

Smart Work Leading to Smart Workplaces

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Abstract

Smart working is leading organizations to reconfigure new workplaces that enable innovative and collaborative processes. Organizations are going smart in order to develop the potential of information and communication technology to enhance a smart mindset and support agile work design. Smart working is leading to collaborative and innovative workplaces, empowering people to experiment with new ways of working together. Employees engage in smart working places, improving job satisfaction and quality of life. The study aims to explain how smart working practices help organizations rethink smart workplaces, bridging human, technological, and social infrastructures.

Keywords

Smart Organizations; Smart Workplaces; Smart Working.

Introduction

The smart future of communities at work and organizations relies on supporting smart working practices, which lead to knowledge creation and innovation (Torre et al., 2024), provide benefits, and drive societal digital transformation (Veglianti, 2023).

Organizations are going smart in order to develop collaboration among people at work who contribute to managing and sharing knowledge and networking (Boorsma & Mitchell, 2011). Advanced digital intelligent technologies and platforms enable knowledge and information sharing and management, and help connect employees to work differently together and innovatively. Smart organizations encourage smart work, enabling teams, individuals, and communities to engage in technological, knowledge, and organizational networking (Filos, 2005).

The future of work relies on integrating both technological infrastructure and the organizational sphere, leading to social and collaborative work engagement that supports cooperative arrangements and empowers management-follower relationships. Organizations are going smart by rethinking a smart work organization (Torre & Sarti, 2019). Smart working enables meeting spaces for collaborative processes, enhances digitalization to empower social and human components, and introduces a new management philosophy, leadership behaviors, and styles that support cooperative frameworks for innovation (Hu, 2020; Torre et al., 2024). Smart working initiatives help support autonomy and innovation (Langè & Gastaldi, 2020), leading organizations to experimenting smart work not only to provide a response to pandemic *Covid-19* (Todisco, Tomo, Canonico & Mangia., 2023) but also to restart a new season of the relationships between workspace, time, technology and employees, making smart the relationship between organization, workspaces and time (Klaser, Cuel & Casari, 2022).

After the pandemic season due to the worldwide health crisis in virtue of Covid-19, in 2024, as reported by the data (osservatory.net) of Politecnico di Milano (2024), in Italy smart work growth is expected (+5 percent of workers in smart working modes). The rise of worldwide smart working is leading to smart digital work environments that facilitate collaboration, support open innovation, and engender a sense of community, empowering employees' freedom and autonomy at work (Errichiello & Pianese, 2020). Smart working practices and digitalization open public administration to collaborative frameworks and foster digital innovation at work, supporting collaborative workplaces

(Dery, Sebastian & van der Meulen, 2017). Smart working helps enhance technological and knowledge-led capabilities to shape smart collaborative workplaces (Dittes, Richter, Richter & Smolnik, 2019), opening up the potential of workplaces as collaborative and innovative spaces by enabling knowledge-based activities to be carried out anywhere (Hur, Cho, Lee & Bickerton, 2019).

Still, few studies focus on the relationship between smart work practices and digital and organizational innovation that lead to smart workplaces. The study aims to explain how smart working practices help public organizations enable workspace innovation and facilitate the rise of smart collaborative workspaces. The study is articulated in five paragraphs. After the introduction, the theoretical background is elucidated in the second paragraph. The methodological section follows in the third paragraph. Smart working is leading to collaborative, innovative workplaces, as outlined in the fourth paragraph. The discussion is outlined, and the conclusions are reported in the last paragraph.

Rethinking smart workplaces

Smart organizations promote collaborative relationships and innovation (Matheson & Matheson, 2001). Organizations are going smart, encouraging smart workplaces and fostering open environments that shape collaboration and innovation (Boorsma & Mitchell, 2011; Viceconte, 2020). New technologies reshape the configuration of work, leading to smart work modes and workplaces (Bonacci, Scarozza & Greco, 2024; Errichiello & Pianese, 2020). Organizations have to cope with the challenge of redesigning the work structure, connecting and integrating technology, space, autonomy, motivation, and commitment of employees (Torre et al., 2024). Smart working practices contribute to driving organizational agility and flexibility for performance improvement (Hu, 2020), strengthening the potential of virtual and digital workplaces that enhance managerial skills that help employees to focus on results rather than work time (Cascio, 2000).

Smart work may drive organizations and empower people at work to experiment with the workplace as a laboratory for driving innovation. Organizations should invest in workplace innovation to cope with changing environmental contingencies and conditions (Dhondt, McMurray, & Oeij, 2023). The rise of worldwide smart working initiatives is leading to smart working environments that facilitate collaboration, enable working together by involving individuals from the same and/or different organizations, and contribute to engendering community and open innovation (Errichiello & Pianese, 2020). Technologies contribute to creating enriching work environments and improve the quality of life of employees who rethink blending work and life spaces. Digital workplaces contribute to fostering digital and collaborative innovation, leading to employee connectedness and responsible leadership (Dery, Sebastian & van der Meulen, 2017). Digital transformation at work is leading to the redesign of work environments and work relationships, shaping a smart office that enhances user interaction (Tuzcuoğlu, De Vries, Yang & Sungur, 2023). Digitalization is leading to smart, intelligent, and collaborative organizations capable of managing complexity (Viceconte, 2020).

Organizations aim to be ambitious in leveraging human, technological, and knowledge-led capabilities to shape smart, collaborative workplaces (Dittes, Richter, Richter & Smolnik, 2019). The future of work relies on the interplay between new work practices, digital technology, and employees' approaches to work to enable collaborative working for innovation (Comacchio, 2021). Digitalization supports an agile mindset and enables smart workplaces, driving employee empowerment and leading to collaborative workspaces (Montanari, 2020). After the *COVID-19* season for smart work practices experiment, digitally smart working is opening to a new normal of work design that supports the rise of collaborative spaces for innovative knowledge production.

Smart working enables exploring the potential of the workplace as a collaborative space by enabling knowledge-based activities to be performed anywhere (Hur, Cho, Lee, & Bickerton, 2019). Smart work facilitates networks that enable people to work and communicate more effectively, thereby enhancing innovation (Bednar & Welch, 2020).

Organizations are increasingly providing innovative information technology to shape the workplaces of the future by effectively facilitating digital work and embedding people within the relationship

between humans, technology, and creativity for innovation (Dittes, Richter, Richter, & Smolnik, 2019). Organizations are experimenting with and implementing smart work solutions that enhance user-centered initiatives, enabling people to combine job satisfaction, expected performance, and creativity for innovation (Remes, Dooley, Ketomäki & Ihasalo, 2022). Smart working practices contribute to agile workplaces for innovation, overcoming managerial resistance with regard to intelligently remote working (Iannotta & Meret, 2020), leading to new leadership styles (Torre, 2020).

Methodological section

The study is conceptual, descriptive, exploratory, and theoretical because the boundaries between organizations, smart work, innovation, technologies, and the future of workplaces are not yet satisfactorily defined. Conceptual papers address untested relationships and new relationships among constructs, focusing on the integration and association of logical arguments, without providing data (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015).

The study relies on a non-systematic literature review and refers to the analysis of articles on the linkage between smart working practices and smart workplaces that drive collaborative spaces and innovation. Technology supports organizations in smart work and enables smart, agile working as a mode that engenders collaborative innovation within workplaces and helps drive smart workplace innovation. The smart working theme is considered as a field of experimentation within organizations. The selected contributions are drawn from the literature on smart organizations driving workspace innovation and collaboration through digital technologies. The selected contributions are interpreted in a narrative synthesis to elucidate new perspectives and advance theoretical frameworks on emerging issues (Denyer & Tranfield, 2006; Dixon-Woods et al., 2004).

Smart working within collaborative and innovative smart workplaces

Discovering the potential of technology as a vehicle to bridge social and organizational infrastructure with technical infrastructure is opening up new ways to interpret the content of jobs and work systems, leading to hybrid, as well as fully digital-driven, smart workplaces that strengthen human and team capabilities and intelligence. Technologies enable new forms of working smart that support an agile mindset by empowering people at work and leading to collaborative workspaces (Errichiello & Pianese, 2020). Today, working through the potential offered by information technology refers to people at work who experiment with smart, dynamic, or agile working practices that contribute to workspace innovation (Comacchio, 2021).

Raguseo, Gastaldi, and Neirotti (2016) refer to smart work as a work practice characterized by spatial and temporal flexibility, supported by technological tools, and that provides all employees of an organization with the best working conditions to accomplish their tasks. Investing in smart working practices helps drive cultural and organizational changes and innovation (Torre & Sarti, 2018).

Smart working practices enable results-led and collaboration-oriented organizations (Politecnico di Milano, 2021). Smart working supports both organizational and cultural innovation for change (Torre, 2020). Smart working advancement is going beyond remote working, co-working, and mobile and flexible work, referring to a way of working relying on results-focused tasks, beyond time and space, and connecting benefits for health, quality of life, and environmental sustainability, and encouraging the employees to interact with managers and customers through digital technology-led applications (Fortuna, Rossi, Elmo & Arcese, 2023).

Organizations are developing a variety of solutions to facilitate the rise of collaborative spaces that foster ideas and drive innovation. Smart *everywhere working* empowers a collaborative view of work redesign and supports both employee well-being and organizational performance and productivity, enriching organizational meaningfulness and leading to better communication, intelligence, and service delivery (Bednar & Welch, 2020; Butera, 2020).

Smart working practices facilitate communication and collaboration, leading to innovative ways of conceiving work relationships between followers and managers, and between employees and

employers (Parker & Knight, 2024), promoting a new management philosophy and empowering new styles of leadership, skills, and behaviors (Sarti & Torre, 2017). Smart working vision and practice help modify the traditional and ordinary work framework and environment, leading to the search for different, not yet defined solutions for better employee work, performance, and well-being (Sarti & Torre, 2017). Smart work facilitates autonomy and accountability of people at work who select the way for employing the technology, modes, time and spaces of performing tasks, leading to a cultural change in work mind set through organizational agility and flexibility development (Torre et al., 2024; Torre & Sarti, 2018), encouraging employees to develop confidence and propensity towards innovation processes (Langè & Gastaldi, 2020).

Smart works helps integrate technology, humans, social systems, and organizations, leading to the redesign of work practices and human resource management (Parker & Knight, 2024). Smart work refers to the use of advanced technology to empower people at work, enabling them to combine discretion, responsibility, and flexibility to build trust and foster collaboration (Remes, Dooley, Ketomäki & Ihasalo, 2022). Investing in smart work practices supports a networked approach to knowledge, collaborative, and social exchange (Boorsma & Mitchell, 2011). Smart work is redesigning work organization, leading to individual-technology-led policies that open the way for organizational visions to rethink the structure and human resource management systems (Torre & Sarti, 2019). Smart technologies contribute to promoting smart flexible working for productivity, well-being, and work-life balance (Angelici & Profeta, 2020), leading to social change for wellbeing (Morea, Basile, Bonacci & Mazzitelli, 2023), and empowering agile workers, enhancing workers' sense of affiliation (Bonacci, Scarozza & Greco, 2024).

Smart technologies and smart working contribute to creating a trust-based workplace, leading to employee participation and reinforcing the use of technology in the workplace, developing cooperative ways of interacting with managers. Smart technologies enhance transparency, knowledge management, and learning (Zheng, Schafheitle & van der Werff, 2023). Smart working is leading to workspaces that foster open collaborative innovation bridging work time and space, opening to collaborative as well as digital workplaces that play as platforms for interaction and knowledge sharing (Hu, 2020), and contribute to enhancing innovative skills and accountability for results, shaping new ways for no predefined workspaces and meeting places at work (Hur, Cho, Lee & Bickerton, 2019).

Smart working experiments, implementation, and practices are opening the way to rethink organizational design, reinforcing emotional-psychological and cognitive dimensions, building trust-based relationships, shaping leadership roles, and fostering employee accountability in human resource management redesign, leading to smart and empowered workplaces (Torre et al., 2024; Torre, 2020). Smart working helps shape the development of social collaboration and work engagement, leading to workplaces that enhance the sense of community, contribute to management and organizational flexibility, and develop competencies for productivity, job satisfaction, and well-being, making happy employees, customers, and the organization (Iannotta & Meret, 2020).

Discussion and conclusions

Smart working practices support both a collaborative view of open innovation and employee empowerment, reinforcing the employee-management relationships within smart, innovative, and collaborative workspaces for agile working and behaviors. Smart working dynamics and evolution are driving collaborative work, organizational social innovation, and cooperative frameworks enabled by digital and intelligent technologies. Smart organizations support smart workplaces, driving collaborative workspace innovation, job satisfaction, and improved quality of life.

Smart working organizations enable collaborative workspaces that facilitate information and knowledge exchange and transfer, supporting employee commitment and public service motivation at work. Smart working practices contribute to improving employee-manager communication and interaction within innovative workplaces. Organizations are going smart by transitioning from technology-led working to smart working practices, from managing employees to strengthening

collaborative frameworks and efforts, and from organizational to innovation-led workspaces and environments.

Effective digital workplaces support collaborative ways in order to approach work and enable cooperative frameworks. Redesigning smart views for work processes is still in its infancy and relies on promoting cultural change that involves people's attitudes and behaviors at work. Adopting a smart view of working environments and processes involves the attitudes and behaviors of people who are willing to contribute to shaping smart workplaces in line with organizational smart workplace policies.

Smart work practices and initiatives facilitate the creation of hybrid workplaces, driving sustainable organizational change. Smart work relationships provide a key driver for rethinking that relies on shaping social and collaborative spaces that enable value co-creation. Smart and digital workplaces enable employees to act as creative co-producers of value and innovation, engage with intelligent technologies, and develop partnerships for innovation within and beyond organizational boundaries. The interaction between empowered people at work and intelligent technologies supports smart, collaborative meeting places. Promoting smart work relationships helps drive sustainable organizational change and supports an innovation-led, collaboration-driven approach to shaping social as well as collaborative spaces that enable value co-creation processes within and outside organizational boundaries.

The challenge for future smart organizations and society is to support workplaces that enable people and technologies to shape intelligent communities, leading to workspaces that contribute to learning and innovation processes. The future of organizations at work relies on constructing and understanding workplaces as platforms that engage human actors and technological agents, bridging human and artificial intelligence to drive social and community intelligence for work collaborative innovation.

Further research should investigate how smart working practices may influence human resource management and organizational policies to drive sustainable working and workspaces.

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