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Constance Kampf  
cka@mgmt.au.dk

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*Reflection note*

# Configuring Organizational and Individual Consequences in Smart Work

## Who should bear the material costs in smart work environments?

Constance Kampf  
Business and Social Sciences, Aarhus University  
[cka@mgmt.au.dk](mailto:cka@mgmt.au.dk)

### 1 Introduction

First, I would like to thank Tina Blegind Jensen for sharing her inspiring insights regarding a broad perspective on the consequences of digitization at work, and a double sided view to 'smart' work. Pointing out the tensions between a liberating view of mobility and fluidity in work and paradoxes inherent in the metaphor of smart work (Costas 2013; Mazmanian, Orlikowski and Yates 2013) leads us to reflect more deeply on potential consequences of the smart work paradigm. Her point about how future leaders can engage in smart work by helping workers think not only about what they are doing, but how they are working, is inspiring.

The first paradox she points out comes from tensions between flexibility and expectations of availability (Mazmanian 2013; Sewell & Taskin 2015). Here, the discussion focuses on time and space, and the ambiguity of purpose around them in smart work environments. A second key issue emerges from her statement that many of the working conditions that were previously governed by the organization will become the responsibility of the employee. Here, she focuses on workers' needs to enhance their technical know-how in a smart work environment to replace IT support functions.

However, this focus both reveals and conceals aspects of consequences for smart work in the interaction between individuals and organizations. It reveals new understandings of work emerging from the affordances of technology which supports smart

work. These new understandings include a positive view of fluidity, flexibility, and shifting spaces for work. At the same time, the focus on interaction through and with digital technologies conceals questions related to the costs of smart work that can be up for re-negotiation between workers and their organizational employers. In other words, smart work affords new configurations for working related to configurations of time and space. These configurations open up new cost saving opportunities for organizations that can result in an increasing cost for smart work at the individual level.

The notion of the costs of time and space for smart work and who should bear the material costs in smart work environments seems to be concealed in discussions of smart work. Why do these costs matter? The material environment that supports smart work in terms of flexibility of space and time can be understood in terms of tensions between workers' and organizations' financial interests, resulting in a transfer of material costs of work from organizations to smart workers. This begs the question of how and why smart work paradigms are developed and implemented.

So to what extent can the flexibility of space for smart work be used as an opportunity to transfer costs formerly seen as the responsibility of the organization to the employee? For example, knowledge workers may find the need to add home offices at their own cost in order to cope with their needs for a stable space to work. In addition, these added costs enable workers to increase the time they spend doing work for the organization because they do not need to commute physically. This can lead to compounding the cost of smart knowledge work for the worker, while saving costs for the organization.

This transfer of costs from the organization to workers appears to be an under-explored aspect of the dark side of smart work. Although technostress and the dark side of smart work have been considered, and frameworks for research laid out (Ragu-Nathan et al. 2008; D'Arcy et al. 2014), conceptualizations of technostress appear to lack aspects that address financial costs of work being transferred from the organization to employees. The financial side of technostress caused by transferring costs from organizations to individuals also has implications for leaders and the pressures they face in smart work environments. Here, advantageous configurations of smart work for the organization may have negative financial consequences for smart workers.

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