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Synopsis: How Space and Place Matter in the Context of Digital Work

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As already mentioned in the Introduction, the debate about the *spatial turn* placed emphasis on the confrontation with changing spatial conditions. This was preceded by the expansion of the previous understanding of space, away from the “container space” or a purely geographical space to a system of references that is socially constructed and emerges through interaction by means of social practices (Lefebvre, 1974, 1991). With the development of modern information and communication technologies, the understanding of space once again came into sharper focus: What should the consequences of these technologies be? This question was first dealt with in the context of science fiction in literature and film.

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The focus lay on the emergence of computer-generated virtual worlds. This was the hour of Gibson's (1984) "cyberspace". The term drew attention to the description of technologically enabled spaces. Based on his literary intention of unfolding a space of action in his novel that was neither place, nor space, but "notional space" (Gibson, 1989, n.p.), arising from a common shared spatial imagination, everything that had anything to do with virtual worlds was soon called cyberspace, including the World Wide Web. The talk of immaterial, virtual worlds or realities, which exist detached from places and time restrictions, became established. These developments promoted the idea that due to the fact that the material basis of these technologies plays less of a role, a "death of distance" (Cairncross, 2001) would be imminent, which would make places interchangeable and distances irrelevant.

The following years were marked by a further technological leap in development allowing many of the hitherto theoretical considerations and developments that were still in their infancy to become reality. The anyplace-anytime paradigm prevailed, supported by the technical sciences, business associations and companies. In fact, this was also reflected in scientific debates. In sociology, the theory of the "network society" (Castells, 1996) was introduced in order to describe society, and as part of it, the world of work, as constituted by networks based on using modern information technology. Following Castells, we are dealing with a "hybrid space, made up of places and flows" (Castells, 2001, p. 235). He differentiates between the conventional "space of places", which is bound to territories and a "space of flows" that is created by information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Castells, 1996). Castells emphasises that new geographies evolve based on information flows that are not "placeless" but networked places.

In fact, this conceptualisation corresponds with the theory of the "information space" (Baukrowitz & Boes, 1996) as already elaborated in the Introduction, that combines Castells' thoughts and Lefebvre's concept of socially constructed spaces with the theory of informatisation (Schmiede, 2006). Digitisation and a worldwide ICT infrastructure in the form of the Internet provide the basis for new spatial dimensions of informatisation, the "information space" (Boes & Kämpf, 2007). With the transformation of more and more working objects to information

objects, it is potentially possible to work from anywhere at any time. This development has gained in importance in recent years and is reflected in concepts such as crowd or platform work or other outsourcing activities in the field of knowledge work. The current phase in this process has been identified as “informational capitalism” (Castells, 1996), with reference to the increasing importance of information within capitalism accompanied by digitalisation and globalisation processes.

Recent research shows that this development does not include a detachment from places or a unilateral delocalisation (e.g., contributions in Flecker, 2016 or Boes et al., 2017). Digitised or virtual work is absolutely not detached from spatial ties, rather, as Will-Zocholl et al., (2019, p. 50) state, it shifts in spatial references. As Roth-Ebner (2016, p. 244) has shown with her study on the mediatisation of work, in many cases several virtual and physical spaces are used in parallel or superimposed with each other, since they are just a click away. The results can also be linked to Doreen Massey’s (2005, p. 9ff.) conceptualisation of space, in the sense that space is constituted through relations and interactions, which, by using digital media, produce a virtual working space. As emphasised in the Introduction, everything that is done in this working space has real consequences.

Taking these developments into account, it can be said that the evolution of digital information and communication technologies has had a large impact on the topologies of work, the way work is organised, performed, evaluated and perceived. This transformation is an interdisciplinary topic and can be discussed using multiple perspectives. What “informatisation” and “information space” describe from a sociological view, media and communications tend to introduce with the term “mediatisation of work” (Roth-Ebner, 2016) in order to grasp the interrelation between the medial-communicative transformation and the changes in the world of work. Since space and time are particularly influenced by mediatisation processes (Krotz, 2007, p. 39), the concept of mediatisation of work specifically refers to spatial dimensions and new topologies of work.

The contributions in this volume represent additional perspectives on the interrelation of work, space and digital media resp. ICTs and

the question of how places and spaces are shaped by the ongoing digitalisation of work. It includes approaches from sociology, media and communications, political economy, working life science, management sciences, environmental psychology, and communication history. Each of the three Parts of the book deal with different scales of spatial reorganisation:

- geographies of digital work;
- places of work (and their conditions); and
- virtual working spaces.

In the upcoming chapter, we reflect on the authors' contributions to the general aim of this anthology.

1 Geographies of Digital Work: Context Matters

The contributions reveal that the geographical location still matters in the globalised and digitised world of work. As put forward in the contribution by Andrey Shevchuk, Denis Strebkov and Alexey Tyulyupo, proclamations of the “death of distance” (Cairncross, 2001), or of a “flat world” (Friedman, 2007) are not irrefutable, since new hierarchies between regions are appearing (“geographic stereotyping”), and geographical factors still mould the way work is being distributed, organised and performed. Anna Ozimek emphasises the significance of the local embeddedness for the digital game production. She demonstrates that the establishment of Poland and Estonia as places for subcontracted work are “based on political, economic and technological power asymmetries in the development of game production between ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ countries” (see the contribution by Anna Ozimek in this volume). In their chapter, Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter demonstrate that data centre environments also depend on national regulatory frames as well as on infrastructural and natural environments that supply grids, cable networks, energy, water resources and—to a certain extent—people.

Concerning the reorganisation of space along with the emergence of the information space, Andrey Shevchuk, Denis Strebkov and Alexey Tyulyupo identify a strong trend of spatial decentralisation in the Russian online labour market in their chapter, diffusing from economically developed centres to less developed regions. Jian Lin also shows this effect—albeit more pronounced—concerning China’s wanghong economy. Its networks span from the urban centres to rural regions and populations, where individuals gain a chance of employment that they are less likely to obtain in the traditional local-social settings. Keita Matsushita points to a further aspect of—in his words “delocalisation” (which could also be described as a relocation of work): the trend of equipping rural areas with working infrastructure in order to relieve crowded cities. Under current conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, this trend could increase as we observe similar developments in Silicon Valley, where tech firms are leaving crowded Californian urban areas and heading towards more affordable regions of the USA like Arizona and Texas.¹

The contributions to this volume disclose a regional embeddedness of work that is linked to language and a common understanding of qualifications, as elaborated by Anna Ozimek using the example of the outsourcing practices of the digital games industry. Similarly, Andrey Shevchuk, Denis Strebkov and Alexey Tyulyupo demonstrate that language and the socio-economic situation of a country or region may contribute to the establishment of distinct online labour markets presenting the example of the digital freelance economy in Russia and beyond. The numbers of registered users and customers of the platform studied show that the Russian-speaking area is still closely linked to the territories of the states that formerly belonged to the Soviet Union. In this way, the platform facilitates an information space for Russian-language orders and offers. This corresponds to the results of other platform work studies that showed a concentration of online labour in specific countries, for example in urban English-speaking areas (Lehdonvirta, 2017; Lehdonvirta et al., 2019).²

Moreover, in their study, Andrey Shevchuk, Denis Strebkov and Alexey Tyulyupo were able to determine that clients in the sphere of crowd working tend to prefer contracting with freelancers from the same country or geographical region. Although the researched platform

(FL.ru) is transnationally dispersed, they report a “geographical clustering of economic activity” (see their contribution in this volume), that has arisen with the emergence of the political conflict between Russia and the Ukraine. Thus, topologies of work also have to be seen in terms of political conditions and developments. Other contributions to this volume serve as an example as well: Anna Ozimek shows that outsourcing practices that centred on Central and Eastern European countries, as in her example, Poland and Estonia, were fostered by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Jian Lin demonstrates how the Chinese government initiatives which aimed at upgrading the Internet infrastructure, on the one hand, and fostering mass entrepreneurship, on the other hand, propelled the establishment of the Chinese wanghong economy. (However, Chinese Internet censorship is also a threat to the careers of wanghong creators.) Similarly, Keita Matsushita points out that local governmental initiatives with the goal of community revitalisation are the drivers for the establishment of workationing facilities in rural areas of Japan. These findings fit seamlessly with the analysis of other authors, such as Noronha and D’Cruz (2016), who traced for India how policies fostered the emergence of the Indian IT success model, or Wolff (2016), who uncovered the impact of regional policies on the emergence of a local IT market in Brazil. Hence, policy influences the establishment and distribution of digital work, and digital work and its consequences have an impact on policy regulations (Meil & Kirov, 2017).

Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter go even further, interpreting data centres “as political institutions, which shift power relations across wide spatial vistas and contribute to changing patterns of geopolitics and governance across diverse geographical scales” (see their contribution in this volume). As an example, Singapore’s future as a data centre hub depends on the race between China and the US to establish standards for data transfer and artificial intelligence. The influence of political decisions on the location of certain industries, such as the data centres, should not be underestimated; it also strengthens the negotiating position in the global market structure, which functions on the basis of data. At the same time, the companies that are active there also influence geopolitics.

Finally, one has to consider the socio-geographical context by emphasising that the conditions of and changes wrought by a digitised world of work are not a general global phenomenon concerning all areas of work and all forms of occupation. As Christian Oggolder states, “hundreds of thousands of employees have to deal with working conditions that are no different from those of the modern era of factories, or even worse” (see his contribution in this volume). This is true above all for blue collar work (in mines, in the textile industry, etc.) but also for an increasing number of digital workers. Huws (2003) describes this development of worsening conditions in terms of insecurity, control and payment around the globe, as the rise of a “cybertariat”.

This is especially pronounced in the case of workers in data centres who are confronted with the fact that their work contributes to training and optimising the algorithms and artificial intelligence so that their own work can be automated. As Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter argue, the workers actively contribute to rationalising and abolishing their work. Some forms of platform work tend to show similar developments, especially in “microwork” (Lehdonvirta, 2016). Other forms of digital work are additionally emotionally and ethically demanding like the work of content moderators in social media (Roberts, 2019).

To sum up briefly, the contributions reveal that the construction of spatial relations in interaction with working or production environments cannot be understood without referring to the geographical embeddedness including historical, political, social and economic contexts. Altogether, they mould the distribution and division of economic activities, labour and of working conditions.

2 Places of Work: About Changing Workplaces and Locations of Work

As was claimed for the geographies of work, concrete locations and places of work also matter. In her research on the digital games industry and its outsourcing to Poland and Estonia, Anna Ozimek shows that the workforce is “influenced by the available infrastructure, resources and regulations” (see her contribution in this volume). Keita Matsushita

reveals movements of mobile work in his contribution that transform urban spaces into working places, for example, cafés, train stations and airports, which Dominik Klaus and Jörg Flecker call “intermediate places” (see their contribution in this volume). Thus, a working place in a digitised world of work can be defined simply as a place where people work, notwithstanding the original intention of the space. This has consequences for the experience of work. Keita Matsushita interprets this as the emergence of style-based workplaces, “where an individual’s workstyle renders their workplace to be possible anytime, anywhere” (see his contribution in this volume). He sees a shift in the perception of workplaces from “‘what workstyles are possible at this place’ to ‘how will I use spaces [...] to suit my workstyle?’” and explores this transformation using the example of co-working spaces in Tokyo’s business centre Shibuya and workationing at the seaside in Shirahama (Japan). The negotiation of workstyles and workplaces shows that the identity of the workers plays a role as well. This is also true for China’s wanghong economy actors, where local places and identities still matter. However, they are reduced to the “surface level that can add to the performative authenticity creators attempt to claim and monetize”, as put forward by Jian Lin (in this volume). In their contribution, Ingrid Nappi and Gisele de Campos Ribeiro also point to the material function of the physical office, which is reflected in the theory of place attachment (Fried, 1963). In fact, the feeling of being attached to a certain place is not fundamentally changed by the experience of telework. The majority (75 per cent) of respondents in Ingrid Nappi and Gisele de Campos Ribeiro’s study on workplaces before and after the first lockdown during the 2020 Covid-19 crisis continue to find the physical office at the company’s premises adequate for their work tasks. The results of the survey showed that the location for working in the information space does not become arbitrary, and that the social embedding in the office is still highly valued—some aspects even more than before (see their contribution in this volume).

Yet, workplaces have to be seen in their relation to the information space. Anna Ozimek shows for the digital games industry that the production takes place in the information space locally based in “fragmented and decentralised production networks” (see her contribution in this volume). The same is true for Andrey Shevchuk, Denis Strebkov and

Alexey Tyulyupo's example of the digital freelance economy in Russian-speaking countries as well as Jian Lin's description of wanghong network effects which "transform the local space of place into 'the space of flows'" (in this volume), where individuals participate in the seeming "place-ness" of Chinese social media communities or, in other words, create information space(s).

In conclusion, concrete places of work have not become meaningless, yet they are extended through virtual workspaces and networks as part of the information space.

3 Virtual Working Spaces: Identity, Subjectivity and Individual Preferences

Today, "business, politics, culture, and communication are shifting from physical places to virtual spaces", as Christian Oggolder (in this volume) argues. Those virtual spaces and their impact constitute Part III. Several contributions in this volume highlight the constructive aspect of space(s), as discussed in the Introduction with reference to Brenneis et al. (2018), Lefebvre (1974/1991) and Massey (2005). As Calle Rosengren, Ann Bergman and Kristina Palm maintain in their contribution, working spaces are constructed through the use of ICT and "can thus not be seen as separate from human action and interaction" (in this volume). The multiplication of work and non-workplaces in the virtual space leads to the demand to be simultaneously available in different work settings and "spheres of life" (ibid.). Consequently, formerly separated spaces are blurring, especially in the concept of "home office work" where private spaces and workspaces increasingly overlap, as described by Calle Rosengren, Ann Bergman, Kristina Palm, Dominik Klaus, Jörg Flecker as well as Christian Oggolder in this volume (and others, e.g., Koslowski, 2016; Roth-Ebner, 2016). This is also associated with a temporal delimitation, leading to all-day accessibility which is controlled socially and technically. This overlapping was already a common concept in the early modern period, where work and family life were combined in the house which served as place of work and living, as Christian Oggolder reminds us in his contribution.

The blurring of boundaries is not the only challenge for people who work. Increased density of work, flexible structures and precarious working conditions have consequences for subjectivity. Thus, new competencies are required in order to deal with the affordances of a digitised world of work (Diehl et al., 2013). Some of the contributions clearly set out that different practices are becoming established, which are related to diverse framing conditions. Calle Rosengren, Ann Bergman and Kristina Palm define the practices of “separating or integrating work and non-work to different times and places” as “boundary work” (in this volume). They demonstrate that ICTs are used to manage one’s availability for different life spheres, yet in different ways, depending on subjective dispositions. How a person handles their boundary work is a subjective and a dynamic process and depends on personal preferences, technological infrastructure as well as on contextual variables (workload, expectations of colleagues and family). Consequently, the authors speak of ICT as a “double edged sword” (in this volume). For example, the spatial flexibility due to the use of Internet-based work applications can be seen as a blessing that enables more freedom and autonomy for the individual. However, it is also a burden, as it requires increased personal responsibility and boundary management effort. Dominik Klaus and Jörg Flecker also conclude their research on the interrelation between boundaryless work and identity work in a similar way: “What may be experienced as a pillar of identity for some, poses a threat to others” (in this volume). Anna Ozimek’s study of game industry workers provides yet more evidence of these ambivalences. She outlines that even the skilled subcontractor’s work is often precarious in terms of uncertain employment status and low salary and, as a consequence, their work is not valued as socially prestigious. Finally, referring to the example of the wanghong economy, Jian Lin shows that the creative protagonists are subject to the logics of platform capitalism and state surveillance and are thus limited in their creativity. Other ambivalences were also addressed in the contributions to this volume: from delocalisation versus localisation, decentralisation versus centralisation, autonomy versus control, physical versus virtual office to empowerment versus burden. This underlines the notion that technological innovations always depend on the social use

they are put to (Matuschek et al., 2003, p. 139) and “that the transformative potential of digital media is just a potential one that does not guarantee any unequivocal effect” (Roth-Ebner, in press).

Some of the contributions in this volume refer to the fact that spatial aspects are interrelated with identity work. With their research on highly mobile knowledge workers, Dominik Klaus and Jörg Flecker stress the importance of spatial identity resources, like owning a desk, being part of an office peer group and having access to infrastructure. These resources can be lost in cases of freelancing or teleworking. For home office work, Ingrid Nappi and Gisele de Campos Ribeiro come to the same conclusion in their study conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is why they emphasise the physical office as an essential part of an organisation. The organisational affiliation (occupational identity) or the affiliation to an employee group or social group (“class”) is at stake under these conditions (e.g., Huws & Dahlmann, 2010).

Further, the blurring of professional and private boundaries is relevant for the workers’ identities. The “way people relate to their jobs affects their boundary management” (see the contribution by Dominik Klaus and Jörg Flecker in this volume). They identify an increased demand for self-governance or self-control regarding boundaryless telework. Calle Rosengren, Ann Bergman and Kristina Palm take the same line when they underscore the relevance of the feeling of being in control with regard to boundary work. However, the interrelation between identity and digitised worlds of work or working in the information space goes beyond boundary work or boundary management. Jian Lin emphasises the relevance of “a continuous self-governance that incorporates self-censorship, continuous learning and emotional management” (see his contribution in this volume) regarding employment in the digital economy.

4 The Covid-19 Crisis as Laboratory for Future Work

During the time the contributions were being written, the Covid-19 crisis, starting in late 2019 and spreading all over the world in 2020,

caused a caesura in the world of work. Due to more or less strict lockdowns, companies were forced to facilitate home office arrangements for their employees where applicable in order to prevent the spread of infection. Meetings, even whole conferences, were organised on a virtual basis. Some of the employees' homes were crowded with both home workers and children who performed their distance learning from home, because in some countries even schools closed due to strict lockdown rules. This situation served as a laboratory where the effects of virtual work were all condensed in a short period of time: from the benefit of keeping work processes and communication going in times of social distancing and reduced commuting times to the downsides of distraction due to family affairs, technological problems and IT security as well as difficulties in team communication and with the flow of information.

The contribution by Ingrid Nappi and Gisele de Campos Ribeiro explicitly discusses the relationship between the Covid-19 crisis in 2020 and the attitude towards home office and altered working practices. Their study reveals that most of the surveyed employees wanted to continue with home office practices after the crisis, alternating this with working at the company's premises. In fact, their results are relevant for post-crisis times as well and the general question of virtual work settings replacing physical ones. As the authors emphasise, "virtual office arrangements still do not replace some essential functions of the physical office such as workspace awareness, the positive dynamics of employee face-to-face interactions, and employees' feelings of workplace attachment" (Ingrid Nappi and Gisele de Campos Ribeiro in this volume). Thus, they conclude that the physical office will continue to persist in post-crisis times, yet it will co-exist with virtual offices. This is again evidence for the central statement of the volume that place matters and that, with the emergence of the information space, place does not become arbitrary.

Today, due to the ubiquitous use of the Internet and the transformation of social action into the information space, the proportion and variety of spatial references has increased, regardless of the actual location from which work is performed. This has consequences for the work of the future, that is, it must also be spatially possible to work in a concentrated manner at home. But if more work is done at home, it may also be important to ensure that there is a community within reach. In this

context, co-working spaces, like satellite offices, can also be considered for ordinary employees (beyond the digital bohemians). And ultimately, the question of where one chooses to live may also come to hinge on the fact that one no longer has to travel to the place of work every day, but is on the road less frequently.

All in all, instead of placelessness, a multiplication of places could be the new normal of work not limited to knowledge work. The further digitalisation in many different occupations could lead to an individualisation of workplaces (home office, corporation, mobile, etc.).

One of the big questions will be how the recognition of and attachment to organisations will be realised. Corporality will still play an important role. Being somewhere physically creates a feeling of belonging and connectedness, as highlighted by Ingrid Nappi and Gisele de Campos Ribeiro in this volume.

5 Full Circle: A Return to Our Research Questions

After reflecting the essence of the contributions to the book, we now return to the guiding questions first raised in the Introduction. These can be tentatively answered as follows:

1. “How relevant is the local embeddedness of work? To what extent does place matter in the context of a digitised world of work, and what does this mean for the division of labour (national–international, but also urban–rural)?”

Even though industries act on a global basis and work is globally distributed, the contributions give credence to the fact that work is still locally embedded. Anna Ozimek has demonstrated this using the example of Polish and Estonian subcontractors working for the digital games industry. The political and economic history of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region has established asymmetrical power relations that persist in the globally distributed workforce. Andrey Shevchuk, Denis Strebkov and Alexey Tyulyupo have shown that even in crowd

working, contracting tends to be based on geographical proximity. According to Dominik Klaus and Jörg Flecker, whether there is a place to work at the company's premises or not has consequences for the workers' identity. The question of whether they are positive resources for identities or a threat to them, varies individually. Also, Ingrid Nappi and Gisele de Campos Ribeiro emphasise the importance of communal space in the organisation.

Work in the information space can potentially be distributed globally. Hence, Anna Ozimek as well as Andrey Shevchuk, Denis Strebkov and Alexey Tyulyupo demonstrated that this distribution is shaped by geographical factors. Jian Lin and Keita Matsushita described the decentralisation of work from urban to rural areas. Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter even showed "how labour transitions to a society of automation" with their analysis of Singapore's data centres (see their contribution in this volume).

The contributions in this volume provide a panorama of a development that includes many other aspects. What is very clear from the different angles taken, however, is that the emergence of a global continuous information space has to be put into perspective. The information space is not as frictionless as its perception as a space of possibilities suggests. Entrance barriers, control intentions, censorship or filters contribute to the determination that no global information space has yet emerged in which everyone can participate equally and without restriction. Political tensions and regimes can also lead to closure processes. As a matter of fact, information spaces are not power-free spaces. Thus, talking about information spaces instead of an information space seems more appropriate at the moment. Even if it is possible in principle for a global information space to emerge, it is more likely that smaller spatial structures will emanate, as the examples in our anthology show.

2. "What are the consequences of the digitalisation of work for previous concepts of geographical places, workplaces and workspaces?"

The contributions reveal that a transformation of communication leads to the transformation of space as well as to the transformation of culture and society. In the virtual sphere, (working) spaces can easily

be constructed with a single click (that e.g., opens a video conference room or a data base). Thus, (virtual) space emerges through (ICT-based) action. Contrary to popular belief, this does not lead to work becoming placeless. Places are used more flexibly, and the geographical, political, cultural or knowledge aspects inscribed upon them remain effective. In addition, new places for working are emerging (e.g., co-working spaces or the trend of workationing as described by Keita Matsushita).

This has consequences for the labour market. New markets (like the Chinese wanhong economy as focused on by Jian Lin) and global production networks are established based on the availability of infrastructure and workforce. These labour markets are less globalised than one might think, as language and cultural approaches still seem to be crucial. Moreover, some of the industries addressed have a geopolitical impact, as Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter's example of data centres as critical infrastructure in a global competitive market indicates.

These spatial transformations also affect the boundaries between the private and the working space, as emphasised by Dominik Klaus and Jörg Flecker, Christian Oggolder as well as Calle Rosengren, Ann Bergman and Kristina Palm in their respective contributions. The contributions have also shown that "old" or traditional structures are retained in part, for example, as put forward by Christian Oggolder, when stating that the dissolving barriers between the home and work that we observe today were already a model of life in the early modern period.

Concerning the conceptual differentiation of place and space, as put forward in the Introduction, it has become increasingly apparent over the course of this volume that a strict separation cannot be maintained in all contexts. However, against the background of greater analytical acuity, we nonetheless plead for this differentiation to be taken seriously. It helps to describe relationships between people, organisations and technology as well as between structure and subjects. Consequently, *place* refers to a geographically localisable location, also in connection with work as a workplace (material equipment), whereas *space* is considered as a spatial reference level (independent of built space), including virtual spaces such as the information space respectively information spaces.

To sum up: Geographical places, workplaces and workspaces do not dissolve, but the relations among them are reconfigured through the information space.

3. "How are those who work located in the digitised world of work? What subjective capacities do they need to cope with these changing working conditions?"

The contributions demonstrate that the workers are of course located in a certain place, be it in a traditional office, at the kitchen table, at a desk in a co-working space or on vacation. Yet, they are also co-present in virtual spaces; even multiple spaces can be used simultaneously or in superimposition.

Regarding the subjective capacities, the contributions serve to manifest that boundary management is a central competency in digitised worlds of work, in order to cope with the blurring of private and professional life spheres due to the availability of digital media independently of time and space, and boundaryless work (as pointed out by Calle Rosengren, Ann Bergman and Kristina Palm as well as by Dominik Klaus and Jörg Flecker). Moreover, people engaged in digitised worlds of work may have to cope with insecure and precarious labour conditions, as stated by Anna Ozimek regarding digital game outsourcing and Jian Lin concerning China's wanghong economy as well as other examples of platform work or the workforce in data centres, as Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter emphasised. Another field of activity for those working in these new topologies of work is the continuous emergence of new challenges. Whether it is keeping up with technical developments, identifying and acquiring necessary skills independently (how do I even shoot a wanghong video?), or organising and maintaining contact with colleagues and or customers. Providing visibility without having personal contact and making sure that one's professional development continues are further challenges that workers have to cope with.

Of course, this book cannot provide ready-made, all-encompassing answers, but has to be understood as an open panorama of the multiple facets of the relationship between work, space, place and digitalisation, that has to be constantly revised and complemented by further research.

One of the desiderata derived from this volume is the elaboration of a concept that refers to the power structures that are evident in the information space, taking into account new technological and social developments. Another major issue concerns the regulation of those new forms of work, described in this volume using the example of platform work and the *wanghong* industry. How can workers be protected, income secured and so forth? Is that even intended? How can occupational relationships and labour relations be organised in such distributed forms of organisation? And how can persisting hierarchies be overcome in order to create fairer chances for everyone participating in the global labour market? As a matter of fact, research will not provide prefabricated answers to these questions. In addition to science, the sphere of politics is called upon to construct framework conditions that are valid not merely for nations, but for the global labour market.

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Notes

1. Examples that are mentioned in press: Hewlett Packard, Oracle, Apple and Tesla: <https://www.technologytimes.pk/2020/12/14/silicon-valley-loses-grip-on-tech-firms/>. Accessed 23 Feb 2021.
2. The explanations here show that we are not dealing with a global market, but with linguistically delimited markets. This also has consequences for previous research on the platform economy, in which the English-speaking market is overrepresented (as Andrey Shevchuk, Denis Strebkov and Alexey Tyulyupo note).

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