 'reluctant managers'**

Other managers, the 'reluctant managers' strongly resisted teleworking in many ways. Some managers openly resist telework by affirming that in their office any type of work can be carried out from a distance. They want to preserve their privilege of controlling the workers by relying on their physical presence in the office and thus avoiding the difficult task of planning medium and short-term targets. These managers were quite skilled in finding excuses for preventing teleworking. For instance, some managers impede teleworking, by saying that certain activities were not suitable for being carried out from home.

I asked to telework two years ago. My daughter was 3 years old, and I had personal problems as well. I asked to telework, then, against the opposition of my supervisor. I asked to change office. I had to move to another office because in the previous one there were no activities suitable for teleworking. I might say that it isn't completely true, the tasks existed, but my previous boss preferred to have me in the office. (Servizi, Teleworker 4)

Teleworking was a real battle for me. I have to say that the people with whom I was working 'were putting a stick between my legs'² (Servizi, Teleworker 4)

Some managers discouraged their employees from teleworking or at least dissuaded them from teleworking under their control. Some managers encouraged

² To put a stick between somebody legs, means to stop somebody doing something in an indirect way. In this specific case the teleworker's manager could not hinder telework without any reasons, so he had to find an excuse.

their teleworkers to change office. Others penalised teleworkers in their final evaluation:

I have always attained my planned objectives. However the final evaluation can be different from supervisor to supervisor. For example, with the previous supervisor I noticed I was slightly penalised, I thought that my final evaluation was incorrect, I was expecting something more, I worked so hard. Later, I understood that telework affected my final evaluation. With the new manager it is much better. Yes, there are people who tolerate control by checking results, others who want your presence at any cost and really hate telework. Luckily, none of my bosses tried to stop me from teleworking. (Servizi, Teleworker 8)

In addition, the teleworkers' agreement is renewable each year. This means that changes of managers might influence the overall telework project. This creates a sense of precariousness among teleworkers, because if their supervisors are against telework they might have to return to the company.

Yes, this problem of precariousness is a hot issue, now that managers are changing offices every three months. I think this is a big problem for the teleworkers. At the first stage you reach your aim and you start teleworking. Normally people ask to telework because they have some personal problems or other family commitments. And you say: 'I have achieved something important'³. Afterwards you change your boss and you see the insecurity of this way of working. If you have a new boss and your boss decides that it is no longer OK, you might have to stop teleworking. (Servizi, Teleworker 2)

Although managers and teleworkers revealed that control by objective was a big limitation for managing teleworkers and introducing this form of working, this was not the only problem. Respondents revealed that this cultural resistance impedes a full development of this phenomenon. This cultural resistance is evident among the 'reluctant managers' who try to prevent teleworking, among the 'charitable managers' who conceive teleworking as a personal concession and among the

³ The important thing that this employee has achieved is being able to work from home.

‘bequeathed managers’ who see teleworking as something that has been imposed against their will.

Apart from teleworkers who had to refer to these managers ‘reluctant’ to the adoption of teleworking, in overall teleworkers noticed that this new type of working improve the relations with their superiors. They claimed that these improvements were due to the distance that working at home introduced. Many teleworkers noted that communication by distance creates more democratic relations. Probably, for this same reason, some managers show a negative attitude towards teleworking. As the next section will show, the rigid bureaucratic structure itself hinders teleworking and the changes that this phenomenon would normally develop.

6.3.2 *Servizi*’s bureaucratic organisational structure

In the analysis of teleworking in *Servizi*, it is important to take into account two different aspects. First, this organisation is located in the public sector, which is conventionally characterised by a very strong bureaucratic structure. Second, it is composed of 4,800 employees, and consequently the 24 teleworkers represent a minority. Moreover, these teleworkers are dispersed among several departments. These two aspects have wider implications for an analysis of control in terms of *vertical* and *horizontal* dynamics. *Servizi* is organised in several departments, each one characterised by the same hierarchical structure. At the top there is a general manager, then the middle management called the ‘quadri’⁴ and finally the employees. The teleworkers’s agreement stipulates that only clerical employees can work from home. Changing the hierarchical structure would demand a total re-organisation of this public institution.

A lateral phenomenon, such as telework did not affect the hierarchical structure of this public body. Despite this, some managers revealed that recently *Servizi*

⁴ The ‘quadri’ are located between the managers and the employees. They do not have the same power as the managers. However, they can still organise the employees’ tasks. They represent the middle management of the company.

underwent a *horizontal* expansion. Now, with the introduction of teamworking there is more collaboration among managers, middle management and employees. A manager confirmed that there have been some changes; however these changes took place before the introduction of telework. Consequently, this new type of employment is not directly responsible for any crucial organisational transformations.

I can say that there is a strong hierarchical structure in Servizi. However, recently, there have been some internal changes. We moved from a purely hierarchical system into an organisation which is more transversal...Teleworkers work individually; however they co-operate all together in teams. From time to time we meet for planning our activities. In everyday life, they are independent and autonomous. (Servizi, Manager 5)

In addition, this company enhanced its flexibility by adopting different forms of part-time work. Many teleworkers associate telework with part-time work. This linkage is understandable, since both telework and part-time work increase flexibility. Some teleworkers perceived that, at its initial stage, telework was not well received, particularly by the managers. As evidence revealed, there was much cultural resistance which hindered the diffusion of this new form of employment. However, teleworkers understood this cultural block as a normal developmental stage, and were firmly convinced that in few years' time telework would be accepted and become as widespread as part-time employment.

I lived through the introduction of part-time jobs. At the beginning it seemed unreal. Now we have different types of part-time work, from 30% to 80%. It has been a real success, I hope it will be the same for telework. (Servizi, Teleworker 6)

Teleworkers understand that the main problems the new form of employment must cope with are cultural, and they are aware that this will take time. As evidence suggested, telework, following in the steps of the part-time job, will enhance flexibility in *Servizi*. An increase of flexibility in work will bring a horizontal widening within its hierarchical and organisational structure.

The rigid bureaucratic structure of *Servizi* does not facilitate a work environment and a work culture suitable for teleworking. This affects the methods through which teleworkers are controlled (e.g. an avoidance for control based teleworkers' outputs) and, as the next section will discuss, the autonomy teleworkers can exercise over their work and their career opportunities as well.

6.3.3 Teleworkers' career and autonomy over their work

A discussion of *vertical* and *horizontal* dimensions of control brings to light the issue of teleworkers' careers. Were *Servizi*'s employees allowed to increase their career opportunities by teleworking? Did teleworking enhance their autonomy and independence? A positive answer to these questions would have involved a development of horizontal forces. This was not the case for *Servizi*.

Servizi is a public body, consequently the process of career promotions is very slow, structured and bureaucratised. A few years ago *Servizi*'s employees could advance in their career only according to their work seniority. Nowadays, managers' final evaluation plays an important role for career advancement. In theory, teleworkers have the same career opportunities as internal workers. Consequently, they are not penalised from the legal point of view. However, if we consider other issues, they miss many chances to climb the hierarchical ladder. It is also important to take into account how the concept of career has recently expanded from its original meaning.

While in the past the term 'career' simply involved an improvement of the social status within the hierarchical structure, nowadays this concept entails wider implications. For many workers, career advancement also means achieving more responsibilities or dealing with different situations and tasks, even if this does not involve an increase of salary or social status. In *Servizi*, to climb the social ladder is more difficult than in the private sectors, since the promotion system is slower and more bureaucratised. Many teleworkers find themselves penalised in terms of

career opportunities in the sense that they have to do repetitive tasks, such as data entry, in order to telework. In other words, teleworking deskills.

Our career depends on the amount of years spent in the company. It is different from the private sector. We feel less this lack of career opportunities⁵. I realise that we have the same rights as the internal employees, however we have fewer responsibilities and probably a boring job, such as data entry. (Servizi, Teleworker 6)

My work is going well and I don't have any problem with my boss. Yes, but I have to say that the work is quite static. You deal with limited tasks in the office and then you carry on doing the same thing from home. I think that teleworkers could do other things. (Servizi, Teleworker 7)

Some teleworkers admit that, in order to telework, they had to change their job. The majority of them do not complain about this; they prefer to do a routine job and stay at home. They are aware that they must make some choices. One choice is leaving an interesting job and starting a more boring one, such as data entry.

Another aspect, which has expanded the meaning of 'career', is the concept of mobility: the opportunity to do similar jobs in other workplaces. For example, an employee might change office and department and carry on doing the same job. It would be likely that the employee would not change his/her status and would receive the same salary. However, the employee could perceive an improvement in his/her career, in the sense that, s/he might acquire new skills or work in a more prestigious environment. *Servizi's* posts are advertised monthly and many positions are available to internal workers. Teleworkers are allowed to change their positions and departments if they want to. However, it will be very difficult for them to find a new job, which can be carried out from home. In fact, teleworkers face two problems. First, the activity has to be considered suitable for teleworking, and second, they have to gain the consent of the new manager.

⁵ This teleworkers points out that in the public sector career advancement is a slow and difficult process. She admits that telework hinders career opportunities. However this is not the main problem. The main point is that teleworkers must do only repetitive jobs.

I think that many employees could telework in Servizi. Many other activities exist, which can be carried out from a distance. It is quite common that the manager of the department is against telework. This is a problem; for example if I wanted to change office, I would have to face many difficulties. I have been offered a consultancy job. However, the handicap is telework itself. They prefer people who work from the office. (Servizi, Teleworker 6)

I like my job and I don't want to change it. It is difficult to find another job, which can be carried out from home, and then it is also difficult to find a manager who is in favour of telework. I know that one of my colleagues was able to change office. However it was difficult, it isn't automatic. We receive an internal bulletin, which also advertise new appointments, and I have never seen a telework post advertised. At the moment I don't want to change my job. I don't care about career advancement. I get on well with my boss and colleagues and it's enough for me. (Servizi, Teleworker 2)

During a teleworking meeting some teleworkers raised this problem. They proposed creating a specific bulletin dedicated to teleworkers' jobs. The aim of this initiative was gaining more security. The majority of teleworkers were satisfied with their job. They did not care about career advancement, but they were scared of the precariousness of their telework agreement. For example, the arrival of a new manager is a potential risk for telework.

Another aspect that prevents teleworkers climbing the social ladder is the importance given to employees' physical presence within *Servizi*. Teleworkers are not in their own office for three days per week, and this is a big problem if they have to deal with urgent situations. Presence is particularly important within the public sector.

It is normal, if you can rely on somebody who is in the office five days per week, eight, hours per day; it is obvious you will give him certain responsibilities. I have to say that on site employees who do the same job as a teleworker, have different responsibilities. We can be contacted by phone, however, if there is an emergency. You need somebody who is always in the office. (Servizi, Teleworker 6)

It's the same as part-time employment; you can be excluded from career advancement. We are in the public sector; one's presence is really important. (Servizi, Teleworker 3)

Even managers admit this:

Honestly, I think that teleworkers are penalised in terms of career opportunities. It is clear; in the public sector it is important to guarantee a permanent presence. I take for granted that when you give responsibilities to somebody, you tend to choose somebody who can guarantee his/her physical presence in the office. I also believe that whoever has decided to telework took this issue into consideration. (Servizi Manager 2)

Yes, they are penalised; this is an objective problem. Some activities through which you can have an upgrade do not require a constant presence; but they require a flexible presence. For example you can be asked to work at night, to come back on Saturdays. Obviously, if you chose to telework it is because you need to stay at home more, and so it is not convenient for you to return the office at night. (Servizi Manager 4)

Since control is still based on the physical presence of the employees in their workplace, it is natural that many managers would penalise teleworkers. Again, this attitude reflects the lack of a cultural *ouverture* to teleworking and an open resistance to a form of control based on results.

- ❖ Qualitative data underlines the presence of *vertical control* within *Servizi*. The management strategy of the weekly report, should have enhanced flexibility and more co-operation among teleworkers and managers. However, managers resisted this new form of control based on objectives achievement. Evidence also suggested that *Servizi* was culturally unprepared to receive this new way of working. The strong bureaucratic structure of this public body was not keen on the growth of a flexible work environment. Teleworking was mainly perceived as a social help for workers and not as option for increasing the efficiency of *Servizi*. As mentioned in Chapter 4, one of the objectives of the '*Bassanini Ter Law*' is to increase flexibility and efficiency in the public sector. However, teleworking did not bring relevant changes within the organisational and hierarchical structure of the public organisation. All these elements have relevant consequences on the devices utilised for controlling teleworkers. Although some teleworkers reported

enjoying better working conditions, data suggested that control still follows hierarchical lines. It is important to be aware that telework has been introduced into a highly bureaucratised public body. As the next section will show, in a such work environment the exercise of *central control* is very important.

6.4 Reinforcing central control

This section focuses on how *central* and *decentred control* operates within *Servizi*. According to the theoretical framework of the Social Dimensions of Control, *central control* involves any forms of control which has as main source the workplace. According to this research, it is important to reinforce the links between the company and the teleworkers, since being at home, they might feel detached from the company and experience problems in organising their daily activities. In addition, managers, by reinforcing central control, can better cope with the absence of teleworkers from the company. In order to reinforce central control, several management practices and policies have been introduced.

One of these is office based-days. Teleworkers must return to their on site office twice a week. This point is clearly stated in their new telework agreement. Compulsory office-based days were introduced for lessening the sense of isolation and for helping them with the organisation of their work. Teleworkers, in fact, would not be able to work from home without returning at least once a week to their on site office.

Moreover, this public body utilises teamworking, daily contact hours, telephone calls and e-mails to facilitate control from a distance and stimulate teleworkers' commitment to company aims. In addition to central control, some other *decentred* operations take place, such as feedback from external clients and consultants. However, these have a minor role and *central control* prevails.

6.4.1 Centralising control through ‘office-based days’

Compulsory office-based days might be considered a relevant management policy which aims to strengthen central control. Although in many work organisations re-visit days are an option and are conventionally introduced for reinforcing corporate values among teleworkers, in *Servizi* the situation is different. The majority of teleworkers must return to the company, otherwise they would not be able to carry out their job from home. The existence of compulsory office-based days reinforces and strengthens *central control*. Through an analysis of qualitative data it is possible to elaborate on a typology of office-based days: ‘office-based days for instruction’, ‘task-oriented office-based days’, ‘flexible office-based days’, ‘forced office-based days’ and ‘social/cultural office-based days’. The development of these concepts will be helpful in understanding how these re-visits to the company can strengthen *central control* and have implications for the ways in which teleworkers are managed.

► Office-based days for instruction

Employees who have been selected for teleworking are people whose job involves limited interactions with their colleagues or supervisors. They have to demonstrate the ability to be autonomous and self-sufficient in order to be able to work from home. However, by agreement all teleworkers must return to their office at least twice per week. Some of these teleworkers utilise these revisiting days for planning their activities with their supervisors.

When I return to the office I must plan my own activities. I’m used to planning with my ‘quadro’⁶. We organise everything together. She tells me which are the most urgent tasks. Sometimes I finish all the urgent work, then I do something else. (Servizi, Teleworker 4)

This type of re-visit to the workplace is called ‘office-based days for instruction’. Teleworkers, in fact, must return to their on-site office for taking instructions

⁶ As I have already explained in section 6.3.1 the office managers are legally responsible for the teleworkers. However, in many cases teleworkers’ managers do not organise their daily activities. These are managed by the ‘quadri’, who represent the middle management.

about what they must do. These office-based days show an open attitude towards teleworking and a way of control based on objectives achievement. Returning to the office is a way of establishing a mutual interaction between teleworkers and their work organisation. These types of office-based days enhance flexibility and *central control*.

► **‘Task-oriented office-based days’**

As mentioned in the previous section, *Servizi* is a very bureaucratic body. The organisation of work is still based on hard-copy documents, and a teleworker’s presence in the workplace is in many cases a necessary requirement. Many teleworkers say that they must return to their on-site office because some work related tasks can be done only within the organisation. As a teleworker said:

I need to come back to the office because I deal with agents who spend a certain period abroad. I check their documents from home; then they have to be signed by my manager. Once signed, the manager sends them back to me and I have to forward letters and photocopy them. So, I really need to be in the office; it would be impossible to carry out my job by working solely from home. (Servizi, Teleworker 5)

Servizi’s teleworkers must return to their on site office twice a week for taking home or handing in documents to their supervisors. During one interview, one teleworker affirmed:

In my case it would be impossible to telework without returning to my on-site office. In my case it’s necessary. Obviously the people that are doing data-entry probably can avoid this if they want to. (Servizi, Teleworker 5)

Despite this comment, interviews reveal that even teleworkers who deal with data-entry must come back in order to collect documentation because it is quicker to use the internal database. Telework in this public body did not introduce a virtualisation of work, which is still directed by the rigid bureaucratic rules for internal workers. Office-based days are thus mandatory. Other quotes confirm these findings:

I return to the office twice a week and I stay at home three days per week. My work is mainly data-entry. I know that some activities have to be done in Servizi. It is also a question of line. If I have to use the PC and connect to the Servizi network I do it from here. (Servizi, Teleworker 1)

In this case, teleworkers return to *Servizi* because they must. This necessity of being back to the office reinforces *central control*, but it does not develop flexible work practices and supports the ‘philosophy’ that being present in the office is still important.

► **‘Flexible office-based days’**

Telework should increase the company’s flexibility. Some managers, in order to organise the work of their department in a more flexible way, extend the revisiting period of their teleworkers. Some teleworkers confirmed that from time to time their managers ask them to return to the company for a certain period. *Servizi* is a public organisation and in many cases must respect very strict deadlines. For this reason, teleworkers were asked to return to the company for a prolonged period to help internal workers cope with urgent work.

What I’m doing now is not my standard job. We are doing the ‘730’⁷. This work has to be done in the office, so I’m not teleworking for few weeks. (Servizi, Teleworker 1)

Similarly, some managers ask their teleworkers to return to the office in conjunction with a decrease of internal staff, for example, when some employees are on holiday.

One of my employees is on holiday, so I asked X [teleworker] to return to her office for a brief period. She will work in her office for a while, there are no problems. Obviously this isn’t common. Anyway the main aim of teleworking is to enhance flexibility. (Servizi, Manager 5)

⁷ The ‘730’ form deals with certain kind of public taxes.

As this manager explicitly affirmed, teleworking should enhance flexibility. Regular revisiting can both enhance flexibility and *central control* if it is planned in a correct way. By asking teleworkers to return to the workplace, managers can easily cope with an urgent situation. Moreover, teleworkers might be pleased to be useful to the company, and this will strengthen their loyalty to the company. However, if these long stays are not the result of a flexible organisation, but a lack of time management, these arrangements will generate the opposite results.

► **‘Forced office-based days’**

From time to time teleworkers are asked to spend more time in the work organisation than they are supposed to, for no particular reason. This type of revisiting is called ‘forced office-based days’. Conventionally, *Servizi*’s teleworkers return to their office twice a week. However, some of them return three times a week. The telework agreement specifies the minimum time -two days per week- that teleworkers must spend in their office, but it does not say anything about the maximum time. In addition, teleworkers have been asked to return to their office for a prolonged period.

Some teleworkers were not happy about this change. It was not convenient for them to return to the on-site office so often. In fact, they have chosen to telework in order to spend more time at home. In addition, this form of office-based days may be interpreted as a lack of consideration for teleworking itself. Some managers, who are not really fond of telework, found it convenient to ask their teleworkers to return to their office three times per week instead of two. In this way they avoid organisational problems linked to teleworking, such as planning the work according to medium term targets. Consequently teleworkers returned to their on site office because they were forced to, but they did not appreciate their manager’s behaviour. ‘Forced office-based days’ risk making them lose their identity as ‘teleworkers’, since they spend more time in their office than at home. Also they no longer feel part of the company.

The contract states a minimum number of office-based days in the office. However, it doesn't say anything about the maximum number. At this moment I come back to my office three days per week. I can't really say that I'm teleworking, I spend more time here [in the office] than at home. Yes, it is better than nothing, I can stay two days per week with my son; however at the beginning it was not like this. (Servizi, Teleworker 1)

Teleworkers perceive that they can telework just because their supervisors cannot avoid it. Hence this method of organising office-based days did not reinforce *central control*. The 'forced office-based days' reflect the traditional way of controlling employees, which relies on personal surveillance. This attitude is counterproductive for the management of remote workers.

► **The 'social and cultural based-days'**

Isolation is a common phenomenon among teleworkers, consequently *Servizi* telework consultants decided to introduce compulsory office-based days for social reasons as well. If teleworkers returned to the on-site office twice a week they would feel as much a part of the company as their colleagues, and they would feel less isolated. Evidence demonstrated that these compulsory office-based days have been beneficial for helping them to cope with the sense of isolation that they might experience in working from home. As a teleworker revealed:

If there weren't two office-based days a week, I would never have chosen to telework. I would rather commute every day. (Servizi, Teleworker 1)

However, some teleworkers experienced a sense of detachment from the company. The feeling of being apart from their colleagues is common experience.

Telework has its disadvantages as well. One disadvantage is that when you telework you miss office news. I noticed that I can't interact with my colleagues in the same way as before. I lost the interactions with people. You can no longer have the same friendships. You lose many contacts, and then if there are some changes in the office, they [internal colleagues or supervisors] let you know only afterwards, when you return to the office. (Servizi, Teleworker 5)

This organisation also co-ordinates some training courses for both teleworkers and internal workers. These have several objectives: to expand knowledge about their job, to keep them updated about what is going on in the company, and to socialise with the other internal workers. This internal training should strengthen teleworkers' attachment to the company, but not increase the number of days that they must return. The majority of teleworkers decided to start working from home because they had personal problems or other commitments, which would make it difficult for them to come back to their on-site offices more than twice a week. Some teleworkers' managers try to encourage their participation in these meetings by taking into account teleworkers' needs. For example, some managers try to organise internal meetings on the same days that teleworkers are supposed to return to the company.

I organise some meetings with my employees, at least two meetings a month. I try to gather 55 people and we discuss some common problems. Whenever I organise these meetings, I always try to take into consideration teleworkers' needs. I always try to choose the days when teleworkers are supposed to return to their offices. If it is not possible to plan the meeting on that day, they can change their revisiting. I try to be very flexible. I have been told that some managers forget to consider these things. (Servizi, Manager 1)

Yes, I attend some internal training courses. They phone me and ask: 'X, there is this training, course is that OK for you?' Normally they organise these internal meetings according to my office-based days. Everybody from my office is so kind to me. (Servizi Teleworker 4)

These and other quotes bring to light teleworkers' appreciation of their managers. Their managers bother to call them and discuss with them the date of the next meeting, so they feel an active part of their office. However, other teleworkers also revealed that, in some cases, managers do not take their commitments into consideration, and often they receive an e-mail at the last minute. This creates a gap between the teleworkers and the internal employees. In contrast, well planned social revisits reinforce central control, because they create an umbilical cord between teleworkers and the organisation.

As evidence suggests, the teleworking policy of compulsory 'office-based days' can be helpful for teleworkers. By spending two days per week in the workplace they can better organise their work and still feel part of their work organisation. However, an abuse of this policy can produce negative effects, such as hindering a form of control based on results.

6.4.2 Other methods for strengthening central control and some decentred dynamics

Central control is reinforced by other management practices and policies, such as teamworking, the daily use of e-mail and the introduction of compulsory contact hours. Teamworking is widely employed by *Servizi*. Conventionally, large corporations use teamworking as management strategy aimed at boosting morale among employees, strengthening their sense of belonging to their company and increasing their productivity. In contrast, in *Servizi* teamworking represents a bureaucratic division of work rather than a management strategy for increasing productivity and the flexibility. Every office has its team, and teleworkers take part in these teams as well. To a certain extent, teleworkers are less involved in teamworking but more autonomous in their work. Otherwise they would not be able to telework. They regard their team mainly as a reference point.

Conventionally Servizi's employees are organised in teams. Teamworking is mainly a bureaucratic division. Within the team there are many tasks which can be done just by one person. The same is true for on-site workers. For example, in my office there is one person who always does the same tasks, because she is specialised in this kind of job. Teleworkers have got a team, of course. It's a reference point for them, however they can do their own activities alone. (Servizi, Manager 1)

As a consequence, although teamworking was seen by teleworkers as positive support for their work, it cannot be considered as a valuable strategy for strengthening *central control*. In addition to teamworking, the use of e-mail can be considered an important device for supporting *central control*, since it facilitates

communication by distance between the office and the teleworkers. Teleworkers can contact their supervisors and their colleagues at any time.

Even before teleworking I sent work via e-mail. It's clear that now I tend to use e-mails more often. (Servizi, Teleworker 3)

In addition to e-mail, *Servizi* also introduced an electronic boards and created its own website, so its employees are aware of what is going on inside the company.

Another teleworking policy which reinforces *central control* was the introduction of daily contact hours. In *Servizi* teleworkers must be available two contact hours per day. During these contact hours they must be at home and available. Contact hours help teleworkers to keep them in touch with their on-site colleagues and supervisors. At the beginning both teleworkers and on-site employees had to confront many problems, some of them due to a lack of daily communication. The compulsory contact hours proved to be a very useful method for solving unexpected problems.

At the beginning I had some problems. You need to adapt yourself when you are working from home; there is no immediate feedback. Sometimes they need me. I begin a task in the office and if my colleagues do not understand something, they call me. (Servizi, Teleworker 5)

For many reasons the loss of the physical presence of the workers in their workplace is a serious problem. The above practices aim to compensate for teleworkers' absence in the office and reinforce *central control*.

The workplace is not the only source of control. Other decentred actors, such as *Servizi's* external clients and consultants exercised control over teleworkers. Some teleworkers deal with the payment of consultants and clients. Normally they fill in fee forms and send them to their supervisors, who must sign them. By signing them, the supervisors can check if teleworkers have fulfilled their duties or not. In

addition, teleworkers are subjected to a double control, if they have not done their work, *Servizi*'s consultants complain directly to the teleworkers' managers.

If the payments are not made at the right time, according to the deadlines, I receive phone calls, complaining letters from our external consultants. Sometimes the payment isn't made because there is something wrong with an application, so I have feedback from these consultants. (Servizi, Manager 1)

Apart from this specific case, control mainly derives from the work organisation itself. In *Servizi* central control is an intrinsic characteristic of the overall company. As evidence suggests, being in the office counts and, for this reason the policy of 'office-based days' is relevant within *Servizi*. Although the work organisation plays an important role for teleworkers, it does not provide any support for helping them to develop self-discipline in order to organise their work days. The next section deals with *external control*, which is derived directly from *Servizi*'s bureaucratic structure, and *internal control*, which is devised by teleworkers for managing their own routines.

6.5 Self-teaching as a form of self-discipline: a focus on internal control

In this case study *external* and *internal* forms of *control* coexist. *Servizi* is a very bureaucratic organisation and must organise its work according to periodical deadlines. This exemplifies *external control*. Despite these external limits, *internal control* plays a major role among *Servizi*'s teleworkers. Self-discipline and self-organisation techniques are forms of *internal control*. The main point about *Servizi* is that this public organisation was not culturally prepared for the introduction of telework. Therefore it was not able to provide teleworkers with any psychological or practical support in order to prepare them for a new life style. This affected *Servizi*'s teleworkers in many ways. Notwithstanding some initial difficulties, teleworkers created their own work routines. Teleworkers tend mainly to organise their own days according to work commitments (office times, daily contact hours, office-based days) and family routines (school times, household commitments).

The majority of teleworkers tend to mix the two. Evidence also reveals the presence of a double role among female teleworkers.

6.5.1 External constraints *versus* teleworkers' autonomy

Both *external* and *internal* forms of *control* direct teleworkers. *External control* is associated strictly with the bureaucratic structure of the company. Teleworkers are only partially autonomous. In fact, before organising their own activities, they had to follow the instructions of their supervisors. The majority of teleworkers plan their own activities every week when they return to their on-site office. Supervisors must also establish the priorities for teleworkers. They can organise their own workdays, but must also respect daily contact hours. In addition, *Servizi's* teleworkers must respect strict deadlines, and sometimes they must return to the company for a few weeks. Consequently, *Servizi's* teleworkers are not totally free.

Notwithstanding the presence of external limits, *internal control* represents an important component of telework within *Servizi*. Teleworkers must be autonomous and independent in order to work at home. Many of *Servizi's* managers support this point:

They must be autonomous. They must be able to manage their own problems. Yes, they can still call me, but they have to be autonomous. (Servizi, Manager 1)

They must be able to organise their own work by themselves. They must be able to prioritise, because working at home is not the same thing as working in the office. At home you can be distracted by other things; if you aren't well organised you can't work at home. (Servizi, Manager 3)

INTERVIEWER: If you need something do you contact your own colleagues?

Not very often. At the beginning our supervisor told us, 'If you telework I don't want you to get involve with your colleagues. You must be autonomous, you can't really call here [call the company] every time you need something. They [your colleagues] have to do their job and you can't disturb them.' So I got organised. I seldom ask

my colleagues anything. In my job nothing is extremely urgent, so when I come back to my office I do my own things. (Servizi, teleworker1)

The necessity of teleworkers being autonomous seems to contradict some previous findings, such as a general resistance to control based on output and the need to ask teleworkers to spend more time in the workplace. However, in many cases an emphasis on their autonomy is a reflection of some managers' perspective: 'You have to be autonomous because I don't want to be bothered'. Autonomy, self-discipline and self-sufficiency are perceived either personal attributes of the teleworkers or features that teleworkers must learn by themselves. As evidence suggests, *Servizi* did not provide any particular support for helping teleworkers to develop these characteristics.

6.5.2 The lack of a teleworking culture

Companies which introduce flexibility as a management strategy have their own interests in developing autonomous workers. In many work organisations, not only teleworkers must be autonomous and self-organised, but internal workers as well should develop these characteristics. This is not the case with *Servizi*. The company is based on a bureaucratic way of working, and does not facilitate flexibility.

A manager who took part in this telework project confirmed that this was one of its weak points. The organisation of teleworking focused on teleworkers' technological problems, but ignored cultural issues, which, according to him, play an important role in the organisation of their daily routines.

Yes, there are other problems, which can be classified as cultural. But the majority of telework experts or consultants embrace 'the technological approach', without considering these sociological and psychological aspects. These social aspects are associated with other organisational and existential elements. For instance, training courses focus on new computer programmes. However, I think that the main problem isn't learning Excel, Word or Works. It is to provide teleworkers with the minimum cultural background necessary to re-

think not only their own working condition, but also their new existential condition. Telework changed their existence, not in a radical way, but in a substantial way. It took me a long time to become aware of this problem. Nobody took this issue into consideration. All the attention was given to other problems, such as the new technologies, or juridical aspects. (Servizi, Telework Organiser)

The lack of specific telework training is an example of this cultural gap. *Servizi's* teleworkers took only a basic course in computing and electronic mail, so they had to learn by themselves how to organise their workdays. In addition, the lack of control based on objectives represents another cultural deficiency. Consequently, many managers were culturally unprepared for telework and, others, as has been pointed out in Section 6.3.1, were opposed to the project. Therefore, teleworkers receive little help from their company in the organisation of their work. In theory, external consultants try to introduce a form of control based on objectives. However, this method was not successful. As a consequence, teleworkers had to start learning how to telework by themselves.

6.5.3 Timing the work

Even if *Servizi's* teleworkers did not consciously admit it, they overcome some initial difficulties when they started to telework. Apart from respecting daily contact hours, teleworkers are free to organise their time. However, this freedom was not always perceived as an advantage.

At the beginning I had to get used to this new way of working. Yes, I was like a child who was starting something new. Yes, I had to organise the whole day from the beginning. I had to find the time for everything...I was free to organise my own time. However, I had to reach weekly objectives. Badly organised time could mean that I wouldn't finish my homework. Some weeks I wasn't well organised, so I had to work during the week-end. After few weeks I got used to this. (Servizi, Teleworker 8)

This teleworker compares himself to a child. Like a child he tried something new and he got used to it only by learning from his previous mistakes. The image of the

child confirms *Servizi*'s teleworkers' lack of guidelines and directions which enable them to start working at home.

This first quote also revealed another problem: timing their own workdays. *Servizi* did not introduce any method for quantifying workers' productivity. Many *Servizi*'s teleworkers were unaccustomed to work by objectives and consequently found it difficult to time their own work. Some teleworkers said that they worked more than they were supposed to. This is a problem for *Servizi*'s teleworkers, because they are not supposed to work overtime; in fact overtime work is not paid. According to a *Servizi* manager, longer working shifts are a reaction to a lack of teleworking culture. According to him, teleworkers are not perceived in a positive way by internal colleagues. Therefore some of them work more in order to prove to their own colleagues that they really do work.

At the beginning I noticed I worked more. You're at home and you feel guilty taking breaks. When I'm in the office, if I want to switch off my routine job, I do something else. I tidy my desk, I distribute the post. At home I don't have to do these kinds of things, and at the beginning I didn't have any breaks at all. At home you are alone, your colleagues can't disturb you. You don't have any interruptions. Many times I also say to my self: 'I want to work hard. I want to demonstrate that, even if I work from home, I can do better'. Many people think that, because I'm at home, I don't do anything. Yes, many times I work harder because I want to prove something.... I also read an article about this, about this syndrome [workaholism]. So I made myself take some breaks. Now at 11 AM I drink my coffee, I relax my eyes for 15 minutes and then I work until 1,45 then I go to pick up my daughter and I work till 5 PM. Then I stop if I've done all my work. (Servizi, Teleworker 4)

Yes, sometimes I work more than I'm supposed to. I read an article about this syndrome [workaholism] that may afflict teleworkers, and I see my self in it. You tend to work more, probably because you want to prove to your colleagues that even, if you are at home you really do work. (Servizi, Teleworker 8)

These last quotes demonstrate teleworkers' awareness of being misjudged by their colleagues and supervisors and their reaction to this. In fact, some teleworkers developed self-help strategies in order to cope with problems related to telework.

For example, some teleworkers read lot of material about telework experiences. This reinforces the hypothesis that *Servizi*'s teleworkers did not receive an appropriate training or support from their work organisation. The training mainly focused on technical aspects of teleworking, but it did not prepare them, for this new reality. The weekly report was also perceived as a tool for creating self-discipline. However, it was not widely utilised, so in many cases the development of self-discipline and self management among *Servizi* teleworkers involved a process of self-teaching.

Other teleworkers claimed to work more than in the office and to avoid breaks because they are more relaxed and concentrated.

When you are at home is more difficult to have a break. I concentrate more on my work. Here the work is more dispersed. People come in into your office and they ask you to do something other than normal duties, your standard duties. Sometimes I have been asked to act as a IT technician. My colleagues asked me: 'The printer is not working. Can you have a look for me, please?' Yes, there are negative and positive aspects about this. On one hand, you can have a break; on the other you loose your concentration. Yes, you were doing something very urgent or important and you lose the concentration. At home I'm more focused and this is positive. However, from time to time you need breaks as well. You can't work all the time! At home you tend to work more...There is that risk. Yes, because you are concentrating and you want to finish what you've started. If you are in your office you think that you must take the train and you say : 'At 5,30 I must go'. At home it's different. Normally I finish at 6 –6,30. But if there are important things I carry on working. (Servizi, Teleworker 3)

This quote points out one of the risks of telework: 'workhaolism' (Haddon and Silverstone, 1994; Di Nicola, 1999; Felstead *et al.* 2003). This syndrome is quite common among teleworkers. At homes they are more concentrated, and sometimes they don't realise they are working too much. Some teleworkers also said they worked more since they started teleworking. However, they do not complain about this. They are grateful to their employers for offering them this chance, consequently they are prepared to work more, if necessary. The benefits brought by telework are very high, so that for some teleworkers it is not a big problem to work a few hours without being paid. However, this attitude is not

shared by all teleworkers. Telework is more productive than on-site work. For this reason some teleworkers, by their own initiatives, decided to work less than eight hours a day. If they can produce in less time what they normally produce in the office in eight hours, it is pointless to work more. The Italian public sector is normally characterised by relaxed work rhythms. Public servants tend to have many breaks and, unlike to the private sector, their productivity is not rigidly checked. Consequently, some teleworkers decided to work less than the conventional eight hours.

At the beginning I worked more than I was supposed to. I didn't really know what to do first, how much work I was supposed to do. Then I got organised and I know that I can do my work in less time than in the office... Yes, because at home there's just me and my PC. What I do here in eight hours I can do at home in five. (Servizi, Teleworker 5)

I'm more productive, but I don't work more than eight hours per day, otherwise I wouldn't have chosen to telework. I decided to telework because I wanted to look after my parents and my son. Yes, probably I'm more productive, but I don't work more than I'm supposed to. We are in the public sector. (Servizi, Teleworker 6)

Other respondents revealed contradictory tendencies and tensions. Some teleworkers are prepared to exploit themselves by doing unpaid overtime work in order to carry on teleworking; others became more self-disciplined and self-aware of their workload. Again, these contradictions demonstrate a lack of the clear guidelines which should be provided for the teleworkers by managers.

6.5.4 The new working routines

As evidence has demonstrated, *Servizi* did not provide teleworkers with any cultural background which could have been helpful for the development of self-organisation techniques. Teleworkers had to invent their own strategies of self-discipline and new methods for organising their work.

Some teleworkers regulate their working days according to office rhythms. They do not have to, it is their choice. In fact, teleworkers must respect only the

two daily contact hours. Some teleworkers follow the office timetable, because in this way, if somebody needs them, they can easily be contacted. Through a particular system, they divert their office calls into their home phone. By working in office hours, they do not miss any phone calls.

My ideal day starts at 9AM and finishes at 4,30 PM. Yes, I tend to follow the office timetable. I don't have to, but I prefer to work it in this way. Even if I don't have to be available all the time, from my house phone I can receive my office calls, so I can be reached at any time. (Servizi, Teleworker 8)

Others started to work in conventional working hours, because if they needed any help from the office, it would be easier to find somebody there. Other teleworkers created a total division from work and home. During the working hours she just works and avoids any intrusions.

At the beginning I didn't say to anybody that I started working from home. First, because it was an experiment and then because I wanted to prepare the ground gradually. There isn't any culture about telework, it's considered a stupid thing: you are at home and you do a bit of work and a bit of something else. It's not like this, you should believe in telework. I believe in telework. I don't want any guests around when I'm working. I don't invite anybody for a coffee during my work times. Yes, some friends tried to break my rules, sometimes they asked me: 'Yes, if tomorrow you're at home I can bring you that thing.' I say: 'No, it's better if you come tomorrow night'. The point is that during the day I work, I'm a public servant. (Servizi, Teleworker 4).

This attempt to separate work from home hides a fear: the unconscious dilemma of not being considered as a real worker. The incorporation of work rhythms hides workers' insecurity about organising their own days. However, a total separation between work and the home is not possible and is unproductive. Many of *Servizi's* teleworkers have, in fact, chosen to telework in order to look after their children or because of other family problems. It is also important to underline the fact that this public body has emphasised the social aspects of telework. *Servizi* gave priority to teleworkers with family problems and those who must commute. Consequently the majority of *Servizi's* teleworkers tend to follow their family's rhythms and

incorporate them in their work routines. Children's timetables, such as school times, are considered as a reference point for many teleworkers.

I can describe my standard workday as follows: I wake up at 6 and I switch on my PC at 7. Normally I start working quite early, because afterwards all my children wake up. Then I drive my small daughter to the kindergarden. At 2 o'clock I pick her up, and if I have time I go to buy some bread and some other things that I need. I come back and I start working again. (Servizi, Teleworker 4)

For many teleworkers children's routines are considered a reference point because they work when their children are not at home and they organise their own breaks to coincide with picking them up.

I don't follow a fixed timetable. It's not the same thing as in the office. I can't stop at 5 o'clock and that's all. For example I have to drive my son to the gym. I stop working and take him there, I go shopping, I pick him up and I come back home. Then I start working again at 6, because it's quieter. I'm very flexible. (Servizi, Teleworker 1)

Many of *Servizi's* teleworkers emphasised the positive aspects of teleworking. This new way of working allows many teleworkers to look after their children and to cope with other family commitments. However, teleworking emphasised another problem which already existed among female workers: the double role. A telework manager stressed that the problem of the double role existed even before the introduction of telework. However, teleworking changed the internal dynamics of the household.

Before teleworking, *Servizi's* employees, particularly female employees, had to cope with household duties when they got back from work. For example they would arrive at 6 PM and then had to go shopping, cook the dinner and to finish other housework. In many cases other family members, such as husbands and children collaborated as well. Some teleworkers said that before teleworking they were used to organising a rota for doing the washing up and other small things. This happened because 'Mum was working and she can't do everything alone'. Telework threatened the identities of the workers. Many family members thought:

'Mum is at home, she's doesn't have to work all the time, she can do the washing up alone'. Therefore female teleworkers became full-time workers and full-time mothers or wives. According to a telework manager, the issue of the double role was underestimated both by the teleworkers and the work organisation.

Yes, some teleworkers mentioned these problems. However they are not perceived at a conscious level yet. Only two female teleworkers mentioned this aspect, but they did not consider this as a real problem. This is especially important for female teleworkers, particularly for the issue of the double role. For example, you have a child and you convinced him do the washing up and some other domestic duties, but if you work at home, your son sees you all the time, and he might tell you: 'So you are at home, you can do the washing up by yourself.'
(Servizi, Telework Organiser: 2)

According to this manager, the issue of the double role represents another cultural problem of teleworking. In his experience the company should at least make teleworkers aware of it. Many teleworkers confronted similar problems when they started teleworking.

It's a stupid thing, I have a dish washer. Normally we have dinner and then we load the dish washer. Now, I don't know by what kind of magical mechanism, I have to do it by myself. The main issue was to make your partner and the whole family understand that you are at home, but you're working. Yes, you are at home but you must work. It's difficult to make them understand this point. Everybody had to do his/her own duty. I'm not at home to do housework. I'm at home because I work here and I want to work quietly...I have to fight a lot about this issue. The family thinks, 'You're at home, so you'll think about it'. It was necessary to make them understand that you're there, but, from a functional point of view, you're detached. It's true, if I have to bring the children to the doctor I can. I can fix the appointments outside the contact hours. We have two contact hours per day: one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon. During these times you must be at home. For the rest of the day you can organise your time as you want. (Servizi, Teleworker 4)

These narratives describe the frenetic days of teleworkers. Some female teleworkers find it particularly difficult to share with family members their new social identity of teleworker. Teleworkers can organise their day in a more flexible way, but they still have to work as well. In addition, Servizi's teleworkers must

respect daily contact hours, so they cannot always give priority to their family's commitments.

Respondents revealed that *internal control*, which in this case means self-discipline and self-management, was crucial for teleworkers. Although initially teleworkers confront many difficulties in organising their working day, they were able to develop new coping strategies to organise their work at home. Evidence suggests that *Servizi* teleworkers develop self-discipline through a process of self-teaching. From this case study we learn that the induction training for teleworkers should deal with social and cultural issues related to telework. As we will see in the next section, a teleworking culture should be developed further. *Servizi* teleworkers, not only struggled to organise their routines but also to make themselves visible.

6.6 A struggle for visibility

This section analyses the ways in which *visibility* can be considered an important variable for exercising control over *Servizi*'s teleworkers. A traditional method for controlling the workers relies on observing them while working. With the advent of telework this method of control is no longer possible. *Servizi*'s teleworkers spend most of their time at home, consequently new forms of control had to be introduced. Conventionally, control from a distance can be exercised by checking the results achieved. This can be a response to the lack of visibility of the workers. However, as previous research suggested (Felstead *et al.* 2003), control by results is not an easy option, and other devices must be introduced to compensate for the lack of visibility of the workers.

The lack of visibility is not just a problem for managers, but for teleworkers as well. Many teleworkers felt penalised because they were not in the office. Consequently they devised new strategies in order to show that they exist and that they work hard, even if they work at home.

6.6.1 'If you sit at your desk that means you are working'

Servizi's teleworkers should be controlled through an evaluation of their results. Managers are supposed to evaluate teleworkers by checking if they have achieved the objectives planned through the weekly report. By following this process, the managers will be able to see the results achieved (*invisible control*). However, some managers had difficulties exercising this form of control. Some of them still prefer traditional control based on the presence of employees in the office. These difficulties have both practical and cultural origins. According to telework organisers, managers prefer to have their own employees in the office, because in this way, by seeing them sit in their desk, they can have them under control.

Teleworking is a new thing. Some people may think that if they don't have their employees seated at on their own desks, they'll loose control of their work. It doesn't happen that way. I can stay all day in my office staring at the ceiling and nobody will notice. Telework scared people because it's a new thing. (Servizi, Teleworker 2)

I noticed that many managers don't like teleworking, because they can't check on what their employees are doing. I tried to say that work must not be evaluated according to the employees' presence. The point is that employees can be all the day in their office, but they may do nothing. It's necessary to evaluate the results. I noticed a certain resistance from the mangers' point of view. (Servizi, Manager1)

An evaluation of the teleworkers according to results achieved is more difficult, and *Servizi's* managers are culturally unprepared. As a teleworker pointed out, this situation can have negative effects on career opportunities. Your manager can tell if you are working or not working. However, he might find it difficult to evaluate whether a teleworker is working efficiently or s/he is just doing some work.

I'm aware that you miss career opportunities. Visibility by distance is sufficient to let other people know that you exist. However, you are not physically present. So, if you have to choose somebody for a promotion, you choose somebody who works in the office. (Servizi, Teleworkers 8)

Via e-mails and telephone calls, teleworkers can show that they are working, however they are still penalised because they are not present in the office. This quote signals the importance of both visibility and physical presence in the office (see Felstead *et al.* 2003). Although teleworkers, through regular e-mails and telephone calls, attempted to compensate the lack of visibility, it is difficult to counterbalance the lack of physical presence. This last aspect has been discussed in section 6.3.3, which discusses the issue of the lack of career opportunities for teleworkers. Managers are used being surrounded by their employees all the time. It is inconvenient for them to assign complex work tasks to teleworkers who are not 'available' all the time.

6.6.2. E-control versus traditional manager's signature

The lack of teleworkers' visibility can be counterbalanced through electronic devices. Teleworkers' managers can also check the work of their own teleworkers via IT, if they want to. As a teleworker said:

If my supervisor types my code number, she can know how many applications I have finished in a certain amount of time. We all have an identity number. All the data that I enter is labelled with my personal ID. When I start working my PC knows that X is working. If my manager checks the history of a certain document, my ID appears on the screen, every time I touched the document. My supervisor can check every single moment what I have done and what I'm doing. She can quantify my work at any moment if she wants to. (Servizi, Teleworker 4)

However, interviews confirmed that electronic monitoring is not utilised at all. Managers claimed not to use IT for exercising control over their own workers. It is too time consuming, and they consider this kind of control unnecessary.

Yes, I can know what she's doing via IT, but I don't bother. I'm too busy, I don't have time. I trust in her. (Servizi, Manager 3)

Consequently, the teleworkers' lack of visibility has not been compensated by an electronic visibility. Trust can be perceived as a way to replace the lack of visibility. It also allows managers to avoid an evaluation of teleworkers' results (see section 6.3.1).

In addition, interviews revealed a peculiar practice through which managers compensate for the lack of visibility of their teleworkers. Normally managers have to sign all the hard copy documents. This procedure is valid for both internal workers and teleworkers. While with the internal workers the managers sign the documents as part of their routine, they pay more attention when signing teleworkers' documents. According to the respondents, this is a handy way to check if the teleworkers have accomplished their tasks. Although teleworkers' managers cannot see them, they can still see their concrete outputs.

I've got lots of freedom for organising my work. The point is that the manager must sign all the applications that I fill. He has to sign them, he can easily check if I work or not. (Servizi, Teleworker 1)

It's not so difficult to check if my teleworkers are working or not. They carry out all the routine activities. It's easy to see if they have been accomplished. They have to send me the concrete results. I have to sign their documents (Servizi, Manager 4)

In this way many managers check whether teleworkers have attained their objectives. This can be considered a starting point for a new type of control based on results.

6.6.3 Teleworkers' reaction to invisibility

One could claim that telework necessitates more elaborate techniques of control based on result. In fact, as many teleworkers pointed out, being seen in the office is not a requirement, but it is still an important variable. Teleworkers suffer from this lack of visibility, therefore they generate new strategies to compensate for their invisibility.

My ex-supervisors remind me many times: it's not necessary to show off. Via e-mail I let her know about everything I was doing. At some point she clearly told me: 'I know that you work, I know that you reach the objectives'. She wanted to tell me that it wasn't necessary to inform her about everything. I didn't want to show off, I just wanted my work to be noticed... Normally I try to get involve everybody with my reports. I want to make an impact on my supervisors and colleagues. In this way they can tell that I work regularly, even if they can't see me. I created this new visibility via IT. (Servizi, Teleworker 8)

As it mentioned in section 6.3.1, teleworkers must hand in a report every week. However, some teleworkers thought that this was not enough, so they send other e-mails or reports about what they are doing. Some managers do not understand this fear of not being perceived, and so they do not appreciate the excess information.

6.7 Conclusion

The 'Social Dimensions of Control', has been utilised as a grid, for analysing qualitative data. *Vertical* and *horizontal control* helps us to explore the impact of teleworking on the organisational structure of the company. As evidence suggested, teleworking has not yet evolved a flexible organisation of work, which is one of the objectives stated by the *Servizi* Teleworking Team. This is due mainly to the fact that the organisational structure is too bureaucratic and, improvements may take same time.

The same dimension, *vertical/horizontal control* helped us to analyse the managers' reaction to teleworking and from this analysis various categories of teleworkers' managers emerged. Apart from few exceptions, these managers showed a clear opposition to a form of control based on results, confirming previous research in this area (e.g. Hamblin, 1995, Huws, 1993, 1994). The main management strategy, which aimed to incorporate a form of control based on results, was the 'weekly report'. However, this way of organising and assessing the work was not accepted by everybody.

The difficulty of utilising a form of control based on results achieved was not the only problem. These managers were not culturally prepared to manage teleworkers (Gordon, 1985, Olson, 1989, Huws *et al.* 1990). In many cases control still relied on watching employees in their offices, and it was thus difficult to introduce new management methods. (Felstead *et al.* 2003). All these aspects reflect the predominance of *vertical control*.

Other aspects which signal the presence of *vertical* forces were the lack of career opportunities offered to teleworkers. Although, in theory, teleworkers should have the same opportunities in progressing their career, in concrete terms teleworking confines them to repetitive and routine work tasks. This is mainly due to the fact that workers' presence in the office is still paramount.

The dimension *central/decentred control*, underlines the fact that in *Servizi*, the organisation of work is centralised. Again, evidence suggested that employees' presence in the office is important for this public body. This is mainly because part of the work tasks can only be carried out within the organisation. Therefore, this public body had to introduce two compulsory office-based days. This policy also aims to make teleworkers feel closer to their workplaces, thus reinforcing *central control*. Other similar teleworking policies and practices include teamworking, contact hours, training and regular communication via ICTs, all of which strengthen *central control*.

Evidence revealed that *internal control* represents a significant element for the teleworkers. Previous research confirms that self-discipline and self-management are important for both employees and self-employed teleworkers (Haddon and Silverstone, 1993; Felstead and Jewson, 2000). *Servizi* showed a lack of an appropriate cultural *ouverture* to teleworking and did not help teleworkers organise their new jobs. In addition, teleworkers' training was really prescriptive and limited to technical aspects of teleworking. Previous research suggested that teleworking training should focus on social issues as well (Huws, 1993). Consequently, *Servizi's* teleworkers experienced many problems for planning their

work, particularly during the initial period. They had to discover, by a process of self-teaching, new routines to adapt themselves to their teleworking lifestyles.

A discussion on *visible/invisible control* puts forward the issue that in *Servizi* control still relies on watching on employees in their offices. Although managers should evaluate teleworkers according to the results achieved (*invisible control*), it is clear that their physical presence in the workplace still counts (Olson, 1989; Felstead *et al.* 2003). Some of them stated openly that they suffer from their invisibility and made themselves visible through a number of practices. As we will see in the next chapter, the importance of workers' presence is not a priority only of a strongly bureaucratic organisation. Even in a virtual call centre, being in the *bureau* is important. As the next case study will illustrate, electronic monitoring cannot solve all the problems related to control.

Chapter 7:

Introducing teleworking in a virtual call centre

7.1 Introduction

Italians say: ‘call centres are growing like mushrooms’. As in many other European countries, such as the UK, Ireland and Sweden, the call centre phenomenon is rapidly developing in Italy. Within the existing literature of call centres, the issue of control has been widely explored. A number of researchers (e.g. Fernie and Metcalf, 1998) adopt the panoptic metaphor to explain mechanisms of control. Others (e.g. Bain and Taylor, 2000; Taylor and Bain, 1999) see call centres as providing a direct transfer of assembly line conditions into white-collars job and address them in terms of employment relations. Still others (Frenkel *et al.*, 1998) consider call centres as a ‘complex hybrid form of work organisation’ (*ibid.*: 975) and tackle the issue of managing the operators in terms of high commitment theory and ‘info-normative control’.

The issue of managerial control exercised among call centre operators who work at home has not yet been deeply explored. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 5, the choice of a call centre follows a strategic choice which aims to describe some national facets and limitations of Italian workplaces. *Art.4 Law 300/1970* (see Section 4.3.4) outlaws the use of telecommunication instruments for checking personal productivity. As this chapter will show, this limitation affects the methods of controlling teleworkers.

This chapter puts forward an analysis of the methods of control exercised with the introduction of telework in *Comunicazione*. It starts with a brief summary of the company and its teleworking project. Subsequently there will be an analysis of the dimensions of *vertical* and *horizontal* control. This analysis mainly focuses on the impact of teleworking among *Comunicazione*’s line managers (‘capi turno’). Through an analysis of qualitative data it was possible to generate a typology of

'capi turno'. Although *vertical control* prevails, some line managers adopt an open attitude towards teleworkers and try to facilitate lateral relations. Each category of line managers ('*capo turno*') represents a different approach of managing teleworkers.

A discussion on *central/decentred control* will follow this analysis. *Comunicazione* had to strengthen *central control* for several reasons. First, teleworkers experienced many communication problems due to poor technological conditions and lack of co-ordination. Moreover, *Comunicazione* also had to help teleworkers cope with the issue of isolation, particularly organisational isolation, which they might experience by working at home. This case study introduced a series of strategies, practices and policies aimed at reinforcing central control. In addition to central control, *Comunicazione's* customers and the creation of a teleworkers' network demonstrate the presence of *decentred control*.

An analysis of *external* and *internal control* shows that conversely to the previous case study, *external control* is extremely important in *Comunicazione* and operates through electronic monitoring. As mentioned in chapter 4, legal constraints limit control exercised through electronic devices. Since managers are not allowed to listen to teleworkers' telephone calls, the evaluation of teleworkers' quality standard becomes a hot issue. The internalisation of corporate values through internal training is seen as compensation this lack of control. As we will see, electronic monitoring also activates the strategy of the 'collective gaze', which unifies both *internal* and *external* control.

The last section of this chapter deals with the *visible control*. Teleworkers' actions, such as logging on, logging off, having a break and their collective productivity are perfectly visible through electronic monitoring. However, electronic devices do not provide a definitive solution to the control of teleworkers. Evidence suggests that social interactions, which rely on the visibility of both operators and managers still play an important role in *Comunicazione*.

7.2 Comunicazione: background of the study

7.2.1 The organisational structure

Comunicazione employs around 4000 operators and is one of the largest call-centres in Italy to provide directory assistance by phone. Once the name and the address of the subscribers is known, *Comunicazione*'s operators supply their customers with the requested telephone number. *Comunicazione* is composed of 104 call centres, which are clustered in 33 branches located all over Italy. The 33 branches co-ordinate the other call-centres, whose operators supply information directly to their customers. The call centres differ from each other mainly according to their timetable. Some call centres operate 24 hours a day, others from 7 AM until 10 PM, others from 8 AM until 8 PM or from 8 AM until 6.30 PM. Moreover, some call centres are open all during the week, while others are closed on Sundays or even for the whole week-end.

Comunicazione's operators work different shifts, which vary according to the amount of customers' requests of information. Operators can work both full-time and part-time. Full time operators work 36 hours per week. Part-time operators' timetables depend on the kind of part-time they are doing (70% or 50%). There are two kinds of shifts: broken shifts or continuative shifts. In the first, operators work for a few hours then stop working for a few hours and then start again. In the second, operators work continuously for a certain amount of hours (depending if they are par-time or full-time workers). Both shifts provide some breaks. Within a continuative full-time shift, operators have a 45 minutes break, within a broken shift a 30 minutes break. In addition, they have 30 minutes of non –paid break for their lunch or dinner. Operators, once they start teleworking, keep the same shifts.

In each call centre there are two co-ordinating figures: the '*capi sala*'¹ who must supervise the whole call centre and the '*capi turno*'², who are the direct supervisors of the operators of each room. The number of '*capi turno*' varies according to different parameters, such as the number of operators who are working and the opening hours of the call centre.

7.2.2 The introduction of teleworking

The introduction of telework officially took place in July 1998 when *Comunicazione* and the trade unions signed an agreement. In March 1999 *Comunicazione*'s operators started teleworking. As in many teleworking agreements, volunteering represents the main prerequisite for taking part in the experimental phase of this project. In addition, the potential teleworkers should also live in a household considered by *Comunicazione* as suitable for this kind work.

The first telework agreement states that the number of teleworkers must not amount to more than 5% of the total workforce of the company. Therefore the maximum potential teleworkers would not exceed 200. For this reason, by considering the law 104/1992, people who need to look after the elderly and children under 18 years old, should have priority for participation in this project. Teleworkers must work from home for two years, after which they can extend their teleworking agreement, or return to the call-centre. In the meantime the company has the right to interrupt the telework project if it creates too many problems. Teleworkers must guarantee the privacy of all the data utilised for carrying out their job and that of the company. They must also respect all security measures. In terms of teleworkers' rights, teleworking does not involve any changes in their previous hierarchical status or their previous salary. *Comunicazione* must pay for the electricity utilised for their work, guarantee an

¹ Literally '*capo sala*' means 'head of the room'. Each call centre has a '*capo sala*'.

² Literally '*capo turno*' can be translated as 'head of the shift'. It is important to say that *Informazione* provides directory assistance 24 hours per day. The operators rotate according to different shift. The '*capi turno*' work according to shifts as well.

insurance policy, provide the teleworkers with the same training courses as the internal workers and assure access to trade union activities.

The agreement also states the rules for controlling the teleworkers. Control is exercised via telematic instruments and through the introduction of periodical revisiting days. This combination attempts to alleviate the problem of isolation and to create an umbilical cord between the teleworkers and the company. *Comunicazione*'s managers can supervise teleworkers' activities via IT, provided that they do not contravene the 'art. 4 of the law 300/70 (see Section 4.3.4), which forbids personal control. This aspect will be expanded in this chapter.

The first telework experimental project produced positive results. Consequently, in November 2000, *Comunicazione* signed another telework agreement with the trade unions. This agreement extended this new way of working to another 110 workers and is similar to the first one. However, it also introduces some new criteria regarding the selection of the teleworkers. In addition to the law 104/1992, *Comunicazione* considers other requirements. Workers over 40 years old, with children under 6 years old and who are commuting, will have priority for teleworking. These new teleworkers must telework for at least three years, after which they can carry on teleworking or they can ask to return to the call centre. This second agreement also states that the IT systems will be improved (introduction of Intranet and e-mail).

7.2.3 The technological equipment of the teleworkers

The teleworkers are linked to their original call centre via an ISDN connection. This system allows communication with both the clients and the database of the call centre, through which teleworkers receive all the information for providing directory assistance. In this way teleworkers can be seen via the principal monitor of the call centre like any other internal operators.

Comunicazione provides each teleworker with a workstation, which is composed of a monitor, a keyboard, earphones, a fax, a phone and a lamp. All this is contained in one piece of furniture, which can be closed like a roll-top desk. Only one ISDN line connects teleworkers to the company. This means that when they are busy in conversations with the customers, they cannot receive or make phone calls, or even utilise the fax machine. Therefore they should log off if they experience any problems and if they want to contact their supervisors. Poor technological conditions have caused many problems which will be better analysed in the following sections.

7.2.4 Further organisational changes

Just after the introduction of this new way of working, *Comunicazione* set up other organisational changes, which might have been indirectly influenced by telework itself. In July 2000 *Comunicazione* became a Virtual Call Centre, thus; it was able to centralise clients' calls from a specific geographical area. For example, through this system, an operator from Rome can now provide directory assistance to a client from Milan. In addition, operators who work in a call centre in Rome could ask help from a '*capi turno*' in the Milan call-centre and vice versa. The location of the workplace became more and more irrelevant. *Comunicazione* also introduced a 'Recognition Vocal System', in which recorded operators can provide information to the clients.

With the advent of the second teleworking project the number of teleworkers increased. The company found it more convenient to close down some call centres. This brought further organisational changes and encouraged a process of centralisation within the company. This development will be expanded in the following sections.

7.3 A pyramidal organisation

This section focuses on the dimensions of *vertical* and *horizontal control*. *Vertical control* prevails in *Comunicazione* which is characterised by a pyramidal hierarchical structure. Similarly to *Servizi*, the introduction of teleworking in this work organisation did not create any changes within the hierarchical structure of the company. In addition, the adoption of new electronic devices for controlling remote workers amplified the hierarchical distance between teleworkers and their line managers.

Respondents revealed that the introduction of this new way of employment caused strains in *Comunicazione*, particularly among the line managers - '*capi turno*'. Even if teleworkers undertake exactly the same work as internal workers, this new mode of work involves several problems for controlling them. '*Capi turno*' had to provide teleworkers with technological support, check their productivity and send them company information. At the same time they must manage internal workers as well.

Through an analysis of qualitative data it was possible to create a typology of '*capi turno*'. Each ideal type portrays a different way of approaching teleworking and involves a different method of control. This section starts with a general discussion of the hierarchical structure of this company followed an analysis of the different types of '*capi turno*'.

7.3.1 The hierarchical structure of the company

Comunicazione's structure is hierarchical. At the top there is a general director, who manages a certain number of call centres in a predefined area. Below the director, we find the '*capo sala*', who is the principal manager of a specific call centre. Each call centre is composed of a series of rooms in which operators provide directory assistance. Each room is supervised by a '*capo turno*'. The '*capi turni*' represent *Comunicazione*'s line managers, these managers directly

check the operators. When telework was introduced they began to supervise teleworkers as well.

As many interviewees revealed, the introduction of teleworking did not bring many transformations. Teleworkers are still supervised by the same '*capo turno*' who in their turns are checked by their '*capi sala*'. This form of *vertical control* takes place for both teleworkers and internal operators. A trade union representative describes this pyramidal control in this way:

The whole structure is very hierarchical. Within all levels of the company there are solicitations from the level above. Even the 'capi turno' are solicited by their 'capi sala', who in their turn receive pressures from the general director of the call centre. Comunicazione's structure is very hierarchical. For this reason a domination effect takes place. (Comunicazione, Trade Union Representative)

Some trade union representatives also claimed that teleworkers might be crushed by this strong hierarchical system, since they are isolated from the company dynamics and thus weaker than internal workers.

Teleworkers cannot talk to each other. Sometimes they receive weird messages: 'If you don't misbehave you can carry on teleworking otherwise you must return to the company.' For example in X call centre, I have been told that some teleworkers had to return to the call centre for a week. Probably they [the managers] wanted to demonstrate to them that they should behave in a different way. Yes, if you take each worker singularly, s/he might react in a different way. S/he is weaker and it's easier to threaten him/her. (Comunicazione, Trade Union Representative)

In addition, the implementation of new technological devices purposely utilised for managing remote call centre operators intensify the hierarchical distance between teleworkers and line managers. Managers communicate with teleworkers by sending them electronic messages. However, teleworkers, if they want to reply, must log off and phone or send a fax to the call centre. The poor technological conditions make teleworkers more isolated and increase the hierarchical distance.

This aspect will be developed further. As the next section will point out, although some managers exploited the existence of a strong hierarchical structure in order to reinforce their control over teleworkers, others tried to establish a more open and communicative approach.

7.3.2 A typology of ‘*capi turno*’

Teleworking introduced new devices through which teleworkers are controlled. When the empirical research took place, *Comunicazione* was still trying to find an homogeneous strategy in order to efficiently manage its remote call centre operators. For this reason, respondents signalled the existence of various and often contradictory methods of controlling teleworkers. An analysis of qualitative data brought to light three main categories of line managers (‘*capo turno*’). Each category summarises a different way of approaching teleworking and managing teleworkers.

The ‘innovative *capi turno*’ were aware of the differences that this new working involves and thus developed a more open attitude in adopting new strategies and practices for managing remote call centre operators. The ‘traditional *capi turno*’ carried on treating them as internal workers. Finally the ‘watchmen *capi turno*’ solved the issue of control simply by relying on IT.

▸ The ‘innovative *capi turno*’

The ‘innovative *capi turno*’ are those managers who are aware of the difficulties of control by distance and aimed to find new solutions. Some ‘*capi turno*’ honestly admit not being trained for this new role, and they are willing to take training courses and seminars on telework.

I followed teleworking from the beginning and this was very helpful because I know all its phases. Yes, it was a new thing for everybody and I learned by experience. Yes, I would like to know more about telework. I know that it involves different dynamics. I know that you must take into account several things for controlling teleworkers, and I have to learn a lot about this. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 5)

Others questioned themselves about the problem of isolation that teleworkers must face and the need to reinforce their links to the company. They also take into account other indirect aspects of teleworking, such as its impact on *Comunicazione*'s costumers and new strategies for re-creating social interaction from a distance.

The real problem is often a relational one. It is necessary to reinforce the sense of belonging to the company. It is also important to suggest that teleworkers find new ways of approaching their work. If they start working in pyjamas, with a sleepy attitude, the clients might perceive this as careless. I don't want to say that they can't work in pyjamas, but we [the managers] must take into account certain things. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 3)

In order to communicate with teleworkers we send them messages. The message is just a signal. We must interact with them. I'm his/her manager, but I must go further. We must inform the teleworkers about what is going on in the company. Yes we must find new strategies to reinforce the linkage between teleworkers and the company. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 3)

The attempt to strengthen teleworkers' sense of belonging to the company will be expanded in the next section on *central/decentred control* (section 7.4.3)

The '*capi turno*' of this category treat them in a more mature way. Teleworkers are at home and they are alone, they cannot ring the call centre for every little problem. For this reason, these managers consider teleworkers more responsible than the internal workers. Consequently, they also try to boost teleworkers' morale. As a '*capo turno*' pointed out:

When we send messages to teleworkers we try to be as diplomatic as we can. I must admit that teleworkers provide us with great productivity. They're alone and they're more responsible. When we send messages about the 'medium time' we say: 'Have a nice day, you're our best operators. Pay attention to the medium time by the way'. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 5)

The managers who fit in this category do not want to be considered solely as controllers. They do not perceive or treat teleworkers as simple numbers, but as precious components of the company.

When I manage teleworkers, I try to send them all kinds of information about the company, not only the news regarding their call centre. For example, I try to explain why Comunicazione's shares are going down. In this way they perceive their company in a more transversal way. It is important that teleworkers should be aware of all the different parts of their company and internalise them. If you just talk about technical aspects the conversation becomes dry. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 3)

Considering teleworkers as part of the whole company, it seems that telework introduced a *horizontal* expansion within *Comunicazione*. However, these line managers represent only a minority. The focus is on productivity, and the organisation is still vertical even if organizational changes are taking place. '*Capi turno*' must ensure that teleworkers accomplish a certain number of phone calls within a certain time, which is called the medium time. If '*capi turno*' do not stick to this rule they will be reprimanded by their superiors.

► The '*traditional capi turno*'

Traditional '*capi turno*' represent those managers who tend to manage operators in call centres according to traditional techniques of control which rely on personal surveillance and workers' presence in the call centre. Of course these managers check operators' productivity through the monitor. However, they also used to walk around in the *bureau* and listen to the operators and correct them in an informal way.

If you walk around you can notice if an operator works or not. If s/he is quick or slow. Yes, you listen to them. You don't need to measure the time. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 2)

Since they have been working for many years in *Comunicazione*, they know the teleworkers personally. This has been a great help in controlling them.

We have been very lucky, because all these teleworkers worked in this call centre. We all know them. This was essential. Since you know them you can motivate them as well. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 3)

In *Comunicazione* the productivity of the operators is divided into two pools: the productivity of the internal operators of a certain call centre and the productivity of the teleworkers who are based in the same call centre. ‘*Capi turno*’ are not allowed to check individual productivity (see art. 4/law 300/70). Individual control is only possible when, by chance, only one teleworker is on service during a particular shift. However, some ‘*capi turno*’ revealed that when the group of teleworkers was not so large they could guess which operators were not working efficiently. This is because they already knew the teleworkers.

For example, we know that two teleworkers are on service and the medium time is high³. Now we know the characteristics of both teleworkers. We have an idea about who may be the quickest because they both worked in our call centre. If we didn't know them, it would be very difficult for us [...] but if we have ten teleworkers who are on service, I don't know their characteristics and I have a problem of high medium time. What can I do? Yes, I can send a collective message to everybody, but I'll never know who slows down the productivity. Probably a teleworker can experience problems during the research of some telephone subscriber. I can't really help him or her because s/he is not here. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 1)

The above quote exemplifies the perplexities of ‘*capi turno*’ who still rely on personal knowledge of the operators even for controlling teleworkers. They realise that in the long term, when teleworkers will increase, they will not be able to use this practice.

The ‘*capi turno*’ of this category also affirmed that they have established a relationship of friendship with the teleworkers. This has been very helpful for this new communication by distance.

It isn't just a professional relationship, we can become friends as well. In this way it is easier to communicate with them. If there are some

³ The ‘medium time’ can be considered the time that operators employ on an average for providing the client with a directory enquiry.

problems, with a phone call we can solve everything. We know to whom we speak and this helps. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 4)

The teleworkers also affirmed that they found it really useful to know their supervisors personally, particularly when they first started teleworking. Some teleworkers even said that when they experienced problems, they tried to ask for help from the supervisors that they personally knew.

It depends on the people. The majority of my supervisors tried to help me. At the beginning we had particular needs. For example, when we started teleworking I always tried to call the supervisors that I already knew. Yes, this is a small thing, but I knew them and I felt more comfortable. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 6)

These line managers portray a traditional way of controlling workers, which might create some problems with an increase in the number of teleworkers. At this moment, since the teleworkers are not very numerous both teleworkers and supervisors can rely on personal knowledge. However, what will happen when they become a larger group? This type of control can be utilised only during the initial stage of the introduction of telework, when there are not drastic organisational changes. During the research process, evidence suggested the disappearance of this form of control, or at least a transformation of it. 'Traditional *capi turno*' are not completely against teleworking, but are not enthusiastic about finding new management techniques for controlling teleworkers. This kind of traditional control does not create a horizontal expansion.

► The 'watchmen *capi turno*'

The last category is composed of the 'watchmen *capi turno*'. As many teleworkers suggested, control in *Comunicazione* is mainly exercised through electronic surveillance. These line managers control teleworkers as if they were numbers and their focus only on productivity. Through the PC, they can visualise two pools of productivity, that of the teleworkers and that of the internal operators. As was already mentioned, '*capi turno*' cannot check individual productivity, but only the overall productivity of both the group of teleworkers and that of the on-site

operators. Normally when the medium productivity is low they send messages to the operators. Many teleworkers complained about receiving nasty messages.

It's clear, it's their job. They must do it. However, they should put themselves in our position from time to time. If you continuously receive messages, such as: 'The work is not going well', you get depressed. They send these messages to everybody. It's true they must do it. But I don't think it's positive for us to receive just these messages. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 6)

Yes, the way of sending messages is very subjective and it varies according to the 'capo turno'. Yes, I know that there are colleagues who hate this. However, if you know that you work hard you shouldn't have a problem. It's clear they can't send messages to a particular person! The messages are collective. If things are getting on well I would be pleased to receive positive messages as well. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 3)

Obviously, when they send a thousand messages per day it's a bit annoying. You're working and there are good days and bad days. There are days that clients won't leave you alone. They're right [the 'capi turno'] they must control our times. But we're right as well, if you don't want to be impolite. I don't mind receiving one or two messages per day. Yes, but in August I used to receive hundreds of messages per day. I got upset and I phoned the call centre. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 4)

In *Comunicazione* control is linked to productivity, and this issue will be expanded in the section about *external/ internal control* (Section 7.5). The most important aspect of this section is to explore if teleworking has increased the vertical distance between teleworkers and their managers or has facilitated lateral relations. Since teleworkers are at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder, line managers do not bother to send them back positive messages if the productivity is getting better. As a teleworker clearly affirmed:

The organisation is pyramidal. When we receive messages everything starts from the top to the bottom. We are the only ones that have direct contacts with the clients. Yes, you might experience problems in finding the phone number. But it's not your fault because you take longer to find the phone number. We are a mere cipher. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 7)

The form of control utilised by the watchmen does not involve any shared responsibilities on the part of the teleworkers. Some of them even say that their situation is worse than when they started teleworking.

Yes, I know even when I was in the call centre we were receiving nasty messages. It's part of the routine in this kind of job. Yes, but if you are in the call centre it's different. The 'capo turno' is physically present and if things are getting better s/he tells you or you might ask him/her. If you telework it's different, you receive messages but you can't reply. I mean you can, but it's not immediate. You have to log off and then you can call the office. Yes, you're doing in that way if you need something. I've never logged off just to know if the productivity was OK. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 1)

The written messages go in just one direction. We can only receive them. If we have to communicate with them we must log off and phone the supervisors. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 3)

As this teleworker clearly showed, unilateral communication reinforces *vertical control*. Line managers who just rely on electronic monitoring in order to control call centre operators who work from home caused many strains among them. They do not consider the social aspects of teleworking; teleworkers are not in the *bureau* and they thus miss the informal rewards which might take place in the workplaces: 'the times are good, carry on in this way'. In addition, this electronic messaging system is also a signal of inadequate technological conditions of this company, which have a negative impact on *central control*. As mentioned, teleworkers spend a long time trying to call 'capi turno' back. This aspect will be expanded in the section below.

7.4 Communication problems and social isolation: their consequences on central control

Comunicazione's teleworkers experienced different problems when they started working from a distance. These have both technical and organisational origins, such as electronic breakdowns and lack of efficient communication conditions, or

social origins, such as teleworkers' isolation. All these dilemmas have a negative impact on the *central control* of the company.

The company tried to solve these difficulties through different management strategies, practices and policies, aiming at reinforcing *central control*. Problems associated with inadequate communication conditions can be solved by increasing technical assistance, improving ICTs, such as introducing e-mails, and by introducing more professional figures assigned to teleworkers. As many teleworkers pointed out, a manager dedicated to them would be a reference point and would also act as an umbilical cord between teleworkers and the company. In addition, *Comunicazione* must also support teleworkers belonging to their company. Internal training, 'corporate trips' and rewards are seen as solutions to this problem.

Although *central control* prevails, forms of *decentred control* take place as well. For instance, *Comunicazione*'s customers are eligible to provide both positive and negative feedbacks to the company. The company uses customers' comments as a quality check. In addition, the teleworkers created a spontaneous network, which compensates the lack of communication within the company.

7.4.1 Breakdowns and mis-communication: when the workplace is far away

Previous literature on teleworking pointed out that the main problem for teleworkers' managers is how to deal with a new form of control based on output. (see Huws, 1994). This research in a call centre partially confutes this finding. Control from a distance is problematic, and it is important to take into account several variables. For instance, this case study demonstrates that technological breakdowns and poor ICT conditions have a negative effect on control exercised from a distance.

For instance, technical breakdowns are quite common between *Comunicazione*'s teleworkers and cause strain for both '*capi turno*' and teleworkers. As a '*capo turno*' said:

The main problem is to deal with teleworkers' breakdowns at a distance. It once happened that the workstation didn't recognise the badge⁴. We must manage all these problems by phone. Yes, sometimes I found it very difficult, because you must help the teleworkers and keep an eye on the internal operators as well. If there are technical problems, teleworkers must point them out and call the technical staff. The intervention is always external, and you can't really check if everything is going well. If teleworkers experience problems during their shifts, you can't even ask them to return to the call centre. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 3)

When asked the question: 'Did you find it difficult to manage both teleworkers and internal workers?', the majority of '*capi turno*' replied at first that they did not experience any particular problems. However, the above quote does not seem to confirm their response. '*Capi turno*' find it very hard to supervise both internal call centre operators and teleworkers.

In addition, these interruptions of work are associated with poor technological conditions which prevent efficient communication. Many companies decided to implement telework to obtain economic benefits. For instance, in this case study, the introduction of teleworking allowed the closure of small call centres and brought savings in terms of renting costs. However, for settling a teleworking scheme companies need to consider new investments in technological equipment. *Comunicazione* is planning to improve communication conditions by introducing e-mails among teleworkers.

As mentioned in the previous section, only '*capi turno*' can send electronic messages to teleworkers. Teleworkers, in order to communicate with them, must log off and phone them. This not only strengthens vertical control, but increases the separation between the call centre and the teleworkers. According to many

⁴ In order to log in and start working teleworkers must insert a badge.

teleworkers, e-mail could also be helpful for solving other communication problems, such as daily enquiries and informal conversation. A supervisor points out that e-mail will be soon introduced:

We are aware of these problems. We plan to introduce an e-mail system very soon. In this way communication can be more flexible.
(Comunicazione, Manager 2)

However, many teleworkers see the availability of e-mail as a remote hope, since it has been promised since they started teleworking.

Other teleworkers revealed that the communication problems are not only due to poor communication conditions but are also linked to the company's lack of organisation. Work relations in call centres are often based on personal ties and daily contacts between 'capi turno' and teleworkers. These informal networks have facilitated control in the call centre. However they do not facilitate control from a distance.

The main point is that you should receive all the information necessary for carrying out your work. For example, the 116 changed number and I didn't know this. The 'capo turno' X, who is also my personal tutor, sent me this information outside my work shifts. She is very nice. I know her well. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 5)

There are obviously some objective problems, which are linked to the fact that you are not in the call centre. Yes, the relationship with the bosses has changed. It depends on who is in the call centre. In general I have to say that there are bosses with whom everything went well and others that can't really handle the situation. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 1)

The above quotes underline the different level of handling teleworkers. Some 'capi turno' are better than other in handling this remote workforce. This heterogeneous attitude towards teleworking does not create a stable reference point for the teleworkers.

In addition, customers' comments as well pointed out the unequal distribution of the flow of information between teleworkers and internal operators. This is underlined by the quote below:

A circus was here for few weeks. So, Comunicazione created a temporary phone number just for this period. This number did not appear in the phonebook. Normally the 'capi turno' writes it on the board. Probably a customer contacted an internal operator before me and s/he told him something about the board at the call centre. He asked me to look at the board, but it wasn't possible, I was at home. I replied: 'Sorry in front of me there is a picture of the Virgin Mary, if I ask her the number I don't know if she will answer to me. Yes, often we miss some information, but it's not a big problem; we try to understand what the customers need. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 1)

Teleworkers showed an understanding attitude towards these inconveniences. They are aware that it is difficult for the call centre to re-direct all the information to them. This example shows how it easy is to dismiss teleworkers. They are not in the office and 'capi turno' can easily forget about them. This case study demonstrates that, even in a call centre, where work is electronically organised, the presence in the workplace is still important. Routine work practices, such as 'writing new phone numbers in the board' should be substituted, or at least complemented by new ones, such as sending electronic messages to all teleworkers. As interviews illustrated, the flow of communication in the *bureau* still relies on old informal work routines, and these cannot be changed in a short period.

Moreover, many teleworkers confirmed that the organisation of the company is not compact. This is due to work shifts; for example, when a 'capo turno' finishes his/her shift and s/he forgets to tell the replacement that a particular teleworker experienced particular problems. As many teleworkers said:

The main point is that there are too many 'capo turno'. For example, I explain a problem to somebody who was working during the morning and at the end of my shift nothing has changed. You must explain everything again to the new 'capo turno'. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 7)

It is important to remember that *Comunicazione* is a virtual call centre. On some occasions line managers have to deal simultaneously with internal workers, teleworkers and call centre operators located in another call centre, and this is a demanding task.

In order to cope with these communication problems *Comunicazione* has also introduced a new managerial figure for both internal operators and teleworkers: the 'personal tutor'. While the '*capi turno*' deals with more urgent and daily issues, the personal tutor is more involved in internal training courses.

I've just received a fax today. I authorised my tutor to fax me even if I'm not in service. Last week I returned to the company and I discovered that there were variations of telephone numbers, I was not aware of this. I spoke to the director about it. The lack of communication is the main issue. We don't miss gossips or the fact that the 'capi turno' could text you: 'Ciao are you all right?' We don't receive important information, and this is the main issue. Yes, personal tutors are helpful but they can't solve everything. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 5)

This idea is supported by other teleworkers who said that this new managerial figure is useful, but cannot solve teleworkers' problems. According to the management, 'personal tutors' should play the role as teleworkers' mentors rather than dealing with strictly technical problems. This caused confusion among teleworkers, since the majority do not know to whom they should refer for help.

Now Comunicazione has introduced the tutor. S/he deals with training courses. My tutor told me to call her whenever I have any problems. However, if there is something wrong I speak with the 'capo turno' in service. The tutor doesn't really know what is going on within each room. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 8)

Consequently, many teleworkers claimed that introducing a supervisor just for them could solve part of the communication problems. The need for teleworkers' supervisors grew with time. A few years ago there were just a few teleworkers who were well managed. Now *Comunicazione* has increased the number of teleworkers, and control becomes a hot issue.

In my opinion there were fewer problems at the beginning. Yes, after a while the company tends to forget about you. The experimental phase is finished and everything is fine. It's not true. We experience many communication problems. We don't receive much news, particularly that linked to trade union initiatives. I think it's possible to solve this problem by introducing a 'capo turno' just for us. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 1)

The introduction of a teleworkers' supervisor could solve many practical problems, such as avoiding misunderstandings between teleworkers and 'capi turno' and reinforcing central control. For the first time teleworkers would have a reliable reference point.

I would be very happy about this [the introduction of a teleworkers' supervisor]. The main problem is that we have to deal with all of them [the 'capi turno']. It depends on the shift. The main issue is that if I have a problem, I can explain it to one 'capo turno', but after two or three hours there will be another one and I have to repeat everything again. I think it would be helpful to create a supervisor who knows everything about us. S/he could be a reference point. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 6)

At the beginning every room had its own 'capi turno'. I know most of them, and, by knowing their shifts, I could contact the 'capo turno' who I know best. Now, it's different. 'Capi turno' wander through all the rooms. You'll never know with whom you're speaking. They learnt to be more flexible, but once it happened that they called me while I was on holiday. They didn't realise this. Yes, it's annoying. A supervisor just for us will be a change for the better. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 7)

As some teleworkers suggested, this new type of supervision could also be helpful for overcoming other psychological problems.

We can't talk with other people. So we receive a nasty message and we have to cope with it. One might think: 'I'm here and I'm working hard. I shouldn't care about these messages' Yes, when you're really working you're aware of this. Anyway, I'm also convinced that it would be nicer to receive something positive from time to time. A pat on the shoulder, or better, a message on the shoulder! So we demanded a supervisor just for us. I thought it would be better. Now if I have a problem and ring the call centre, I don't know who I'm speaking to. I think we need somebody who acts as an arbiter of our requests. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 1)

Both the company and teleworkers regard the introduction of a supervisor dedicated only to the teleworkers as positive change. However, the management express the dangers this new managerial figure might involve. For instance teleworkers might become more and more isolated from the company. 'Organisational isolation', which can be translated as the tendency of becoming more detached from the workplace, will be analysed below.

7.4.2 Organisational isolation

Another problem common among teleworkers is isolation. Many teleworkers experienced an 'organisational isolation'. Since they work from home, they might no longer feel part of the workplace. For instance, a '*capo sala*' noted that some teleworkers might suffer from the 'goldfish syndrome'. They start feeling comfortable in their little aquarium and they do not want to come back to the sea. Probably it is excessive to compare a call centre to the ocean. However, it is a matter of fact that many teleworkers do not feel the need to return to the *bureau*. Managers should adopt new strategies for making teleworkers feel part of the workplace. Teleworkers provided some suggestions as well. The issue of communication came back again. According to many teleworkers, communication between them and the company should be more than an exchange of work-related information. As a teleworker suggested:

The most important thing is communication. 'Capi turno' don't have to call you just to know if you exist. Also ironical and funny messages are important for us, you feel that you're not alone. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 5)

Although it is important to communicate the teleworkers' work-related information, many '*capi turno*' also decided to reshape the content of telephone call, by consciously introducing gossip and jokes.

In addition, *Comunicazione*'s managers and '*capi turno*' found that office-based days and training courses could solve many communication problems and strengthen the link between teleworkers and the company.

Now we can say that we have institutionalised the teleworkers' day. Yes, some teleworkers will participate in these meetings and others won't. We encourage participation, but we don't want to force them to return. Yes, when they return there is a physical contact, something that it is impossible to experience from home...With these internal meetings we tried to improve communication between teleworkers and the company. This is a time just for them. Here they can express their problems. In everyday life they have to deal with last minute emergencies. This meeting has to be understood as a reflective moment. (Comunicazione, Manager 2)

Other *Comunicazione* managers believe that these revisits to the companies should be coupled by other initiatives, such as encouraging social links between teleworkers and internal operators and reinforcing unity among teleworkers themselves.

Teleworkers might experience problems linked to isolation after only one year. To avoid this, teleworkers should be informed about all company activities. It's not just me who should call them, but their colleagues as well. Teleworkers should feel part of a team. Yes, I know this is difficult. For example, it is necessary to stimulate call centre based-days, not only for training, but for making teleworkers feel part of the company. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 5)

According to some '*capi turno*', call centre based-days should be coupled with managers' visits to teleworkers' homes. Managers should also act as mentors as.

I think that 'capo turno' should visit them in their homes as well. In this way it will be possible to consider the personal aspects, which are the most underestimated. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 5)

Managers visits to teleworkers' homes was just a possibility. The most important point which emerged from the interviews is that the social aspects of teleworking should not been underestimated.

7.4.3 Customers' feedbacks: a source of decentred control

As mentioned, revisiting days, internal trainings, personal tutors and the potential creation of a manager dedicated to teleworkers aim to reinforce *central control*. However, *decentred control* takes place as well. Customers are an example of how

decentred control acts. In Chapter 4 we discussed *art.4 Law 300/1970*. This specific law puts some limitations on electronic monitoring. For instance, '*capi turno*' are not allowed to listen to call centre operators while they are taking calls. This limitation makes difficult for the '*capi turno*' to check the qualitative standard of phone conversations. Thus, customers' feed back play an important role in evaluating teleworkers activities. Each call centre operator has a number, which has to be repeated at the beginning of each conversation. If customers are not satisfied with the phone consultation, they can take note of this number and make a complaint. A manager points out that customers' feedback is considered as a common and simple practice for checking the quality of teleworkers' phone calls.

I can't really complain about the teleworkers. I think they are better than internal operators, if we consider total productivity. Probably because they are at home they feel more responsible. Yes, we can't check them personally, however each operator, teleworker or internal worker has a code, which they should give to the customers. If they are doing something wrong the customers can call us and make a formal complaint. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 3)

Although some '*capi turno*' felt satisfied with teleworkers' workload, others are concerned about the quality check on home conversations. According to them, customers' comments are not enough for guaranteeing good quality standards of phone conversations. As a '*capo turno*' affirmed:

Yes, customers' comments can help. If somebody has been very rude to them they will call us back. However it's really rare. For instance, if our operators wouldn't stick to conventional greetings, such as: "Comunicazione thanks you for calling us...", costumers would not call us to complain. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 3)

Since customers' feedback cannot guarantee an appropriate evaluation of quality standards of teleworkers' conversations, additional management strategies have been implemented. These will be discussed in the next section which will assess *internal control* (section 7.5).

Some teleworkers also claimed that the quality of their phone conversation is also checked by 'mystery shoppers' surveys. 'Mystery shoppers' are standard practice in the Anglo-Saxon call centre industry and normally used to evaluate customer service standards. Because of *art.4 Law 300/1970*, in Italy these procedures are outlawed. However, some teleworkers affirmed that this forms of managerial control takes place.

Yes, they can actually check your quality standards. They pay external agents and they call you, you can recognise them. They are normally 'acid' women, you can tell from their voice...They are not supposed to, but they actually do these things. Once I come back to the call centre and my personal tutor told me: "Yes, you're doing well, your times are perfect, but you should remember to thank the customers". How can she know this information? (Comunicazione, Teleworker 1)

Are 'mystery shoppers' a reality or just teleworkers' fears? In the analysis of managerial control, it does not really matter. The most important thing is the effect of this 'real' or 'presumed' management strategy: teleworkers' belief of that they are listened to stick to conventional quality standards.

These two examples, customers' feedbacks and presumed 'mystery shoppers' surveys show how external actors can exercise control over teleworkers. They also demonstrated how *decentred control* is able to reinforce company practices, such as adherence to customers' standards (*central control*).

7.4.4 Teleworkers' informal networks

Decentred control relies on teleworkers themselves. As previously discussed, teleworkers experienced several problems in lack of communication. In order to compensate for inefficient communication conditions, teleworkers created their own network. For instance, if one teleworker receive new information, s/he will contact immediately her/his home-located colleagues. It is a kind of self-help which aims to remedy the company's negligence.

Yes, I can say that there is a strong network among the teleworkers. For example, when I receive some news I call my friend. She's teleworking and lives very close to me. There is a kind of underground network. We help each other if necessary. We also compensate for the lack of communication by the company. (Comunicazione Teleworker 2)

This teleworkers' network has not been interpreted as an organised resistance to *Comunicazione*, but as a spontaneous practice of self-management. They were aware that *Comunicazione* had to solve many problems in order to introduce teleworking, so they adopt an understanding attitude towards their company.

Since teleworkers found themselves alone, they developed a peculiar form of solidarity, which was unexpected by both the company and the trade unions. At the very beginning, trade union representatives were convinced that teleworking would isolate teleworkers from each other, and thus their commitment to trade unions activities would decrease. However, this was not the case with *Comunicazione's* teleworkers. As a trade union representative stated:

Some of my colleagues were a bit suspicious regarding the introduction of telework. They thought that once telework had been set up, teleworkers would have forgiven trade union initiatives. Luckily it didn't happen. I have to say that we are more in touch with teleworkers than internal operators. They are at home and they feel isolated. Probably for this reason they feel the need to keep in touch with their trade unions. In this way they are informed about what is going on inside the company. Consequently, in contrast to trade union expectations, telework strengthened the relationships between teleworkers and trade unions. (Comunicazione, Trade Union 1)

According to some teleworkers, the company plays a minor role in solving organisation of their social and relational problems, and for this reason they ask for trade union support. For example, some teleworkers claimed that the company should organise more meetings for teleworkers, in which they can discuss their problems in front of their supervisors. Since the company is not active in this sense, teleworkers tend to organise their own meetings through trade unions. As a trade union representative clearly expressed:

We have noticed this. This month we have organised a meeting for teleworkers who provide directory assistance. We are always active in this sense also because we are always contacted by the teleworkers themselves. (Comunicazione, Trade Union 1)

Teleworkers' self-management and co-operation with internal trade unions have both positive and negative consequences, from the company point of view. At first glance this collaborative attitude of teleworkers is helpful for *Comunicazione*, in the sense that it alleviates 'capi turno's additional workload. However, co-operation of teleworkers among themselves and with trade unions, makes them stronger, less 'exploitable' and more detached from the company.

7.5 External constraints and internal commitment: the traditional quantity/quality dilemma

In contrast to the first case study, *external control* plays an important role in *Comunicazione*. Teleworkers must follow fixed shifts. Consequently, they cannot organise their workdays according to their commitments or hobbies. Self-discipline plays only a minor role since their freedom is limited by the rigidity of the timetable and the constant electronic monitoring.

Although managers are not allowed to check the individual productivity of the teleworkers, through this technological system it is possible to check constantly on collective teleworkers' working pace. This provides a quantitative measurement of their productivity. As mentioned in the previous section, limitation of individual electronic monitoring (*art. 4 Law 300/1970*) raises another important issue: how can the company evaluate the quality of service provided by the teleworkers? In addition to customers feedbacks, *Comunicazione* check the quality standards of teleworkers through internal techniques of control, such as customers' service training.

7. 5.1 External control: a focus on teleworkers' productivity

Productivity is measured in terms of the 'medium time', which in statistical terms is the media of the time that teleworkers and internal call centre operators take to complete a phone conversation with a customer. As previously mentioned, *art.4 Law 300/1970* outlaws checking the individual productivity of every single operator. *Comunicazione's* monitor shows two pools: internal operators' productivity and teleworkers' productivity. Through this system *Comunicazione* solved the problem of measuring teleworkers' productivity in quantitative terms. Evidence suggested that teleworkers are more productive than internal operators.

Only in one specific case the company can check the productivity of single operators. For instance, if only one teleworker is on service, the company is allowed to evaluate his/her performance.

Regarding their productivity, we have the groups' statistics. We don't check individual productivity. There can be an exception, for example, if there is only one teleworker in a shift. In this case you can see individual productivity. This is due to a technical problem. However, normally we just have group statistics. Yes, we can see that teleworkers are more productive. (Comunicazione, Capo Sala 3)

In *Comunicazione*, as in many other call centres, productivity is monitored in order to create a regular pace of work. An important indicator, which constantly appears on *capi turno's* PCs is the 'medium time'. If the 'medium-time' becomes too high, the '*capi turno*' must intervene. In the call centre, the '*capi turno*' constantly check the productivity both through the central computer and by looking around to find the lazy ones'. If there are problems regarding the medium time, they write a message on the board, and, as soon the 'medium time' reaches standard levels, they cancel the previous message and write a new positive one.

Control over teleworkers follows similar dynamics, even if it acts through other mechanisms. Within the call centre, '*capi turno*' could arbitrate the exercise of control in a direct and immediate way. Teleworkers have to cope with this problem

by distance, and this causes many strains. When productivity is below the minimum standard, '*capi turno*' send messages to teleworkers via an IT system. This is because productivity is the main imperative for this company. As a teleworker said:

As you know, we receive a regular salary, but our way of working is very similar to piece-work. We must work for producing, we don't have to spend a long time on the phone. Our service is based on reply-time. We are like a factory, we must produce as much we can.
(*Comunicazione, Teleworker 7*)

At first glance, productivity appears to be monitored through external mechanisms. However, if we analyse the overall process, *external control* takes place in conjunction with *internal control*. This system of monitoring productivity, generates the management strategy of the '*collective gaze*'. Teleworkers know that '*capi turno*' are not allowed to check their personal productivity. However they also know that their collective results are constantly monitored, thus they discipline themselves.

The willingness to be more productive creates the precarious status of the teleworkers. Their agreement says that if teleworking becomes problematic for the company, they must return to the call centre. They are unconsciously aware that if *Comunicazione* does not consider them productive they have to come back to the call centre. This provides an additional incentive for working hard, even harder than internal call centre operators. In addition, teleworkers' self-discipline is constantly reinforced by the use of *external* forms of control, such as the collective electronic messages.

Supervisors, also say that they are glued to production standards, which can be easily attained by sending messages to teleworkers. As a supervisor says:

If the production is positive, we don't send any messages. Our messages concern technical issues, such as breakdowns administrative procedures, holidays and day-leaves, or others which we call 'threatening' messages. Probably it's excessive to call them that, but

it's the best way to describe them. We must reach our objectives. If everything is OK we don't send any message. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 1)

As mentioned in section 7.3, these kinds of messages create tensions among teleworkers, particularly when these 'nasty' messages were not followed by positive ones once productivity reaches the normal standard. According to teleworkers, these episodes are quite common. This reinforces the idea that even in a virtual call centre, where ideally the workforce can be managed simply through IT, in everyday life, the physical presence of the workers is still important. This example shows how easy it is to dismiss workers when they are not in front of you, particularly when the workload is going well. The main point is that managers know that productivity has reached the minimum standard, but teleworkers, if not promptly advised, still believe that their productivity is down.

Research also revealed a non-homogeneous attitude towards these 'threatening' messages. Some '*capi turno*', the '*watchmen capi turno*', abuse them, others, the '*innovative capi turno*' utilise these electronic messages only when necessary and complement their staff with positive contents.

As many '*capi turno*' (the '*watchmen capi turno*') revealed, control which relies only on technology can be effective, but it does not concern relational aspects such as the interactions of managers/ workers. When I asked a '*capo turno*': 'Do you think that it is possible to control the teleworkers via IT alone?' She replied:

Yes, it's possible. If you think in terms of goals achievement, this method is more effective, more drastic and easier. If you don't know them [the workers] they are like numbers for you. It's black or white, there is no grey. Here we have different tonalities of grey. Yes, because you must deal with people, not numbers. If the medium time doesn't work, I must intervene. Yes, the operator can react or not react. You have both positive and negative points. If you just control them through the monitor it's limiting, but in terms of efficiency it's simpler, more mechanical, easier and more effective. Yes, for sure you'll reach your target. Yes, if they [her superiors] ask me to do in this way, I'll do it. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 1)

This '*capo turno*' seems over-optimistic about the use of electronic monitoring. However, in her quote it one notes the deficiencies of control based solely on IT systems: you can control teleworkers' from a quantitative perspective, but it is difficult to check their qualitative standards ('*It's black or white, there is no grey*'). This aspect is further explored in the section below.

7.5.3 Qualitative control and the internalisation of company values

External forms of *control* can be useful for checking productivity in quantitative terms. However, *Comunicazione* must also take into account some qualitative aspects. While, in the call centres, '*capi turno*' can control both operators' productivity (quantitative control) and their adherence to customers greetings (qualitative control). With teleworking the dynamics become more complex. As mentioned, '*capi turno*' cannot listen to teleworkers' conversations, thus the issue of how to check the quality standards of telephone conversations becomes central. A bad quality of conversations means that the customers will be dissatisfied. Since there is a strong link between the quality of the phone calls and customers' satisfaction, some managers believe that it is possible to improve teleworkers' quality standards by reinforcing their commitment to customers' needs. As a '*capo turno*' pointed out:

I know the main goal is to enhance the customers satisfaction. We have to consider that these operators carry out routine jobs. We have some engineers who work from home; for them it's different. They deal with big projects and they work on the project from the beginning until the end. They are committed with their job. Yes, with the teleworkers it's different. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno Pisa 2)

Call centre operators' work is routinised and standardised, and customers' service training and commitment strategies are implemented for both internal operators and teleworkers. These management strategies play a major role for the teleworkers. For instance, *Comunicazione* tries to develop customer values among teleworkers through internal training courses.

Now, during the revisiting days, we try to create a uniform image of Comunicazione across the whole territory. Our training might seem silly. We make teleworkers repeat some simple sentences such as: 'Hallo, Comunicazione, I'm Laura can I help you? We make them repeat the same sentences to everybody. We have operators all over Italy from Bolzano to Sicily and we must provide the clients with the same service. We always try to create a homogeneous service. We can check the operators in the call centre, but we have to trust in the teleworkers. Internal training helps. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 3)

The repetition of standard sentences can be considered as a form of internal control, since it facilitates the internalisation of company values and the customers' orientation. However, in some cases this kind of repetitive training can provoke resistance. As a teleworker revealed:

Yes, from time to time they ask us to return to the company. It's mainly because they want to check our times⁵ or make us repeat some standard sentences, such as: 'Thanks for calling Comunicazione'. Sometimes I don't repeat these sentences on purpose. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 1)

The management takes internal training seriously into account and evaluates consistently operators' adherence to greetings and positive attitudes towards customers. Good performances lead to a good evaluation of teleworkers. In addition, *Comunicazione*, tried to support the importance of these internal training, by introducing an 'award system'. As a teleworker noted:

If you're doing well you receive 5 stars. Yes, they are points. Then the company will reward you. Yes, the 'company gifts' [laughs] last year I received a desk-lamp. [laughs] It's good incentive to work harder...This year I did really well and they invited me on these company trips to testify to the success of teleworking. I didn't go, I took my holidays instead. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 1)

These last two quotes confirmed recent research on commitment policies, for instance internal training. Apparently they are introduced to improve workers' conditions. However, they must be seen as a new rhetoric of work intensification

⁵From time to time *Comunicazione*'s teleworkers are asked to return to the company. During these revisits their tutors or supervisors act as customers and formally check through a chronometer their conversational times.

(Legge, 1995; Purcell, 1993; Willmott, 1993). Workers might perceive that this normative commitment does not lead to any real opportunity of participation or to any real increase of tasks roles, so they respond in a negative way.

7.6 Seeing through the monitor and watching over the operators: how e-surveillance works and why it doesn't work

In *Comunicazione*, a '*capo turno*' can follow through electronic instruments any moves of the teleworkers: when they start a shift, when they finish, when they are having a break, etc. However, evidence suggests that electronic monitoring has its limits, and the traditional practice of watching over the operators in the call centre is still widely utilised. Evidence also suggests that social interactions, which rely on the visibility of both workers and managers, still play a relevant role in *Comunicazione*. The limits of electronic monitoring have several implications for controlling teleworkers.

7.6.1 'If the desk is green the operator is available...': electronic monitoring, its effects and limitations

Via the PC '*capi turni*' can watch every single operation of the workers. They can see when operators start working, when they log off, when they take break, if they are engaged in conversations or if they are available to receive phone calls. When the interviews have been conducted, all these indicators appear through the central system:

Here you can see all the operators. The shining lights indicate the operators who are not working, the fixed lights the ones who are regularly accepting phone calls. Every number is associated with an operator... Yes, we can see everything they're doing. For example, grey table means that the operator logged off. Here there is an arrow, it button that the operator is doing research, or s/he's busy with a conversation. This button is green, it means that the operator is available to accept a new request. (Comunicazione, Capo Sala 3)

Comunicazione's management can see both internal workers and teleworkers' indicators either together or in two different screens.

This is the screen for all the workers [the teleworkers are included] and this is the screen for the individual teleworkers. It follows exactly the same system. (Comunicazione, Capo Sala 3)

As the previous section pointed out, through the monitor '*capi turno*' are able to observe the teleworkers' moves and the indicators of their productivity:

The data regarding productivity includes the number of the phone calls made; then we also consider the medium time of each phone call. We see the acceptance of the phone call, the information and the time necessary for managing the information. (Comunicazione, Manager 2)

The main terminal shows this data separately for teleworkers and internal operators. As mentioned, teleworkers, knowing that their productivity is constantly checked and their actions are perfectly visible from the monitor, discipline themselves.

Unlike their internal colleagues, teleworkers must do additional operations. Examples include inserting a special badge when they start working, log off and when they receive messages from the call centre. All these operations are perfectly visible.

Look, here there is a teleworker who is just starting the shift, he's connecting now. Yes, this woman switched off her PC at 8.40 and at 9.01 started her shift. In order to start working she must insert her badge. Then she will receive this message: 'Start of shift'. And she will press 'Yes'. (Comunicazione, Manager 2)

As mentioned above, when the productivity is below a certain limit, '*capi turno*' send teleworkers messages via IT. *Comunicazione's* managers can see if teleworkers have received messages and if they have read them.

Here we are, I select a particular operator [teleworker] and she receives the message. Here we can tell if the teleworkers read the

message. 'V'[in Italian 'Visionato'] means that the message has been screened and 'T' means transmitted. Yes, we can see that she read the message. Teleworkers can't send messages. They must log off and phone us. (Comunicazione, Capo Sala 2)

Since all these operations are visible, and teleworkers know it, they cannot ignore these messages. At first sight, electronic monitoring, by making teleworkers' actions and productivity visible, creates a panoptic effect: teleworkers work by following a regular pace, since they know that they are watched. However, electronic monitoring does not give a definitive solution to the issue. As in many call centres, electronic monitoring generates control but also resistance to it (Bain and Taylor, 2000). The company dictates the length of operators' workdays and the length and recurrence of their breaks as well and control the adherence to these strict rhythms through electronic monitoring. However, some teleworkers resist this rigidity, no matter if the '*capo turno*' can see them cheating.

All the breaks are planned by the company. We have breaks of five or ten minutes, according to the length of our shift. A break of five minutes is too short for me, I can't just have this short break. I always try not to exaggerate! In any cases, I never respect their timetables. Five minutes are not enough for me...Normally I extend this break. I know they can see me, but I don't care. They never complain about this. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 5)

'*Capi turno*', appear to be understanding about these small violations, also because indicators suggested that teleworkers are actually more productive than internal operators. Workers' resistance is not considered the main limitation of electronic-monitoring, as the interviews revealed. Watching over the operators, the traditional surveillance, is still considered an important technique for exercising control over the workers. In addition, both teleworkers and managers pointed out that managers' commands are met by expressions of disappointments, anger and smiles, and electronic tools cannot render these emotions visible. All these aspects are analysed in the section below.

7.6.2 Visible moves, invisible bodies

It is possible, via electronic monitoring to follow every single move of the operators. However, 'capi turno' do not rely only on this method. Within *Comunicazione's* call centre, direct visibility of operators and managers plays an important part in the exercise of control. As many 'capi turno' revealed, being in the call centre and being able to wander around, provides an effective help for controlling teleworkers.

If you are walking around you can see if an operator is quick or slow. Yes, with a direct link it's easy to control them. You can even time with a chronometer the length of each phone call. Yes, but we don't do this. You can see, you can perceive if somebody is working. You don't need a chronometer. (Comunicazione, Capo Turno 2)

In the call centre there is a completely different approach. All the activities are visible. If somebody has many breaks, or starts talking with a colleague, you can see this. You can't observe teleworkers. You miss this qualitative check, so you must send nasty messages to everybody. (Comunicazione, Capo Sala 2)

According to many 'capi turno', the operators' presence in the call centre and the possibility of watching them facilitates their exercise of control, particularly when they must deal with critical situations.

In the call centre it is different. You can get upset for ten minutes, because the conversational time is too long, then everything becomes normal. You say: 'Ok guys, now the time is under control!' With telework you must consider the fact that teleworkers aren't in front of you. You send nasty messages, but you must remember to send positive messages as well. Through the monitor you can see that everything is going well, but teleworkers can't. You must consider this. (Comunicazione, Capo Sala 2)

We need to talk. Eye contact is important. Communication by telephone is more impersonal. You receive a message and you might think 'the boss hates me'. In the call centre it's different; you can immediately resolve these kinds of tensions. (Comunicazione, Teleworker 1)

The visibility of managers' feelings, such as their expression of anger if the 'times are to long' and their smiles when 'productivity is fine', cannot be transmitted through the monitor. This is a problem which necessitates a solution.

In addition, according to a manager, 'appearance' plays a role in control in the workplace. This manager always wears a suit at work. According to him, his formal dress communicates a role of command and authority. Obviously, he must develop new strategies for interacting with teleworkers.

You must be able to interact with the teleworkers even if you aren't present. You must enter into their minds. This is difficult. Yes, you should consider that it has been difficult for us to deal with this new type of relationship. Our way of controlling the operators is also linked to our social image. Suit and tie can help people who hold a position of control. Yes, it sounds silly [...] you phone an operator and, s/he may be in pyjamas [...] I don't have the equipment to see them. Teleworkers work in a completely different context. We should consider this, but it's difficult for us. (Comunicazione, Capo Sala 2)

This quote reflects the initial anxieties of supervisors towards the introduction of telework. 'Capi turno' and 'capi sala' are well aware that many things must change, but in some cases they do not know how to substitute for old methods of control with new ones.

7.7 Conclusion

The *Comunicazione* case study showed the difficulties experienced when introducing teleworking in a call centre. The social dimensions of *vertical/horizontal control* generated a typology of line managers ('*capi turno*'). This indicates contradictory attitudes towards teleworking and line managers' difficulties in coping with this phenomenon. Only the 'innovative *capi turno*' adopted a more understanding and co-operative attitude to the teleworkers. They tried to understand the inner meanings of this new way of working and to devise new forms of communication from a distance (*horizontal control*). The second category of line managers, the 'traditional *capi turno*', reinforced the idea that

physical presence in the workplace was still important (Felstead *et al.*, 2003), even in a call centre, where, in theory, electronic monitoring can detect every single move of call centre operators. This indirectly illustrates a bias against telework and, an insistence on using traditional methods of control (*vertical control*). Finally, the 'watchmen *capi turno*' showed an overoptimistic reliance on electronic devices. In agreement with other studies (e.g. Zuboff, 1988), they also confirmed that electronic tools can reinforce the hierarchical distance between managers and employees.

The dimension of *central control* illustrates how complex is the task of keeping teleworkers and their work organisation together, even in a call centre environment where everything seems simplified by the technology. However, technologies become a problem when small disruptions must be solved from a distance. And again, evidence implied that it is difficult to direct the same flow of information to both teleworkers and internal call centre operators. Teleworkers are not in the *bureau*, and it is easy to forget them. In order to solve these communication problems, *Comunicazione* plans to improve their communication systems by introducing e-mail and is considering the option of having a personal supervisor only for the teleworkers. This option creates confusion among the management, and this new management strategy can, in fact, generate a deeper separation between the teleworkers and their original workplace. *Central control* attempted to solve the risk of teleworkers' detachment from their work organisation. Different policies, such as internal training and re-visits to the call centre were considered as solutions for this problem.

In a macro perspective, *central control* highlights some peculiarities of our post-industrial era, such as distributed workplaces and flexibility of scale and place. Technological changes allowed communication from a distance, and even working outside the original workplace (Greenbaum, 1998). The diffusion of teleworking and network organisations represents such new organisational realities. However, all these decentred units fall under one central system, which thanks to new technological improvements is able to co-ordinate all of them. For

instance, in *Comunicazione* the introduction of teleworking allowed the creation of a virtual call centre, which spread out geographically is now co-ordinated by a few centres. Although it might seem counter-intuitive teleworking reinforced *central control*.

A discussion on *decentred control* in a post-fordist era puts forward and emphasises customers. In *Comunicazione*, in fact, the customers themselves played an important role for checking the quality standards of teleworkers. The importance of customers' feedbacks was emphasised by legal limitations to check teleworkers' conversations via electronic monitoring. *Decentred control* was also ensured by teleworkers themselves, who created their own networks and organise regular meeting with trade unions in order to compensate for the lack in organisation of the company. This spontaneous process of self-help affects on the company, but also led to a separation between teleworkers and internal workers. Teleworkers were acquiring and internalising new values and identities (Giddens, 1991): 'we are teleworkers, we are independent, we no longer need the help of our company'.

The social dimensions of *external/internal/visible* control prompted a discussion on the use and the relevance of electronic monitoring in workplaces. A number of researchers highlight the full and perfect panoptic power of electronic monitoring, which makes any other form of control unnecessary (Ferne and Metcalf, 1998). In contrast, other research illustrates the imperfections of this technological device and argue that employment relations cannot adopt this simplistic model of 'total control' (Bain and Taylor, 2000; Taylor and Bain, 1999).

In Italy, because of legal limitations, electronic monitoring is far from perfect. *Comunicazione's* 'capi turno' are allowed to check only the collective productivity of the teleworkers. This activates the strategy of the 'collective gaze', which simultaneously combines *external*, *internal* and *visible* control. Teleworkers know that their collective results are constantly monitored, so they discipline themselves accordingly. In addition, teleworkers' self-discipline is constantly reinforced by

the use of *external* forms of control, such as the collective electronic message, which reminds teleworkers when productivity is low.

Although teleworkers' productivity is high, electronic monitoring cannot solve all the problems related to control. *Comunicazione's* line managers are not allowed to listen to teleworkers' conversations and, this makes it more difficult to evaluate the quality standards. Other *internal* techniques of control should couple electronic monitoring, and this point is supported by similar research (Di Nicola, forthcoming). For instance, a strategic use of internal training attempted to facilitate internalisation of customer service values, and thus try to assure a good quality standard of phone calls. Although training is introduced apparently to develop teleworkers' skills, in many cases should be seen as a strategic which aims to make workers, both internal call centre operators and teleworkers, more committed to company values and intensify the labour process (Legge, 1995; Purcell, 1993; Willmott, 1993). As evidence suggested this might lead to forms of resistance.

It is clear that electronic monitoring is not a panacea. Line managers tend to watch internal operators taking calls and this facilitates control. Similar research reinforces this point by pointing out that teleworkers should spend a certain period in the call centre before starting teleworking (Di Nicola, forthcoming). In addition, *Comunicazione's* interviews illustrate that not only workers' but managers' visibility and presence in workplaces is important. Through their smiles and expressions of anger they can immediately transmit signals of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with teleworkers' productivity. Through their 'smart suit' they can project respectability. As it is clear, although previous research noted that low-skilled teleworkers can be easily controlled through external techniques of control (Huws, 199; Hamblin, 1995), this is not the case with home-located call centre operators. Their control is, in fact, a complex task, and necessitates taking into account a different range of variables.

Chapter 8:

Introducing teleworking in a in a small-medium sized enterprise

8.1 Introduction

The SMEs (small-medium sized enterprises) represent the ‘heart’ of the Italian economy. Conventionally they are family run and are organised into ‘industrial districts’ (Goodman and Bamford, 1989). In recent years, the diffusion of ICTs introduced many changes within these small firms which increased their flexibility. In order to represent the evolution of the Italian economy, it has been decided to explore the introduction of teleworking in an Italian SMEs. The company, *Informazione*, has also been chosen for its innovative features based on a flexible organisation of work. It represents the evolution of Italian small firms, which are able to retain tradition and integrate technological innovations (Loparco, 2000).

The following section, describes the most important characteristics of *Informazione*. It also explains why teleworking was introduced and what changes it brought about. Subsequently, there will be a discussion on *vertical* and *horizontal* control. Interviews with teleworkers and their managers demonstrate that teleworking brought an increase of autonomy and freedom to teleworkers (*horizontal control*).

Central and *decentred control* will also be examined. Conversations with teleworkers, revealed an unintended resistance to *central control*. Interviews suggested a separation between internal workers and teleworkers. In addition, by working at home, teleworkers become more autonomous and independent, and they do feel no longer the need to return to the workplace. So *Informazione* had thus to implement new strategies to reinforce teleworkers’ commitment to the company. *Decentred control* coexists with central control and it is summarised by

Informazione's customers, who, as will be demonstrated, have a great impact on teleworkers' productivity.

The following section puts forward an analysis of *Informazione*'s major method and strategy for controlling teleworkers: 'virtual hours', which unite both *external* and *internal control*. This new strategy for controlling teleworkers enables them to have a wide range of flexibility, but they must also develop new techniques of self-discipline for organising their own workdays.

The last section explores how teleworking has reshaped the meaning of *visible control* within this company. Although IT introduced new forms of visibility based on teleworkers' results, evidence demonstrates that the physical presence of *Informazione*' employees is still important. This caused some contradictions.

8.2 *Informazione*: background of the study

8.2.1 *Informazione*'s history and its new changes

Informazione was founded in 1977. Its main task is to supply business information. It provides a varied range of services: legal data on all Italian companies registered at the Chamber of Commerce, financial data, local investigations, etc. Public data are extracted in real time from the public database via sophisticated computer connections. Afterwards, they are checked and matched with unofficial data, which have been previously collected on the spot, and connected on-line to *Informazione*'s database. *Informazione* provides business information for the whole of Italy and other European countries. In fact, to satisfy its international clients, it also became a member of one of the most important European networks for credit reporting.

Informazione now has 101 employees, of which 18 are working from home. It has more than 1000 clients, provides more than 428,000 services per year and has an income of 23 billion of Lire. Its employees are particularly committed to trade

union issues. Of over 101 employees, 46 are members of the company Trade Union. Sixty per cent of *Informazione*'s employees work in business information. They must verify that their database information corresponds to local investigators' information. This process leads to the formulation of a risk indicator and to a final evaluation of a client's company. By using these parameters, customers can decide if it will be prudent to start a business with a certain company. All 18 of *Informazione*'s teleworkers provide business information.

In 1991 *Informazione* re-organised its work processes, and teamworking was introduced. Before this change, its organisational structure was similar to an "assembly line". Some employees monitored financial data, some dealt with legal data and others focused on local investigations. This particular organisational model hindered flexibility. New management strategies stipulated that each employee should be able to carry out any single task. Every employee can follow the whole productive process even if they do not practice it. Each team represents a geographical area of Italy: North, Centre and South. A supervisor coordinates each team.

In addition, a massive process of recapitalisation took place. This led to new technological investments for the creation of new information networks. The process of reorganization was supported by an information system of automatic work distribution, and in 1993 *Informazione* started to work on line. The 'Paperless Project' represents another important step for *Informazione*. A management system based on applicative software enables the company to eliminate paper documents from the productive process. Thus, all files, dealings, documents and applications pass from one employee to another, inside and outside the working organisation, without any exchange of paper. The 'Paperless Project' increased the efficiency and productivity of the company by reducing the times for each business report and led to the creation of the 'virtual desk'. The new telematic networking allows *Informazione*'s workers to send applications to customers and local investigators and receive business requests from anywhere. This process involves a virtualisation of work and, for this reason, it was said that the 'Paperless

Project' was the precursor of teleworking. Work is conventionally distributed via an information system, which takes into account the amount of work for each employee. However, the supervisor can modify these automatic distributions and provide support to the employees.

These technological and organisational advances occurred in conjunction with further management changes. The 'centrality of the customer' was the main imperative for redefining the structure of the work organisation, and its productive processes and for the orientation of the company's strategies. The paperless policy introduced by *Informazione*, did not only reduce internal costs, it also increased the level of efficiency by reducing working times for each application. Thus *Informazione* could provide customers with the same services in less time. *Informazione* also tried to spread this culture of customer orientation by organising training courses among their employees. It reinforced its corporate values according to its long experience of providing business information. These initiatives gave very positive results, in fact a recent survey¹ confirmed that the level of customer satisfaction was close to 80%.

8.2.2 The introduction of teleworking

These technological and organisational changes were a good foundation for the introduction of teleworking. The first discussions on teleworking took place in 1992, but a Teleworking Team was not established until 1996. This team is composed of company representatives and an employees' representative. The aim of this team was to present to the administrative department of the company a 'Telework project', in which the internal trade union of *Informazione* actively participated.

The main reason *Informazione* decided to introduce teleworking was to avoid a loss of human capital. In the previous years, some female employees gave up work, because they were unable to combine it with family commitments. In order

¹ The source is not mentioned in order to protect the anonymity of the company.

to achieve a high level of professional skills, employees must follow a specific training and acquire many years of experience. Consequently, the increased number of employees' resignations lead to a decrease of productivity and an increase of costs. *Informazione* reasoned that the introduction of teleworking could be favourable in other ways, such as the cutting of fixed costs, and an increase of productivity through a decline of sick leave, a rise of overtime work and a re-motivation of the employees. It is also important to consider the fact that the introduction of teleworking in *Informazione* occurred at the same time as the company moved offices. This too, brought savings in terms of property rents.

During the experimental phase the 'Teleworking Group' had to solve several problems: the perplexities of internal management after losing direct control over the productive processes, the indecision of the external trade union and other juridical problems. Finally, in 1997, *Informazione* was able to begin the experimental phase of teleworking. In May of that year the company signed an agreement with the trade union. Fourteen employees -eight women and six men- decided to telework. The internal trade union was committed to this project since the beginning; it also collaborated with the organisation of training courses.

During the experimental phase, *Informazione* created Teleworking Teams which were supervised by a teleworking consultant and a psychologist. These teams were composed of teleworkers, middle management, teleworkers' colleagues and trade union representatives. They agreed that teleworking was a problem not only for teleworkers, but the whole company must be committed to this new way of working.

The focus of the training course for teleworkers was working with the new technological equipment and helping them to solve other teleworking problems. A workshop was organised with a teleworking consultant, and a psychologist helped teleworkers to acquire techniques of self-organisation, autonomy and responsibility. This would overcome the problem of isolation and make them feel more integrated within the company. In order to strengthen a sense of belonging to

the company, *Informazione* also introduced office-based days and daily contact hours. Teleworkers can also link to the company via video-conference. Technological equipment is important in helping teleworkers overcome the problem of isolation.

In order to apply teleworking it was important to introduce some parameters for virtualising the work. This virtualisation process allowed the company to control the productivity of the teleworkers, and it also guarantees the flexibility to carry on the work. *Informazione* introduced the concept of 'virtual hours'. These can be defined as the medium time taken by workers to complete a specific work task. In order to measure these 'virtual hours', managers first classified the different work tasks and then quantified the medium time internal workers took to accomplish them. Teleworkers must work 38 virtual hours per week, 7.38 virtual hours per day. They can carry out their duties at any time. The company should provide, by contract, a minimum of 38 hours per week for each teleworker. If the company has less work, teleworkers are legally protected and receive the same salary.

The 'virtual hours' system generated much opposition, particularly from external trade unions. It was perceived as a new form of telematic piecework. However, internal trade unions were in favour of the introduction of teleworking, since they believed it was a very positive initiative for the workers. They did not perceive virtual hours as a means of exploiting the workers. *Informazione's* teleworking agreement was based on the national contract, so teleworkers have the same rights as their on-site colleagues. For example, while piecework can provide an unpredictable salary, it does not give maternity leave, and paid holidays. Teleworkers have all these benefits. The introduction of 'virtual hours' also allows them to work overtime. This would be impossible without a quantification of the workload. These 'virtual hours' also enable *Informazione* to increase teleworkers' flexibility.

When teleworking was first introduced, teleworkers had to come back to the company at least once a week, and they had also to reserve two hours per day

during which the company can contact them. After a few months, *Informazione* realised that teleworkers were able to organise their own work and did not have any isolation-related problems. So *Informazione* deleted these two constraints. Now teleworkers can come back to the company whenever they want to and are free to organise their own work day. They are not obliged to adhere to contact hours, but if they need information they can contact their own supervisors during conventional office-hours. Through the introduction of an updated telematic network and the virtual hours system each teleworker can check how many applications they have finished and how many hours they have done. Teleworkers also have to fill out urgent applications, and this new telematic system can tell them exactly when an application should be handed in. In this way they are free to organise their own working day. *Informazione* incorporates flexibility as a management strategy. Its managers realise that more freedom teleworkers have, the more they produce. Teleworkers do much more overtime work than internal workers, because they have the opportunity to work in antisocial hours such as at night and on Saturdays.

The next four sections confirmed that, telework introduced new techniques of control, which will be analysed by taking into account the theoretical framework of the four dimensions of control: *vertical control/horizontal control*, *central control/decentred control*, *external control/internal control* and *visible control/invisible control*.

8.3 A vertical heritage and a horizontal widening

Vertical control tends to be exercised within a company with a rigid hierarchical structure, where each workers' task is separate from the others. But a work organisation built on *horizontal* principles encourages shared responsibilities and workers' commitments to the company's goals. In *Informazione* both *horizontal* and *vertical control* emerge through empirical data. However *horizontal control* prevails. Interviewees described some changes in *Informazione*'s hierarchical and organisational structure. Teleworkers pointed out that in the last few years a

horizontal expansion occurred within the company. These changes are mainly due to major technological and management innovations within *Informazione*. Thus, it is relevant to address this question: can teleworking be linked to these technological and management changes? Did these changes create *horizontal* forces which facilitated the introduction of telework?

Next it is important to analyse the direct impact of telework within the hierarchical structure of *Informazione*. Empirical evidence highlights an increase of autonomy and responsibility among teleworkers, which may be another indicator of *horizontal* expansion. It appears that teleworkers are more autonomous and have acquired more responsibilities than on-site workers. To what extent is this assumption true? Have teleworkers acquired a higher status within the hierarchy of the company than on-site workers? How do teleworkers re-shape their relationships with their managers? These issues are very controversial, particularly since teleworkers have fewer career opportunities than on-site colleagues.

8.3.1 New technological, organisational and hierarchical changes

According to some teleworkers, the development of *horizontal* forces reflects technological, management and organisational changes which took place within the company. Consequently, the impact of telework on *Informazione*'s hierarchical structure must be analysed and understood with reference to the other changes that occurred in this work organisation. One could say that these changes prepared a positive ground for the introduction of teleworking, since they provided a more flexible way of working which is better suited to teleworking.

Several teleworkers perceive this *horizontal* expansion as a result of the new IT innovations introduced in *Informazione*. During the last ten years this company invested in new technological instruments for the creation of new IT networks. In 1993 *Informazione* started working on line, and, during the following years, it supported the 'Paperless Project'. Through the creation of a new management system based on applicative software, it was possible to eliminate hard files from

the production process. The 'paperless project' could be seen as the pre-requisite for telework, since it enables workers to send and receive information from anywhere. Through this new IT system, information is sent automatically to each worker, thus decreasing the presence and intrusion of the supervisor into the whole work process. Workers' independence is amplified with the introduction of teleworking.

Yes, there has been a big evolution. I started working in Informazione in 1982, and I could see a development from the hard files and a system of hierarchical relationships, to a technological innovation of the company and changes of hierarchies among the workers. (Informazione, Teleworker 7)

Other management and organisational changes had an decisive impact in *Informazione's* hierarchical structure. Jobs have been redesigned to be less 'Taylorised' and more rounded (multi-tasked, multi-skilled). *Informazione* introduced teamworking, micro-responsibilities and workers' participation in the company's objectives. These management strategies had an important impact on *Informazione's* hierarchical structure and also prepared the ground for the introduction of teleworking. Teleworkers said that these management changes had a significant role in widening the hierarchical structure of the company.

Yes, there is still a hierarchy, but I don't think that it is incisive. I don't think that it tends to underline the demarcations between one step and the other among the different hierarchies. There have been some changes; there are micro-responsibilities. (Informazione, Teleworker 1)

We have introduced teamworking; our employees took part in most of our projects. We believe in the activities organised by the team, where people can cooperate together. We don't believe that an individual can carry out the work alone. Within the team the concept of 'boss' doesn't exist anymore. There is the project manager, who is the leader of the project, but in this case his/her position within the company hierarchies does not count. Sometimes, I took part in projects as an expert, not as a leader. (Informazione, General Director)

Yes, I can say that there is a horizontal widening. However a pyramidal structure still exists. Changes have been introduced within

the company. Previously, you suffered the consequences of the personal control of your boss. Now if there is a new project, at least one of your colleagues will take part in it, you can ask her/him why they made this decision, and s/he can provide you with an explanation. (Informazione, Trade Union Representative)

The introduction of telework can also be considered an example of employees' participation in process of decision-making.

When we decided to introduce telework, we have asked the opinion of our employees. I have to say that some teleworkers agreed to telework. They suggested us to introduce telework. (Informazione, General Director)

It is important to stress that all of these management and organisational changes generated *horizontal* forces within *Informazione*'s structure and had a positive impact on the introduction of teleworking. However, the persons at the top of the social ladder still exercise power in decision-making. For this reason, the personal commitment of people who hold high hierarchical positions was important for the success of this initiative. It is relevant to remind the reader that *Informazione* is a SME, and the role of the owner is relevant for introducing and supporting relevant changes.

Yes, there has been a widening of mentality, which helped the introduction of teleworking. The general director has always believed in this project. If he hadn't believed in this project, we wouldn't be able to start telework. We found an initial resistance from the bosses. Only after a year and half they began to accept telework, they knew that they couldn't stop it. (Informazione, Trade Union Representative)

In contrast to the previous two case studies, apart from initial perplexities, the managers started accepting teleworking, and they managed teleworkers through a homogeneous approach. In addition, the previous two work organisations respondents highlight the heterogeneous way of managing the teleworkers. The teleworkers' managers, fall into categories which identify different ways of controlling the teleworkers. In *Informazione* there was a different scenario, which is mainly due to its size. In *Informazione* only three managers supervised both

teleworkers and internal workers. Most important of all, size is very much a function of the style of the firm and the relationships which characterise it. As with many SMEs, in *Informazione* the relationships between workers and entrepreneurs are informal (Goodman and Bamford, 1989). This factor facilitates communications and participation among the entrepreneur, the middle management and the employees. These aspects facilitated the implementation of more coherent methods for controlling the teleworkers, whose principles were shared by all the management and workers as well.

Several small firms are composed mainly of family members, and the entrepreneur is both head of the firm and head of the family. Others, like *Informazione*, are grounded in community. They share values, beliefs and loyalties (*ibid.*). In this context, the head of the firm is characterised by charismatic virtues, which are shared by all the members of the firm. In *Informazione*, the General Director's great involvement and enthusiasm for teleworking was able to attract the co-operation of the middle management.

To summarise, the many technological and organisational changes which occurred in *Informazione* created a horizontal widening within the hierarchical structure of the company. This prepared a positive ground for the introduction of teleworking. In order to set up teleworking, it is not only necessary to own the appropriate technologies, a new mentality and a new way of organising the work is also important. For this reason, a more open hierarchical structure is more suitable for the flexibility that teleworking needs.

8.3.2 More co-operation with supervisors

Another important aspect in analysing *vertical* and *horizontal control*, is the relationship between teleworkers and their supervisors. No teleworkers complain about their relationships with their supervisors. Many teleworkers say that they had a very good relationship before teleworking and that they still have a good relationship now, that are working from home. Some say that their relationship

with their supervisors has much improved since they started to telework. While in the past these *Informazione's* employees were controlled through direct mechanisms of supervision, which often made them feel uncomfortable, now supervisors no longer constantly watch them. They cannot call them at any time and ask for favours. It is this distance between teleworkers and supervisors which makes supervisors less powerful. Basically, it was for this reason that, when telework was first introduced, some supervisors were against this project, because they were forced to reformulate their relationship with their workers. As many teleworkers pointed out:

I have to admit that there is more respect (on the part of the supervisors), probably because I'm external. They take me more into consideration. (Informazione, Teleworker 7)

For many reasons I think that telework has improved my relationships with my supervisor. There is no longer the routine of everyday life, which tends to trivialize many things, to make some situations unbearable. The fact that we see each other only when we are returning to the company is a positive thing. I think that distance optimises relationships. In my case, I have never had bad relationships, even when I was working in the company. (Informazione, Teleworker 5)

There is no longer this relationship of subjection of the workers their bosses. Now I go to my boss and I ask him: 'Can I take one day leave?'. He might tell me: 'Why do you want one day's leave?'. I can say: 'If you give me one day's leave, tomorrow I'll stay longer'. Teleworkers are outside this perverted logic. They are no longer their bosses' little slaves. This was the main impasse which made supervisors and bosses say: 'we don't want telework', since it ended this physical control over the worker. These people work whenever they want to. (Informazione, Trade Union)

Before teleworking, the supervisor was wandering around and causing tensions. When I was working in the office I felt that I had to do something, because there was a 'snoop', which was watching me. Now I can organise my own work. (Informazione, Teleworker1)

Thus, according to many teleworkers, the physical presence of the supervisor creates subjection. Teleworkers' supervisors had to change their attitudes. Both the

setting and the means of communication were changed. Face-to-face encounters are no longer possible, since communication via e-mail and telephone is both more impersonal and more democratic. Supervisors cannot give orders anymore, they have to co-operate with the external workers. They have to get them more involved in their work. Supervisors cannot make demands anymore; if they need something they must ask for it as a favour. They have to treat workers as peers, not as somebody of inferior status. For these reasons, similar to the previous two case studies, *Informazione* had to deal with managers' resistance to teleworking. However, this issue was easily solved. A well managed implementation of teleworking and more informal relationships between senior and middle management was able to enhance collaboration between managers and teleworkers. In addition, as a member of the trade union pointed out, managers became indirectly more collaborative with on-site workers as well:

The mentality has changed; the supervisors lost that physical control that existed before. Thus, from a 'mental point of view' they got used to getting the teleworkers involved. Before they did not need the teleworkers' commitment, they could physically control them. They could say: 'Don't move from your desk otherwise I'm not giving you your day's leave'; they had the instrument to give you a hard life. With the teleworkers they can't act in this way; they are not in the office, they are at home. Thus if they want them to do their job, if they want to ask them a favour, they have to get them involved, they have to change their mentality, and, as you know, if you change mentality with somebody you can't act in a completely different way with someone else. They are not actors, so it often happened that they changed mentality with the on-site workers as well. They tried to get the workers more committed to the company's activities, they look for their cooperation. Now the workers have a role in some projects, not only the managers. (Informazione Trade Union)

Consequently, teleworking does not only change the relationship between teleworkers and their supervisors, but also between on-site workers and supervisors.

As this section demonstrates, it is important to analyse the changes brought through teleworking by taking into account all the processes of the company.

Telework has to be analysed in conjunction with the many changes that occurred in *Informazione*.

8.3.3 Teleworkers' autonomy

As it was stressed above, during the last few years *Informazione* employees became multi-skilled, multi-tasked and more committed to the company's initiatives. These changes were the result of a company management strategy. Managers believed that if the company left the workers alone, they would become more productive. *Informazione* encouraged autonomous work for both on site workers and teleworkers. Moreover, research confirms that this sense of autonomy became a central part of teleworkers' identity. Teleworkers, who worked in *Informazione*'s on-site offices for at least seven years, are people who know their job and are able to carry out their duties in an autonomous way. These people are able to work without the help of their supervisors even in the on-site office. However the sense of autonomy became part of their identity only after the experience of telework.

Various factors contributed to teleworkers' autonomy, as mentioned in the section 8.3.4, one of which was the lack of direct and continuous control by the supervisors.

We don't have any control, we can organise our work as we want. This is the best part of my job. I feel more responsible now. You don't have to cope anymore with the physical presence of your supervisor. We can organise our work. I don't feel I'm controlled. (Informazione Teleworker 1)

In addition to the removal of direct control, the company also enhanced professional values among the teleworkers, who felt more autonomous because they perceived themselves to be professionals.

We have emphasised professionalism and thus we have elevated autonomy. You can really see the changes brought by telework. One of

my employees was really oppressed by deadlines of the applications that he had to complete, 'with the breath on my neck'². This was the typical expression of this worker. When he started to telework he had to focus only on his objectives. This was a great step for him. Now he's more efficient and more relaxed. (Informazione, Manager Director)

Many teleworkers claimed they have acquired more responsibilities and more autonomy. They can carry on their work at any time, while their supervisors have to follow a fixed timetable.

We don't have to follow the timetable of the company, we are our own bosses. (Informazione, Teleworker 3)

The rule is that it is the boss who must provide availability in terms of time, not the teleworkers. (Informazione, Manager Director)

However, they cannot do everything alone. As was mentioned before, hierarchy still plays an important role in *Informazione*.

I think that the organization is vertical. It looks horizontal, but there are things that you can't do alone, even if, as a teleworker, I acquired more responsibilities. (Informazione, Teleworker 3)

There are some functions, such as the registration of a company in the Chamber of Commerce, which I couldn't do alone. It would be useful. This function can be carried out only by the head of the office, so we have to call him. (Informazione, Teleworker 1)

Only in limited cases did *Informazione*'s teleworkers depend on their superiors. They demonstrated their autonomy. However, as the section below will show, some teleworkers claimed that teleworking deskills and prevents career advancement. *Vertical* forces are still present in *Informazione*.

² 'To have a breath on his/her own neck' is a typical Italian saying for expressing the oppressive feeling of the very close physical presence of somebody: you are so close to me that I can feel your breath on my neck. In this specific case the teleworker utilised this expression to point out to which extent the supervisor's control bothered him.

8.3.4 Lack of career opportunities

To summarise, it is possible to say that teleworking has widened the hierarchical structure of the company, by emphasising the sense of autonomy of the teleworkers. However, hierarchical forces still exist and are exercised within *Informazione*. Telework also creates some differences between internal workers and teleworkers, both of whom carry out the same work and are supposed to hold the same social status. However, there are drawbacks: internal workers, even if they have to follow a rigid timetable and in some aspects are less autonomous, share more company responsibilities than the teleworkers do. As a teleworker points out:

The hierarchical ladder has crumbled. Now there are some micro-responsibilities. However, the teleworkers do not take part in these micro-responsibilities. We cannot take part in these kinds of projects, even teleworkers who have had twenty years of experience in Informazione. We have not been included in projects that involve sharing responsibilities. (Informazione, Teleworker1)

Many teleworkers pointed out that they are penalised in several ways. Some claim to be excluded from big projects since they are not physically present at *Informazione*. For the same reason, many teleworkers feel that they have no chances in terms of career opportunities.

It's clear, even if I work in the company, I might choose not to have a career. Not all the workers want a career, not all the workers are social climbers. It is also true that the main condition for getting on a career is to work inside the company. I think that companies want workers to be devoted to them. According to managers, the more workers spend inside the company, the bigger will be their link with their work organisation. (Informazione, Trade Union Representative)

Yes, telework penalises you from the career point of view. I've tested it on my skin³. I think there have been some divergences between those who are working in the offices, who can be controlled and judged, and

³ The expression 'I've tested on my skin' means that someone has experienced the negative consequences of some events on himself/herself. In this specific case, the teleworker points out that in his experience, telework does not involve any career opportunities.

those who telework from home, who, according to some on-site employees, can't be judged. Therefore we don't receive any premium, any promotion; we are not part of the elite. It's unjust, but we're un-assessable. When I accepted telework, I also accepted this situation, I was aware of this. (Informazione, Teleworker, 7)

Many teleworkers accept this lack of career opportunities as a 'normal' situation, within this new form of employment. Others express their resentments.

You have to follow a certain flow of production. At least, from a theoretical point of view, there are few chances of having a career. I think that, as a company strategy, it will be a clever idea. I think that if this year, if one or two teleworkers would had received a premium of one million, there would have been a more peaceful atmosphere. (Informazione, Teleworker 1)

The company itself understands the gravity of this situation and has planned to introduce a teleworkers' supervisor who is teleworking as well.

In the future, teleworkers' supervisors will telework as well. We also think about teleworkers' careers, because they're professionals and they can aspire to reach positions of leadership. The teleworker becomes the supervisor of the teleworkers. The concept of boss changes, since he/she is no longer the one who organises other people's work. S/he is the co-ordinator who takes into account all the different issues and acts as company spokesman for the teleworkers. (Informazione, Manager Director)

Telework creates contradictory situations. On the one hand, it widens the hierarchical structure; on the other, it creates new hierarchical differences among workers of the same status.

This contradictory situation is present in the next section as well. Although the teleworkers are satisfied with their working conditions they unconsciously detach themselves from their company. For this reason *Informazione* has to reinforce its central apparatus.

8.4 Central control and unintended teleworkers' detachment to it

The main focus of this section is to identify the way *central* and *decentred control* operates within *Informazione*. Both methods of control coexist in this case study. The bureaucratic hierarchical structure and other management strategies and policies, such as teamworking and the organisation of training courses, represent *central control*. *Central control* is also reinforced by the introduction of the new telecommunication technologies.

Informazione also experienced an unintended detachment to the *central control* of the company. Teleworkers are satisfied about their new work arrangements, however they unconsciously try to avoid the workplace. *Decentred control* is present as well. *Informazione's* customers represent this phenomenon.

8.4.1 A centralised distribution of workload

Conventionally, *central control* converges with the organisational and bureaucratic structure of the company. This has also been the case for *Informazione*. The bureaucratic structure of *Informazione* is responsible for the assignment of work and for checking that the work has been accomplished by both on-site employees and teleworkers. However, teleworking has brought many organisational changes within the company. *Informazione's* management had to change the way *central control* is exercised and adapt the work process to the flexibility that telework necessitates. As the director of *Informazione* has stated:

Conventionally subordinate work implies a link between the company and the employees: the company provides the technological resources, the space, the organisation and the work, while the employees offer their time and their professional abilities. Telework has overturned this situation. The company does not provide XYZ any longer. The company now provides the technological resources; it does not provide the space, since teleworkers can choose their own space. It provides the work, but it does not deal with the organisation of it. It defines the rules for carrying out the work and says when the work has to be finished, but the teleworkers have to organise their own activities. (Informazione, Manager Director)

The concept of self-management (see Section 8.5) plays an important role in telework. *Informazione*'s teleworkers must organise their own working day and attain the 38 virtual hours per week. As mentioned above, 'virtual hours' can be defined as the medium time that an employee takes to complete a work task. The company does not interfere with the teleworkers' organisation in terms of time and space. However, *Informazione* must provide the teleworkers with a minimum of 38 virtual hours per week and must check that they have reached their own objectives. If business decreases, teleworkers must return to their office and *Informazione* must organise their work. *Central control* provides the teleworkers with some important guarantees. Both trade unions and *Informazione*'s employees are aware of this:

If Informazione decreases its business, the company will guarantee our salary, even if we'll work less. If the company decreases its clients for a long period, then we'll have to come back and to do other things. I'm happy with this situation. I know that many freelancers are teleworking, but they always have to worry about having enough work.
(*Informazione*, Teleworker 4)

The teleworkers' agreement indirectly describes the difference between teleworkers as employees and teleworkers as self-employed. While the first category of teleworkers is more directed by the central control of the company, the second category tends to follow decentred dynamics. In the first case the company provides regular work, regular deadlines and a fixed salary. Teleworkers are free to organise their own work, however they still hold fixed rights. The self-employed work irregular hours, do not receive a fixed salary, and are probably more autonomous, but they must also adhere to the unpredictable requirements of their customers.

8.4.2. Unintended detachment to central control

All the teleworkers interviewed are satisfied with their work conditions. However, evidence demonstrates an increasing separation of the teleworkers from their

company. Teleworkers' detachment can be identified in the division between teleworkers and on-site colleagues:

Yes, there is a separation. They are jealous [the internal workers]. I notice that we, teleworkers, are not seen in a positive way by the other workers. We look like fat cows⁴ and spend all our time doing nothing. It's not true, our productivity is great. It is obvious, sometimes they see me here, with shorts, tanned, and so they think that I am not working. It's clear, everybody can telework, if they want to. (Informazione, Teleworker1)

According to this teleworker, the division between teleworkers and on-site employees is reinforced by the attitudes of these last ones. Other teleworkers admit that other hidden logics create this division. For instance teleworkers and on-site workers carry out the same work tasks however teleworkers do not deal with very urgent or more complex applications.

Yes, now the workers are split into two categories: those who work in the company and those who telework; this was unavoidable. Teleworkers carry out a job, which is slightly different from that of on site workers. The administrative department doesn't really want to create differences, but we cause this separation. Yes, we are part of this new category; we are perceived as teleworkers and no longer as Informazione's workers. (Informazione, Teleworker 5)

Moreover, some teleworkers admit feeling uncomfortable when they have to come back to the office, and they cannot find a rational explanation for this behaviour. They do not take part of the company any longer.

Sometimes I miss the personal contacts with my colleagues. Yes, it seems stupid, but sometimes I miss having coffee with my colleagues, having a chat with them. We can return to the office whenever we want to, but, after having started teleworking you change your mentality. We have to come back to the office if we have meetings or something else, but I'm no longer at my ease, I don't feel comfortable, even if I miss certain things. (Informazione, Teleworker 6)

⁴ Cows become fat when they do not move. According to on-site workers teleworkers do not work at home, for this reason they are similar to 'fat cows'. This is a typical Italian expression.

And again:

I don't feel isolated at all. When I have to return to the company, I can't sleep, I don't know. I should be pleased I can see my ex-colleagues. I can have a break from the routine. I don't know, probably because I have to wake up before 6.15. For me it's like coming back to the past. I can't sleep. (Informazione, Teleworker 3)

The company and the Trade Unions are aware of the risk of this separation of teleworkers and the company:

As trade unionists we are scared of this new element that we call the concept of individualization. The creation of solidarity is a common phenomenon among office workers. On the other hand, teleworkers only talk about their own personal problems. It is so difficult to find a common problem shared by everybody. Everybody has a different problem: going shopping, going to pick up their children. We couldn't find anything in common with them. (Informazione, Trade Union Representative)

According to the Trade Unions, separation from the company is a real danger. Teleworkers' individualisation of work can in some cases be contrary to the rules of the company. However they do not intend to act illegally.

It was really hard to make teleworkers understand that if they were on holidays, they were not allowed to work. They didn't understand it. If you have a family, when you take few days off it is not because you are travelling. Probably you just want to pick up your son, because it is his first school day. These people think: 'I have four more hours left, I can work a bit'. No, no! It is not like that! You are on holiday and you can't work! The company can't pay your holidays and the work that you have done while you were on holiday! If I'm on holiday I can't physically be in the company. This is a good point. They can work from home, they don't have to go to the office. It's that's not right. (Informazione, Trade Union Representative)

Until now, *Informazione's* teleworkers have shown high productivity and their managers did not particularly take into account this unintended teleworkers' detachment from the company. However, as the quote above stressed, teleworkers' isolation can give rise to 'unintended illicit' behaviours, which in the future might be transformed into teleworkers' resistance to their workplace.

In addition, the risk of creating an irreversible separation between the teleworkers and the company generates new strategies, practices and policies for reinforcing central control.

8.4.3 Other centralising techniques

Because of the creation of an unintended detachment to central control, the company decided to reinforce its *central* power. A flexible bureaucratic and hierarchical structure, reinforced by strong technological apparatus, are the bases of a central control. Supervisors distribute via IT files and reports to both on site employees and teleworkers. Via these new technologies, supervisors can also check that the work has been finished by the workers. The massive introduction of IT not only facilitated exchange of information, but also increased a *central control*. *Informazione's* director clearly stated that IT provided an important help for minimising the separation between teleworkers and internal workers.

At the beginning we were not able to transmit images via fax to the teleworkers. We were not able to give them some applications. It was a kind of discrimination, the internal workers complained that teleworkers were not doing some applications. Then, through IT, we were able to overcome this problem. (Informazione, Director 1)

IT is also helpful for creating a link between teleworkers and internal workers.

I don't feel apart from my colleagues. I can easily contact them from home. The most important thing is that I can receive the same information as I would in the company. I call my colleagues 5-10 times every day. I also e-mail them. (Informazione, Teleworker 5)

Sometimes there are some problems. It is easier to solve the problem if we are two persons instead of one. For example, I say: 'This is red' my colleague says: 'No, this is yellow'. One can observe the phenomenon from different points of view. There is no a lack of communication. It is the same as before. Via PC, I can see my colleague's application and she can see mine. I am not the only one who can deal with it, but everybody can visualise my application. (Informazione, Teleworker 2)

IT also facilitates daily contacts between teleworkers and their supervisors.

Introducing teleworking in a small-medium sized enterprise

I contact my boss every day. It's easy with the e-mail. Now we no longer use the fax. Previously the fax was essential for receiving something from the local investigators. The paper is just a memory now, all the work is sent via IT. (Informazione, Teleworker 1)

Teleworking is responsible for the creation of other centralising mechanisms. For example, the introduction of the company 'electronic board' occurred in conjunction with the introduction of telework. Both internal employees and teleworkers can use these telematic instruments. However, teleworkers may find it more useful. Through this innovation they can get exactly the same information as the internal workers.

There is an electronic board and, from time to time, we receive e-mails about the changes occurring within our group, or more general company changes. Probably they will do something that they don't want to tell us. This could happen even if we were in the office. If they want to hide something, they have the tools to do it. However, the most important thing is that we receive the same information as we would in the office. (Informazione, Teleworker 3)

For example, yesterday, during the conference, a CD Rom was distributed. On it, there is an interview of one of our teleworkers. We have already introduced this interview in our electronic board. In this way all our workers, internal and external can receive exactly the same information. (Informazione, General Director)

Evidence demonstrates that the new technologies are helpful, but they cannot solve these internal separations. For this reason, the company has introduced teamworking. In *Informazione* there are three teams: North, Centre and South. Each team represents a part of Italy. Linkage with the team may reinforce belonging with the company and may prevent separation between teleworkers and internal workers.

Our work is individual, however if I need something I can always call the members of my team. They help me and I help them...(Informazione, Teleworker 4)

Organisation in teams is useful for reinforcing the linkage between teleworkers and the company and it can be considered as a good management strategy which

increases the productivity of the company. However, supervisors pointed out that there are still some problems related to organisation of the work. The quote below shows that managers unconsciously did not consider teleworkers as part of the team.

My team is composed (approximately) of 17 people. I said approximately, because there are 5 teleworkers in my group. They work from home and they are well integrated with the group. Yes, I put approximately into brackets; teleworkers are free to organise their own work, so we can't rely on them during the standard working day. All the work is distributed via IT. There are no problems or differences regarding the distribution of the work. (Informazione, Manager 2)

Some teleworkers stressed only the practical aim of the team; they did not really feel part of it.

Yes, I can say that I work in a team. We are split into three pools, we have divided Italy into three sections: North, South and Centre. I work in the North team. It can be considered team-work since, if unfortunately tomorrow my colleague is ill, his/her applications are re-distributed among the members of his/her team. We have team deadlines; however our job is individual. It doesn't mean that we work together. (Informazione, Teleworker 3)

Other management policies are utilised to reinforce the process of centralisation. The organisation of training courses, which are addressed to both teleworkers and internal workers, are considered an example. Training courses have different objectives, such as to improve IT skills. However, the main aim is to strengthen the sense of belonging to the company. These meetings are particularly important for teleworkers.

The training courses have always followed the evolution of the company. Yes, even if we are external, we are part of the company. There is still an umbilical cord which keeps us tied to it. (Informazione, Teleworker 7)

When teleworking first began, the company introduced both office-based days and contacts hours. Afterwards, teleworkers became completely free to organise their own day and to come back to the company whenever they wanted to. Many teleworkers see these revisits as restrictions. It was believed that leaving

teleworkers more autonomous and free might generate a more positive and constructive attitude towards the company. The teleworkers embraced this increase of autonomy, which can be considered one of the more attractive aspects of telework in *Informazione*. As some teleworkers pointed out:

When I first started, I used to return to the company once a week. Re-entry was a right. It was written in the contract. I used to come back just to exercise my right. I was used to returning once a week, then twice a month and now once a month. Today I'm here just for this interview. The company does not exercise any pressure. If you want to come back you come back; you can organise your own office-based days. They gave us this chance since they thought that we would feel isolated. They thought that to stay in front of the PC all day could be alienating. I don't feel isolated at all. (Informazione, Teleworker 1)

Teleworkers do not need to come back to the company any longer. This development can be interpreted in different ways. They became so well organised and autonomous that they did not need to return in their own office, or they decided not to come back to their own office because of other reasons. As mentioned, after a period spent at home some teleworkers felt uncomfortable coming back to the company. This implies a hidden process of separation, which has not been deeply explored yet. The first hypothesis does not exclude the second one.

8.4.4 Customers' requests as decentred control

Informazione's customers generate other mechanisms of decentred control, and in this case the variable telework is particularly important. The teleworkers' contract states that in the case of a decrease of the company's productivity, teleworkers must come back to their office. Teleworkers were found to be very committed to *Informazione's* productivity, probably because they want to carry on teleworking.

Yes, there are some deadlines, but we are free to organise our work. Obviously, there are some problems related to times. Sometimes the customers need a report in 2 hours, but we don't do these reports. We can finish a report in 4 hours. We don't have to, but we try to do our best. We are always trying to satisfy the customers, because if they are

not satisfied they can choose another company, and this is bad for us as well. (Informazione, Teleworker 4)

I always say: the application is mine, the application is yours. Here the applications should get everybody involved. Everybody has to work hard everyday. The most important thing is that the company receives more and more orders every year. If the company is getting more and more profits, this is positive for us as well. (Informazione, Teleworker 3)

Thus, for many reasons, customers exercise control over teleworkers, because the development of telework is strictly linked to the company's productivity.

Teleworking has created new centralised and decentralised forms of control. The advent of new ways of working has introduced unintended resistance to central control, which can be represented by the separation of teleworkers from on-site workers and the separation of teleworkers from the company. This unintended resistance encourages *Informazione* to reinforce *central control*. *Central control* is represented by *Informazione*'s bureaucratic structure and other management strategies, policies such as, teamwork, training courses and the introduction of new IT systems. *Informazione*'s customers represent other forms of *decentred* control. Since the teleworkers' agreement states that teleworkers can carry out their own duties from home until there is a minimum demand for service, the decentred control exercised by *Informazione*'s clients has stronger effects on teleworkers than on-site workers. Thus teleworking creates unintended consequences. As the next section points out, teleworkers internalise these external limits and create their own routine, their own ways to organise their job. Teleworkers also internalise other values, which are not company values. Their own way of working becomes so unique that it cannot be predicted by the companies.

8.5 The re-elaboration of external constraints and the creation of personalised routines

Interviews with the respondents demonstrate the sense of autonomy, independence and freedom that teleworkers have acquired by working from home. They do not

have to follow a fixed timetable, they do not have to guarantee any kind of contact hours during the day, and they can even work at night and at weekends. So, is it possible to say that teleworkers are not tied to any company's requirements? As this section will demonstrate, *Informazione*'s teleworkers are not totally free. In fact, they have to guarantee a minimum of productivity, which is quantified through the 'virtual hours' system (*external control*). In addition, they must hand in commercial reports according to daily deadlines.

Informazione wants teleworkers to reach these standards via *internal control*. Teleworkers, aware of the objectives they must obtain structure their own working day by creating new forms of self-organisation and self-discipline. These new techniques of self-organisation and self-discipline represent *internal* forms of control. So it is important to address the following questions: where do these new organisational techniques come from and how do teleworkers elaborate them? Empirical evidence reveals the existence of different sources from which teleworkers construct their own daily routines. First, through the company rhythms, such as conventional office timetable, company deadlines and customers' satisfaction. Second, through the non-work sphere, such as family commitments, hobbies, sports, their ability to follow their personal rhythms and, finally, through the internalisation of traditional values. In many cases there is a superimposition of these different spheres.

8.5.1 Virtual hours: constraints or freedom? – Reshaping the new work imperatives

Empirical data stress independence, autonomy and freedom as the main aspects of telework. When teleworkers' supervisors were asked to point out the key characteristics of a teleworker, they replied:

Teleworkers must develop specific professional skills and be aware of all the changes in the company. Most of all, they have to be autonomous. In practice, when we have to deal with teleworkers, we don't do anything. They must acquire self-organisation techniques,

because they do not have to follow a precise timetable. They must organise their work alone. As a consequence they need these characteristics: autonomy and professionalism. (Informazione, Manager 2)

They have to be independent, autonomous, self-sufficient. They should also be sociable, since they have to stay at home alone. (Informazione, Manager 2)

However, teleworkers are not completely free. They must, in fact, fulfil some company requirements. The company can check teleworkers' productivity through a system of 'virtual hours'. In this way it can fix a minimum of virtual working hours. As *Informazione*'s director pointed out:

They are free to work whenever they want to. However, they must work, they must work a minimum of virtual hours: 152 virtual hours per month. Only if they reach this minimum of virtual hours they can receive their standard salary. Obviously, if they do not work, I must reduce their salary or they can take some holidays. (Informazione, General Director)

Thus, *Informazione* protects its productivity through these *external* forms of control. However, *Informazione*'s director states that it never occurred to him to apply these extreme remedies. This work organisation tends to use *internal* forms of control as a strategy for increasing productivity. Companies which utilise external constraints for exercising control over workers do not take into consideration workers' professional skills. In contrast, *Informazione* emphasises teleworkers' autonomy and professionalism, and therefore qualitative data reveal that *external* forms of control play a minor role within *Informazione*'s management. Electronic control is not used as a restrictive mechanism; it is a tool by which teleworkers can organise their workdays and the company can check its own productivity. Consequently, *Informazione* employs electronic control in an unconventional way.

Conventionally, electronic monitoring is used to verify if workers follow a certain pace of work (*external control*). In contrast, within *Informazione*, electronic monitoring increases the autonomy and the freedom of the workers.

Teleworkers can, through their PC, verify how many hours they have done, and can organise their working time accordingly. At the beginning, *Informazione* met resistance to the introduction of 'virtual hours'. External trade unions compared them to a form of electronic piecework. Despite certain similarities, *Informazione*'s 'virtual hours' do differ from conventional electronic piecework. Payment by piecework involves forms of external control. For example, workers can work nine hours one day, but it can also be that they receive no work the day after. Their salary is dictated by the company's exigencies. This is not the case with *Informazione*'s teleworkers. If they receive a smaller salary, it is not because they did not receive enough applications, but because they were not able to attain the required number of virtual hours. A trade union representative clearly pointed out this aspect:

Yes, at the beginning they [the virtual hours] were defined as electronic control by piece work. We defined them in this way since the salary was distributed against a controlled performance. I don't agree. As a trade unionist, I use the word piecework for workers who have no rights, such as a fixed salary, days for sickness, pregnancy rights and holidays. This is not the case with our teleworkers. What other people classify as control by piecework, I classify as telematic (electronic) control. (Informazione Trade Union Representative)

Thus, even if the 'virtual hours' can be considered as *external* constraints, they do not develop forms of *external control*. Many teleworkers pointed out that they are not afraid being unable to finish the fixed amount of 'virtual hours'. This was just an initial fear.

The workload is completely organised by us. We have to do a certain number of virtual hours, which we exceed very often. (Informazione Teleworker 1)

In addition to 'virtual hours', *Informazione*'s teleworkers face another external constraint. They must complete business reports according to daily deadlines. Some applications, in fact, have to be finished in just three or four hours then sent to the customers.

The company provides the technology, and the workers have to organise their own work. The company judges the completion of the final objective and provides them with business information. Every application has a deadline, one day, two days, three days. The teleworkers know this, so they have to organise their own time. (Informazione General Director)

They don't have to guarantee daily contact hours. However, they have to get daily applications through. Obviously, if they are not connected to the internal website, it's not a big problem. (Informazione, Manager 1)

There are applications, which have to be finished in three or four hours. So, if you are not connected, you miss these applications. It does not occur very often, not every day. For this reason, there are not many problems with the supervisor. It is also necessary to be flexible. The system works in this way. At night I can do many applications, so it is not a big problem if I'm off line for three hours. Otherwise telework wouldn't make any sense. (Informazione Teleworker 6)

There is not a real limit for the teleworkers, since they do not have to be connected to the network during the conventional working day. However, teleworkers do their best to respect these deadlines. As will be clarified in the next section, this external constraint does not generate forms of external control. Flexibility is the main issue of teleworking. *Informazione's* management granted teleworkers more and more freedom and flexibility. This may be perceived as a company strategy, which led to an increase of productivity.

The main issue in *Informazione* is that these external limits are not perceived in a negative way. Teleworkers were able to create new work routines. For these reasons, the limits generate *internal* forms of control. Some teleworkers utilise this 'virtual hours' limit for creating their own routines.

I can say that my workdays are more or less the same, because I am tied to a standard productivity. Obviously, I have my own way to organise my work. For example, I try not to concentrate my work in just few hours. It would be negative for the quality of the service and it would undermine me, because I would make many mistakes. (Informazione, Teleworker 4)

Other teleworkers efficiently overcome the constraints of a deadline by working in advance. The process of anticipating application becomes part of everyday life.

I used to work lots in the company, and I always tried to support my office. I was doing many applications, and if somebody was ill everything was given to me. I like to work in advance. I don't like to finish the applications for today and then stop working. I know that every application must be completed within a certain time. There are applications, which must be handled in 4-6 hours and others in 48 and 24 hours. I prefer to anticipate the times. (Informazione, Teleworker 2)

In addition to deadlines, teleworkers have to face other contingent problems, such as the occurrence of an electronic blackout. Some teleworkers prefer to anticipate their workload for overcoming these unexpected situations and handing in their work in advance.

It never occurred to me not to finish an urgent application. Yes, probably once, there was an electric blackout and I could not work for half a day, because I couldn't log in. In order to avoid these inconveniences I tend to work in advance on all the urgent applications. In this way I can minimize the damages, such as electric blackout, or problems with the network. It's all part of this game. (Informazione, Teleworker 5)

Internal control does not only derive from company constraints, the internalisation of company values also plays an important role in the creation of self-disciplining techniques among teleworkers. One example is the internalisation of the value of customer satisfaction.

I try to concentrate all my work during the morning. During the afternoon I'm just doing urgent applications, which have to be finished in 3 or 4 hours. In most cases these applications are part of my overtime. However, I want to satisfy the customers, so I try to send them as quickly as I can. Yes, I think that telework has much improved customer's satisfaction. (Informazione, Teleworker1)

Many teleworkers also describe their abilities to mix company constraints with their own personal habits, such as the preference for working at night or during the weekend, for building up daily routines.

I exploit the nights. Last night a local investigator called me. Yes, we can organise our day as we want. We have to guarantee the completion of daily applications then, we can organise the other work as we want. For example, if we have an accumulation of virtual hours, I can take half a day off and I can resume at night-time. If there is something urgent, I can also work on Saturday. That's not the case with me; I try to keep the week-end free. I only worked a few times on Saturday, because during the week I was busy. (Informazione, Teleworker 6)

Another important element in the new teleworkers' timetable is the massive introduction of overtime work. *Informazione's* director pointed out that customers' requests have recently increased. As a consequence, it is positive for the company to gain workers' cooperation in doing overtime work. Obviously the company cannot oblige the workers to do overtime. As a trade union member pointed out:

The collective national contract says that the company can ask you to do up to 200 hours of overtime per year. If you want to work more it's your choice. (Informazione, Trade Union Representative)

He also gives a reason for the increase of teleworkers' overtime work:

Overtime is a hot issue. Internal workers find it quite hard to work overtime. This is because they spend hours commuting. For teleworkers it is different. They work from home and thus they have transformed commuting time into overtime work. In addition to this, we have to say that they are more autonomous, and they can work overtime whenever they want. (Informazione, Trade Union Representative)

The fact that teleworkers do work more and more overtime is not seen as a positive thing from a trade unionist point of view. If every worker works overtime, the number of appointments will decrease. However, trade unions cannot prevent teleworkers from working overtime.

The main point is that overtime work becomes part of the teleworkers' daily routine. Many teleworkers organise their overtime work as part of their 'compulsory' work.

We receive the applications automatically. However, if one day I finish all my work and I have some spare time I can phone the company and ask for more applications. They always have lots of work. I don't have to finish it all in one day. I can finish it during the week. Yes, we work even when there isn't anybody in the office. (Informazione Teleworker 6)

Many teleworkers reveal that they do not work extra hours. By following the 'virtual hours' system they are more productive than when they are working the same amount of hours in the office.

Yes, it becomes a routine to work overtime, you work the same number of hours as before, but you produce more. (Informazione, Teleworker 7: 1)

Other teleworkers say that while in the past they were too busy to work overtime, now they can. Many teleworkers transformed their commuting time into overtime work.

I can say that the way of working has not changed from the quantitative point of view. However, at home, if I have a spare hour I work. It's always positive to earn extra money. When I was working in the office I had no time for overtime. I arrived at home at 6,30, then I had to pick up my son at 7. I was always in a hurry. (Informazione, Teleworker 3)

Another aspect that teleworkers have to consider for setting up their personal work plans is the office timetable. It is true, they can work at any time. However, they can ask for help only at certain hours. As a consequence, some teleworkers are still tied to a conventional timetable, while others construct their work times in a more personal way, but they still are aware of these time limits.

I try to dilute the work throughout the whole day. This way of organising the work is also convenient, because I can contact my colleagues who are working on the site office. (Informazione, Teleworker 4)

Yes, if I want to work in this way⁵, I have to ask for work during the office hours. I have to organise my work according to the office rhythms. I always check if I have some remainder work. If not, I phone the office. (Informazione, Teleworker 6)

As we will see, work-routines and work practices are not the only sources of self-discipline for the teleworkers.

8.5.2. Non-work routines as a reference point for teleworkers

In addition to the office timetable, other variables, such as family commitments, play an important role for the creation of teleworkers' daily routines. Female teleworkers tell how their timetables tend to follow their children's timetable. In many cases the school timetable is considered a reference point for setting up the beginning of the working day, the breaks and the end of their work. Female narratives clearly express women's ability to switch from family commitments, work limits, self-organisation and leisure time.

Not everything is 'roses and flowers'⁶, because you should really be able to organise your workday. Yes, the fact that you are at home involves many other things, mostly for women, who are used to doing many other activities at home. I can say that some days I work three times more. I have to guarantee the office work. Telework is a virtual desk from home, so the hours that I was doing here[in the office], must be done from home as well. Then, I have to pick up my son at school. Yes, I can say that I work more than before. However, many things have changed. Previously, I was always nervous, always in a hurry; now I'm more relaxed and I can do many other things. If you are well organised you have time for your hobbies as well. This is the great thing, you can know many other aspects of life. Life is not only family and work. Telework changes the concept of work completely. (Informazione, Teleworker 6)

While in the first case study, *Servizi*, female teleworkers claimed that teleworking worsened their female autonomy by introducing the 'double role'. Before working from home they received some help from partners and children. Female teleworkers at *Informazione* argued that the 'double role' was present even before

⁵ 'To work in this way' refers to the fact that the teleworker prefers to work at night.

⁶ Telework does not only involve positive points but also drawbacks.

teleworking and that, this new work arrangement improved the quality of their lives.

Interviews with teleworkers revealed that mainly women tend to mix work with family commitments in a synchronistic way. This assumption may be slightly biased by the sample. Among the four male teleworkers interviewed, one is single, and the other two are married but without children. In contrast, all the female teleworkers interviewed are married with children. Mainly male teleworkers mentioned their sports and hobbies while they were talking about their everyday routines. As a male teleworker pointed out:

What I most like about teleworking is that you are able to organise your work time with your spare time. I like sports, I like to practice different kinds of sports. I also like watching sport competitions on television. For example, tomorrow morning I have already planned to play tennis at 10 AM. I organise my own work and then I'll play tennis. When I come back I can finish my work. (Informazione, Teleworker 2)

Among many teleworkers, sport and hobbies have the function of creating breaks in the middle of their work routines.

In my study-room there is a piano as well. I could also start to take piano lessons. I like music, so when I'm stressed I have a break and I play the piano. Then I start working again and the applications seem less difficult and less boring. (Informazione, Teleworker 1)

Other internal forces, through which *Informazione*'s teleworkers organise their daily routines derive from their own creativity. Many teleworkers claimed that they have different work routines, or at least they can create different work routines if they want to.

The beautiful thing is that your working day changes every day, or at least you can think that, if you really want, it could change every day. Then probably you are tied to the routine. If you have the chance to change it, it always seems new. (Informazione, Teleworker 1)

Many teleworkers also highlight the benefits of being able to organise their work according to their own biological rhythms.

There are winter habits and summer habits. For example it is useless to work in the afternoon during the summer. It's too hot and it's really hard to work. We have the chance to work at night as well. Yes, during the summer I prefer to work early in the morning or late at night. Anyway I prefer to concentrate my work during the morning. I'm a morning person. (Informazione, Teleworker 1)

For other teleworkers the internalisation of personal values, such as those linked to family and friends, have an important role in the decision to undertake telework. Two male teleworkers have decided to telework at their mother's home. Telework allows them to come back to their origins.

After two hours I have a break. I can't stay long hours in front of the PC. My eyes become all red, so I have a break. The market is just one minute from my place, and all my friends are there, we grew up together. Yes, we have a chat, it can be compared to the coffee break here, but it's different. One of my friends is a frame maker. He lives just in front of my house, and we played together when we were children. Yes, in my mother's place it's definitely different, we all know each other, we are a big family. (Informazione, Teleworker 2)

According to this teleworker, breaks now acquired a more affective dimension. The same teleworker claimed that the presence of a homemaker in the family also facilitates the decision of choosing teleworking as an alternative way of working.

They are always talking about the trauma teleworkers have to face, the psychological problems of isolation. I don't know, probably because I grew up with my mother and my aunt, both dressmakers. They have always worked at home. In the past most women were working at home as artisans, and they didn't have any problems. It isn't telework, but it's homework. What did our mums do in the past? Did they commit suicide? Did they throw themselves out the window? No, this is the only way to live with your family, and I'm not referring just to women. (Informazione, Teleworker 2)

The previous experience of his mother homemaker, made him understand that some problems linked to teleworking can be easily overcome.

To conclude, the data collected point out that *internal control* play a prominent role among teleworkers. *External control* exists, however it is just a deterrent. The teleworkers' agreement states clearly that they have to work a minimum of 'virtual hours' to obtain their standard salary, and, until now, no external reinforcement has been needed. However, teleworkers have to face many *external* constraints, such as daily company deadlines. These company constraints do not generate *external* forms of control, but *internal* forms of control instead. *Informazione* teleworkers elaborate these company limits and, by taking them into account, generate new work timetables and new work routines. In addition, other non-work related limits, such as family commitments, have an important role in the elaboration of alternative work regimes. Some teleworkers organise their work days by taking into account breaks for sports activities and hobbies. Others set up their work routine in a more personalised way. For example, they try to follow their biological rhythms. For others, teleworking flexibility allows them to re-discover some traditional values and habits. Thus, these new self-organising, self-discipline techniques represent internal control among *Informazione*'s teleworkers. Teleworkers had to consider many factors in order to create their own daily routines: the company, the family and their hobbies as well. Flexibility of work gives teleworkers the chance of working even if they are invisible in the workplace. The next section explores this particular aspect of control.

8.6 Visible objectives and invisible desks

This section aims to analyse how telework has reshaped the meaning of *visible control* in *Informazione*. Evidence suggested that the physical presence of *Informazione*'s employees is still considered an important parameter. This form of control, based on the amount of time that employees could potentially be 'watched' within the company, brought many consequences for teleworkers, who are *invisible* from the physical point of view.

Telework also introduced new forms of *visibility* based on IT: teleworkers are no longer visible; however, it is possible to watch what they are doing. The concept of visibility is now linked to productivity, no longer to the workers. It must also be

interpreted in a deeper sense: how do people perceive the teleworkers? What do teleworkers do in order to make themselves more visible? And moreover, how are teleworkers perceived within their own household?

8.6.1 A presence in the office is still important

During the past ten years many structural and organisational and structural changes occurred in *Informazione*. As already mentioned in the section 'vertical-horizontal control', a horizontal widening has occurred within this company; while in the past there were forms of personal control, during the last few years employees' opinions were taken more into consideration. However, evidence revealed that control in *Informazione* is still based on checking and watching the physical presence of the employees. The feeling of being watched is reinforced by the structure of the company. The internal operators who are providing commercial information work in three open-space rooms, and all the desks are in a semi-circle. In this way everybody can see each other. The desk of the supervisor is arranged in a corner of the room, and in this way s/he can see and interact with all the employees. In this context the physical presence of the supervisor and the sensation of being constantly watched, can have negative consequences on the employees. Many teleworkers, in fact, pointed out that one of the advantages of telework is that nobody can watch you, since you are at home and your boss is at his office.

Something has changed. Until few years ago there were more fears, more problems. It was a big deal just asking for one day's leave. There was this kind of mentality: 'I'm the boss, shut up you have to work'. They made you feel guilty, just because you were taking one day's leave. The situation was so surreal! Luckily it has changed. Even when I come back I don't feel at my ease; it always looks like the supervisors are controlling you. They check how many times you leave your desk for a coffee. For me this is absurd. When I am at home, I am my own master; here there is my boss and the company's director. Yes, I don't have to ask: 'May I go to have a coffee?'. However, there is still the presence of your boss. At home you are alone, but you're doing your work. It is not that because you are at home you are not serious, you don't have integrity. (Informazione, Teleworkers 6)

All the teleworkers agree that they work better alone, far away from the 'immanent eye' of the company. At home direct control based on *visibility* has been substituted with the creation of techniques of self-discipline and self-organisation. Teleworkers know that they have to do a certain number of 'virtual hours', so there is no need to check if they are working. According to them, they work better alone. The lack of direct visible control has many positive points; however there are drawbacks as well. Telework has revolutionised the way teleworkers are controlled. However, it has not introduced radical changes for the on-site employees.

In teleworking the focus is on workers' productivity, while, inside the company control is still directed towards the employees themselves. Thus the physical presence of the employees is an important variable for the evaluation of their duties. A trade union representative pointed out that forms of control and evaluation based on the amount of time spent inside the office are unproductive for the company. However, this is one of the 'sad truths' of control in workplaces. Evidence confirmed that this form of control might also have negative consequences for the teleworkers careers.

It is true, for a career you should stay in the company. In my opinion, companies like Informazione establish employees' commitment by considering the time that you spend within the company. For example, my boss and the general director of the company like me simply because after 5 PM I'm still in my office; they don't really check my productivity during my 8 hours of work. Many people tell me: 'I left the office at 8 PM'. They arrived in the office at 8 AM and they left the office at 8PM, it's unbelievable, it's absurd! If a company is so tied to workers' activity then the workers can blackmail the company. I have worked in the company until 7PM. The company checks the workers' activities by measuring the time that they spend inside the office. The situation of the teleworkers is different, they don't have contact hours. Consequently, there is no immediate relationship with their supervisor. That is why they are a bit compromised. (Informazione, Trade Union Representative)

Yes, you imprison yourself, since you are doing the same kind of job, your career involves a physical presence in the company. It is not by chance, that in the last few years teleworkers did not get any

promotions. We didn't expect this anyway. (Informazione, Teleworker 5)

The lack of career opportunities is a 'hot issue' for teleworkers. The main aspect to emerge from the data is that, since the workers are not physically *visible* and they cannot interact with their supervisors, they will have fewer chances to climb the ladder.

8.6.2 E-visibility and its contradictions

Obviously teleworking introduced new forms of visibility by results via ICTs. An example is the introduction of 'virtual hours'. *Informazione* introduced 'virtual hours' by making an estimate of internal productivity. The creation of the 'virtual hours' allows the introduction of control by distance and enhances flexibility among teleworkers. Through the system of virtual hours both teleworkers and their supervisors have a perfect and immediate visibility. This system is beneficial for both teleworkers and the company itself. First, the company can immediately check the quantity of work accomplished by the teleworkers. Second, by means of this system teleworkers can organise their work by checking their productivity. By means of 'virtual hours' teleworkers are now aware to be very productive and thus very precious to the company, all the teleworkers have increased their overtime work since then they started teleworking.

We have to fill in some applications. I can quantify my work and see what I am doing. I can see that I can work more hours and that I'm doing more overtime. When I was in my office I was not able to do overtime. Now it's different. There is a number which is linked to the time. If I have not finished X files, I have not done my work. I can see everything on the screen, I can see that I am more efficient, now I'm doing more overtime. (Informazione Teleworker 6)

We work according the virtual hours system, so we know how many applications we do daily. By talking with our supervisor, we know that we are working a lot. (Informazione Teleworker 3)

The 'virtual hours' also stress teleworkers' awareness of being productive: their work is visible and in this way it is evident that they are working hard. So

teleworkers ask themselves why they did not gain advancement. This situation creates a separation between the on-site workers and the teleworkers. The former are physically visible, but their productivity is not electronically visible; the latter are invisible, however their productivity is clearly visible on the screen. Teleworkers are aware of this lack of visibility inside the company and they tried to underline their commitment to the company in many ways. Some teleworkers claim they phone their supervisors many times every day, other carry on contacting their colleagues and team members. A contradictory situation still exists: teleworkers' productivity is visibly high, but, according to them, they are not treated properly (e.g. lack of career opportunities).

Telework introduced new forms of *visibility*: the main focus is no longer on the *visibility* of the *workers*, but on the *visibility* of the *result*. It also introduced new ways through which the work can be made visible: the direct control of a supervisor is replaced by new IT systems. However, evidence also suggested that these new forms of control do not entirely substitute for the traditional ones based on strict supervision and direct control. For example, teleworkers, since they do not spend enough time inside the company, are excluded from career opportunities.

8.7 Conclusion

Informazione portrays the introduction of teleworking in an 'ideal' work environment; a flexible organisation of work, advanced technological conditions, time flexibility make this company the 'best' place to telework. In addition work performances based on outputs are perfectly quantifiable, creating fewer problems from the managers' point of view. However, all these optimum conditions cannot prevent the emergence of unintended problems and unexpected contradictions.

The 'Social Dimensions of Control' accompanied our analysis. The dimensions of *vertical/horizontal control*, by following the lines of the post-fordist paradigm, highlight how organisational and technological changes anticipated the advent of teleworking and widened the hierarchy of this work organisation. The introduction

of teleworking reinforced the dimension of *horizontal control*. According to the teleworkers, teleworking makes them more autonomous and free, because they can escape the personal control of their managers. In this case communication from a distance increases workers' autonomy and freedom.

In contrast to the previous two case studies, teleworkers' managers, apart from an initial resistance, did not experience any particular problems in managing teleworkers. This can be explained by two factors: the small size of the company facilitates communication between teleworkers and managers and among managers themselves, thereby allowing a more homogeneous method of management. In addition, the 'virtual hours' allowed a perfect quantification of teleworkers' output and this eased managers' tasks.

Despite all these positive changes introduced by teleworking, tensions and contradictions co-exist. Teleworkers noted that a physical presence in the workplace is still important, and that working at home penalises them in terms of career opportunities (Brocklehurst, 2001) and confines them to a job with less responsibility. In other words, teleworking increases teleworkers' autonomy but deskills them and creates a hierarchical distance between them and the internal workers, who are involved in more interesting activities, while teleworkers who perform simpler tasks.

The social dimension of *central control* highlights other contradictions: although teleworkers are satisfied about their new work arrangements, they admit that they detach themselves from their workplace. In order to overcome this problem the company introduced a series of management practices and policies, such as improving IT systems, ensuring regular training, etc. However, the main problem was transferring the corporate culture to the new remote workforce. As previous literature suggested, corporate culture has become an explicit tool of managerial control (Kunda, 1992; Casey 1995; Grugolis *et al.* 2001, Willmott, 1993), which normally occurs in the workplace. Recent research suggests how difficult it is to compensate workers' lack of physical presence in the office and

import corporate values through other methods (Felstead *et al.*, 2003). What this research revealed is that teleworkers become more independent and autonomous and thus more detached from their workplaces. They started re-creating new personal routines (Sennet, 1998; Felstead and Jewson, 2000) and acquiring new identities and values (Giddens, 1991).

Decentred control is represented by the customers. This is in line with the flexible accumulation of the post-fordist era. As we have seen, customer satisfaction acquires a deeper meaning for the teleworkers. If the productivity of the company decreases, they must return to the company. For this reason, they try to satisfy their customers as much as they can.

The management strategy of 'virtual hours' leads to a discussion on *external/internal control*. Although, at first glance, the 'virtual hours' might be perceived as a constraint, in practice they are precious tools which can help teleworkers to manage their own work. Teleworkers can work whenever they want. Through the 'virtual hour' system, they can immediately quantify their workload and organise their days according to the company's rhythms and non-work spheres.

The final dimension of *visible/invisible control* highlights new contradictions of teleworking. As mentioned, control still relies on workers' presence in the workplaces. The 'virtual hours' system makes teleworkers' results perfectly *visible* on the monitor. Teleworking consultants assumed that this variable would become less important and compensate for the invisibility of the teleworkers. This was not true of *Informazione*. Through their PC, teleworkers become aware of being more productive than internal employees. However, they are *invisible* and, for this very reason, can be excluded from career opportunities. This causes many tensions.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

In the final chapter of this thesis findings are drawn together and comparisons are made. The thesis has argued that the exercise of control over teleworkers is a complex phenomenon. The types of control which emerged in previous researches have been discussed in Chapter 2 (for instance: Hakim, 1987; Allen and Wolkovitz, 1987; Brocklehurst, 1989, 2001; Haddon and Silverstone, 1993; Phizacklea and Wolkovitz 1995; Olsen, 1989; Huws *et al.*, 1990, Huws, 1993, 1994; Di Nicola –forthcoming; Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Felstead *et al.* 2001, 2002, 2003). Other mechanisms of control emerged from research carried out in the three case studies considered.

In order to investigate how teleworkers are controlled, it has been necessary to define the focus of enquiry. There are many types of teleworkers, however this thesis considers employed teleworkers, in paid work for an employer, who work mainly at home. After having identified the subject of this analysis, previous literature dealing with the issue of control in homeworking/teleworking has been reviewed. Through an analysis of previous studies on teleworking, it has been possible to generate a theoretical framework which guided both the empirical work and the data analysis. In addition, a specific chapter based on telework in Italy was introduced. This provided an understanding of the national context of the research. Since legislation plays an important role for teleworking in Italy, Italian laws on teleworking have been discussed. These specific aspects of teleworking have, in fact, important consequences for the development of mechanisms for controlling teleworkers.

The national context, Italy, had an impact on sampling the case studies and the whole empirical research. Three case studies have been selected according to their diversity and their theoretical relevance.

Once the data was collected, the theoretical framework guided the analysis and originated new theoretical categories and concepts for each case study. The aim of this chapter is to compare and generalise the findings of the three different case studies and to provide a final answer to the research questions stated at the end of Chapter 1. These research questions have been present throughout the research and to remind the reader they are specified below.

The main research question is: How are teleworkers controlled?

From this main research question, it has been possible to generate other sub-questions:

- ▶ Which management strategies, practices and policies does teleworking develop?
- ▶ What is the impact of teleworking on companies' organisational and hierarchical structure?
- ▶ How do managers react to and resist teleworking?

These research questions will guide this concluding chapter, which aims to compare the findings of the three different case studies analysed with previous research on teleworking. As we can see, the theoretical framework is an important tool for analysing these research questions.

The first sub-question deals with the management strategies, practices and policies which each company developed in order to control teleworkers. Because of the organisational differences, each case study built up its own strategies, practices and policies for managing their remote workforce. Teleworking management strategies are formalised techniques of control which are specifically utilised for increasing productivity. Teleworking management practices are the methods of control which are commonly used for controlling this remote workforce. These methods have not been purposely designed. However, they are utilised daily for controlling teleworkers. Policies related to control are normally practices which have been formalised in

teleworkers' agreements or in other recognized documents. These play an important role for coping with problems which restrict control over teleworkers.

One of the aims of this research is to investigate the interactions of the phenomenon of teleworking and the whole work organisation which has introduced this new form of working. It will be interesting to discover if teleworking developed relevant structural changes or further changes within the hierarchies the companies, which introduced this type of working.

As previous literature on telework pointed out, companies which decided to implement teleworking schemes deal with the opposition from the managers in charge of controlling teleworkers (see for instance: Olson, 1989; Huws, 1993, 1994; Phizacklea and Wolkovitz, 1995; Hamblin 1995). The middle management is responsible for controlling the teleworkers, so it was important to investigate their reactions towards teleworking. The final part of this chapter summarises the findings of this thesis and discusses the issues which require further research.

9.2 Teleworking management strategies, practices and policies

Before comparing the different management strategies, practices and policies which emerge from this research, the three different case studies will be briefly summarised. The three work organisations which set up teleworking schemes are very different from each other (see Chapter 5), and decided to implement this way of working for diverse reasons. The first case study, *Servizi* (see Chapter 6) is a public body whose motivations for introducing telework were primarily political and social rather than economic. Teleworking has been mainly implemented to improve workers' quality of life. Teleworking was, in fact, considered a convenient option for commuters and parents who have to cope with childcare responsibilities. From a macro perspective, teleworking creates new working opportunities for people with disabilities, those

looking after children and the elderly and those who live in rural areas. Teleworking should also increase the efficiency and flexibility of this public body. For instance, the future introduction of desk sharing will reduce management costs. However, external consultants in charge of implementing teleworking are aware that economic benefits can be considered only in a long-term period. *Servizi* represents the introduction of teleworking in a very bureaucratised public sector environment.

Within the second case study, *Comunicazione* (see Chapter 7), we have a completely different scenario: it is a large telecommunication company and, has introduced teleworking among its call centre operators. In contrast to *Servizi*, in *Comunicazione* the economic motivation prevails. The company, after having checked that teleworkers are more productive than internal call centre operators, decided to close down some small call centres. The social interests, such as helping employees with childcare and family responsibilities came as an afterthought. *Comunicazione* can be seen as the example of the implementation of teleworking in a call centre environment.

The third case, *Informazione* (see Chapter 8), is a medium-sized enterprise and its teleworkers are semi-professional employees. It has introduced teleworking mainly to cope with staff retention, which worsened after its decision to relocate its offices. After the office relocation, in fact, many employees considered the option of leaving their job. *Informazione*'s employees need a long period of training. *Informazione*'s employees were used to dealing with electronic documents even before the implementation of teleworking. Therefore, management thought that the introduction of teleworking could be a solution for this problem. In a more general terms, *Informazione* represents new developments in the Italian economy, which are embodied in small-medium sized enterprises.

As it was possible to understand from the analysis of the case studies considered, different work organisations and different motivations for introducing telework,

generate different methods through which teleworkers are controlled. This can be classified in management strategies, practices and policies. These different methods of control will be summarised and compared by referring to the theoretical framework and previous literature on telework.

9.2.1 Teleworking management strategies

As expected, the three work organisations developed different strategies in order to control teleworkers. These are summarised in the Table 9.1 and will be discussed in this section.

Table 9.1 Teleworking management strategies

Organisations	Management strategies
<i>Servizi</i> (public body)	▸ ‘Objectives achievement’
<i>Comunicazione</i> (virtual call center)	▸ ‘Collective gaze’ ▸ Strategic use of customer satisfaction training
<i>Informazione</i> (SME)	▸ ‘Outputs measurement’ ▸ Customers’ satisfaction

If we compare the three organisations, we first note that they developed different strategies for controlling the teleworkers. In addition, the motivation for introducing teleworking affects the strategies for controlling the workforce. In the first case study, *Servizi*, teleworking was mainly seen as an instrument for helping the workers. *Servizi* adopted a form of control by objectives and, this ‘problematic’ method of control has been introduced in a very bureaucratic work environment hostile to flexible forms of working, such as teleworking. The finding that control by objective is problematic has been discussed in previous research on teleworking (Huws *et al.* 1990, Huws, 1993,

1994; Phizacklea and Wolkovitz, 1995). This case study partially confirms these findings.

What lesson can we learn from this case study, which in more general terms represents the introduction of teleworking to a bureaucratised public sector environment? Ideally the strategy of managing teleworkers by evaluating their outputs should develop a horizontal widening and generate more collaboration between managers and teleworkers (*horizontal control*). However, the organisational structure of *Servizi* is too bureaucratic and hierarchical. Teleworkers' managers are normally chosen according to their specialist expertise, and it is expected that officials holding higher positions have authority over those lower down (*vertical control*). An organisation of work based on objective achievement means bypassing the hierarchical structure and can be regarded as a loss of power from the managers point of view. This finding confirms other results attained by previous research on teleworking (Olson, 1989; Huws *et al.* 1990; Huws, 1993; Huws, 1994; Phizacklea and Wolkovitz, 1995; Humblin, 1995). Similarly to *Servizi*, these studies demonstrate that the managers' 'fear of losing control' is one of the main obstacles to checking control by results. This aspect is particularly critical within *Servizi*, which is based on a strong hierarchical structure. The social dimension of *vertical control* underlines this specific issue.

In addition, as in previous studies on teleworking (Phizacklea and Wolkovitz, 1995; Huws, 1993), managers' fear of losing control is coupled with their inadequate preparation of these managers for controlling employees by objectives. As in previous research (*ibid.*), the work organisations which introduce teleworking should implement training or specific guidelines for managers in order to get them used to control by objective. These practices should facilitate this new form of control.

The organisation of work by objectives achievement is not only a problem for managers, but for teleworkers as well. This form of control makes teleworkers less

subjected to *external* forms of control and more directed by forms of *internal control*, such as self-discipline and self-management. Self-managed and self-oriented teleworkers can be recruited through a careful selection of the candidates or by implementing a well designed training course (Huws, 1993; Baruch, 2001). In the first case, the focus is on personal characteristics, only teleworkers with specific personal qualities can become a teleworker. In the second case, the company should be responsible, through training courses, to instil self-discipline. Again, other research emphasised the processes through which teleworkers develop self-discipline (Haddon and Silverstone, 1993; Felstead and Jewson, 2000).

In *Servizi*, as is probably in other public bodies, control by objectives generates many perplexities among the new teleworkers. First, the selection of the potential teleworkers does not pay particular attention to the personal characteristics of the workers. The main variables for selecting the teleworkers considered were the ability to carry out their work autonomously, but also other social aspects, such as their commuting distance to the workplace, whether they have children etc. This case study also set up teleworkers' training schemes; however, these dealt more with technical aspects of telework, (such as how to use the e-mail), than social ones. In addition, this work organisation was not culturally prepared for a flexible way of working.

According to *Servizi's* consultants, the introduction of the weekly report, which both teleworkers and managers must fill in, should facilitate co-operation between managers and teleworkers and develop self-discipline among these latter. Whilst it was thought that the regular use of the reporting system could help teleworkers in developing self-discipline, many teleworkers complained of having experienced some problems regarding the organisation of their work, particularly during the initial period of teleworking. As evidence suggested, many teleworkers experienced difficulties in timing their own activities. This is a common problem among teleworkers. Many researchers noted that teleworkers can easily become workaholics (Haddon and Silverstone, 1993; Brocklehurst 2001, Felstead *et al.* 2003; Di Nicola

forthcoming). This is a relevant issue for *Servizi*'s teleworkers, since they are not paid for overtime work. *Servizi* failed to provide teleworkers with appropriate teleworking training or guidelines, so that teleworkers had to teach themselves to organise their own working days. An interesting finding of this case study is the social nature of self-discipline. Evidence from this case study showed that self-discipline is only partly a personal characteristic of the worker, it can also be learnt. *Servizi* demonstrates how self-discipline becomes part of a self-teaching process (*internal control*). Since this work organisation did not provide an appropriate training, teleworkers claimed to have read books and articles, to learn how to organise their working days efficiently.

Conventionally, managerial control in both the public and private sectors relies on visibility and the presence of workers within their workplaces (Baldry, 1999; Baldry *et al.* 1998; Marglin, 1976; Marcus, 1993). Recent research on home-based work points out that the loss of workers' visibility was considered a serious problem (Felstead *et al.* 2003). Thus it is difficult to substitute a traditional form of control which relies on making the workers *visible* with a new form of control where the *invisibility* of the workers must be compensated by a focusing on their outputs. Similarly to recent research on teleworking (Brocklehurst, 2001), teleworkers perceive that lack of *visibility* could be counter-productive for their future career development. As this research suggests, some teleworkers resisted, in different ways their lack of visibility. Consequently, control by outputs involved many problems that become difficulty overcome.

The other two case studies adopted different strategies of control from *Servizi*. Within *Comunicazione*, the work organisation which introduced teleworking in its call centre, the strategy of the 'collective gaze' operates through the device of electronic monitoring. As mentioned, *Comunicazione* represents the introduction of teleworking in a call centre environment.

Although recent research on call centres (Fernie and Metcalf, 1998) demonstrates that control in call centres follows panoptic mechanisms of surveillance, optimised by ICT, which can easily generate self-discipline among the workers. Other studies (Bain and Taylor, 2000; Taylor and Bain, 1999; Callaghan and Thompson, 2001; Frenkel *et al.*, 1998; Di Nicola, forthcoming) confute this thesis, according to them electronic surveillance cannot be considered the only method of control in call centres. If according to the latest, electronic surveillance is not able to control internal operators, what is its role in the control of call centre teleworkers? In addition, it is important to remember that, in Italy, electronic monitoring is constrained (see chapter 4). *Article 4, law 300/1970* of the Workers' Statute outlaws control from a distance through audiovisual instruments. This means that call centre supervisors cannot listen to operators' phone calls and cannot quantify the productivity of each operator.

In the Italian call centre context, electronic surveillance was thus adopted to monitor the collective productivity of all the teleworkers who work in the same shift. Electronic monitoring activates the strategy of the 'collective gaze'. This acts through *visible/external/internal control*. Although teleworkers are not in the call centre, line managers can see their overall productivity (*visible control*). Teleworkers are thus aware that if their productivity drops, they will be asked to return to the call centre (*external control*). *External* methods, such as electronic messages, reinforce this process of self-discipline (*internal control*). If the productivity decreases they will receive 'nasty' messages.

Other literature on call centres noted that managers utilise collective statistics based on team performances (Frankel *et al.*, 1998) for reinforcing the workers' sense of belonging to their team and empowering them. In *Comunicazione* and, more generally, in other Italian call centres which have introduced teleworking, quantitative measurement of the pool of the remote workers acquires a different meaning. It is mainly a forced decision, which compensates for the lack of individual monitoring. It indirectly motivates teleworkers to work harder and, to demonstrate that teleworking

is a good choice for the managers. Although this strategy was successful in terms of productivity, teleworkers became more productive than internal workers. However, this caused many strains among them. First, the use of a separate 'productivity pot' for teleworkers and internal workers increases the teleworkers' separation from the company. Electronic monitoring, by making teleworkers' productivity *visible*, tried to compensate for the teleworkers' lack of physical presence in the workplace. However, according to the findings of this research, being in the call centre is still an important variable.

The strategy of the 'collective gaze' guarantees good productivity. However, there was still an unsolved problem: how can managers check the quality standard of phone conversation? A strategy which compensates for the impossibility of recording and listening to phone conversations involves the strategic use of training sessions which mainly activate normative control. During these training sessions teleworkers are asked to repeat many times some standard sentences, in order to reinforce customers satisfaction and assure a good standard of phone conversations. According to the management, by the regular repetition of these sentences, teleworkers internalise these values (*internal control*).

Previous literature on teleworking (Hamblin, 1995, Huws, 1994; Phizacklea and Wolkovitz, 1995) makes a distinction between low-skilled and professional teleworkers. These studies claim that the first category of teleworkers can be easily managed through *external* techniques of control. The 'problematic' teleworkers are the professional ones who must be managed by checking achieved objectives. The findings of this case study add a more complex scenario to previous research. As evidence revealed, even low skilled teleworkers, such as call centre operators, are difficult to manage. *External* forms of control, such as electronic monitoring, must be coupled with *internal* ones. Electronic monitoring also involves *internal control*, which mainly acts through panoptic mechanisms: 'I'm watched so I work harder'. However, this is just a consequences of *external* measures. The introduction of new

strategies more focused on *internal* dynamics of the companies must be introduced. This finding reflects recent literature on control in workplaces. For instance, strategies based on normative commitment have been introduced for controlling low skilled workers (Legge, 1995; Purcell, 1993; Willmott, 1993). As the research findings revealed, normative control can be productive, but it can also generate resistance.

It is important to note that while previous research of low-skilled teleworkers, principally focused on manufacturing or data entry home-teleworkers, the present research analysed specifically teleworkers of the 'call centre sector', an aspect which has not been deeply explored in the teleworking literature. Thus, these findings do not apply to all low-skilled teleworkers, but specifically to home-located call centre operators. This reinforces the idea that control over teleworkers is a complex phenomenon because it involves a heterogeneous range of workers.

The third case study, *Informazione*, represents the evolution of Italian middle-sized enterprises through the introduction of ICTs and a more flexible way of working. The strategy of control that *Informazione*'s management introduced is based on 'outputs measurement' and acts through the 'virtual hours system'. As mentioned in Chapter 8, in order to measure virtual hours, managers first classified the different work tasks, then measured the medium time that internal workers take in order complete each work task. 'Virtual hours' can thus be interpreted as the medium time workers employ to carry out a specific task. This is a form of control based on outputs, however, in contrast to *Servizi*, in *Informazione* the output is perfectly quantifiable. This should facilitate the work of teleworkers' managers who can calculate in advance the value of work of each teleworker. However, other problems related to control emerged.

As mentioned in Chapter 8, *Visible*, *external* and *internal control* act jointly. Through the central monitor, managers can check the work teleworkers have completed and the corresponding 'virtual hours' accumulated (*visible control*) and can assign teleworkers work tasks accordingly (*external control*). Through their PC

teleworkers can see exactly what they have produced and organise their work hours accordingly (*internal control*). Previous research on of *external control*, such as payment by pieces of work. For many reasons it is misleading to associate the 'virtual hours' system with electronic piecework, since *Informazione's* teleworkers are employees and receive a fixed salary. In this specific case, *external control* enhances the freedom and flexibility of the teleworkers and facilitates *internal control*. A system which allowed a precise quantification of teleworkers' outputs also allowed these workers to work at any time and to carry out extra hours work. In fact, with an increase of demand, management found it more convenient to pay for overtime work than employ new staff. This might create problems with the Trade Unions.

This medium-sized enterprise is an example of post-industrial organisation, whose production is based on flexible accumulation, which can only be achieved by assuring the co-operation of the workforce in order to regulate the *decentred* customers' needs (Willmott, 1993). The co-operation with the teleworkers is achieved by increasing their ability to organise their time and their workload. In this case study teleworkers are aware that if customers decrease their requests, they must return to their company. This facilitates the internalisation of customer satisfaction values (*internal control*) and increases teleworkers' production.

Conventionally, professional teleworkers are controlled by objective achievements. Because managers found it difficult to set and measure objectives, control is perceived as problematic (Huws *et al.* 1990; Huws, 1993, 1994). However, even when teleworkers' output becomes perfectly quantifiable, problems still remain, for example teleworkers' detachment from their company. Teleworkers, by becoming more and more autonomous and independent, also detach themselves from the company. As Brocklehurst (2001) noted, teleworkers are mainly directed to recreate new identities (Giddens, 1991; Sennett, 1998; Felstead and Jewson, 2000) and in some cases these new identities, do not completely converge with the ideal and values of the workplace. Thus it is necessary to reinforce the *central control* of the work organisation.

A vast amount of literature on corporate culture notes that the 'strengthening' of corporate culture enhances organisational performance by securing commitment from employees (Davis, 1984; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Goldsmith and Clutterbuck, 1984; Kanter, 1984; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale, 1985; Watermann, 1988). Corporate culture is based on values, myths and, language (Kunda, 1992) which can be easily widespread in workplaces. Corporate culture is seen as a strategic means to ensure normative control (Etzioni, 1961, Kunda, 1992). Previous research on teleworking underlines the importance of corporate culture in the workplace. For this reason the lack of employees presence in their work organisation can become problematic (Olson, 1989). Similar results have been found in the companies considered, particularly in *Informazione* which finds it difficult to transfer its corporate culture to their teleworkers. A common strategy utilised for reinforcing teleworkers' commitment to corporate values and the central control of the company is teamworking. However, team working, in many cases, is a bureaucratic construction which disguises normative control. For this reason, not all the teleworkers identify themselves with their team.

To summarise, the findings of this research revealed the following generalisations. For many reasons, control based on results can be considered problematic. Similarly to previous research (Huws *et al.* 1990, Huws, 1993, 1994), managers might experience problems in setting up and evaluating the results. However, this is not the only constraint; other variables, such as a strong hierarchical structure and a lack of teleworking culture made control more problematic. Regarding the strategy of control based on electronic monitoring, this research partially confirms previous findings of call centre literature (Bain and Taylor, 2000; Taylor and Bain, 1999; Frenkel *et al.* 1998; Di Nicola, forthcoming), and points out that this form of control should be coupled with others, based on internal control. This research revealed a new category of low-skilled teleworkers. These are the home-located call centre operators. Little

research have been done on these workers. It illustrated that within this category of low-skilled teleworkers control is complex task.

Finally, even when teleworking is implemented in a flexible environment (*horizontal control*) and workers' output is perfectly quantifiable through electronic devices and facilitates self-discipline (*internal control*) among teleworkers, control is still problematic. Research findings confirmed the risk of teleworkers' detachment from their workplace. New strategies must be introduced for strengthening *central control* and teleworkers' commitment to their workplace.

9.2.2 Teleworking management practices

In addition to these management strategies the three companies selected utilise other practices for controlling their remote workforce. These are summarised in the table below (Table 9.2).

Table 9.2 Teleworking management practices

Organisations	Teleworking Management Practices
<i>Servizi</i> (public body)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‣ Control based on trust ‣ Telephone calls, e-mails
<i>Comunicazione</i> (virtual call center)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‣ Control based on trust ‣ Telephone calls, fax
<i>Informazione</i> (SME)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‣ Telephone calls, video conference

Teleworking practices can be considered as different devices of control which have not been purposively designed for teleworkers, but they are daily utilised for controlling them. A comparison of the three case studies revealed some similarities regarding the practices utilised for managing teleworkers. In the first two case studies, control based on trust is a common practice utilised for avoiding new strategies of

control, such as control by results and compensate the lack of physical presence of teleworkers in the office. In addition, the use of informal practices, such as phone calls, e-mails aim improve communication between teleworkers and their superiors or colleagues, to enhance their belonging to their workplace and, again to compensate for teleworkers' lack of physical presence in their office.

As mentioned above, in bureaucratic workplaces (e.g. *Servizi*) 'trust' can be adopted as a practice for avoiding more attentive planning and control by objectives achievement. Many managers considered control as an unproblematic issue since they trust their employees. They do not need to adopt new strategies of control.

Bureaucratic organisations, in their pure form (e.g. Weber's ideal type) should be based on rationality, so personal forms of control must be banned. However, studies demonstrated that many bureaucracies develop personal relationships in order to control their workforce who might be de-motivated by the rigid structure of the company (Gouldner, 1954). Personal control empowers managers and impedes workers resistance. Trust can be considered as a specific form of personal control. It involves a history of personal ties between the teleworkers and their managers which take place within the work organisation.

In public sectors profits are not considered the main imperative. In many circumstances, social aspects have priority. Trustworthy employees who have to commute for long distances or have family commitments, have better chances of being selected. Recent studies on teleworkers (Felstead *et al.*, 2003) discussed the issue of trust from a different angle. According to Felstead *et al.* (*ibid.*), the managers of home-located workers interpreted trust as a capacity on the part of the workers for individual self-discipline and self-management. Thus, during the selection processes, reliable, self-motivated and self-disciplined workers had better chances of working at home. 'Trust was, then very widely conceived in individualistic and psychological terms rather than as an attribute of workplace relationships' (*ibid.* : 251).

Control based on trust, can have some positive points, such as allowing co-operation and providing employees with more autonomy (*horizontal control*). These aspects are particularly important for the teleworkers. However, it involves drawbacks as well. Control based on personal ties can reinforce the hierarchical distance between teleworkers and their managers (*vertical control*). Many managers let trustworthy employees work at home as a personal favour. These teleworkers, in exchange for the chance to telework, will be more willing to exploit themselves.

This research revealed that control based on trust is also present in a call centre environment (Di Nicola, forthcoming). Line managers, in fact, evaluate teleworkers on the basis of their previous experience in the call centre. Trust, in this case, attempts to compensate for inability to check, via electronic devices, the productivity of every single worker (lack of individual *visibility* through electronic monitoring).

Daily face-to-face communication and informal meetings represent common practices for managing workers in workplaces. In the all three case studies, these practices are replaced by regular telephone calls (all three case studies), e-mails (only in *Servizi* and *Informazione*) and video-conference (only in *Informazione*). These regular phone calls and e-mails allowed the three work organisations to keep teleworkers aware of any changes occurring in their workplaces, to solve technical problems and to establish regular contacts with the teleworkers. Teleworkers' detachment from their company (*central control*) is a common phenomenon among teleworkers. Regular communication with the company was conceived as a simple way to overcome this problem. Recent research on home-located workers (Felstead *et al.*, 2003) found similar results. They also underline the existence of new skills that both managers and home-located workers have to learn and deploy, during their regular telephone calls, in order to compensate for their lack of visibility within the office.

Conclusion

The importance of these informal practices of communication which facilitate control from a distance become more evident in those workplace characterised by poor technological conditions (e.g. *Comunicazione*). In such workplaces, teleworkers are more luckily to suffer from communication problems and tend to become more detached from their workplace.

In addition, many teleworkers, noted that communication from a distance, improves their relationships with their supervisors and facilitates collaboration with them (*horizontal control*- e.g. *Servizi* and *Comunicazione*). According to many teleworkers, the lack of face-to face confrontation increase their autonomy. However, this finding cannot be generalised. Previous studies (Zubuff, 1988) confute this hypothesis, line managers in her case studies found the opposite. Line managers revealed that communication by technological tools empowered them and reinforced hierarchical mechanisms of control (*vertical control*). Thus, the idea that communication from a distance creates lateral relations can be controversial.

9.2.3 Teleworking Policies

Teleworking also generates different policies, some of them indirectly relate to control. These can be summarised in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3 Teleworking policies

Organisations	Teleworking Policies
<i>Servizi</i> (public body)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Contact hours ▸ Office-based days ▸ Training
<i>Comunicazione</i> (virtual call center)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Office-based days ▸ Training
<i>Informazione</i> (SME)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Contacts hours ▸ Office-based days ▸ Training

Teleworking policies have been introduced in internal documents or in teleworkers' agreements for solving some issues specifically related to teleworking. Teleworking policies deal with teleworkers training, the necessity to introduce contact hours or office-based-days. Overall, the main aim of these teleworking policies is to strengthen *central control*. In the sections 9.2.2 and 9.2.3, *central control* is mainly discussed in terms of teleworkers' attachment to their company. This aspect will also be analysed in this section. In addition, the company is also a central point, where teleworkers can find guidelines and instructions for carrying out their job.

Contact hours can be considered as a common policy introduced in work organisations which implemented teleworking. During these contact hours teleworkers must be at home, so that their company knows when to contact them. Contact-hours are seen as policies to strengthen *central control*.

Work organisations which have implemented teleworking can either decide not to introduce contact hours, to make them compulsory or to consider them just as a

flexible arrangement between the managers and the teleworkers. In teleworking schemes which do not offer time flexibility, such as in call centres, contact hours are irrelevant. In other organisations, in which teleworking has been introduced to enhance workers' flexibility, contact-hours have been introduced for detecting teleworkers' availability, so that, in case of emergencies, internal colleagues and managers know where to contact them. These limits can also be seen as beneficial from the teleworkers point of view. These constraints make them reflect that their workplace needs them, and so reinforces their attachment to the company (*central control*). Evidence suggested that the abolition of these contact hours can give counter productive results. It is true, that teleworkers gain more autonomy and flexibility, but this independence can be translated as a progressive detachment from their workplace. (e.g. *Informazione*).

Another management policy is the implementation of office-based-days. This policy can exist in teleworking schemes, but with variations. For instance, some work organisations decide to introduce compulsory office-based days. There are reasons which can explain this resolution. These work organisations can be highly bureaucratised (e.g. *Servizi*). In these workplaces the use of hard copy documents are still part of the organisation of work; therefore, teleworkers return to the company regularly. This necessity of returning to the original workplace can give positive results, such as reinforcing teleworkers' attachment to their company and helping them to face the problem of isolation (*central control*). Regular stays in the original workplace can be beneficial. However, if the periods spent are prolonged, teleworkers can experience additional problems. Since they spend more time in the office than at their home, they do not identify themselves as either teleworkers nor internal workers.

Office-based days are not considered compulsory for all the work organisations which have introduced teleworking (e.g. *Comunicazione, Informazione*). Revisits to the company can be also utilised for training purposes. In this case teleworkers are required to return to their workplaces less regularly. Again these training sections, in

addition to facilitating a staff development plan, also strengthen the teleworkers sense of belonging to the company (*central control*).

Evidence suggested that teleworkers in work organisations which have introduced compulsory office-based days tend to be more committed to company aims and values (e.g. *Servizi*). In workplaces which decided to maximise the time flexibility of teleworkers and thus, did not introduce fixed and regular office-based days (e.g. *Informazione*), teleworkers become more detached from their workplace. These teleworkers substituted the old routines with new ones. For instance, they replaced the usual coffee break with colleagues with a coffee with friends in the local bar. They become autonomous and independent and no longer need to identify themselves with their company culture and routines. These new dynamics confirm previous research on teleworking (Brocklehurst, 2001; Felstead and Jewson, 2000) which utilises Giddens'(1991) concept of identity to describe how teleworkers re-shape their new identities by creating new routines in terms of space and time. Consequently, the policy of office-based days has been considered relevant, for reinforcing central control. However, many teleworkers have chosen this work option for avoiding the workplace, so that implementing compulsory revisits to the workplace can be considered problematic.

Induction and on going training are considered important teleworking policies. As mentioned, in many cases ongoing training has been utilised for strengthening teleworkers commitment to their workplace and reinforcing the *central control* of the company. In contrast, induction training is commonly introduced for learning purposes. These training sessions are purposely organised for preparing the teleworkers for their new job. Evidence suggested that these induction training can be either prescriptive and focused mainly on IT and health and security policies, or dealing with other social issues, such as how to cope with isolation and how to acquire new self-discipline and self-management techniques (*internal control*).

Generally speaking, a bureaucratic organisation with a rigid organisational structure (e.g. *Servizi*) tends to focus on the technical aspects of teleworking and dismiss other cultural and social issues of this phenomenon. As mentioned above, this had negative impacts on *Servizi*'s teleworkers, particularly during their initial stage, and regarding the organisation of their own working days. Self-discipline is acquired through a process of self-teaching (*internal control*).

In contrast, work organisations based on a flexible organisational structure emphasise other teleworking problems which have more social origins, such as isolation, struggling for self-discipline and tensions with the household. In the specific case of *Informazione*, teleworkers also had the chance to consult a psychologist.

9.3 Changes teleworking brought to the organisational/hierarchical structure

In many cases the introduction of flexible forms of work, such as teleworking brings or is coupled with further changes of the organisational structure and within the hierarchies of work organisations. The Table 9.4 shows the changes which teleworking brought in the three different case studies.

Table 9.4 Organisational Changes

Organisations	Organisational/ hierarchical changes
<i>Servizi</i> (public body)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Organisational structure bureaucratic and hierarchical (no changes) ▸ Strong central control (no changes)
<i>Comunicazione</i> (virtual call centre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Office relocation ▸ Virtual call centres ▸ Hierarchical structure (no changes) ▸ Reinforcement of central control
<i>Informazione</i> (SME)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Office relocation ▸ Virtualisation of work ▸ Increase of flexibility ▸ Post-fordist structure <i>but</i> strong central control

This research suggested that in bureaucratic organisations, such as public bodies (e.g. *Servizi*) the advent of teleworking does not affect the hierarchical and organisational structure of the company. Teleworking is perceived as a minor phenomenon and is really unlikely to create major changes. In addition, in public bodies, innovations, such as teleworking, can be regarded as initiatives aiming to achieve social objectives rather than economical ones. For this reason, the management might not take teleworking seriously into account.

Evidence suggested that in other types of organisations the introduction of teleworking leads to a series of organisational and hierarchical changes. For instance, in many private companies (e.g. *Comunicazione* and *Informazione*) the introduction of teleworking is coupled with a process of office relocation.

In addition, *Comunicazione*, only one year after the implementation of teleworking, introduced a Virtual Call Centre, which centralises customers' calls from a specific geographical area. The location of the workplace became more and more irrelevant, so that the company closed down some call centres. Teleworking led to a centralisation of the labour process. In this case, the *decentralisation* of labour brought by telework reinforces *central control* of the company. This is in line with the current post-industrial paradigm. The new technologies allowed flexibility of scale as well as distributed workplaces (Greenbaum, 1996). These changes led to a separation of work from location. As the example of network organisation suggested, *decentred* organisation of work does not enhance the strength of every single decentred unit, but supports the *central control* of the company. In this specific case, the introduction of telework facilitates this process of centralisation. As regard, the hierarchical structure of the company, teleworking did not bring any particular change. Both internal call centre operators and teleworkers exercise very little autonomy over their work tasks.

Daniels *et al.* (2001: 1165), expected a greater adoption of teleworking by organisations, concomitant with other transformations. For instance, the

implementation of teleworking schemes is more likely to occur in conjunction with other organisational changes which implicate increase in fixed costs such as relocation (van Ommeren, 1997) and new technological investments. This is the case with Italian middle enterprises which, with the diffusion and availability of ICTs are now more open to new flexible ways of working. For instance, in *Informazione* several organisational changes anticipated the advent of telework. As mentioned in Chapter 8, before the introduction of telework this medium sized enterprise radically changed its work process and its division of labour. Before these organisational transformation, the labour process was similar to an 'assembly line'. With the introduction of new technology and the use of HR management, *Informazione* developed a division of labour based on teamworking, and workers became multi-skilled and multi-tasking. This enhanced flexibility within the labour process, and workers carry out their job in an autonomous way (*horizontal control*).

The introduction of new technological changes, allowed a virtualisation of work. Work tasks are distributed from a central information system and can be carried out anywhere. Similarly to *Comunicazione*, the virtualisation and the relative *decentralisation* of labour, through teleworking, reinforces the *central control*.

Thus, although it might seem counter-intuitive, teleworking reinforces *central control*. In the case of high bureaucratic organisation, teleworking does not introduce particular structural changes, and therefore it does not undermine the strong *central control* which was already present before its implementation. In the case of large companies and medium sized enterprises, teleworking, by allowing work tasks to be carried out anywhere, also *centralises* the decision-making.

9.4 Managers' reaction to telework

As teleworking literature suggested, the resistance of middle management has been one of the main obstacles that companies had to overcome (Hamblin, 1995, Huws, 1994). This result has been confirmed by my cases study as well. This research aims to add develop previous findings in a number of ways. (Table 9.5).

Table 9.5 Managers' reaction to telework

Organisations	Typology of middle management
<i>Servizi</i> (public body)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Positive attitude to teleworking: the 'innovative managers' ▸ Neutral attitude to teleworking: the 'charitable managers', the 'bequeathed managers' ▸ Negative attitude to teleworking: the 'reluctant managers'
<i>Comunicazione</i> (virtual call centre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Positive attitude to teleworking: The 'innovative <i>capi turno</i>' ▸ Neutral attitude to teleworking: the 'traditional <i>capi turno</i>', the 'watchmen <i>capi turno</i>'
<i>Informazione</i> (SME)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Positive attitude to teleworking: Homogeneous way of management

Teleworkers' managers deploy a series of different reactions towards teleworking. Managers in only one case study (*Informazione*) illustrate a consistent attitude towards managing teleworkers. Research revealed that the introduction of virtualisation of work before the implementation of teleworking and, a small work organisation can help managers dealing with teleworkers. Research carried out in an innovative medium size enterprise illustrates that, apart from initial perplexities towards teleworking, *Informazione*'s managers were handling teleworkers well. Since work

task were transmitted and received through ICTs even in the workplaces, the introduction of teleworking did not necessitate any changes for managing teleworkers. This homogeneous way of managing teleworkers was beneficial for them as well.

In contrast, the other two case studies display a heterogeneous attitude towards teleworking, which reflects different methods for managing this workforce. This is mainly due to the size of the workplace. For instance, it is easier to transfer consistent methods of management to a smaller group of people than a larger one. A larger group of managers is more likely to have different working experience and different ways of managing the workers. In addition, an inconsistent method of management becomes more difficult to cope with when, for instance, line managers work in different shifts (*Comunicazione*).

It was also found that managers, for a series of different reasons had either a positive attitude to teleworking, or a neutral or negative one. These various orientations have been translated into different methods of controlling teleworkers. Although the majority of teleworkers' managers express anxieties and doubts towards this new way of working and confirms previous studies (Huws, 1994; Hamblin, 1995; Olson, 1989), some others adopt positive attitudes towards teleworking. The 'innovative' managers/'capi turno' are in favour of the further development of teleworking, because they strongly believe that it is a profitable initiative for the whole organisation; others are attracted to its novelty. These managers are willing to adopt new methods for controlling teleworkers and also show an interest in attending new training courses which facilitate the management of this remote workforce. The managers in this category tend to co-operate with their teleworkers and try to be understanding regarding the problems that this new form of work involves (*horizontal control*).

The majority of managers deployed a neutral attitude towards teleworking. These are: the 'charitable managers', the 'bequeathed managers' (*Servizi*) and, the 'traditional

capi turno', and the 'watchmen *capi turno*' (*Comunicazione*). The managers which fit into these categories were not against teleworking. However, they did not make any particular effort to acquire new ways of controlling their remote workforce.

The most striking category of managers is that of the '*charitable manager*'. These managers represent the heart of *Servizi*'s experience. For them teleworking was not perceived as a profitable initiative, but as a 'social help' for people with family commitments or who must commute for long hours. These managers solve the issue of control by relying on trust. Trusting the teleworkers can be interpreted as an easy option for avoiding control based on outputs. As mentioned, control based on trust can bring controversial results (tensions between *horizontal* and *vertical* control). The category of the 'bequeathed managers' tried to avoid control based on outputs by other means.

Similarly, in the call centre analysed, many managers did not show a completely negative attitude towards teleworking, but they were not interested in finding new methods for controlling teleworkers. For instance, the 'traditional *capi turno*', represent those managers who tend to control operators in call centres according to traditional techniques based on personal supervision. These tend to exercise control by relying on 'memories' of call centre operators, when previously working in the call centre (*vertical control*). The 'watchmen *capi turno*' tend to exercise control mainly through electronic surveillance (*vertical-external control*) and dismiss the human factor in teleworking. The managers of these both categories experienced problems with control and miss the physical presence of employees in the call centre (*visible control*). As one could tell, electronic monitoring in Italy is far from perfect (Di Nicola, forthcoming).

The lack of physical presence in the office (*visible control*) was considered a serious limitation for *Servizi*'s 'reluctant managers'. These were against teleworking for a number of reasons. For instance, similarly to previous research (Hamblin, 1995;

Huws, 1994) control by objectives was regarded as problematic. They were frightened of losing personal control based on their hierarchical position if they co-operated with the teleworkers (*vertical control*).

These categories reinforce the idea that managerial control deployed over teleworkers is complex and problematic. Control by results is not the only issue. The overall workplace should be more culturally prepared to accept this new way of working and to integrate their traditional form of control with new strategies. This process also involves managers who must control low skilled teleworkers (Di Nicola, forthcoming).

The existence of different managerial styles cannot be conceived as a positive phenomenon; it indicates rather a lack of clear company guidelines. This hypothesis is confirmed by the *Informazione* case study. Since the method of control was clear and the outputs perfectly quantifiable, managers operated with uniformity. This company confirmed that a good use of technological innovation and a flexible way of managing is positive for both managers and teleworkers. Although the management was ‘semi-perfect’, the teleworkers of this case study become more detached from their company.

9.5 Final findings and further developments

The findings of this thesis illustrate that the exercise of control over teleworkers is a complex phenomenon. It is not feasible to solve this problem with a single strategy of control, and many variables should be considered. A series of generalisations emerged from a comparison of the three case studies. These highlight the main problems associated with control over remote workers and provide new contributions for further investigation. The theoretical framework of the ‘Social Dimensions of Control’ proved to be a helpful instrument for guiding the research and analysing data and will

now provide final generalisations and new inputs for further research on teleworking (see Chapter 3).

During a discussion of the social dimension *vertical/horizontal control* many issues have been considered. For instance, it has been attempted to analyse the impact of teleworking on the hierarchies of the companies involved. Research revealed that teleworking tends to develop *horizontal control*, which means more co-operation between managers and workers and an increase of workers' autonomy for carrying out daily tasks, provided it is implemented in workplaces characterised by a flatter organisational structure and lateral relations. The introduction of teleworking in rigid and highly bureaucratised organisations does not bring about any relevant changes in its hierarchies (*vertical control*).

The dimensions of *vertical* and *horizontal control* have also been helpful to analysing the impact of teleworking on middle management. The creation of a typology of teleworkers' managers partially confirmed and developed previous research on this field (Huws *et al.* 1990, Huws, 1993; Huws, 1994, Phizacklea and Wolkovitz, 1995, Olson, 1989). Similarly to these studies, this research confirmed that teleworkers' managers find it difficult to accept teleworking and controlling teleworkers, particularly when control is based on outputs. Control by results is not the only source of strains. An inappropriate teleworking culture (Olson, 1989; Huws *et al.* 1990) and the consequent insistence on utilising traditional methods of control create tensions between the management, changes in management that teleworking should bring (*horizontal control*) and the managers' resistance to them (*vertical control*).

This research revealed a series of managerial styles, all of which portray inconsistent methods for controlling teleworkers. It is clear that new consistent managerial styles should be adopted. Previous research (e.g. Phizacklea and Wolkovitz, 1995) suggested that teleworkers' managers should be provided with

guidelines for their new role of managing from a distance. Similarly, other research (Huws, 1993) supports the idea that teleworkers' managers should take training courses specifically designed for teleworkers' management. Further research should explore the impact of this training on middle management.

Again, *vertical* and *horizontal control* play an important role in illustrating the changing nature of relationships between managers and teleworkers. Overall research revealed that the physical distance between managers and teleworkers creates more co-operation and enhances lateral relations (*horizontal control*). This is more evident among clerical and semi-professional teleworkers. For this reason, the lack of physical presence in the office is seen as one of the main fears of teleworkers managers (Felstead *et al.* 2003). However, low-skilled teleworkers seemed more subject to the authority of their line managers. Poor technological conditions increase this problem, since they impede a more equalitarian communication between managers and teleworkers (*vertical control*). Although low-skilled teleworkers experienced many problems, only limited cases of resistance emerged. This research found that teleworkers are less willing to resist than internal workers, since, for them, working at home is a privilege, and they become more tolerant of their employers because they want to carry on teleworking. The issue of teleworkers' resistance has not been deeply explored and needs further research.

Another aspect analysed was the autonomy teleworkers can exercise over their work tasks. Evidence suggests that the level of autonomy varies according to different jobs. However, many teleworkers felt more autonomous because they depend less on their manager (*horizontal control*), or they can better manage their time. A contrasting finding is that teleworking can deskill and fragment the labour process. Some teleworkers felt left out of work tasks which require responsibility. In addition, evidence suggested that teleworkers have fewer chances to progress in their career than internal workers (*vertical control*). This is because workers' physical presence in the workplace is still considered an important variable (Brocklehurst, 2001, Felstead

et al. 2003). These last aspects, such as teleworkers' risk of becoming deskilled and their lack of career opportunities, should be explored further.

The discussion on *central* and *decentred control* reveals the impact of teleworking on the organisational structure of work organisations. Evidence revealed that transformations brought by teleworking are in line with the current post-industrial paradigm. The new technologies allowed flexibility of scale as well as distributed workplaces (Greenbaum, 1996). These changes led to a separation of work from location. Although it might appear counter-intuitive, *decentralisation* strengthens *central control*. Similar findings have been illustrated by research on network organisations (Wood, 1989). This process of *decentralisation* has not been found in all workplaces (e.g. bureaucratic organisation).

In line with the post-industrial paradigm, flexibility of scale created *decentred* forces: the customers (Du Gay, 1996). Customers' satisfaction plays an important role among teleworkers. As evidence suggested, a decrease in customers' requests can undermine teleworking initiative, and teleworkers will be asked to return to their company.

The analysis of *central/decentred control* suggests a discussion of corporate culture. It is a common opinion that the 'strengthening' of corporate culture enhances organisational performance by securing great commitment from employees (Davis, 1984; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Goldsmith and Cluttermbuck, 1984; Kanter, 1984; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale, 1985; Watermann, 1988). By following this paradigm inherent conflict between employees and employers can be transformed into co-operation. Corporate culture summarises the leading principles of cultural or 'normative control' (Etzioni, 1961; Kunda, 1992) which is based mainly on the development of an appropriate social order, which provides the basis for desired behaviour (Deal and Kennedy, 1982: 15). Through corporate values, work organisations can reinforce *central control*. Corporate values are normally transferred through regular interactions

in the workplace. Previous research considered it difficult to transfer these values to teleworkers who are separated from their workplace (Olson, 1989; Felstead *et al.* 2003). The present research confirms these findings. Even more problematic is the fact that teleworkers tend to detach themselves from their workplaces and acquire new identities (Giddens, 1991; Sennett, 1998; Felstead and Jewson, 2000). More focused research should develop the issue of transferring corporate values to teleworkers and explore the possible alternatives for solving this problem.

The issue of teleworkers' detachment can worsen through technical factors, such as the lack of appropriate communication conditions or managers' inability to communicate from a distance. Teleworking policies such as contact hours and office-based days, tried to strengthen teleworkers' connection to their company. However, new research should explore this phenomenon and develop new and focused policies. From a trade union point of view, if teleworkers become more and more isolated from their workplace they will become more likely to be exploited.

The social dimensions *external/internal control* demonstrated that the exercise of control is complex. Although previous studies on teleworking make a distinction between low-skilled teleworkers, who can be more 'easily' controlled through *external devices*, and the professional teleworkers, considered the 'problematic' ones, since they involve a form of control based on results. (e.g. Huws, 1994; Hamblin, 1995) This research demonstrates how low-skilled teleworkers, such as call-centre operators, cannot be easily managed only through *external* devices of control. Conventional *external* techniques of control, such as electronic monitoring, have to be coupled with others, which involve *internal control*. This research also revealed to what extent national pressures (Daniels *et al.*, 2001), such as Italian legal limits to electronic monitoring, have impacted on the issue of control. Again, this reinforces the fact that in our post-fordist era the need for a shift from external control to commitment becomes more evident (Gallie *et al.* 2001; Legge, 1995; Lincoln and Kalleberg, 1990; Womack *et al.*, 1990). For many reasons, commitment is a tool to

intensify control over the workers (Thompson and McHugh, 1995: 212). While in the past they could be controlled through rational principles (Taylor, 1947), and workers were considered as machines with no brains (Braveman, 1974; Taylor, 1947), in our era control acts through the internalisation of values (*internal control*). As mentioned above, this process becomes more difficult if managers have to deal with teleworkers.

Internal control has also been discussed in terms of self-discipline (Haddon and Silverstone, 1993; Felstead and Jewson, 2000). The results of this thesis emphasise the social nature of this aspect, which, in many cases, has been either treated as a personal characteristic of individuals (Baruch, 2001), or something that can be acquired through a learning process. This research revealed that self-discipline and self-management are a mix of both. One of the findings is that work organisations should provide more help for the development of self-discipline and self-management among teleworkers through the introduction of more complete teleworking training schemes. The lack of appropriate training creates many problems among teleworkers and initiates a process of self-teaching. Teleworkers learnt how to organise their work by themselves. This thesis addresses the need to introduce more appropriate training and to research further the effect of training on teleworkers' self-organisation.

The final dimension of control, *visible/invisible control*, illustrates that although new technological devices can create new forms of visibility and control based on results makes personal surveillance unnecessary, the presence of the employees in their workplaces is still an important variable (Felstead *et al.*, 2003). Many employees still rely on watching and observing what the workers do in order to evaluate them. In addition, while in the workplace managers can reinforce their authority through a smart 'tie and suit' appearance, with distance control they lose this instrument of power. Research suggested examples of resistance through which teleworkers make themselves more visible, and these aspects should be more carefully analysed.

Conclusion

As we could see, the theoretical framework of the 'Social Dimensions of Control' made an important contribution to directing the research and disclosing the meaning of the descriptive accounts of the teleworkers and their managers. New contributions have been provided along with new suggestions for developing further research on managerial control exercised over teleworkers. The choice of case study methodology and the use of a descriptive approach is one of the strengths of this thesis. By following the flow of teleworkers' and managers' conversations it was possible to discover their fears and perplexities, but also their achievements, which derive from this new type of working. One might also say that the approach has left out some macro aspects of teleworking. Being aware of these limitations, the author aims to use this thesis for developing new comparative research where the national context, which here is mainly utilised as a background to the study, will assume a more predominant dimension.

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Appendix

Teleworkers' interviews

All the interviews started with an introduction of the research.

a) Employment history

- 1) Can you tell me a little about your employment history?
(before teleworking and now that you are teleworking)
- 2) Can you describe your job your job?
- 3) How long have you been working for this company?
- 4) What were you doing before you became a teleworker? How long had you been doing this?
- 5) How long have you being teleworking?
- 6) Why did you decide to work at home?
- 7) Does teleworking change your job?
- 8) Did teleworking change the terms of your previous contract?
- 9) Are you working full time or part-time?
- 10) Is your job permanent/temporary or for a fixed term?
- 11) Which sort of information/communication technologies were you using before teleworking? Now?
- 12) Would it be possible for you to work without these technologies?
- 13) According to your experience, what are the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking?

b) Teleworking scheme

- 1) Now I'd like to turn to the history of the teleworking scheme in your company. Could you tell me when teleworking was set up? At whose initiative?
- 2) What in your opinion were the reasons that lead to the introduction of teleworking?

3) Was there any opposition? If so, from whom?

4) Have you noticed any particular changes in your organisation since teleworking has been introduced? (e.g. recruitment of new people, general changes in organising the work within the company, visible changes such as shared offices)

c) Selection

1) Now I'd like to turn to the process of the selection of teleworkers. How did your company select teleworkers, according to your experience?

2) How were you chosen? Did you have an interview? What did they ask you?

3) From what group of people were you chosen? Did external members of the company take part in the process of selection? Who? (Trade Union's representatives, teleworking experts...)

4) What was the role of your supervisor?

5) According to you, why have you been chosen?

6) Do you think that teleworking is suitable for all types of people? Or all types of jobs?

7) According to you, what are the most important characteristics for teleworking?

d) Training

1) Did you received an induction training before teleworking?

2) What was the main focus of the training? (e.g. IT) For what aspects was the training useful? According to you what aspects needed to be expanded?

3) Is on going training for teleworkers different from training provided for other employees doing a similar job? In what ways?

4) Did your supervisor take part in the training? Is there a separate training for supervisors?

5) Do you receive additional training by distance?

e) Appraisal

1) Can you talk about the appraisal procedures of your company?

2) In which ways are you appraised? (e.g. Deadline/analysis of the output/quality/performance/comparison with other on-site performance)

3) Are there any differences between teleworkers' appraisal and internal workers appraisal?

4) When you are appraised do you receive feedback?

5) How often are you appraised?

6) By whom are you appraised?

f) Supervisor

1) Now I'd like to talk about your relationship with your supervisor. Have you noticed any changes since when you have started teleworking?

2) For how long have you been working with the same supervisor? Have you got more than one supervisor?

3) Do you organise your own work with your supervisor?

4) Do you think that since you have started teleworking you are collaborating more with your supervisor?

5) As a teleworker, do you have more autonomy in the way you organise your work?

6) How regularly does your supervisor contact you? What means does s/he use? What is discussed? (before/after teleworking)

7) How does your supervisor give you feedback on your work? (face-to-face, via e-mail; before/after teleworking)

g) Co-workers

Lets talk now about your relationships with your colleagues (co-workers, team workers).

Even if you are no longer in the work-site do you still keep in touch with your ex co-workers? How? How often? Why?

2) Do co-workers contact you when they need more information about the work you are doing at home?

3) Do you report back to your co-workers? If so about what and why?

h) Team-working

- 1) Were you working in a team before teleworking? Are you still working in a team? Does the team operate differently now you are a teleworker?
- 2) How do you communicate among the team members? Do you have to contact your team leader to inform her/him about your job?
- 3) Do you feel under pressure from others in your team?
- 4) Is teamwork monitored? Do you receive any team rewards/bonuses?

i) Communication System

- 1) Can you tell me what forms day-to-day communication takes? (with supervisors, on site colleagues, clients, members of the team) (Try to underline the differences between communication before teleworking and communication after the introduction of a teleworking scheme.)
- 2) How did you communicate before teleworking? Which means of communication did you use less often before teleworking?
- 3) Do you miss face-to-face communication? Do you think it is more effective? (positive and negative points of face-to-face communication)
- 4) Does your company communicate via video-conference? Is this means of communication available to everybody?

j) Trade Unions

- 1) Have you ever attended trade union meetings? If you are not able to attend TU meetings, how do you get information about these meetings?
- 2) What is the attitude of Trade Union about teleworking schemes? (it is in favor or did it try to hinder it?)
- 3) Do you think that Trade Unions played an important role for the introduction of teleworking in your company?

k) Corporate culture/Isolation

- 1) Does your company provide mechanisms for keeping staff up-to-date about the workplace? (notice board, e-mail, workplace newsletter/magazine, meetings with managers/colleagues)

2) Does your organisation make any effort to integrate teleworkers socially with each other or with on-site colleague?

l) Reports

1) Did it often occur to you to write reports? (before/ after teleworking)
To whom do you send these reports? How often?

2) What is the purpose of these reports?

3) Do you think that reports improve your supervisors' perception that you are 'really' working?

4) Do you write reports only when asked to, or do you voluntarily writing reports?
Why?

5) Do you always receive feedback from reports?

6) Do you find it (writing reports) useful for the organisation of your work?

m) Controby objectives

1) How does your supervisor evaluate your job performance? (and before you started teleworking)?

2) Has your supervisor explained to you how s/he is going to evaluate your job?

3) Do you plan with your supervisor the objectives you have to reach?

4) What happens if you are not able to reach the planned objectives?

5) Do you plan regular meetings for setting timetables and assessing progress?
Does your supervisor give you feed-back? (written oral)

6) Do you receive additional rewards if you are doing a very good job?

n) Electronic-monitoring

1) Is your work controlled through electronic monitoring?

2) Are all teleworkers controlled via electronic monitoring?

3) Does your company utilise electronic-monitoring for other employees in the main site?

4) How does electronic monitoring work? Can your supervisor see what you are really doing?

o) Self-management/Self-discipline

1) Do you use any particular techniques for organising your own working days? Give examples...e.g. daily diary....

2) Have you read any manuals about teleworking? Were they helpful for organising your own working day?

3) Did your company provide you with help for the organisation of your work?

p) Time management

1) Let's now talk specifically about the organisation of your working hours. Describe the timetable a typical working day.

2) At what time do you start work? At what time do you finish?

3) Do you follow the same timetable everyday?

4) Do you follow the same timetable if on-site workers? Or are you following your own timetable?

5) Do you organise your working hours according to your family commitments?

6) Do you regularly work on Sunday/Saturday?

7) (Before teleworking) have you ever done any paid overtime?

8) Mention the problem of workaholicism.

If you are working more hours now: Why are you working more hours now? You are more involved in your job/you are not well organised....

9) Do you have contact hours? Do your supervisor/or colleagues contact you often during these time?

10) Is there a collective diary which every else has access to?

q) Promotion/Career

1) What differences does being a teleworker make to your career progression?

- 2) Are there any opportunities for promotion in your present job?
- 3) How do you know that there are new positions you can apply for?
- 4) Are vacancies internally advertised? If so how?

r) Personal information

Male/Female

How old are you?

Can you describe your current status? Single/married/separated/widowed/living with partner

Do you have any dependent children? (if yes give ages)

Which are your highest educational qualifications?

Thank you for your co-operation.

Managers' interviews

a) General questions

- 1) Can you describe your main activity?
- 2) For how long have you been working for your company?
- 3) How many employees are covered in your personnel group? Teleworkers?
- 4) Which are the main activities carried on by the majority of teleworkers in your company?

b) Teleworking scheme

- 1) What were in your opinion, the reasons that led to the introduction of teleworking?
- 2) Was there a pilot scheme set up?
- 3) Were there any opposition? If so, from whom? How did your company solve these initial problems?
- 4) Have you noticed any particular changes in your organisation since teleworking has been introduced? (e.g. recruitment of new people, general changes in organising the work within the company, visible changes such as shared offices)
- 5) Do you think that your company is going to increase the number of teleworkers?

c) Selection

- 1) Let's talk about the selection of the teleworkers.
Were you involved in the process of selecting teleworkers?
- 2) Who were involved in the selection of teleworkers?
- 3) Which were the criteria taken into account for selecting teleworkers?
- 4) Do you think that teleworking is suitable for all types of jobs? And all types of people?
- 5) Which are the main characteristics that a teleworker should have?
- 6) Do you think that all managers are able to manage teleworkers?

d) Training

- 1) What kind of induction training does your company provide for new teleworkers?
- 2) What is the main focus of the training? What aspects of the training needed to be expanded?
- 3) Do you offer any counselling to the new or potential recruits to prepare them for teleworking?
- 4) Is training for teleworkers different from training provided for other employees doing a similar job? For what aspects?
- 5) Do managers have to take part in this training?
- 6) What are the most important things a manager should learn in order to manage teleworkers?

e) Appraisal

- 1) Can you talk me about the appraisal procedures of your company?
- 2) In which ways are teleworkers appraised? (e.g. analysis of the output/quality/performance...comparison teleworkers and in site workers)
- 3) How often are they appraised?
- 4) Does your company regularly check and reveal its productivity? And teleworkers' productivity?

f) Relationships with teleworkers

- 1) Could you describe your relationship with teleworkers? To what extent does it differ from your relation with on-site workers?
- 2) Do you think that you are collaborating more with teleworkers than on-site workers?
- 3) How often do you meet teleworkers?

g) Communication systems

- 1) Can you tell me what forms day-to day communication takes for contacting teleworkers?

- 2) What means of communication are you using more often with teleworkers?
- 3) Do you miss face-to-face communication? Do you think it is more effective? (positive/negative points of face-to face communication)
- 4) One of the problems that teleworkers have to face is isolation. Have you tried to help teleworkers in this sense?
- 5) Do you often contact teleworkers just to know if they are OK?
- 6) Did you organise social activities to integrate teleworkers socially to each other or with in site colleagues?

h) Control by objectives

- 1) How do you evaluate teleworkers' job performances?
- 2) Do you plan with your employees the objectives they must achieve?
- 3) Do you plan regular meetings for setting timetables and assessing progress? Do you give teleworkers your feedback? (written /oral)
- 4) Do you give them additional rewards if they are doing a very good job?
- 5) What happens if they are unable to reach the planned objectives?
- 6) Do you think that they are more efficient than in site worker?

i) Reports

- 1) Do you ask your teleworkers to write reports?
- 2) What is the purpose of these reports?
- 3) How do you analyse these reports?
- 4) Do you give written feedback?

j) Electronic-monitoring

- 1) Are you checking working performance via electronic systems? Are you using electronic monitoring for just checking the teleworkers or also for checking on-site workers?

2) Do teleworkers are aware of this? What is their reaction?

k) Difficulties/ changes

1) What is the biggest problem you have with supervising teleworkers?

2) Do you find difficult this form of control based on objective? Why?
Negative/positive points.

3) Do you think that teleworking has brought and will bring changes in the management structure of the company?

l) Self-management/Self-discipline

1) Does the company help teleworkers to develop these self-discipline/self-management techniques?

2) Does the company provide manuals about teleworking?

m) Time management

1) Do you (or your company) leave teleworkers free to organise their own working days?

2) Do teleworkers have contact hours? Do you often contact them during these hours?

3) Is there a collective diary of teleworkers' hours which every one else has access to?

4) Do you think that teleworkers are working more than on-site colleagues? Why?
Mention the problem of workhaolism.

5) Is overtime work paid?

n) Promotion/Career opportunities

1) What differences does being a teleworker make to promotion procedures?

2) Have you ever given a promotion to a teleworker? If not, why not?

3) Do you think that teleworkers don't get promotions because of their work tasks?
Or because they are working from home?

4) Are vacancies internally advertised? If so how?

5) What do you think, your company bases a rise in salary on: seniority, or objective achievement. Is this statement valid for teleworkers as well?

Finally, if you have something to add about how a supervisor can manage teleworkers, I'm ready to listen to you.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Interviste ai telelavoratori

Prima di iniziare le interviste e' stata fatta un'introduzione della ricerca.

a) Storia lavorativa

- 1) Mi puoi raccontare brevemente il tuo passato lavorativo?
(prima di telelavorare e dopo il telelavoro)
- 2) Mi puoi descrivere brevemente il tuo lavoro?
- 3) Da quanto tempo lavori in questa organizzazione?
- 4) Cosa facevi prima di telelavorare? Da quanto tempo svolgi questa attivita' lavorativa?
- 5) Da quanto tempo telelavoro?
- 6) Perche' hai deciso di telelavorare?
- 7) Il telelavoro ha cambiato la tua attivita' lavorativa?
- 8) Il telelavoro ha cambiato i precedenti termini contrattuali?
- 9) Lavori a tempo pieno o part-time?
- 10) Hai un contratto fisso o a tempo determinato?
- 11) Che tipo di ICTs usavi prima di telelavorare ? Ed ora?
- 12) Sarebbe possibile telelavorare senza queste tecnologie?
- 13) In base alla tua esperienza quali sono i vantaggi e gli svantaggi del telelavoro?

b) Progetto telelavoro

- 1) Ora vorrei parlare circa l'introduzione del telelavoro nella tua organizzazione. Mi puoi raccontare come e' stato introdotto il telelavoro, da chi?
- 2) Per quali ragioni e' stato introdotto il telelavoro?
- 3) Ci sono state delle opposizioni? Da chi?
- 4) Hai notato dei cambiamenti nella tua organizzazione lavorativa da quando e' stato introdotto il telelavoro?

c) Selezione

- 1) Ora vorrei parlare circa il processo di selezione dei telelavoratori. Come e' stato svolto il processo di selezione?
- 2) Come se stato scelto? Hai avuto un colloqui? Cosa ti e' stato chiesto?
- 3) Da chi sei stato scelto? Sai se dei membri esterni alla tua organizzazione lavorativa hanno fatto parte del processo di selezione? Chi? (Sindacati, consulenti del telelavoro...)
- 4) Quale e' stato il ruolo del tuo capo?
- 5) A tuo parere perche' sei stato scelto?
- 6) Secondo te il telelavoro si addice a tutti i tipi di persone? E a tutte le professioni?
- 7) A tuo parere quali sono le caratteristiche piu' importanti che un lavoratore deve possedere per telelavorare?

d) Training

- 1) Hai ricevuto un training iniziale prima di telelavorare?
- 2) Quali erano gli aspetti piu' importanti di questo training? Per quali motivi il training e' stato utile? Quali aspetti dovrebbe sviluppare ulteriormente?
- 3) Il training per i telelavoratori e diverso dal training per i lavoratori interni? Per quali motivi?
- 4) Il tuo capo svolto il tuo stesso training? O ha svolto un training separato?
- 5) Ricevi del training a distanza?

e) Valutazione

- 1) Mi puoi parlare delle procedure in base alle quali il tuo lavoro viene valutato?
- 2) In quale modo vieni valutato? (scadenze fisse, analisi dei risultati, paragone con i risultati dei lavoratori interni)
- 3) Quando il tuo lavoro viene valutato, ricevi dei feedbacks?
- 4) Come vieni valutato?
- 5) Quanto spesso?

6) Da chi vieni valutato?

7) Rapporto con il tuo superiore

1) Ora vorrei parlare circa il rapporto con il tuo capo. Ha notato qualche cambiamento da quanto hai iniziato a telelavorare?

2) Da quanto tempo lavoro con il tuo capo? Hai più di un capo ?

3) Organizzi le attività lavorative con il tuo capo?

4) A tuo parere da quando hai iniziato a telelavorare collabori di più con il tuo capo?

5) Come telelavoratore, hai più autonomia nell'organizzare le attività lavorative?

6) Ogni quanto il tuo capo ti contatta? Quali mezzi usa (prima e dopo il telelavoro)

7) Con quali mezzi il tuo capo ti fornisce feedbacks? (prima dopo telelavoro)

g) Rapporto con i colleghi

Ora vorrei parlare circa il rapporto con i tuoi colleghi.

1) Anche se non lavoro più in ufficio, ti tieni in contatto con i tuoi colleghi? Come? Quanto spesso? Per quali motivi?

2) Vieni contattato dai tuoi colleghi per richieste lavorative?

3) Tieni informati i tuoi colleghi circa il tuo lavoro? Come?

h) Teamworking

1) Lavoravi in un team prima di telelavorare? Se ancora parte di un team? Il team work opera in modo diverso da quando hai iniziato a telelavorare?

2) Come comunichi con i membri del team? E con il team leader?

3) Il team è fonte di pressioni?

4) Il lavoro di team viene monitorato? Ricevi dei premi per il lavoro di team?

i) Sistema di comunicazione

- 1) Mi puoi dire attraverso quali canali si svolgono le comunicazioni giornaliere? (con i superiori, colleghi, clienti, membri della tua team-prima e dopo il telelavoro)
- 2) Come comunicavi prima di telelavorare? Quali mezzi di comunicazione usavi meno frequentemente?
- 3) Ti manca il contatto personale?
- 4) La tua azienda provvede ai lavoratori un a comunicazione tramite video-conferenza? Questo tipo di comunicazione viene garantito a tutti?

j) Sindacati

- 1) Partecipi alle riunioni sindacali? Se non partecipi alla riunioni sindacali come ottieni le informazioni relative al sindacato?
- 2) Qual'è l'atteggiamento del sindacato nei confronti del telelavoro?
- 3) A tuo parere il sindacato ha svolto un ruolo importante per l'introduzione del telelavoro?

k) Cultura aziendale /Isolamento organizzativo

- 1) La tua azienda offre dei meccanismi per tenere informati i telelavoratori circa i cambiamenti aziendali? (bacheca, e-mail, bollettino aziendale, incontri con colleghi e managers)
- 2) La tua azienda ha introdotto delle iniziative per integrare socialmente i telelavoratori con gli altri colleghi?

l) Reports

- 1) Scrivi spesso dei reports? (prima e dopo il telelavoro)
- 2) Qual'è l'obiettivo di questi reports?
- 3) A tuo parere questi reports sono utili nel provare che tu 'lavori su serio'?
- 4) Scrivi questi reports, solo se te lo chiedono o li fai volontariamente?
- 5) Ricevi dei feedback dai reports?
- 6) Trovi questi reports utili per l'organizzazione del tuo lavoro?

m) Valutazione per obiettivi

- 1) Il tuo capo come valuta i risultati lavorativi che hai ottenuto?
- 2) Ti ha spiegato i metodi di valutazione che utilizza?
- 3) Pianifichi gli obiettivi che devi raggiungere con il tuo capo?
- 4) Cosa succede se non riesci a raggiungere gli obiettivi?
- 5) Pianifichi regolarmente dei meetings? Il tuo capo ti fornisce regolarmente dei feedbacks?
- 6) Ricevi dei premi se lavori in modo efficiente?

n) Electronic monitoring

- 1) Il tuo lavoro e' monitorato tramite un sistema di controllo elettronico?
- 2) Tutti i telelavoratori sono controllati tramite un sistema di controllo elettronico?
- 3) L'azienda utilizza e-monitoring anche per i lavoratori interni?
- 4) Come funziona e-monitoring?

o) Auto-organizzazione

- 1) Usi delle tecniche particolari per organizzare le tue giornate lavorative?
(e.g. diario...)
- 2) Hai letto dei manuali sul telelavoro? Sono stati utili per l'organizzazione delle tue giornate lavorative?
- 3) La tua azienda provvede un supporto circa l'organizzazione delle giornate lavorative?

p) Organizzazione del tempo lavorativo

- 1) Mi puoi parlare circa l'organizzazione del tuo tempo. Mi puoi descrivere l'organizzazione temporale di una tipica giornata lavorativa?
- 2) A che ora inizi a lavorare? A che ora finisci?
- 3) Segui gli stessi orari lavorativi ogni giorno?

4) Segui il convenzionale orario lavorativo di ufficio? O crei un orario lavorativo personalizzato?

5) Organizzi il tuo orario lavorativo in base ad impegni familiari?

6) Di solito lavori di sabato o di domenica?

7) Prima di lavorare facevi straordinari ed ora?

8) Menzionare il problema del 'workhaolism'

Se lavori piu' ore da quando telelavoro, perche'? Sei piu' coinvolto con l'attivita' lavorativa, non riesci ad organizzare il tuo tempo lavorativo...

9) Hai degli orari in cui puoi essere contattato dall'azienda? Il tuo capo di contatta regolarmente durante questi orari?

10) Nella tua azienda esiste un diario collettivo?

q) Promozioni/avanzamento di carriera

1) A tuo parere il telelavoro fa differenza circa l'avanzamento di carriera?

2) Hai delle possibilita' di promozioni nell'attivita' lavorativa che stai svolgendo?

3) Come fai a sapere se ci sono delle posizioni a cui puoi fare domanda?

4) I posti lavorativi sono pubblicizzati internamente? Come?

r) Informazioni personali

Uomo/Donna

Eta'

Stato civile

Prole

Certificato di studio

Grazie per la cooperazione

Interviste con managers

a) Domande generali

- 1) Mi puoi descrivere la tua attivita' lavorativa?
- 2) Da quanto tempo lavori in questa azienda?
- 3) Quanti lavoratori gestisci? Tra questi, quanti lavorano da casa?
- 4) Quali sono le attivita' svolte dai telelavoratori?

b) Progetto Telelavoro

- 1) A tuo parere per quale motivo la tua azienda ha introdotto il telelavoro?
- 2) Mi puoi parlare del progetto pilota che ha preceduto l'introduzione formale del telelavoro?
- 3) Vi e' stata un' opposizione? Da chi? Come soni stati risolti questi problemi iniziali?
- 4) Hai notato dei cambiamenti nella tua organizzazione lavorativa da quando e' stato introdotto il telelavoro?
- 5) A tuo parere la tua azienda ha intenzione di aumentare il numero dei telelavoratori?

c) Selezione

- 1) Parliamo della selezione dei telelavoratori. Se stato coinvolto in questo processo?
- 2) Chi e' stato coinvolto nel processo di selezione?
- 3) Quali criteri sono stati presi in considerazione per selezionare i telelavoratori?
- 4) A tuo parere il telelavoro si adattata a tutti i tipi di professioni? E a tutti i tipi di persone?
- 5) Quali sono le caratteristiche che un telelavoratore dovrebbe possedere per telelavorare?
- 6) A tuo parere tutti managers possono gestire i telelavoratori?

d) Training

- 1) Che tipo di training iniziale la tua azienda fornisce ai telelavoratori?
- 2) Qual'è l'obiettivo principale del training? Quali aspetti dovrebbero essere migliorati ulteriormente?
- 3) La tua azienda offre un supporto psicologico ai nuovi telelavoratori?
- 4) Per quali aspetti il training per i telelavoratori contrasta con il training per i lavoratori interni?
- 5) I managers partecipano a questi training?
- 6) Quali sono gli aspetti più importanti che un manager dovrebbe apprendere per gestire i telelavoratori?

e) Valutazione

- 1) Mi puoi parlare delle tecniche aziendali per valutare i lavoratori?
- 2) In quali modi sono valutati i telelavoratori? (e.g. analisi dei risultati finali, paragoni risultati lavoratori interni/lavoratori esterni)
- 3) Ogni quanto sono valutati i telelavoratori?
- 4) La tua azienda mostra regolarmente la sua produttività? E quella dei telelavoratori?

f) Rapporti con i telelavoratori

- 1) Mi potresti descrivere il tuo rapporto con i telelavoratori? Differenza rapporto con lavoratori interni.
- 2) A tuo parere collabori di più con i telelavoratori rispetto ai lavoratori interni?
- 3) Ogni quanto incontri i telelavoratori?

g) Sistemi di comunicazione

- 1) Mi puoi dire che attraverso quali mezzi comunichi giornalmente con i telelavoratori?

- 2) Quali mezzi di comunicazione usi piu' spesso con i telelavorato rispetto ai lavoratori interni?
- 3) Ti manca la comunicazione personale diretta? Pensi che sia piu' efficace? (aspetti positivi e negativi)
- 4) Uno dei problemi dei telelavoratori e' l'isolamento, hai cercato di aiutare i telelavoratori ad affrontare tale problematica?
- 5) Ogni quanto contatti i telelavoratori?
- 6) La tua azienda ha introdotto delle iniziative per integrare socialmente i telelavoratori con gli altri colleghi?

h) Controllo per obiettivi

- 1) Come controlli i risultati dei telelavoratori?
- 2) Pianifichi insieme ai telelavoratori i risultati che devono ottenere?
- 3) Organizzi incontri periodici per organizzare piani di lavoro e valutare i progressi ottenuti? Fornisci ai telelavoratori feedbacks) (scritti/orali)
- 4) L'azienda fornisce ai telelavoratori dei premi se lavorano in modo efficiente?
- 5) Cosa succede se i telelavoratori non sono in grado di ottenere gli obiettivi pianificati?
- 6) A tuo parere i telelavoratori sono piu' efficienti dei lavoratori interni?

i) Reports

- 1) Richiedi a telelavoratori di scrivere dei reports?
- 2) Qual'e' lo scopo di questi reports?
- 3) Come analizzi questi reports?
- 4) Dai un feedback scritto a questi reports?

Electronic monitoring

- 1) Utilizzi un sistema di controllo elettronico per monitorare la produttivita'? (Telelavoratori/lavoratori interni)

2) I telelavoratori sono consapevoli di questo?

k) Difficolta'/ cambiamenti

1) Quali sono state le piu' grandi difficolta' che hai dovuto affrontare per gestire i telelavoratori?

2) E' difficile controllare i telelavoratori basandosi sui risultati che hanno raggiunto?

3) L'azienda organizza dei seminari dove i telelavoratori possono discutere circa questa nuova modalita' lavorativa?

l) Auto-organizzazione

1) L'azienda aiuta i telelavoratori ad auto-organizzarsi?

2) L'azienda fornisce ai telelavoratori dei manuali sul telelavoro?

m) Organizzazione temporale

1) L'azienda lascia liberi i telelavoratori di organizzarsi le giornate lavorative?

2) I telelavoratori hanno degli orari in cui possono essere contattati? Contatti i telelavoratori durante questi orari?

3) L'azienda fornisce un diario collettivo?

4) A tuo parere i telelavoratori lavorano do piu' dei lavoratori interni? Perche'?

Problema'workaholism'

5) Sono pagati gli straordinari?

n) Promozioni/avanzamento di carriera

1) A tuo parere il telelavoro fa differenza circa l'avanzamento di carriera?

2) Hai mai dato una promozione ad un telelavoratore?

3) A tuo parere perche' i telelavoratori non ottengono promozioni? (il loro lavoro/scelta di telelavorare)

3) I posti lavorativi sono pubblicizzati internamente? Come?

4) Nella tua azienda l'avanzamento di grado si basa: su alla'anzianita'/o capacita' a raggiungere gli obiettivi?
Se avete altri commenti da aggiungere....

Grazie per la cooperazione.