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Pascale Peters and Stefan Heusinkveld

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Pascale Peters

Institute for Management Research, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Stefan Heusinkveld

Institute for Management Research, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Abstract

Building on recent research that stresses the important role of managers in the adoption process of telehomeworking, or telecommuting, this study examines the influence of the institutional context on managers' attitude formation. Drawing on large-scale survey data from 96 CEOs and 380 HR managers in Dutch organizations, we show that normative and mimetic pressures affect managers' beliefs, which are reflected in their perceptions of the relative (dis)advantage of telehomeworking. We also find that the perceived improvements of work outcomes and perceived social costs/benefits vary among managers from different 'occupational communities'. CEOs' beliefs are more susceptible to mimetic pressures, while HR managers' attitudes towards telehomeworking are positively fed by pressures from their occupational community. These findings support the view that current debates on work–life initiatives' diffusion and organizational changes in relation to these initiatives should pay much more attention to the importance of the institutional environment and managers' subcultures.

Keywords

cognition, institutional theory, management ideas and practices, subcultures, telecommuting, telework attitudes

Introduction

Telehomeworking,¹ or telecommuting, is one of the work–life initiatives that organizations have started to introduce in response to changing workforce demographics and

Corresponding author:

Pascale Peters, Institute for Management Research, Radboud University Nijmegen, PO Box 9108, Nijmegen, NL-6500 HK, The Netherlands.

Email: p.peters@fm.ru.nl

global competition (Hammer et al., 2005), as it has the potential to improve both employees' quality of working life and organizational effectiveness (Bélanger, 1999; Duxbury and Haines, 1991; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Madsen, 2003). Since its introduction in the 1970s, the adoption of teleworking by employees (Baruch and Yuen, 2000; Mokhtarian and Salomon, 1997; Peters et al., 2004), as well as by organizations (Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2007; Peters and Batenburg, 2004), has been a much debated topic. Despite the often reported advantages of this innovative work mode, such as performance and productivity gains (Kossek et al., 2006), teleworking has been portrayed as 'an innovation where nobody is getting on the bandwagon' (Ruppel and Harrington, 1995). Apart from the control and coordination arguments, it is the reported 'social costs' of telework affecting not only teleworkers themselves, but also non-teleworking co-workers in the work unit (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Golden, 2007) that may be accountable for this.

Despite the slow uptake of teleworking, the long-standing debates about telework adoptions did report some growth in the use of teleworking. When considering all types of teleworking, including home-based teleworking, mobile teleworking and self-employed teleworking, Gareis (2002) showed the total percentage of European teleworkers in 2002 to have increased to 13.0 percent of the European workforce. Focusing on home-based teleworking practices alone, the European penetration rate that year was 7.4 percent. Generally, however, there is consensus that the adoption and diffusion of telework policies and teleworking practices in organizations fall short of the high expectations (Bailey and Kurland, 2002).

In search of explanations for the adoption and diffusion of teleworking, scholars have emphasized the importance of 'fit' between the organizational characteristics and the attributes of this new work mode. Various fit-elements have been mentioned, such as the use of information and communication technologies in the organization (Pérez-Pérez et al., 2003, 2005); occupation, task and employee characteristics (Olson, 1983; Peters and van der Lippe, 2007), structural factors, such as formalization, centralization and specialization (Ruppel and Harrington, 1995); the competitive environment of organizations (Sia et al., 2004); the organization's corporate culture (Karnowski and White, 2002; Peters and Batenburg, 2004; Standen, 2000) and national culture (Standen, 2000; Peters and den Dulk, 2003; Tregaskis, 2000). Currently, however, it is doubtful whether telework adoption depends solely on these types of fit-factors. When teleworking was relatively unknown, it can be assumed that its adoption and diffusion was primarily driven by compatibility arguments and perceived competitive advantages such as efficiency and effectiveness considerations and economic gains (Rogers, 1995; Tolbert and Zucker, 1983). In later stages, adoption behavior may be more driven by legitimacy and status seeking behavior (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2001) because with the increased acceptance of teleworking, institutional pressures are likely to increase (Scott, 2001; Tolbert and Zucker, 1983).

Although Scott (2001) noted the cognitive aspects in early institutional approaches, it is only recently that institutional theorists have started to develop more systematic research into these 'micro-level processes' and seek further understanding of the cognitive bases of institutional behavior (Barley and Tolbert, 1997; Daniels et al., 2002; George et al., 2006; Lant and Baum, 1995). In the current literature, management cognition is also referred to as 'beliefs' (Duxbury and Haines, 1991), 'mental models' (Daniels et al., 2001),

or 'dominant logics' (Kossek et al., 1994), which are considered to constitute the basis for managers' attitudes. The emphasis on cognition among neo-institutionalist scholars can also be found in the attitude-formation literature, which postulates that beliefs affecting managers' attitudes arise from cognitive responses. These cognitive responses, in turn, are considered to arise from the general process of managers acquiring information from their external environment (Duxbury and Haines, 1991; Olson et al., 1982; see also Kossek et al., 1994).

The present study examines whether the influence of pressures from the institutional environment on managers' beliefs also reveals itself in managers' perceptions of the relative advantage of teleworking. Drawing on Schein (1996), it is argued that the institutional environment in which managers are being socialized and in which they operate, shape their deeply rooted shared beliefs and, eventually, also their attitudes towards teleworking. We focus particularly on two 'subcultures' of managers (Schein, 1996). These 'occupational communities' may graft a specific set of dominant beliefs and role related social expectations onto managers that constitute the basis with which they assess new ideas and practices (Schein, 1996). As a result, institutional factors shaping managers' attitudes can be considered important in the diffusion of teleworking (Daniels et al., 2001; Pérez-Pérez et al., 2003). By analyzing how institutional pressures affect managers' attitudes towards teleworking, the present study aims to contribute to the debates on adoption and diffusion of work-life initiatives in general, and teleworking in particular. It seeks to do so in several ways.

First, by focusing on managers' perceptions of the relative advantage of teleworking, this study relates to the growing attention that work-life researchers have started to give to the organization's 'work-home culture' (Lewis, 2001) since managers' attitudes can support or hinder the introduction, spread and use of work-life initiatives (Allen, 2001; Dijkers et al., 2007; Sahibzada et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 1999). In line with this, growing attention has been paid to the role of managers as potential change agents in the adoption and diffusion processes regarding work-life initiatives within an organization (Bardoel, 2003; den Dulk and Peper, 2007; Kossek et al., 1994). Further, managers' perceived attributes of teleworking and interpretations of its advantages and disadvantages are crucial in the adoption process (Peters and van der Lippe, 2007). More specifically, managers can either initiate the idea to work from home, support the use of teleworking, or turn down an individual employee's telework request (Ruppel and Harrington, 1995). Hence, given the fact that attitudes, or perceived relative advantage, are important predictors of adoption intentions and actual behaviors (see Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Rogers, 1995), it is important to understand how institutional pressures shape telework attitudes at a micro-level.

Second, this research builds on recent insights from neo-institutional theory, by analyzing the role that pressures from the institutional environment play with respect to the formation of managers' attitudes towards teleworking. As attitudes are shaped through processing information from the environment (Duxbury and Haines, 1991), the present study stresses the importance of professional socialization, inducing 'normative pressures' on managers, and the importance of behavior of peer organizations in the organizational field, engendering 'mimetic pressures' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001). In this study, we base our views on mimetic pressures arising from 'co-orientation' and 'peer-behavior'. The third

institutional element distinguished in the neo-institutional literature, 'coercive pressures' resulting from rules and regulations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001), is not taken into account in this study as these types of pressures (for instance, induced by the autonomous Framework Agreement 2002 stimulating employer and employee representatives in the European Union to agree on formal telework policies) are still at an embryonic stage (Larsen and Andersen, 2007).

Third, although previous studies have taken various types of managers into account (Karnowski and White, 2002; Pérez-Pérez et al., 2002), little attention has been paid to differences in shared beliefs and values across subcategories of managers. However, these 'cultures' may differ across management positions, and managers may vary in the extent to which they are susceptible to particular institutional pressures (see Schein, 1996). In order to see how institutional pressures affect categories of managers differently, our empirical work involves a large-scale quantitative study conducted in 2003 among 96 CEOs and 380 HR-managers ($N = 476$) in Dutch private sector companies employing 100 or more employees.

Fourth, the link between institutional pressures and managers' cognition has been given attention in earlier studies (Daniels et al., 2001). However, the present study presents empirical evidence for the role that institutional factors play in shaping managers' telework attitudes. While taking various other 'fit-factors' into account, hierarchical regression analysis will be conducted to study whether the two types of institutional pressures affect managers' perceptions of advantages and disadvantages associated with teleworking, and whether these effects vary across the two distinguished categories of managers thereby showing signs of what Daniels et al. (2002) phrase as 'cognitive convergence' or 'cognitive divergence'.

Building on neo-institutional theory, the following section presents a set of propositions on the influence of institutional pressures on managers' attitudes towards teleworking that will be tested in this study. Next, the research methodology is outlined, followed by the presentation of the empirical results. Finally, the implications for research into the diffusion of work-life practices and organizational change are discussed.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

Traditionally, institutional theorists focus on the way organizations seek to gain legitimacy in the institutional environment (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2001). To be in line with what is socially constructed as 'desirable, proper, or appropriate' (Suchman, 1995: 574) is considered crucial to the survival of organizations, as it provides access to essential resources (Scott, 2001: 58; see also Kumar and Das, 2007). Therefore, organizations seek conformance to coercive, normative and mimetic pressures (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001). Although institutional theorists emphasize stability, they do not deny the possibility of the adaptation of existing social structures (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996; Scott, 2001; Reay et al., 2006). In line with Greenwood and Hinings (1996), the work of Scott (2001) presents the diffusion of new ideas and practices as an instance of 'convergent change'. This implies that strong and shared institutional pressures related to a new idea or practice from the environment may lead to what Daniels and colleagues phrase as 'cognitive convergence' (2002: 31) among members of any

social unit such as among managers within a department, within an organization, across peer organizations, or among members of the same occupational community. Convergence in managers' beliefs constitutes the basis for homogeneity in attitudes and, eventually, in managerial responses. In the next subsections, we hypothesize how managers' belief-based attitudes are shaped through processing information from their institutional environments in the case of teleworking. More specifically, we discuss the effects of 1) normative pressures and 2) mimetic pressures in managers' teleworking attitudes.

Normative pressures

Scott (2001) considers normative systems as an important mechanism that may play a role in institutional diffusion processes. These systems define, according to Scott, the 'legitimate means to pursue valued ends' (2001: 55). Research into normative processes persistently concentrate on professional networks as vital carriers of ideas and practices that prescribe how organizations should function (Scott, 2001). In their seminal article, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest that the degree of formal education constitutes a key element in shaping the attitudes of professional managers and their staff. Training institutions are considered to be 'important centers for the development of organizational norms' (1983: 152). Such norms that are acquired in the course of managers' educational socialization shape their beliefs, a process that is reinforced by their socialization in the 'norms and mores of the organization' (1983: 153; see also Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Tsoukas, 1996).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) hypothesize that normative pressures will be stronger in organizations that employ a higher number of staff with academic degrees. Hence, a longer educational career might help managers to understand and recognize the value of innovations to their organization. Managers' attitudes about new ideas and practices, such as teleworking, may be unfavorable because their beliefs (due to their inexperience) still lack the norms that shape the ability to understand and recognize their value (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). As suggested by institutional theorists, new ideas and practices must include characteristics that are already known in order to increase understanding and gain acceptance among a given population (Hargadon and Douglas, 2001). Practices that are poorly understood are often 'unthinkable' in the light of a manager's belief system and are easily considered to be 'illegitimate' (Dougherty and Heller, 1994: 202). Therefore, it can be expected that a higher educational level decreases the possibility of managers' perceptions of incompatibility of the telework model with their belief and is, therefore, positively related to the recognition of teleworking as a beneficial strategy to the organization.

Hypothesis 1: Higher levels of education of managers will be associated with more positive attitudes towards teleworking.

Institutional theory reveals that normative systems give rise to specific 'roles' (Scott, 2001; see also Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Scott defines roles as 'conceptions of appropriate goals and activities for particular individuals or specified social positions' (2001: 55). These role-related normative expectations can differ significantly between

different managerial positions within an organization, and these expectations likely affect managers' beliefs and related opinions about new ideas and practices (Boiral, 2003; Schein, 1996). In fact, managers' attitudes towards new ideas and practices strongly depend on the role-related objectives that managers hope to accomplish (Duxbury and Haines, 1991). This implies that CEOs, whose primary concerns are organizational effectiveness issues, such as productivity, supervision or administrative costs (Duxbury and Haines, 1991; Schein, 1996), can be expected to hold different attitudes towards teleworking compared to HR managers, whose focus is mainly on improving the organization for its employees, such as stress reduction, quality of work life and morale (Duxbury and Haines, 1991; Schein, 1996).

In organizational practice, however, these different role-related expectations may compete with each other, and managers may have to compromise (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This may particularly become apparent in the diffusion of ideas and practices, or as Scott puts it: 'Often there is competition among those who promulgate normative models' (2001: 117). As historical accounts on the institutionalization of new ideas have pointed out, advocates of an innovation may encounter significant opposition from other managers in the firm (Guillén, 1994; Nelson, 1975), as the adoption and implementation would generate management costs and uncertainties (Powell and Maniero, 1999). This indicates that specific professional subgroups may have stronger interest in promoting an idea or practice, whereas CEOs may not necessarily adopt their enthusiasm for a specific idea (Schein, 1996). Therefore, we propose that CEOs may be biased towards holding more conservative teleworking attitudes, as they have stronger interests in risk avoidance due to their acquired role-related normative expectations, whereas HR managers may be biased towards holding more positive teleworking attitudes as they have stronger interests in promoting teleworking due to their specific role-related normative expectations.

Hypothesis 2: CEOs' teleworking attitude scores will be lower than HR managers' attitude scores.

Mimetic pressures

A central theme in institutional theory is the problematic nature of change in general (Scott, 2001) and of organizational change in particular (Brunsson and Olsen, 1997; Greenwood and Hinings, 1996). Institutions are associated with stability, and the regulative, normative and cultural pillars are regarded by Scott as the 'elastic vibes that resist change' (2001: 49). Change remains assumed to be 'both difficult and dangerous for organizations' (Scott, 2001: 110) because it is at odds with the socially accepted ways of thinking and acting in a specific field. This mechanism may be even stronger when managers experience important uncertainty and ambiguity in relation to the benefits of specific ideas and practices to the performance of their organization (George et al., 2006; see also DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). When faced with uncertainty of the value of new ideas and practices, managers are likely to 'co-orientate', that is, acquire information from their organizational field about the behavior of other organizations (Scott, 2001; Tolbert and Zucker, 1996). 'Co-orientation' is considered to be a 'low-cost strategy [. . .] because other organizations will have pre-tested the structure' (Tolbert and Zucker, 1996: 183). As DiMaggio and Powell posit, organizations tend to

'model themselves on other organizations' that they perceive as being successful and legitimate (1983: 151). Hence, managers that are involved in 'co-orientation' are likely more doubtful about the value of teleworking.

Hypothesis 3a: 'Co-oriented' managers will be associated with more negative attitudes towards teleworking.

According to Scott (2001), mimetic pressures originate from the cultural frameworks that are prevalent in the environment. These frameworks shape people's interpretations of social reality when they are conceived to be taken-for-granted. This occurs through a process of 'objectivation', that is, the development of a shared belief among managers about the value of an idea or practice (Scott, 2001; Tolbert and Zucker, 1996). Such a shared belief can lead to an increased adoption of specific ideas and practices by organizations. This is because the more peer organizations have adopted specific ideas and practices 'the more likely will decision-makers perceive the relative balance of costs and benefits to be favorable' (Tolbert and Zucker, 1996: 183). As a result, the adoption rate is taken as a key measure of the social acceptance of specific ideas and practices, or, to use Scott's terms, 'organizational density serves as an indicator of the cognitive status of the form' (2001: 119). When ideas and practices achieve a high density, that is, they are widely adopted in an organizational field, they 'acquire a rule-like status as legitimate elements' (Westphal et al., 1997). In particular, late adopters of specific ideas and practices will experience more mimetic pressures (Burns and Wholey, 1993; Tolbert and Zucker, 1983; Westphal et al., 1997). The insights from neo-institutional theorists suggest that these mimetic pressures lead to 'cognitive convergence' (Daniels et al., 2002; Scott, 2001) that constitutes the basis of their attitudes. In particular, the pressures that are induced by the number of telework adoptions in the field can lead to convergence with respect to managers' beliefs (cf. George et al., 2006). Hence, when co-oriented managers perceive that a sizable number of peer organizations have adopted teleworking practices in their firms, their beliefs of teleworking may change, resulting in more favorable attitudes towards teleworking.

Hypothesis 3b: Managers who perceive higher percentages of organizations with formal teleworking policies in their organizational field will hold more positive attitudes towards teleworking.

Susceptibility to mimetic pressures

A key explanation for differences in attitudes between categories of managers in a similar organizational field is related to the different influences that they experience from their occupational community. Or as Scott argues, actors are 'not equally subject to the institutional processes at work' (2001: 162). Following the argument of Goodstein (1994) and Oliver (1991), Scott stresses that differences in institutional backgrounds may lead to heterogeneity in managers' beliefs, and that these differences likely produce a variety of different responses to institutional pressures (Goodstein, 1994; Oliver, 1991). In line with this, Schein posits that managers are part of different occupational communities

who 'have learned their assumptions from the environments in which they exist' (1996: 238). In these environments, occupational communities play a role in the constant development of 'organizational norms' among professional managers and their staff (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 152; see also Schein, 1996). In line with this, Scott (2001) emphasizes that professions construct cognitive frameworks that define areas within which they claim jurisdiction and seek to exercise control.

It is even argued that, rather than being a source of stability, professional associations may play a key role in legitimating institutional change (Greenwood et al., 2002). This would mean that the possible interest of staff managers for new management ideas and practices is particularly related to their specific occupational community. This could particularly apply to HR managers whose members of their professional community play a crucial role in propagating ideas that relate to their profession and construct their role in heroic terms (Caldwell, 2003; Ulrich, 1997; see for other examples, Braam et al., 2007; Shenhav, 1999). As a result, their beliefs are likely more influenced by trends in their occupational discourse and may be less susceptible to the larger adoption rates among peer organizations in their organizational field. At the same time, CEOs share a common set of assumptions that is related to a different occupational community. It is argued that key assumptions in this community are that decisions are dominated by the measure of financial viability and lack of trust for the opinions of their subordinates (Duxbury and Haines, 1991; Schein, 1996). Given the influence of their specific occupational community advocating role-related normative expectations that are serving the organization's interest rather than enlarging their own professional territory, CEOs' beliefs are hypothesized to be more led by the peer behavior of similar organizations than those of staff managers, such as HR managers, which will be reflected in their attitudes towards teleworking.

Hypothesis 4: CEOs' attitudes towards teleworking will be more positively affected by the adoption behavior of peer organizations in the organizational field than the attitudes of HR managers.

Methodology

Data

To test our hypotheses, we made use of data that were collected through a written organization questionnaire (Time-spatial Flexibility Questionnaire) that was sent to 2927 organizations randomly selected from an address file belonging to the Dutch Chamber of Commerce (Hillebrink et al., 2008). The address file contained a list of private organizations employing at least 100 workers. In spring 2003, the questionnaires were sent to the organizations' personnel departments. After three weeks, all of the organizations received a reminder. Altogether, 604 questionnaires were returned. The response rate was 21 percent, which is an acceptable level for postal surveys (Hillebrink et al., 2008). Of equal importance is the selectivity of the (non-)response. It appeared that some industries were less cooperative than others, but according to sector, size and regional composition the non-response group did not significantly deviate from the response group. Noteworthy is that the present study relates only to larger organizations (100 employees or more) and

that the public sector, the agricultural sector and the hospitality industry, are not included in our final data set. In most cases, the questionnaire was filled in by the senior HR manager, or by (one of) the CEOs of the company. As it is often senior management that is in the position to adopt a formal telework policy (Pérez-Pérez et al., 2003), the analyses presented in this study are based on data provided by 380 senior HR managers (79.8%) and 96 top managers, the latter also being referred to in this study as CEOs (20.2%) ($N = 476$). Owing to missing values on our dependent variables (managers' attitudes towards teleworking), the analysis in the present study was confined to 444 cases.

Measures

Dependent variables In the questionnaire, teleworking was defined as 'the situation in which an employee works at home during contractual working hours for at least one day per week'. According to a large scale cross-national telework study, the Dutch service economy is among the forerunners with 20.6 percent teleworkers among its working population (Gareis, 2002). Especially by the end of the 1990s, the number of Dutch teleworkers increased substantially (van Klaveren et al., 2005). The total Dutch share of teleworkers among the Dutch working population even goes beyond that of the US where teleworking was first introduced, and where at the beginning of this century one in five of the adult workforce of 18 years and older did some type of teleworking. According to the European figures referred to earlier (Gareis, 2002), 9 percent of the Dutch working population has home-based working days averaging one or more than one day per week. This means that supplementary teleworking (i.e. occasional telecommuting) exceeds alternating or permanent teleworking practices.

Telework attitudes relate to the overall attractiveness of teleworking as perceived by managers and, hence, depend on the perceived instrumentality of salient telework attributes (Duxbury and Haines, 1991). However, it can be assumed that some telework attributes are more important to look into than others. The present study focuses on the analysis of two clusters of telework attributes that both stand out in the international telework literature and also appear to be important factors in the telework adoption behavior of Dutch workers and managers. Moreover, these two clusters are shown to affect telework adoption (Peters and Batenburg, forthcoming). The first component refers to a cluster of telework attributes that relate to 'improved work outcomes' owing to a rise in motivation, concentration and productivity. In the Dutch context, 55 percent of the Dutch teleworkers and 58 percent of the teleworking managers indicate increased efficiency to be the prime reason for them to work from home (Beffers and van den Brink, 2008). In the international telework debate, telework is often considered to improve performance and productivity (Frolick et al., 1993; Kossek et al., 2006; McCloskey and Igarria, 2003). According to the results of Pérez-Pérez et al. (2003), HR managers consider productivity increase to be the most important benefit for the company.

The second component of managers' attitudes refers to 'social costs/benefits of telework', including consequences with regard to organizational commitment, workers' isolation, cooperation and learning-on-the-job. Among the Dutch employed population, 59 percent of the employees and 58 percent of the managers agree to the proposition that teleworking has a negative impact on the social contacts at work (Beffers and van den

Brink, 2008). Factors related to organizational social relationships are also often mentioned in the international literature as drawbacks of telework (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Cooper and Kurland, 2002; Golden, 2007; Kurland and Cooper, 2002). Noteworthy was that a manager's perception of teleworking being beneficial to employees' work-life balance was not shown to be a significant factor in organizations' telework adoption, although this item was responded to most favorably (66% of the managers agreed to this proposition) (Peters and Batenburg, forthcoming). In order to measure the two clusters of perceptions on 'improved work outcomes' and 'social costs/benefits', respectively, seven items (five-point Likert scales) were presented in the questionnaire:

- 1) Teleworking increases productivity;
- 2) Teleworking improves employees' concentration;
- 3) Teleworking increases employees' motivation;
- 4) Teleworking decreases mutual learning among employees;
- 5) Teleworking decreases cooperation amongst employees;
- 6) Teleworking leads to isolation of employees;
- 7) Teleworking decreases employees' organizational commitment.

Factor analysis (PAF, Oblimin) confirmed the seven items to represent two separate factors. The items 1) (productivity), 2) (concentration) and 3) (motivation) comprised one factor indicating the respondent's view on the assumed 'improved work outcomes' of teleworking (internal consistency reliability Cronbach's alpha = 0.68). The items 4) (learning), 5) (cooperation), 6) (isolation) and 7) (commitment) were found to load on a factor representing the manager's perception of the 'social costs/benefits associated with teleworking' (internal consistency reliability Cronbach's alpha = 0.78). To be noted is that some of the items were reverse coded, a higher score thus representing a more positive attitude of managers towards teleworking; in other words, a higher score indicates managers to have more positive expectations of telework with regard to work outcomes and less negative consequences with regard to social aspects of work.

Institutional pressure indicators The present study focused on two types of institutional pressures. *Normative pressures* were measured by taking the respondent's position in the organization into account as an indicator of the occupational community to which the manager belongs. The respondents were divided into two categories: CEOs (management board members and manager directors/executives) (20.0%) and HR managers (80.0%), the latter being the reference group in the analyses. In addition, manager's educational level was measured by a dichotomous variable (1 = higher vocational training or university (87.4%)).

Mimetic pressures arising from telework behavior of peer organizations in the organizational field were measured by asking respondents to make an assessment of the percentage of peer organizations in their sector that had introduced a formal telework policy. Based on this question, two variables were calculated. The first one refers to the manager's 'co-orientation', operationalized by whether the respondent was able to make such an estimation (1 = familiar with peer behavior with respect to telework policies (57.3%)). The second mimetic pressure variable 'perceived telework adoption rate in the organizational field' was coded as follows: 1 refers to the manager's perception that

hardly any of the peer organizations have introduced formal policies (67.7%); 2 refers to the manager's perception that a small share of the peer organizations have implemented formal telework schemes (24.0%); 3 refers to the manager's perception that half or more than half of the peer organizations in the organizational field have introduced formal telework policies in their companies (8.3%). In order to test the two mimetic-pressure-hypotheses, both the 'co-orientation' variable and the 'perceived adoption rate' variable were included in the analysis. Missing values on the 'perceived-telework-adoption-rate variable' were imputed with estimated values using EM methods.

Finally, in order to analyze whether the effects of mimetic pressures differ across occupational communities, interaction effects between the normative pressure variable 'managerial position' and the two mimetic pressure variables were calculated. In order to enable interpretation of the data, mimetic pressure variables were centred.

Data analysis

The present study presents both descriptive (*t*-tests) and explanatory analyses. In order to test the propositions raised in the theoretical section, we employed hierarchical regression analyses for the two telework attributes separately, that is, 'improved work outcomes', and 'social costs/benefits.' For each dependent variable, two models are presented in Table 3. Model 1 only includes the main effects of the variables entered. In steps 1 and 2, respectively, a set of control and fit variables were entered (see below). In step 3, the normative pressure variables were entered. In step 4, the mimetic pressure variables were entered. In Model 2, as a fifth step, the interaction effects were added. The change statistics presented in Table 3 indicate the change in explained variance that can be attributed to the particular set of variables entered in each single step in the analyses of managers' telework attitudes with regard to 'improved work outcomes' and 'social costs/benefits', respectively. As our hypotheses are one-sided, we used one-tailed tests and *p*-values. In Table 1, the minimum and maximum scores, the mean scores on the central dependent and independent variables and their uncorrected correlations are presented. The two factors representing the two components of managers' telework attitudes appear to correlate relatively high ($r = 0.46$), the disattenuated correlation being 0.63 (Lord and Novik, 1968). Factor analyses, however, showed the two components of telework attitude to be two separate factors. Given the high intercorrelation between the two scales, we employed both MANOVA and OLS regressions. As the results did not differ, the hierarchical regressions are presented.

Control variables In a first step, the analyses were corrected for the sector that the organization can be related to, as beliefs may be 'an industry-wide commonality' (Daniels et al., 2002; Walsh, 1995). Moreover, some sectors may be more vulnerable to institutional pressure than others. For instance, especially in service and consultancy, teleworking is known to be much more common than in other sectors (van Klaveren et al., 2005). Therefore, the dummy variable 'sector' was entered in a first step, using the consultancy service sector (23% in our study) as the reference category to the other sectors, that is, 'manufacturing industry' (37.6%); 'building industry' (12.2%); 'trade' (9.2%); 'transport, logistics and communication' (7.5%); 'financial sector' (6.5%); and 'health and

well-being' (4.1%). In this first step, the analyses were also controlled for organizational size (min = 100; max = 16,000; mean = 546.55; SD = 1084.08) as larger organizations may be more vulnerable to institutional pressure than smaller companies (Cook, 2004). In the analyses, the continuous variable 'ln_organizational size' was used.

In the second step, other factors that might affect managers' attitudes towards teleworking but which were not mentioned in our hypotheses were also taken into account. In a previous study on telework adoption (Peters and Batenburg, forthcoming), fit-variables that were often mentioned in the literature were taken to be indicators of a greater compatibility of existing organizational practices and teleworking (Daniels et al., 2000; Depickere, 1999; Nilles, 1998; Peters and Batenburg, forthcoming; Standen, 2000; Suomi and Pekkola, 1999). The present study includes the following fit variables: *Educational level of the workforce* being operationalized by a continuous variable representing the 'percentage of higher educated workers in the organization'; the presence of *individual output related rewards* in the organization measured through the dichotomous variable 'individual bonus/output related rewards' (1 = yes); the presence of *mobile workers* in the organization measured by the dichotomous variable 'mobile workers' (1 = yes); the presence of *flexible working hours* in the organization being measured by the dichotomous variable 'flexible working hours' (1 = yes). In addition to these fit-factors, Quinn's shortened instrument on *organizational culture* was used to control for the organization's culture with respect to flexibility and control (Cameron and Quinn, 1999; Standen, 2000). The respondents were asked to respond to three different issues (leadership, management style and cohesion) and to distribute 100 points to propositions/ answering categories (A, B, C, D). Proposition A corresponds to a family culture, B to adhocracy, C to a hierarchy culture, and D to a market culture. Based on the scores obtained from the propositions, it can be determined what type of culture pictures the organizational culture the best. As the focus is on the dimension 'flexibility versus control', the scores on the A-items (family culture) and the B-items (adhocracy culture) were added up. A higher score on the calculated variable 'flexible culture' reflects a more flexible organization culture. In addition, the analyses were also controlled for the so-called 'technical readiness for telework' of the work activities performed by the workers in the organization (Pérez-Pérez et al., 2003). Therefore, the continuous variable '% PC-use within the organization' was used (min = 0; max = 100; mean = 57.54; SD = 31.36), as we expected teleworking to be more feasible when a higher percentage of the employees in the organization work with a personal computer.

Additional correlation analysis showed the correlation between the rate of higher educated workers and the rate of computer use to be relatively high (Pearson correlation = 0.64). In order to analyze the magnitude of multicollinearity, the size of the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) was taken into consideration. The VIF-factors ranged from 1.065 (telework culture) to 2.412 (percentage of employees using a computer during work). As a rule of thumb, multicollinearity is high when the VIF factor exceeds 5. In our data, the VIF-factors are no higher than 2.412. This indicates that, in our analyses, multicollinearity is not too high.

To control for the effects of an unmeasured latent methods factor (Common Method Variance-factor) on the interval and ratio scaled variables, we employed the statistical program AMOS. We began with a model including the latent CMV-factor, as suggested

by Podsakoff et al. (2003). We compared this model with a nested model excluding the latent CMV-factor. Both models fitted the data well. The model without the CMV-factor showed the following results: Chi-square = 49.077; d.f. = 38; probability level = 0.108. The model including the CMV-factor showed a Chi-square of 39.092 (d.f. = 29; probability level = 0.100). The analyses in AMOS showed that the CMV-factor does not significantly affect the scores on the variables in our model, and hence, that our findings are not much affected by the problem of common method variance. Moreover, the standardized regression estimates showed the CMV-factor only to contribute to a small proportion of the variance of the manifest variables, the lowest proportion being 0.0841%, the highest proportion being 20.6%. Finally, the Information Criteria of the default models indicate that the model without the CMV-factor fits the data better than the model including the CMV-factor, which is seen by the lower scores on the Information Criteria of the model without the CMV-factor.

Results

Descriptive analyses

T-tests show that CEOs, on average, hold less favorable attitudes towards teleworking than HR managers (see Table 2). This holds true for both expected improved work outcomes and social costs/benefits associated with teleworking. Table 2 also shows that CEOs appear to be more aware of the telework adoption behavior of peer organizations in their organizational field than do HR managers. This can be taken to reflect their stronger 'co-orientation' on peer organizations' behavior in comparison to HR managers, which is in line with neo-institutional theory. Moreover, HR managers' estimations of telework adoption by peer organizations in their organizational field, on average, are significantly higher. With regard to educational level, the two groups of managers score equally high.

Table 3 presents the results of the two final steps (Model 1 and Model 2) of the hierarchical regression analyses, respectively, explaining managers' perceptions of improved work outcomes and social outcomes associated with teleworking.

Explaining perceptions of improved work outcomes

When we look into factors affecting managers' expectations of teleworking concerning 'improved work outcomes' (Model 1), we find our data to support our 'normative pressure hypotheses'. First, in support of our expectations (Hypothesis 1), highly educated managers hold more positive attitudes towards teleworking (Model 1: $\beta = +0.130^{**}$). Second, CEOs are shown to hold less positive telework attitudes than do HR managers (Hypothesis 2) when it comes to expected improved work outcomes (Model 1: $\beta = -0.213^{***}$). The effects of the normative pressure variables remain significant in Model 2 where interaction effects are included.

Also the 'mimetic pressure hypotheses' were supported. Descriptive analyses presented in Table 2 show that 78 percent of the CEOs indicate being familiar with the percentage of peer organizations that have introduced a formal telework policy, compared to 52 percent of the HR managers. This shows that CEOs are more likely to focus on a subset

Table 1 Minimum score (min), maximum score (max), mean score (mean), standard deviation (SD) and bivariate correlations coefficients between variables (N = 444)

Variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Improved work outcomes ^a	444	1	4.67	3.21	0.62	1					
2 Social cost/benefits ^a	444	1	4.50	2.67	0.66	0.46 ^{***b}	1				
3 Manager's position [1=CEO]	444	0	1.00	0.20	0.40	-0.25 ^{***}	-0.12 [*]	1			
4 Manager's educational level [1=higher educated]	444	0	1.00	0.87	0.33	0.14 ^{**}	0.11 [*]	0.05	1		
5 Co-orientation regarding peer group telework adoption [1=yes]	443	0	1.00	0.57	0.50	-0.11 ^{**}	-0.08	0.21 ^{***}	0.10 [*]	1	
6 Perceived adoption rate	444	1	3.00	1.39	0.84	0.23 ^{***}	0.16 ^{***}	-0.11 [*]	0.10 [*]	0.03	1
Valid N (listwise)	443										

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed).

^aA higher score represents a more positive attitude.

^bUncorrected correlation coefficient/disattenuated correlation = 0.63.

Source: Time-spatial flexibility questionnaire, 2003.

Table 2 *T*-tests comparing mean scores between manager categories

Variables	All managers N = 443			
	Mean score CEOs	Means score HR managers	Difference	Significant at
Perceived improved work outcomes [1–5] ^a	2.91	3.29	-0.38	***
Perceived social cost/benefits [1–5] ^a	2.52	2.72	-0.20	**
Co-orientation regarding peer group's telework adoption behaviour [1= yes]	0.78	0.52	0.26	***
Perceived adoption rate [1–3]	1.29	1.42	-0.13	*
Educational level [1= higher educated]	0.92	0.86	0.06	n.s.

$p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed); n.s.= not significant.

^aA higher score represents a more positive attitude

Source: Time-spatial flexibility questionnaire, 2003.

of firms competing within an industry (Daniels et al., 2002) than do HR managers, who may be more focused on their professional community. However, among both subcategories, managers' peer-orientation is associated with a more negative telework attitude (Hypothesis 3a) (Model 1: $\beta = -0.079^*$). Model 1 also shows that managers' perceptions of a high telework adoption rate correlates positively (Model 1: $\beta = +0.128^{**}$) with managers' expectations with regard to improved work outcomes (Hypothesis 3b). The interaction effect between perceived adoption rate and manager's position in Model 2, however, shows that a higher perceived rate of peer organizations that have introduced telework programs only affects CEOs' expectations of improved work outcomes resulting from teleworking (Model 2: $\beta = +0.149^{**}$). Therefore, we conclude that particularly this category of managers (CEOs) is susceptible to mimetic pressures arising from peer organizations' behavior in their organizational field, which is in line with Hypothesis 4.

Surprisingly, none of the control variables (Change statistics: $\Delta R^2 = 2.5\%$) and fit variables (Change statistics: $\Delta R^2 = 5.8\%^{***}$) is shown to be a significant factor in managers' expectations of improved work outcomes associated with teleworking. Obviously, when it comes to teleworking practices, the internal fit-factors are less influential with regard to managers' attitudes than institutional factors. In particular, the normative pressure variables contribute to the explained variance presented in Table 3 (Change statistics: $\Delta R^2 = 6.5^{***}$). All variables together (Model 2) explain 14.4 percent of the variance in managers' expectations concerning work improvements due to teleworking.

Explaining perceptions of social costs/benefits

Also with respect to managers' expectations regarding social costs/benefits associated with teleworking, two hierarchical models were estimated. In this case, Model 1 shows that our

Table 3 Hierarchical regression analysis

Managers' attitudes towards telehomeworking ^a	Improved work outcomes		Change statistics ΔR^2 in %		Social cost/benefits		Change statistics ΔR^2 in %	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Variables								
Step 1: Controls								
Organizational size	0.021	0.032			0.108*	0.113*		$\Delta R^2=4.2^{**}$
Sector (ref. = Service)								
Industry	-0.13	-0.16			0.057	0.062		
Building	0.006	0.001			-0.007	-0.005		
Trade	-0.049	-0.050			0.065	0.064		
Transport	0.041	0.040			-0.038	-0.041		
Finance	-0.052	-0.051			-0.054	-0.052		
Health	0.073	0.079			0.086	0.080		
Step 2: Fit factors								
% Highly educated	0.055	0.057			0.046	0.043		$\Delta R^2=4.1^{**}$
Output related rewards [1=yes]	0.056	0.060			0.024	0.024		
Mobile workers [1=yes]	-0.043	-0.037			0.045	0.049		
Flexi-time in organization [1=yes]	0.055	0.054			0.060	0.061		
Flexible culture	-0.058	-0.065			-0.070	-0.068		
% Computer users	0.086	0.072			0.102	0.099		
Step 3: Normative pressure								
Higher education [1=yes]	0.130**	0.129**			0.087*	0.086*		$\Delta R^2=1.6^*$
CEO [ref.=HRM]	-0.213***	-0.192***			-0.091*	-0.065		
Step 4: Mimetic pressure								
Co-orientation [1=yes]	-0.079*	-0.074			-0.062	-0.033		$\Delta R^2=0.5$
Perceived telework adoption rate [1-3]	0.128**	0.066			0.049	0.050		

Table 3 (Continued)

Managers' attitudes towards telehomeworking ^a	Improved work outcomes		Change statistics ΔR^2 in %		Social cost/benefits		Change statistics ΔR^2 in %	
	Model 1 Beta	Model 2 Beta	Model 1 Beta	Model 2 Beta	Model 1 Beta	Model 2 Beta	Model 1 Beta	Model 2 Beta
Step 5: Interaction effects	$\Delta R^2 = 1.7^*$							
Co-orient. * CEO	-	-0.002	-	-0.082	-	-0.082	-	-0.082
Adopt. rate * CEO	-	0.149^{***}	-	-0.010	-	-0.010	-	-0.010
R² in %	16.4	18.1	10.3	10.8	10.3	10.8	10.3	10.8
Adjusted R² in %	13.0	14.4	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7
F	4.872^{***}	4.895^{***}	2.859^{***}	2.672^{***}	2.859^{***}	2.672^{***}	2.859^{***}	2.672^{***}

N = 443; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001 (hypotheses tested one-tailed).

^aA higher score represents a more positive attitude.

Source: Time-spatial flexibility questionnaire, 2003.

normative pressure hypotheses are confirmed by the data. First, in line with Hypothesis 1, higher educated managers hold more positive attitudes regarding social consequences of telework (Model 1: $\beta = +0.087^*$). Second, in line with Hypothesis 2, CEOs hold less positive attitudes towards teleworking than do HR managers (Model 1: $\beta = -.091^*$). The contribution of these two normative pressure variables to the variance in managers' expectations of telework related to social work aspects is not high, but it is significant (Change statistics: $\Delta R^2 = 1.6\%^*$). However, the mimetic pressure hypotheses are not supported, that is, no mimetic effects were found to be significant and the mimetic variables did also not contribute significantly to the explanation of the variance in managers telework attitudes (Change statistics: $\Delta R^2 = 0.5\%$). Also the interaction effects in Model 2, representing variations in effects of mimetic pressures on telework attitudes across manager categories, were not found to be significant (Change statistics: $\Delta R^2 = 0.5\%$).

Finally, with regard to the control variables, only organizational size was found to be significant (Model 1: $\beta = +0.108^*$). In fact, this factor contributes most to the explained variance (Change statistics: $\Delta R^2 = 4.2\%^{**}$). Obviously, managers working in larger organizations expect lower social costs (or more benefits) due to teleworking in their firms. Our analyses show that only 6.7 percent of the variance in managers perceived social costs (or benefits) that was associated with teleworking can be attributed to the variables in our model, including institutional pressure variables and organizational size.

Discussion and conclusion

In spite of the often reported advantages of teleworking, its adoption by organizations still falls short of expectations. Building on recent research that stresses the significant role of managers in furthering the adoption process (Bardoel, 2003; Den Dulk and Peper, 2007; Kossek et al., 1994) and on the emerging literature that concentrates on empirically studying how institutional pressures shape micro-level processes (Bardoel, 2003; Cook, 2004; Daniels et al., 2001; Kossek et al., 1994), the present study sheds light on the influence of the institutional context on managers' attitudes that are likely to affect the implementation of alternative work-life arrangements such as teleworking. Below we discuss the implications of the present study for the current debates on the diffusion of teleworking in particular, which may also reflect the mechanisms affecting attitude formation towards and implementations of work-life policies in general. On the basis of this study, we also offer some important directions for future research and for managing organizational change in relation to work-life initiatives.

Theoretical implications

Using a cognitive neoinstitutional perspective, this study sought to elaborate our understanding of managers' attitude formation and, ultimately, the adoption of work-life initiatives (Daniels et al., 2002; George et al., 2006). Our findings contribute to the current debates on the diffusion of work-life initiatives and organizational change in two ways.

First, we found that institutional pressures accounted for a notable part of managers' attitudes, particularly in view of the small proportion of variance explained by other ('fit') factors that are likely to affect the informal and formal adoption of teleworking policies and

practices (Peters and Batenburg, forthcoming). Our results pointed out that normative pressures affect both managers' perceptions of improved work outcomes and also social outcomes associated with teleworking, two clusters of well-reported and important teleworking attributes. The more positive attitudes held by higher educated managers and by HR managers show that both managers' educational level and their occupational socialization are important factors in managers' telework attitudes. Further, mimetic pressures were shown to affect managers' attitudes towards teleworking significantly. Although concerns about the social aspects of work were not affected by the mimetic pressures examined in this study, a higher perceived adoption behavior of peer organizations positively affected managers' expectations concerning productivity gains associated with teleworking. This finding on mimetic pressure is in line with institutional diffusion models that argue that a substantial number of previous adopters induce other firms to follow their example, but contrasts Ajzen and Fishbein's theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), which suggests that managers respond to institutional pressures (subjective norms) separate from their own attitude. In fact, our findings indicate that managers' attitudes are influenced by social norms. This observation is also in line with findings of Vallerand and colleagues (1992) confirming the interaction between individual attitudes and social norms.

Second, beyond showing the important role of institutional pressures in explaining managers' attitudes, we also identified important differences across manager categories, an issue that has received scant attention in the current debates. It was argued that managers in different organizational positions are driven by different role-related normative expectations that affect their attitudes towards teleworking. HR managers are more susceptible towards normative pressures from their occupational community than CEOs in shaping their telework attitudes, whereas CEOs look more for legitimacy, their telework attitudes being informed by the telework adoption behaviors of peer organizations. In line with our expectations, the results indicate that CEOs' telework attitudes differ significantly from those of HR managers. CEOs are shown to hold less positive attitudes towards teleworking than HR managers. Yet, CEOs appeared to be more open to mimetic pressure, their perceptions of higher telework adoption rates in their organizational field reducing the initial 'attitude gap' between CEOs and HR managers. More specifically, CEOs appear to associate peers' teleworking adoption with potential productivity gains, but not with social work consequences. Whether cognitions across manager categories are likely to converge or further differentiate cannot be concluded from this study. However, the significant interaction effect between manager's position and the perceived telework adoption rate may be an indication of 'between-group convergence' (Daniels et al., 2002). As more organizations in an organizational field introduce telework programs, CEOs will become more positive about the consequences of teleworking, causing the 'between-group difference' to diminish. According to the institutional theory, however, the grounds for the two manager categories' attitudes will remain different (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001).

Limitations and future directions

The present study aimed to explain variation in managers' attitudes from an institutional perspective. In the previous subsection, we developed two notable implications for the

current debates on the diffusion of work–life initiatives in general, and teleworking in particular. Remarkably, however, despite the large number of variables in our models, relatively little variance in managers' telework attitudes could be explained. Whereas institutional pressures accounted for a notable part of variation in managers' attitudes, internal organizational 'fit-factors' did not very much affect managers' attitudes. In view of this, our study can be seen only as a first step in trying to explain managers' telework attitudes from an institutional perspective. On the basis of our findings, four fruitful areas for future research can be distinguished.

Socialization Our findings indicate important differences between managers related to distinct 'occupational communities'. Drawing on an institutional approach, we argue that these communities shape the deeply rooted beliefs and assumptions of managers and their role-related expectations through a process of socialization. Professional organizations, for instance, may stimulate HR managers to develop strategies to stimulate the adoption of telework in their firms (Shenhav, 1999). In this study, however, the socialization process itself, either during vocational training or afterwards, has not been addressed. In order to gain further understanding of the role of socialization in the attitude formation process with regard to teleworking, future research may look into the effects of curricula of educational programs and managers' participation in professional seminars, courses and meetings (Shenhav, 1999). Our study also has not taken into account the general managerial discourse and the HR literature on teleworking. As the print media is generally considered to be an important arena where new management ideas and practices are disseminated, legitimated and contested, which may affect the opinions of professionals within organizations (Braam et al., 2007), the influence of these media on managers' attitudes can be considered another fruitful area for future research.

In a different vein, our data did not provide information on the age of managers. However, age may be an important factor as young managers may be less reluctant to use teleworking than older managers would be. It is proposed that future managers will be socialized in an era in which working at a distance enabled by information and communication technology will have become much more common. Moreover, managers of the younger generations may feel the need of employing teleworking more than do the current senior managers. Due to the growing number of dual-earner households, not only employees but also their managers, may increasingly respond to the need and demand for more flexibility and autonomy. Of course, age may not only be a factor in attitude formation towards teleworking, but also towards other work–life initiatives.

Internal organizational dynamics Our cross-sectional research design did not allow us to develop a longitudinal perspective on managers' attitude formation process and how this process affects managers' intentions to adopt telework and their actual telework adoption behavior. Although cognitive differences are likely to exist between managers' subcultures, no attention could be paid to the interactions between the two subcultures within an organization. Despite the more positive attitudes of HR managers, it remains unclear as to whether they can be considered the telework champions who place the telework issue on the internal agenda. Moreover, it is unknown beforehand how an initial idea or plan will be received. What kind of reactions will a telework plan engender? Questionable

is whether the responses will be co-operative and supporting, or whether champions will meet resistance or challenging behavior from other managers (Boiral, 2003; Oliver, 1991; Schein, 1996).

Future research could include the roles of all stakeholders in the telework adoption process, such as HR managers, facility managers, IT managers, line managers and employees. Studying ‘within-organizational-dynamics’, particular attention could be paid to differences in telework adoption between higher and lower level management levels (Peters et al., 2009). Since senior executives are seen to have a special responsibility for the strategic positioning, direction and performance of their organization, there could be differences in telework attitudes, adoption intentions and actual adoption behavior in comparison with lower-level managers, for instance, those who are expected to concentrate on operational issues (Powell and Maniero, 1999; Schein, 1996).

Telework diffusion in an organizational field Our study showed that not only actors outside the organization such as relevant organizations in the organizational field, but also clients can exercise pressures affecting the internal adoption process. With regard to mimetic pressure, it is still unclear how the imitation process takes shape and affects diffusion of telework practices within an organizational field. Why are certain practices perceived as being legitimate and viewed as key examples while others are not? What circumstances create a ‘window of opportunities’ (Reay et al., 2006) for organizations to become the telework champion? These questions are very important, but remain unanswered.

Regulative processes As was indicated in the Introduction, the present study paid no attention to the influence of coercive pressures arising from rules and regulations. Future research may look into the effects of the implementation and consequences of the EU Framework Agreement, for example, which was established in 2002. Although this new mode of European regulation is still relatively new, future research may analyze how it affects managers’ telework attitudes, as the success of the regulation highly depends on the willingness of national governments, social partners, organizations, managers and, ultimately, employees to adopt teleworking (Larsen and Andersen, 2007).

Practical implications

Beyond contributing to the debates on the diffusion of work–life initiatives, our findings provide some notable clues for managing organizational changes to implement telework effectively. Specifically, we believe that the *attitudes of managers can be regarded as a starting point for these changes*. We started our study with the assumption that managerial agency is essential for realizing the potential advantages of teleworking (Allen, 2001; Dikkers et al., 2007; Lewis, 2001; Sahibzada et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 1999) through a further acceptance and diffusion of teleworking within a company, an organizational field, or a society. Below we discuss three importance factors in the change process: 1) positive CEO attitudes; 2) HR managers’ role as change agents; and 3) managing micro-processes of change.

Positive CEO attitudes Most keenly, the support of top management is needed to introduce formal telework programs at an organizational level (Peters et al., 2009). Our research points out that particularly CEOs' attitudes are susceptible to the use of teleworking in other, similar organizations in the fields that mainly relate to their expectations of improved work outcomes. In view of this, the media can play an important role in stimulating teleworking practices, particularly by communicating best practices and productivity gains (Olson et al., 1982). Professional journals will especially be read by HR managers who can search for and amplify signals to CEOs that teleworking is considered to be useful among peer organizations and, if necessary, in the wider institutional field, or in other sectors. Awareness and positive attitudes of CEOs can further be enhanced by visits of these managers to other companies who showcase the ways in which they can successfully deal with telework in their situations and how improved performance can be achieved.

HR managers as change agents Although HR managers (Caldwell, 2003), like facility managers (Karnowski and White, 2003), may be less involved in corporate decisions to adopt telework programs, our findings imply that they may be in the position to take on the function of championing teleworking in their organizations (Stjernberg and Philips, 1993). Institutional theorists consider 'institutional entrepreneurship' as an important component in changing present ideas and practices (DiMaggio, 1988; Munir and Phillips, 2005) and see institutional change as requiring 'purposeful continual actions of determined individuals' (Reay et al., 2006: 993). Given the current shift from HR managers towards a more strategic line position, HR managers may even play a key role in the change process, not only by proposing initial ideas about telework and by stimulating its adoption, but also by taking on multiple roles and responsibilities in leading the change (Kossek et al., 1994). This would be in line with the prescriptive vision of Ulrich (1997) who sees the role of 'change agent' as a key part of the HR professional's function in organizations. In the case of a telework implementation process, HR managers may support line managers, for instance, by energizing, communicating, coaching, and facilitating the change process. This may also imply that HR professionals may first stimulate professional education of their managers, as it enhances the receptiveness of general managers to work innovations, like telehomeworking. Although theorists see the presence of such 'institutional entrepreneurs' as a necessary condition for a change project, the degree of success depends on their 'social skills' (Fligstein, 1997). Convincing others of the value of telework requires continued promotion efforts on the benefits to the actors involved and representing existing practices as being less appropriate. However, this may also mean that HR managers need training to acquire these social skills.

Managing micro-processes of change The mere development of a CEO-driven corporate telework policy in a firm is important, but no guarantee for positive attitudes of line managers (Peters et al., 2009) who are increasingly given discretionary room to decide about the use of teleworking in praxis (Powell and Maniero, 1999). Rather than being part of a collective agreement providing equal access to all employees, teleworking is often found to be part of an 'idiosyncratic deal' between a single manager and one

subordinate (Hornung et al., 2008; Rousseau, 2001). Although in our study constituent, structural and cultural factors did not appear to have much effect on the CEOs' and HR managers' telework attitudes, these fit-factors are likely to play an important role in the possible adoption of telework (Peters and Batenburg, forthcoming; Peters et al., 2009). Indeed, new ideas and practices may easily be considered to be 'illegitimate' when they do not conform to the 'institutionalized thought structure' (Brunsson and Olsen, 1997; Dougherty and Heller, 1994; Greenwood and Hinings, 1996; Scott, 2001). This means that in generating change among different line managers and their subordinates, CEOs and HR champions face the task of fitting the teleworking policies and practices into the managers' institutionalized mental models by engaging in 'microprocesses of change' (Reay et al., 2006). Theorists of institutional change stress the importance of the compatibility with the institutionalized thought structures and ways of working in an organization in order for new ideas and practices to become entrenched (Reay et al., 2006; Zeitz et al., 1999). Case studies indeed show that line managers are likely to be reluctant towards telework when organizations do not provide sufficient IT infrastructures, when managers do not possess the right skills to use IT, and when they are not given adequate training to manage virtual teams with a focus on communication and output management (Peters et al., 2009). Telework scholars, therefore, stress the importance of a formal, holistic plan and a set of policies for program development accompanying telework implementation, including the necessary technological infrastructure, training components and duties and obligations of all participants (Nilles, 1998). Moreover, for a telework program to be successful, organizations should clearly communicate their business objectives and goals of their telework programs to their managers (Nilles, 1998). Accomplishing these goals requires constantly accumulating and promoting noticeable achievements or 'small wins' (Reay et al., 2006) among line managers, for instance, by initiating a successful telework pilot in an organization, thereby shaping the attitudes of the people involved by creating a prospect of success.

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Note

- 1 Telework is a generic term referring to work located at a distance from a regular main office site, often performed with the help of information and communication technology (IT). In some definitions the new work mode is narrowed to distance working for more than one full day per week or 20 percent of employees' contractual work hours. A broader definition of telework comprises all home-based telework, mobile telework, telework by self-employed, supplementary telework, telework in telework centres/telecottages and combinations of different kinds of telework. In the remainder of this article, for clarity reasons, telehomeworking is referred to as telework.

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Pascale Peters is Assistant Professor at the Institute for Management Research, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands. In 2000, she received her PhD from the Faculty of Social Science of the University of Tilburg. Her research interests include work–life balance issues and flexible work arrangements, in particular home-based telework and ‘New Ways of Working’. The main focus in her research is on new employment relationships; managers’ telework attitudes; telework adoption; telework management; human resource management; and outcomes of flexible working. Publications include papers in *Community, Work and Family* (with L. den Dulk and T. van der Lippe), *International Journal of Manpower* (with C. Hillebrink, J. Schippers and A. van Doorne Huiskes), *International Journal of HRM* (with T. van der Lippe), *Information and Management* and *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics* (with K. Tijdens and C. Wetzels), *Time and Society*, and in various Dutch academic and management journals. She also wrote chapters in national and international books on IT and work. Together with Tanja van der Lippe, she co-edited the book entitled *Competing Claims in Work and Family Life*, which was published by Edward Elgar in 2007. [Email: p.peters@fm.ru.nl]

Stefan Heusinkveld is Assistant Professor at the Institute for Management Research, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands. In 2004 he obtained his PhD from the Radboud University Nijmegen with a dissertation on transience and persistence in management thinking. After his PhD he visited Durham Business School and the Stockholm School of Economics. His current research concentrates on the evolution and dissemination of management ideas and practices with a special interest in the role of management consultants and management gurus herein. Stefan’s work has appeared in various journals such as *Organization Studies*, *Human Relations*, *Information and Management*, *Technovation*, *Quality and Quantity* and *Journal of Organizational Change Management*. [Email: s.heusinkveld@fm.ru.nl]