

Bergmann's new-work concept and the new work megatrend in the Covid-19 pandemic: a comparative analysis

Il concetto di new-work di Bergmann e il megatrend del nuovo lavoro nella pandemia di Covid-19: un'analisi comparativa

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Abstract

The pandemic forced reactions to the world of work in Germany. The qualitative comparative analysis of four representative studies examines the extent to which the measures have influenced the work culture and which specific effects on the New Work megatrend can be identified. The results show that measures to contain the pandemic have a reinforcing effect on individual elements of New Work. Some of the studies analyzed show that there were already efforts to anchor New Work elements in individual companies before the pandemic. Short-term changes to the world of work do not necessarily have a long-term effect. This is also due to the fact that individual measures are not holistically integrated and cultural changes mean far-reaching change management with major efforts within the organization. The New Work megatrend differs from Frithjof Bergmann's New Work concept from 1970, in which work can be something positive, empowering and wonderful through the flexibilization of work systems.

Keywords: work culture; working environment; flexibilization; home office; shortage of skilled workers.

Sintesi

La pandemia ha imposto reazioni al mondo del lavoro in Germania. L'analisi qualitativa comparativa di quattro studi rappresentativi esamina quanto le misure hanno influenzato la cultura del lavoro e quali effetti specifici possono essere identificati sul megatrend del Nuovo Lavoro. I risultati mostrano che le misure di contenimento della pandemia hanno un effetto di rafforzamento sui singoli elementi del Nuovo Lavoro. Alcuni degli studi analizzati mostrano che gli sforzi per ancorare gli elementi del Nuovo Lavoro nelle singole aziende erano già in atto prima della pandemia. I cambiamenti a breve termine nel mondo del lavoro non hanno necessariamente un effetto a lungo termine. Ciò è dovuto anche al fatto che le singole misure non sono integrate in modo olistico e i cambiamenti culturali implicano una gestione del cambiamento di vasta portata con sforzi importanti all'interno dell'organizzazione. Il megatrend del Nuovo Lavoro si differenzia dal concetto di Nuovo Lavoro di Frithjof Bergmann del 1970, secondo il quale il lavoro può essere qualcosa di positivo, potenziante e meraviglioso attraverso la flessibilizzazione dei sistemi lavorativi.

Parole chiave: cultura del lavoro; ambiente di lavoro; flessibilizzazione; home office; carenza di lavoratori qualificati.

1. Introduction

The measures taken in Germany to overcome the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic forced reactions with regard to work culture and the world of work as well as the New Work megatrend (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit [BMG], 2023; Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie [BMWi], 2021; Bünning et al., 2020; Robelski et al., 2020). New Work was conceived in the 1970s by the social philosopher and anthropologist Frithjof Bergmann and is also his life's work (Hackl et al., 2017). In his view, traditional work harbors dangers; it makes people ill, dependent, unhappy and robs them of energy. With New Work, he presents a new view of work, life and the meaning of existence (Bergmann, 20004). His concept of work culture represents an alternative to the purely paid employment that has dominated German society in recent decades (Bergmann, 2004; Georgi, 2021). The demands of disruptive change are more than ever transferable to the principle of the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous-(VUCA)-world (Heller, 2019). This article therefore examines the extent to which the measures taken to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic have influenced the work culture in companies in Germany and what specific effects can be identified on the New Work megatrend?

2. Methods

In order to answer the research question, a literature-based design and a qualitative comparative analysis was carried out, taking into account four representative studies and the current state of research (Döring, 2023).

The literature search was carried out in particular in the databases PubMed, a service of the National Library of Medicine (NLM), which includes the biomedical literature from MEDLINE, life science journals and online books, Cochrane Library with systematic reviews from Cochrane (CDSR) and various other databases, including a register of randomized clinical trials (Central), a database of systematic reviews outside of Cochrane (Epistemonikos), Cochrane Clinical Answers (CCAs) based on Cochrane reviews for point-of-care decisions, Somed, a socio-medical literature database with around 330,000 documents from the specialist areas: Occupational Medicine, Occupational Toxicology, Environmental Medicine, Health Promotion, Health Sciences, Health Reporting, Addictive Disorders, Rehabilitation, Medical Statistics, Environmental Hygiene, Environmental Toxicology, Epidemiology and Nursing Sciences, in a snowball system.

Comparative analysis is a qualitative research method that aims to systematically compare two or more objects, concepts or phenomena in order to identify and interpret both similarities and differences. This method is used in various disciplines, including the social sciences, literary studies and economics. The comparative analysis includes the following steps:

1. objectives of the analysis;
2. selection of comparative objects;
3. development of comparison criteria;
4. data collection;
5. analysis of the data;
6. interpretation of the results;
7. documentation and presentation (Döring, 2023).

There are numerous studies and research approaches on the impact of the COVID-19

pandemic on the world of work (see for example Alipour et al., 2020; Alipour et al., 2023; Bonin et al., 2020; Eurofound, 2020; Schlude et al., 2023). Four studies were selected in particular due to the similar approach in research design, the questions in the online survey and the similar study period and thus form a solid basis for a comparative analysis. All four studies were conducted online between April and May 2020 and focus on the aspects of New Work and New Normal and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work. For the comparative analysis, it is necessary that the objects (four studies) show differences. They differ in terms of sectors, company size, the group of respondents (e.g. managers, specialists, age, with or without children) and the work culture that was already in place before the pandemic.

3. Work culture and New Work as a new view of the setting work

Work culture is the manifestation of explicit and implicit symbolic orders, cultural codes and contexts of meaning and significance within a company, which are expressed in different practices and make them possible. These are based on individual, company, job-specific and social norms and values and are exchanged in social relationships (Wörwag & Cloots, 2020). Among other things, leadership culture, generational conflicts, motivational approaches, the demands of the times in the form of political events, economic conditions, demographic change, shortage of skilled workers and many other aspects are important for understanding a company's work culture. Employees have a feel for the work culture, they shape it through their attitude and actions and are motivated or demotivated by it (Hackl et al., 2017). Employees have concrete ideas about what is needed to change the work culture. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, these are characterized by the desire for a participative and innovative understanding of leadership, a bottom-up structure with a people-oriented attitude, flexible and experimental opportunities for action and a culture of error (Galasso & Foucault, 2020; Wörwag & Cloots, 2020). In addition, the multi-generational approach has gained in importance (Knappertsbusch & Wisskirchen, 2023).

Laloux (2015) is convinced that traditional corporate structures and work cultures cannot continue to exist in the long term and will be replaced by self-management concepts like the New Work model. Classic organizational models are unsuitable for globalized, digitalized and technical developments (Bonin et al., 2020; Dingel & Neiman, 2020; Espinoza & Reznikova, 2020).

Pressure on employees and managers also leads to health problems (Neuner, 2021; Rump & Walter, 2013). As a countermeasure, workplace health promotion is implemented, which is inadequate because it does not take the overall system into account (Neuner, 2021). Laloux (2015) is convinced of the principle of holism. People who bow to the conventions of the company put on a professional mask in their day-to-day work, which hinders creativity and intrapreneurship (Laloux, 2015; Sprenger, 2021). Today, New Work is considered a megatrend in society (Barsch & Trachsel, 2018; Gatterer & Tewes, 2023; Wieden, 2016). The term megatrend was coined by Naisbitt in 1982 (Naisbitt, 2015; Wieden, 2016). Megatrends are topics and trends that are sustainable, help shape the future and can drive change in society. They are intangible and sometimes difficult to comprehend (Gatterer & Tewes, 2023; Wieden, 2016).

New Work is the need to question the system of work and the understanding of work and to adapt it to current circumstances (see for example Hackl et al., 2017; Jobst-Jürgens, 2020; Merke, 2022). There are four upheavals at market level: Work 4.0, Industry 4.0, skills

shortages and decentralization. Changes at a societal level are demographic change, digitalization, globalization and changing values (Adelsberger et al., 2020; Hackl et al., 2017; Jobst-Jürgens, 2020).

New Work represents an approach to meeting the requirements as a company. Five categories characterize demonstrable, successful implementation:

1. individuality;
2. leadership;
3. agility;
4. new office concepts; and
5. flexibility (Hackl., et al., 2017).

Bergmann (2004; 2021) is convinced that we should not serve the work, but the work should serve us.

The system of work requires a new, rethought concept and the reversal of processes (Georgi, 2021; Neuner, 2021). Work should be transformed in such a way that people can once again be free, self-determined beings (Bergmann, 2021; Bergmann & Friedland, 2021). Work should be interesting and exciting; it should strengthen self-confidence. It is like breaking through a strong tradition that prevents us from experiencing work as something delicious and wonderful (Bergmann, 2004). Frithjof Bergmann's idea of New Work is work that is done by one's own mind, dispositions and talent and out of deepest desires and convictions. This work releases unimaginable energy and helps people to be strong, full of life and human (Bergmann, 2004). Frithjof Bergmann's (2004; 2021) goal is to build a society and culture in which every person is given the opportunity to do fulfilling, fascinating work that generates joy, strength, vitality, pride and courage. Creativity and inventiveness, a power current of new work would be the consequences (Bergmann, 2004). Bergmann (2004) appeals for a holistic approach to looking at people. The aim is to achieve harmony of body, mind and soul. In this context work is also the most effective instrument for strengthening people and promoting their development (Bergmann, 2004, 2021). Moreover, this is not an individually oriented project, but rather an approach to creating new structures and make them possible for the vast majority of people (Bergmann & Friedland, 2021; Bonin et al., 2020; Jobst-Jürgens, 2020; Merke, 2022).

New Work can be summarized as employment-oriented work with a way of working that is characterized by a high degree of virtualization of work equipment, networking of people, flexibilization of work locations, working hours and work content (Adelsberger et al., 2020). The digital transformation and the associated pressure to innovate demand and promote agile, self-organized and highly customer-oriented working principles (Jobst-Jürgens, 2020). Not only when and where of work, but also the mode of collaboration with colleagues and customers is changing (Winkelmann & Helmer-Denzel, 2021; Winkelmann & Rogalski, 2023). New Work therefore also stands for the changed expectations of employees with regard to participation, autonomy and the creation of meaning through work (Flüter-Hoffmann et al., 2019; Georgi, 2021). As a result, the demands placed on managers and management systems are shifting away from hierarchies towards a coaching, lateral and supportive understanding of leadership (Hofmann et al., 2019).

Hofmann et al. (2019) find four fields in which New Work approaches manifest themselves:

1. flexibilization of work in terms of location and time;
2. agile and project-based forms of organization;

3. practical relevance of the value-based nature of work and the creation of meaning through work;
4. changed management structures and new distribution of power through de-hierarchization, participative decision-making mechanisms and self-organization.

4. Four Studies with a focus on New Work

4.1. Bertelsmann Foundation, Münchner Kreis and TUM Campus Heilbronn

In cooperation with the Bertelsmann Foundation, Münchner Kreis and Technical University of Munich (TUM) Campus Heilbronn gGmbH a special study on the effects of the corona pandemic in social, economic and technological terms was carried out with a total of 211 people were surveyed between April 15, 2020 and April 24, 2020 (Krcmar & Winterman, 2022). The respondents work professionally as digitalization, technology and AI experts. The study by Krcmar & Winterman (2022) is divided into five questions on business and four questions on new work.

The experts agree that virtual working methods will become a natural part of everyday working life in the future. This means that the new balance between private and working life is particularly important, especially in the context of flexible work models that are distributed over time and space. Everyone is then asked to shape this new duality. At over 80%, the experts clearly see the continued existence of work concepts such as new virtual conferences and home offices even after the crisis. When asked whether people in the home/mobile office tend to work more or less throughout the day than in the office, the experts are undecided. While 41% assume that people tend to work more in the home office, 37% assume that the work intensity will remain the same and 17% expect that less work will be done in the home office than in the office. Finally, the question is posed as to which assessments of the future prevail in the context of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology. 70% state an optimistic attitude, 11% are rather pessimistic and 19% state neither (Krcmar & Winterman, 2022).

4.2. Fraunhofer IAO and German Society for Personnel Management

Hofmann et al. (2020) by the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO) in cooperation with the German Society for Personnel Management (DGFP) has published a study entitled Working in the Corona pandemic – on the way to the new normal.

Hofmann et al. (2020) examined the phenomenon of working in a state of emergency. In addition to the results of the study, it was questioned whether Corona acts as a game changer and which of the changes that have occurred will be sustainable. The survey by Hofmann et al. (2020) took place between May 4th, 2020 and May 24th, 2020. Around 500 companies from the private sector, service sector, manufacturing companies, public sector were surveyed. The study consists of a total of eight questions. The first question refers to working from home in relation to communication. It is clear, video conferencing and the use of social media channels are being used significantly more often. Staff appraisals are taking place via video conference, as are recruitment interviews. New order forms are emerging, and order clarifications are also being organized online. Workshops are being held online and learning software has been made available. The impact of the crisis on working hours means that employees are working at unusual times. 54% are also working at weekends and 39% of employees are working overtime. The information on less work

or more vacation during this period of the survey is relatively similarly distributed in relation to these two factors (Hofmann et al., 2020).

Further information is provided on the question of what learning effects are recognizable from the crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of employees agree with these statements with regard to the aspects of increased use of home office, critical questioning of the necessity of business trips, acceptance of home office, committed managers generate creative solutions and a strong work culture promotes crisis management. With regard to the use of office space in relation to the assumption that more home office use remains, and less office space is necessary in terms of cost savings, most employees agree, but are not fully convinced. 35% agree less or not at all or are unable to assess this (Hofmann et al., 2020).

An assessment from a Human Resources (HR) perspective on four aspects was scrutinized. According to this, 45% estimate that there are no conflicts between employees and managers when working from home. Around 28% state that conflicts of this kind rarely occur. A possible excessive demand on managers due to the pandemic-related crisis situation is the case for 40%, only 13% state that this is not the case (Hofmann et al., 2020).

In terms of positive experience with regard to working from home and from the Experience of reduced barriers to future use 47% agree, 23% cannot judge, 12% state that this is not the case (Hofmann et al., 2020).

With regard to preparations for dealing with crises of this magnitude in the future, questions were asked about necessary aspects such as equipment, digitalization and operational regulations. Overall, an average of 70% consider aspects such as Virtual Private Network (VPN) access and the provision of technical devices to be necessary. Concerning digitalization, 60% agree that important documents should be digitalized, and that data protection should be observed and maintained (Hofmann et al., 2020).

In terms of company regulations, 50% agree with the need for standardized regulations for working from home and 57% agree with the need for efficient digital working time recording (Hofmann et al., 2020).

Further surveys on necessary and important aspects for preparing for crises in this dimension were carried out regarding the topics of dissolution of boundaries, leadership and management, media skills, process digitization, information platforms, committee work and cultural role models as well as interior design (Hofmann et al., 2020).

More than 70% state the need for managers to develop strategies to counteract the dissolution of boundaries and to keep an eye on the health consequences of dissolution of boundaries. An average of 50% state that managers need new routines and a new form of self-management in relation to remote leadership (Hofmann et al., 2020).

On average, 40% consider comprehensive training courses on media skills to be necessary, as well as information platforms and the digitalization of processes through exchange platforms, regulations and information for use in the home office (Hofmann et al., 2020).

It is striking that fewer needs are seen with regard to committee work and office equipment. 42% see a need for flexible workspace design. 35% see virtual opportunities for cooperation between the workers or staff council (Hofmann et al., 2020).

4.3. Institute for Employment Research

The Institute for Employment Research (IAB) is a research institute of the Federal

Employment Agency (Germany). For analyzing the extent to which coronavirus has changed everyday working life 1,212 people were surveyed from April 11, 2020 to May 25, 2020 about their everyday working life (Frodermann et al., 2020). The study is representative of people from private-sector companies. The study includes questions on short-time work, changes in working hours, experiences of working from home, communication in everyday working life and data on everyday working life with and without childcare.

The criteria are working from home, working at unusual times, finding it difficult to concentrate on work and working less efficiently. The majority of both genders state that they work from home with a child. Furthermore, additional work is done at unusual times.

In context of the criterion of concentration on work, women and men with children find it more difficult to concentrate than those without. Working people without children find it almost twice as easy to concentrate. The exception in this context is women without a child, who, like women with child show concentration difficulties. Workers with children state that they consider working with a child to be less efficient. The values are more pronounced for women than for men (Frodermann et al., 2020).

The criterion of the average actual and agreed weekly working hours of employees in 2019 and 2020 is given in the form of hours per week. Concerning working hours in comparison from 2019 to 2020, the factor actual working hours & currently on short-time work is particularly low, as is the factor agreed working hours & currently on short-time work. Overall, the agreed working time aspect remains relatively constant (Frodermann et al., 2020).

A comparison of the home office transitions factor shows that 45.7% are working as before. 19.6% have moved from the company to the home office. 30.9% of employees who had previously worked from home continued to do so (Frodermann et al., 2020).

Regarding the aspect of employee communication, a differentiation is made between A) No home office and B) Home office and C) No home office to home office. These data are in relation to the on-site meetings survey, Location-independent conversations in digital form as well as location- and time-independent communication in the form of e-mails or the use of messengers. The aspect of location-independent conversations has risen minimally (Frodermann et al., 2020).

With regard to the question of the extent to which working and caring function simultaneously, the results show that the closures of daycare centers and schools have caused significant additional stress, resulting in extreme, changed circumstances in the everyday working lives of employees with children. They stated that they were often working at other times. Workers with children rate their work as less efficient than employees without children (Frodermann et al., 2020).

4.4. Institute for Employment and Employability and Hays

The empirical study in cooperation with the Institute for Employment and Employability (IBE) and Hays AG by Eilers et al. (2020) is entitled HR Report 2021 Focus on New Work. The survey was conducted in the period from April to May 2020 with 1.046 people from the industrial, service and public sectors (Eilers et al., 2020).

The HR report is based on the four criteria by Hofmann et al. (2019):

1. flexibilization of work in terms of location and time;

2. agile and project-based forms of organization;
3. practical relevance of the value-based nature of work and the creation of meaning through work;
4. changed management structures and new distribution of power through de-hierarchization, participative decision-making mechanisms and self-organization.

In addition to the main topics on the influence of the pandemic on New Work, a Long-term view presented in the form of the most important HR topics and fields of action (e.g. central HR trends, employee recruitment, employee retention, leadership and corporate culture). Right at the beginning, the study participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the individual dimensions of New Work have already been implemented in their company. Almost two thirds of respondents (61%) report a pronounced flexibilization of work almost two thirds of respondents (61%). In around half of the companies, other forms of New Work are already a reality: project-based forms of organization, the creation of meaning in and through work, the local flexibilization of work of work, agile forms of organization and changed management structures. management structures. A new distribution of power is already reported by 43 percent of participants (Eilers et al., 2020).

The flexibilization of work in terms of time and place has evidently not yet reached the public sector to the same extent as in industry and the service sector. This is despite the fact that the public sector, with its wide range of part-time models, has for years stood for a high level of commitment to the balance of work. Agile and project-based forms of organization are more widespread in the industrial and service sectors. Management structures in the traditionally hierarchical public sector are changing slowly. A comparison of the results by company size shows that companies with 1,000 to under 5,000 employees are implementing New Work. The age-related analysis shows that the under-40s are much more aware of the spread of agile forms of organization, changed management structures and a new distribution of power than the over-50s. The assessments also differ depending on the position of the respondents. For example, all aspects of New Work are significantly more pronounced for HR managers than for managers from specialist departments and employees without management responsibility. This is particularly evident in the questions about changed management structures and a new distribution of power. (Eilers et al., 2020)

Eilers et al. (2020) prove that the more changes a new work approach is required in the organizational structure, the less often it is realized. A talking point is revealed here Action Gap: The (theoretical) discussions about New Work are only partially implemented in practice.

5. Presentation and interpretation of the results

The following section illustrates the extent to which the studies show similarities and differences and whether there are significant overlaps. The most concise features of the results are listed in a table to provide an overview (Figure 1). The tabular analysis shows that there are some similarities between the four studies, but there are also clear differences and conspicuous features.

The global environmental influences in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting political, labor and health law consequences affect not only the working environment but also the work culture and mean changes for everyone in their professional and private lives. This is particularly evident from the results of the comparative analysis.

The evaluation of the different study results has shown that there is a high degree of overlap overall in the points of the expected long-term changes, changes with regard to the flexibilization of work in terms of space and time, home office, the role of the manager, the management style and in the area of communication.

Each research institute has its own individual research approach. In contrast to the other three studies, the special study by Krcmar & Winterman (2022) on the Covid-19 pandemic has fewer participants overall, but most clearly shows the difference between economic corporate issues and questions on new work. It is striking that it is the only one of the four studies that conducted surveys on the winners and losers of the pandemic situation (Krcmar & Winterman, 2022). It is also astonishing that 90% of the companies stated that they were already equipped with software and mobile devices. This indicates that these companies were well equipped digitally. The fact that only 10% have an ergonomic workplace in the home office is worrying. In contrast to the other studies, the study by Bertelsmann, MÜNCHNER KREIS, TUM Campus Heilbronn highlights the aspect of overtime, as well as an expected awareness of illness and the social consequences of government intervention (Krcmar & Winterman, 2022).

Current Number	Title of the study	Research organization, editor	Special Features	Similarities to the comparative studies	Differences from the comparative studies
01	Study on the effects of the corona pandemic in social, economic and technological terms within the framework of the "Münchner Kreis Future Study VIII: Life, Work, Education 2035+"	Bertelsmann Foundation, Münchner Kreis e.V. and Technical University of Munich (TUM) Campus Heilbronn gGmbH	Focus on business & New Work, long-term winners, investigation of largest Changes in the company, economic consequences, sustainable trends, equipment: software and devices almost 90% given, ergonomic Equipment less than 10%	Acceleration digital Transformation through pandemic experiences, expected long-term consequence: temporal and spatial flexibilization of work, new digital communication, leadership role, virtual education, new worklife balance & private	Focus on overtime in the Home office, Overview winners & Losers per sector, consequences for society due to government intervention & digital consultations & cashless payments & Awareness of

02	Working in the Corona pandemic – on the way to the new normal	Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO) in cooperation with the German Society for Personnel Management DGFP e.V.	Focus on quality of communication through differentiated execution of means & methods, management	Work at unusual Times, Reducing reservations about working from home & long-term implementation, importance of operational Regulations for home office, technical equipment, Digitization, Questioning classical Office concepts, role	Focus on learning effects in Company, Conflicts and Excessive demands from Specialists & employees, Danger of the dissolution of boundaries in the Home office, Leadership at a distance & Self-management new
03	Online survey of employees: How Corona has changed everyday working life	Institute for Employment Research (IAB) of the Federal Employment Agency, Germany	Focus on concentration, Self-assessment of Efficiency in the home office, switching to the home office from differentiated	Work at unusual Times, Home office, Differentiation, Working time in actual & agreed & work	Differentiated surveys on gender & tasks in working life
04	HR Report 2021 Focus on New Work - An empirical study	Institute for Employment and Employability (IBE) at the Ludwigshafen University of Economics and Society and Hays AG	Tensions between employees regarding New Work application due to lack of compensation for non-applicability in areas, Tensions to temporal & local & project-based organizations, Meaningful work, Long-term study important HR topics & trends & Employee retention & culture	Spatial & temporal Flexibilization of Work, home office, role	Implementation dimension <i>New Work</i> so far, Flexibilization through agile organizational form, changed management structure, new distribution of power Differences between Employees and Manager

Figure 1. Special features, similarities and differences of the four studies included.

In their study Working during the Covid-19 pandemic, on the way to the new normal, Hofmann et al. (2020) focus on the quality of work communication in various aspects and levels. The study also scrutinizes the role of managers. The results of this study differ from the other studies due to the focus on learning effects in companies and the aspect of conflicts, for example due to excessive demands on employees and managers. The danger of the dissolution of boundaries through spatially flexible working is made clear. Recommendations for further training concerning remote leadership and self-management are formulated (Hofmann et al., 2020).

Frodermann et al., 2020 by IAB have a differentiated survey on gender and tasks in everyday working life as a special feature of the study. The focus of the survey is on aspects of concentration, self-assessment of work efficiency in home office and the options for switching to the home office (Frodermann et al., 2020).

In contrast to the other studies, the study by Eilers et al. (2020) includes a question on the implementation of New Work to date. In addition, this study includes surveys on a new distribution of power in companies. What is striking about this study is the focus on tensions between employees who are able to apply New Work and those who are not. There is a lack of balance in this respect avoid negative consequences such as envy between colleagues (Eilers et al., 2020).

Overall, the research question posed at the beginning, which concrete effects can be observed in connection with the New Work megatrend, can be well understood on the basis of the analyzed four studies. Companies, managers and employees are rethinking their approach in light of the pandemic situation and circumstances. The research results show that the companies involved are beginning to try out New Work methods in the form of temporal and spatial flexibilization and new, flexible power and management structures. However, the New Work megatrend differs from Frithjof Bergmann's original New Work concept in its approach to work motivation. Frithjof Bergmann (2004) not only had the vision that work could be something positive, empowering and wonderful through the flexibilization of work systems. According to his vision, people need space to discover their talents, passions and abilities and accordingly find work that promotes this positive energy and results in a significant level of creativity (Bergmann, 2021). Although the new New Work megatrend is a holistically conceived instrument. It is currently being used to a limited extent in the form of individual methods to make work more flexible and to attract and retain skilled workers. (Hackl et al., 2017; Hofmann et al., 2019) The systemic rethink has not yet taken place. Some of the studies analyzed show that even before the pandemic, there were efforts in individual companies to anchor New Work elements (see for example Frodermann et al., 2020). But not holistically. This is because it requires it to be viewed as a concept and firmly anchored in the work culture. Another key factor is that employees must be open to the possibilities of New Work and organize their lives accordingly (Laloux, 2015; Sprenger, 2021). The surveys of employees and managers on the impact of the pandemic on the reality of work in Germany show the accelerated reaction of the world of work to the exceptional situation, leading to a new transformation of this and every individual company in a very short space of time (Wörwag & Cloots, 2020). Overall, the included studies show that new things are being tried out with a view to future viability and that there is a willingness to learn through this involuntary experiment. However, it should be critically noted that one trigger was the changed working environment caused by the pandemic and not the transformation of the corporate culture that had grown from within (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, 2023).

6. Conclusion and recommendations to transform the world of work

The aim of this analysis was to find out whether the measures taken to contain the pandemic have had an effect on the world of work and in what form in the sense of New Work. In summary, the results are positive. However, they differ in terms of sectors, company size, the group of respondents (e.g. managers, specialists, age, with or without children) and the work culture that was already in place before the pandemic. Some have the disadvantage or the opportunity to reinvent themselves, while other companies are repositioning themselves, reflecting and considering new ventures. The pandemic reveals limits and opportunities for the world of work. The pandemic phase can be seen as an experimental space. Experience has been gathered, evaluated and shows that changes can be made flexibly. The results of the analysis show that there is a need for change in the working world in terms of work-life balance (better work-life flow), skilled workers are needed in most sectors and the measures to contain the pandemic had a reinforcing effect on individual elements of New Work. It should be noted, however, that a short-term change in the world of work does not necessarily have a long-term effect. The reasons for this include the fact that the individual measures (e.g. home office) are not integrated holistically and cultural changes (including the corporate culture and work culture) mean in-depth change management processes and the associated efforts within the organization. These are hardly noticeable. Small changes to the working environment are more noticeable, which should take place continuously and with regard to various aspects to ensure sustainability. The need to create new conditions in the world of work as a result of the pandemic is not necessarily associated with the sustainability of these measures or more humanity and meaning at work.

The transformation of the world of work towards an optimal work-life balance requires a joint commitment from companies, managers and employees.

Specific recommendations for action to transform the world of work are as follows:

1. Companies:

- implementation of flexible working time models: The introduction of flexible working time models, such as flextime, part-time and home office, can increase the individual adaptability of employees. Studies show that such models increase employee satisfaction and productivity by taking their personal circumstances into account;
- design of hybrid working environments: Creating hybrid work environments that integrate both office and remote work promotes spatial flexibility. The use of modern technologies and communication tools is crucial to optimize collaboration and knowledge sharing;
- implementation of health-promoting measures: Introducing health promotion programs, such as stress management workshops and ergonomic workplace designs, can support employees' physical and mental health. Research shows that such measures reduce absenteeism and increase job satisfaction;
- promotion of an open corporate culture: A corporate culture that promotes openness and transparency allows employees to communicate their needs and challenges. Regular feedback meetings and anonymous surveys can serve as tools to gather employee feedback and increase the organization's adaptability.

2. Managers:

- role model function and self-management: Managers should act as role models by exemplifying a healthy work-life balance and respecting their own boundaries.

This can have a positive influence on employee behavior and promote a culture of self-management;

- clear communication of goals and expectations: Transparent communication of realistic goals and expectations is essential to avoid overwork. Clear goal setting helps to increase motivation and avoid stress;
- employee participation: Involving employees in decision-making processes that affect the way they work promotes a sense of personal responsibility and appreciation. Participation can strengthen identification with the company's goals and increase innovative strength;
- regular employee appraisals: Conducting regular check-ins allows managers to evaluate the well-being of employees and respond to potential problems at an early stage. Such discussions can serve as a preventative measure for stress management.

3. Specialists:

- taking personal responsibility: Employees should actively take personal responsibility for their work-life balance by setting personal boundaries and communicating them. The ability to say “no” is crucial for avoiding overwork;
- planning recovery time: Systematically scheduling breaks and recovery time into the workday is necessary to promote regeneration. Research shows that regular recovery periods increase cognitive performance;
- further training and personal development: Taking advantage of training opportunities contributes to personal and professional development. This not only promotes individual careers, but also the organization's ability to adapt to changing market conditions;
- building networks: Exchanges with colleagues basically serve to share experiences and find support. A strong network, even across sectors, can help to better overcome challenges. The standard implementation of benchmarking, peer consulting and industry meetings can be suitable examples of this.

By implementing these recommendations for action, a positive change can be brought about that promotes both the well-being of employees and the productivity of the company.

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