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Flexible Work, Constrained Mobility: Spatiotemporal Barriers to Teleworkers' Daily Travel

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Abstract

Just as the spatial and temporal flexibility offered by telework and flextime can bring autonomy and a greater sense of control over an individual's time–space behavior, it can also reveal hurdles that limit and modify this behavior. The objective of this research is to examine the time–space barriers that result from these work arrangements, as well as how these barriers may affect everyday mobility and its planning. The analysis draws on 13 semi-structured interviews with Czech teleworkers who also use flexible work schedules. In doing so, this study complements the plethora of predominantly quantitative studies that deal with the impact of these work arrangements on mobility. Time barriers can be attributed to the tendency to align the flexible rhythm of teleworkers with that of colleagues or the predominantly fixed working patterns inherent in the Czech work environment. Conversely, space barriers emerge from the disadvantageous policies of certain establishments (e.g., cafés) and from the need to negotiate reasonable distances between home and potential secondary workplace. This ultimately prompts teleworkers to seek the most effective means of optimizing their time–space behavior—and while the time barriers presented mainly affect planning when, with whom, and whether their non-work trips will take place at all, spatial barriers mainly affect the formation of work-related travel and movement between home and alternative workplace.

Keywords

daily mobility; flexible work; flextime; spatiotemporal barriers; telework

1. Introduction

Teleworking has been a subject of interest for academics in various fields for several decades. Thulin et al. (2023, p. 2) discuss research focusing on its role in reshaping the time–space of everyday life as a journey

"full of high hopes and disappointments," as the expected impacts (reduced work-related travel, fossil fuel use, air pollution) have not been as significant as originally anticipated. However, one of the advantages attributed to telework is that, in conjunction with flextime, it can be characterized as a form of flexible work arrangement (Wöhner, 2022). Such arrangements enable workers to have greater autonomy and flexibility in planning not only their work, working hours, and place of work, but also their non-working life, activities, and travels. This ultimately provides greater freedom to decide when, where, and what activity will be performed. Although such an arrangement may seem beneficial at the individual level, this article aims to highlight the problems and spatiotemporal barriers that teleworkers who also utilize time flexibility may face in their daily lives, particularly concerning their (non-)work travel. Therefore, the study examines how spatially and temporally flexible work can also create barriers and constraints in teleworkers' daily mobility.

The space-time barriers that are the main subject of this research have been discussed explicitly and implicitly in geographical literature and beyond, but their conceptualization varies depending on the field and the research's specific focus. These barriers are often perceived as obstacles to accessibility (transport, healthcare, public space, etc.), from which other types of barriers are then derived, such as transport or social barriers (Dodge & Nelson, 2023; Maleki & Smith-Colin, 2025). Spatial barriers can be created by physical objects and obstacles, as well as by the conditions of one's surroundings. These barriers can lead to different perceptions of place (Friman et al., 2020). Kwan (2013) argues that an individual's everyday spatiotemporal behavior depends on accessibility, which is perceived not only in terms of locational proximity but also in terms of temporal and individual accessibility (e.g., gender, age, and disability). The limits and boundaries in the formation of an individual's time–space are also often discussed through the time–space constraints known from time-geography (see Section 3). However, Fischer (2004) does not view barriers as insurmountable limitations. Instead, he views them as challenges that can lead to opportunities to improve a situation or solve a problem. This article does not consider the various physical barriers teleworkers face, such as obstacles in their environment that they need to navigate around or adapt to. Here, barriers are defined as perceived and experienced impediments and hurdles arising from conflicts between different settings, norms, or planning at the individual level. These barriers thus hinder the effective implementation of spatially and temporally flexible work of teleworkers and influence their everyday mobility.

Although there is no consensus on the definition of "telework" and, as Lamond et al. (1997) put it, there may be no one form of teleworking, the term can be defined as "a form of organizing and/or performing work, using information technology, where work, which could also be performed at the employer's premises, is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis" (European Social Partners, 2006, p. 4). However, telework is often confused in studies with the terms "telecommuting," "remote work," "virtual work," "flexible work," "flextime," or "distance work" (Allen et al., 2015). In this article, telework refers to work arrangements that allow the traditional workplace, particularly the office, to be replaced by another location, thanks to ICTs, which enable people to work and communicate remotely without direct contact with the workplace or other colleagues, which points in particular to the spatial component of work flexibility. This research, however, focuses on teleworkers who also take advantage of time flexibility (see Section 2) and thus have the opportunity to adapt their work in terms of time. The analysis, therefore, takes into account both spatial and temporal flexibility, but for the sake of simplification and standardization, the term telework is used, and interviewees are referred to as teleworkers.

Telework can also be distinguished based on its temporal and spatial components. While spatial classification specifies, for example, home-based, center-based, or mobile telework (Helminen & Ristimäki, 2007), in terms of time, a distinction can be made between full-time/part-time teleworkers, or full-day/part-day teleworkers (Antunes et al., 2023; Asgari et al., 2019). The predominant alternative work environment is the home, although other locations include cafés, libraries, coworking spaces, and separately rented offices. It is evident that the original correlation between place of residence and workplace, as well as the fixed working hours and subsequent commuting between the two locations, is no longer applicable. In this regard, Elldér (2017) points out that if an individual's daily spatial patterns are not tied to their place of work, this can lead to the creation of new mobility strategies that contribute to spatial heterogeneity, ones based more on individual needs than on the structure of the city.

A study by Luca et al. (2025) demonstrated that individuals with a higher propensity for teleworking are predominantly those employed in the information and communication, insurance, and finance sectors, as well as in scientific, technical, and educational fields. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a significant change in the introduction and acceptance of telework across sectors, especially working from home, with telework often being referred to as the predominant work mode in the post-COVID era due to positive responses from both employees and employers (Eurofound, 2020; Zhu & Guo, 2022). Among the self-employed, the transition to more flexible arrangements was already underway prior to the pandemic, largely because they were not restricted by employers who, at that time, were less willing to allow employees to work outside the office (Luca et al., 2025).

However, the perception of telework is not uniformly positive or negative (Cañibano & Avgoustaki, 2022) and can therefore be described as a "balancing act" (Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2021). Research on telework and flextime frequently concurs that teleworkers possess greater personal time and time for their families, more time to fulfill household responsibilities, reduced stress (partly due to the absence of commuting), and a superior work-life balance compared to on-site workers. Conversely, there is a possibility of a violation of personal space and a blurring of the boundaries between personal and professional life (Erdoğdu & Watson, 2022). Long-term telework can also cause employees to feel isolated due to a lack of social interaction with colleagues (Chen & Zheng, 2023).

2. Temporal Flexibility at Work

As previously defined, telework constitutes the spatial dimension of work flexibility. Conversely, the concept of flextime embodies the temporal dimension, signifying the absence of clearly predetermined working hours and workers being permitted to exercise greater or lesser flexibility in daily planning (Wöhner, 2022). Temporally and spatially flexible work can thus be described as progressive and enabling the time–space autonomy of the individual, but on the other hand, it can result in constant work availability and ease of access to work (Kotýnková Krotká, 2025; Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2021), which are further enhanced through the use of ICT, online communication platforms, and virtual offices. However, these arrangements are most likely to be beneficial if employees feel more control over when and where they work (Kelly & Moen, 2007).

Time-flexible work enables workers to control their working hours, which can lead to a reduction in their schedule (e.g., to meet family demands; Chung & van der Lippe, 2020), and on the other hand, to an increase in overtime (Erdoğdu & Watson, 2022) and a shift of unworked hours to the evening/night part of the day.

Such an arrangement can not only reinforce expectations of constant availability but ultimately also break down the boundaries between work and personal time, creating specific conditions for the emergence of time poverty, the final extent of which may also depend on who sets the main rhythm of an individual's life (Kotýnková Krotká, 2025). Rhythms are an essential part of everyday life (Ingold, 2000, as cited in Kaaristo, 2020, p. 63), and Honing (2001) sees them as a temporal structuring device. Time-flexible work can enable "following of one's rhythms" (Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2021) and, in such cases, bring time freedom and autonomy to the individual. However, if it is necessary to negotiate time with others (colleagues, family, clients, institutions, etc.) who set the dominant rhythm to which one must adapt, then there is a heightened likelihood of encountering time poverty (Kotýnková Krotká, 2025).

3. Spatiotemporal Constraints and ICTs

The ICTs, in conjunction with working arrangements such as telework and flextime, are gradually weakening the traditionally strong association between place, time, and activity, and so the former "tell me where you are, and I'll tell you what you are doing" no longer applies, and given that many activities are performed digitally and in virtual space, researchers encounter the limits of traditional time geography (Couclelis, 2009). From the perspective of time geography, an individual's daily activities are constrained not only by the limited time in the day, but also by time–space limitations imposed by mandatory (and often fixed) activities (Asgari et al., 2019), which have a fixed location and time and function as anchor points in an individual's daily routine (Zhang et al., 2024).

In the academic literature concerning telework and flextime, the concept of time–space constraints is a subject of extensive discussion, partly due to the fact that ICTs enable individuals to communicate without the need to physically move (Ellegård, 2019), and thanks to communication platforms and social media, they are able to communicate at any time, thereby transforming or eliminating traditional time–space constraints (the constraints of authority, coupling, and capability). In addition to the dissolution of these constraints (e.g., commuting to a specific place at a specific time, the fixed location of the workplace), there is also an increase in the availability of time for non-work activities or the possibility of choosing new locations based on personal preferences rather than geographical proximity (Elldér, 2017). The final degree of spatial and temporal flexibility may therefore reflect specific time–space constraints at the individual level. For instance, Black (2001) has noted that full-day teleworkers may have no time–space constraints, and consequently, their time–space behavior may vary across individuals. A comprehensive understanding of the spatiotemporal constraints and rhythms to which teleworkers are exposed, and which they must adapt to and take into account in their daily lives, may ultimately influence the spatiotemporal barriers they face.

Examples of time constraints include demands for constant availability (Sewell & Taskin, 2015), scheduling limitations such as rigid core hours (Kelly & Moen, 2007), or cultural-cognitive constraints (e.g., procrastination) related to a lack of external time structures (Lehdonvirta, 2018). Conversely, spatial constraints may arise from physical distancing between the remote worker and the team members in the office (Sewell & Taskin, 2015) or from the negotiation of workspace limitations (e.g., in the case of working from home; Waismel-Manor et al., 2021). The sources of such constraints can vary and may include both employer control and client requirements, as well as individual limitations from the perspective of a decision-maker who influences their own time–space behavior.

4. The Influence of Telework and Flextime on Daily Mobility

A significant body of research has identified the impact of telework on daily mobility, individual travel, and, notably, commuting to work. Telework reduces (but does not eliminate) the need for commuting in everyday life. Nevertheless, most research and studies in this area focus on the quantitative side of the issue—the frequency of telework during the week, the total number of teleworkers, the total time spent traveling, and the effect on morning and evening rush hours.

However, as Allen et al. (2015) suggested, the impact of telework and flextime on daily commuting should be distinguished, because, as Wöhner (2022) noted, telework cannot completely replace commuting, while flextime can influence it by spreading it more evenly throughout the day and thus have a positive effect on traffic congestion during rush hours. Nonetheless, changes in behavior and habits associated with telework can alter workers' mobility decisions. Since they are not forced to commute to their workplace every day and waste time in traffic, they become much more sensitive to the time spent in it (Erdoğdu & Watson, 2022).

While telework is often linked to an increase in non-work-related trips, as measured by the number of trips, total travel time, or total distance traveled (Kiko et al., 2024), the necessity of commuting to work remains consistent and may vary among different categories of teleworkers. For individuals who exclusively work from home, this type of commute can be completely eliminated. For teleworkers who work from locations other than their homes (e.g., coworking spaces, cafés, etc.), the need to commute to work remains. However, as Ellegård (2019) points out, the original idea that the use of ICT would lead to less travel has not ultimately come to fruition.

The objective of this article is not to differentiate between the effects of telework and flextime on daily commuting, as previously explained, but rather to examine time–space flexibility in its entirety. Through the analysis of specific time–space barriers, the article aims to elucidate how it is reflected in and affects daily (not solely work-related) commuting and mobility at the individual level.

5. Flexible Work Arrangements in the Czech Republic

The following time–space barriers are based, in many respects, on the manner in which flexible working arrangements are approached in the Czech Republic and how (un)usual they are perceived. Full-time employment with fixed working hours and location remains the major employment type in the Czech Republic. Flexible working arrangements, in general (not exclusively as referenced in this article), are still uncommon in the country, for various reasons. Firstly, there is a discrepancy between the demand and supply of such arrangements (Plasová, 2008, as cited in Formánková & Křížková, 2015, p. 229). Flexible working arrangements, such as part-time jobs, job sharing, and the option to change work agreements, are still very much in the minority in the country. While one-third of companies in the EU offer these arrangements, less than one-tenth of companies in the Czech Republic do so (UZS, 2019). Of the available part-time jobs, most are occupied by individuals who are marginalized in the labor market (disabled people, people of pre-retirement age, or low-educated people; Hora, 2009). Secondly, part-time employment frequently entails work of a lower quality and less favorable working conditions (Vohlídalová & Formánková, 2012). Finally, the low supply of flexible arrangements may stem from the prevailing tradition of long (three years) parental leave, which can isolate women in particular from the labor market (Formánková & Křížková, 2015).

Employees in the Czech labour market are then more often allowed to work from home, but this does not necessarily involve time flexibility. According to statistics from the Czech Statistical Office (2025), in 2024, 59% of Czech companies allowed their employees to work from home occasionally, but only 21% of employees took advantage of it. According to remote workers, their proportion in the pre-Covid era in the Czech Republic was around 5%, and even during the pandemic in 2021, it did not exceed 10%. By contrast, countries such as the Netherlands, Finland, and Sweden had values above 20% in the same year, with Ireland exceeding 30% (Luca et al., 2025).

6. Methods

The present study is based on 13 semi-structured interviews with teleworkers (six women and seven men from the Czech Republic and Slovakia) working in the Czech Republic (see Table 1). The selection of interviewees was primarily based on the flexible nature of their work, characterized by autonomy in terms of time and place of work, i.e., that their working hours were primarily subject to their personal settings and preferences, and that they had the same freedom of choice regarding their place of work. In this selection, an effort was also made to achieve representation of different industries associated with telework and flextime. Interviewees could be either self-employed (i.e., economically dependent self-employed people and freelancers) or employed. The places where they performed their work could also vary. These places were often combined (during the week, but also within a single day). Some teleworkers still had the option of using company office space, even though they were not required to do so. Although there are differences among individual teleworkers, the presented space-time barriers do not stem from differences in job sectors, types of employment, or managerial levels. Therefore, the primary aim of this research is to highlight the spatial manifestations that arise from experienced and perceived flexibility.

The majority of the interviews were conducted online (Google Meets, MS Teams), while two interviews were conducted in person. All interviews were recorded for subsequent transcription and analysis. The interviews ranged in length from approximately 35 to 70 minutes, with an average length of approximately 47 minutes. Prior to each interview, the interviewees were informed about the content of the interview, its purpose, and the subsequent processing and use of the data in the form of informed consent. In the case of face-to-face interviews, informed consent was signed by the interviewees; in the case of online interviews, consent was given verbally after the recording began. The audio recordings of the interviews and their respective transcripts were stored in a private repository, and pseudonyms were assigned to the interviewees to preserve their anonymity.

The recruitment of interviewees was primarily carried out using personal contacts and contacts of acquaintances. This selection was always monitored to ensure that the final sample corresponded to the above-mentioned variability and did not lead, for example, to the overrepresentation of a particular sector. Concurrently, recruitment took place in Facebook groups where people with the required criteria could come together (e.g., remote work, home office groups, etc.). Ultimately, only one interviewee emerged from this form of recruitment. The initial series of interviews was conducted during January and February of 2025. Subsequent to the transcription, preliminary readings, and rudimentary thematic analysis, the remaining interviews were conducted by the end of April 2025. These subsequent interviews were undertaken with the objective of both addressing thematic gaps identified in previous interviews and supplementing the sample of interviewees in accordance with the aforementioned criteria. After these interviews, data

collection was concluded, as thematic saturation was reached and no new topics expanding on the original research questions arose from them.

The subject of time–space barriers was not a central theme in the interviews from the outset. The objective of the interviews was to understand how temporal and spatial flexibility is reflected in the everyday mobility of teleworkers. Consequently, the preliminary analysis of the interviews (using Atlas.ti) was not guided by a predefined theoretical framework to emphasize the individual perceptions and narratives of the interviewees. For this reason, open coding was used in the initial phase of the analysis as a way to discover new units of meaning across the data (Řiháček et al., 2013). This phase of the analysis was therefore more descriptive in nature (e.g., work vs. personal boundaries, domestic mobility, shift in working hours, meanings of mobility, etc.). It was at this stage of the analysis that the topic of time–space barriers emerged as a salient theme in the data. Consequently, a more selective coding approach was employed, with a focus on this specific topic to better address the narrowing research question (e.g., time/space constraints, time freedom/poverty, pace-setters, change of workplace, restrictions by other people, travel efficiency). Attention was therefore directed toward the time–space barriers that emerge from the time and space flexibility of interviewees, impeding or constraining their ability to fully utilize the flexibility of their work, and, last but not least, where, when, and with whom they experience and undergo their daily mobility. The objective of this article is to respond to the research question: How does spatially and temporally flexible work create barriers and constraints in teleworkers' daily mobility? While teleworkers perform many activities, notably work itself, in virtual space, this article focuses exclusively on their movement in physical space.

Table 1. Basic information about interviewees.

Name	Gender	Age	Job	Workplace	Employed/self-employed
Adam	M	27	IT (security expert)	solely HO	employed
Irena	W	43	online news editor	solely HO	self-employed
Jakub	M	24	entrepreneur (software development)	solely HO	self-employed
Jitka	W	28	clinical trial monitor	HO, office, cafés	employed
Kamila	W	25	editor of an online magazine	cafés, libraries, HO, houses of friends	employed
Martina	W	30	learning and development partner	HO, office, cafés	employed
Matěj	M	35	accounting firm owner	HO, office	self-employed
Marek	M	34	IT (architect for data storage)	solely HO	employed
Oskar	M	42	financial advisor	HO, individually rented office	self-employed
Radek	M	34	IT (application engineer)	individually rented office	employed
Samuel	M	27	IT specialist	HO, office, cowork	employed
Valerie	W	25	IT architect	solely HO	employed
Vilma	W	32	accountant	HO, office	employed

Note: HO = home office.

7. Results

In interviews, work flexibility was presented not only as flexibility in working hours and the possibility of choosing a place of work, which were the main criteria in selecting interviewees, but also as the ability to plan work and non-work activities individually and not having to report absences (e.g., doctor's appointments). As Matěj articulated: "I can adapt it to what I want and need." When asked whether their work flexibility allows them more flexible daily mobility, the interviewees responded positively without hesitation. However, a thorough examination of the data reveals that although the work schedule of teleworkers appears to be adaptable, in reality, it encompasses a number of time–space barriers and conflicts that are incongruent with such a work arrangement.

7.1. Navigating Flexibility Through Time

The experience of time is generally influenced by a combination of cultural meanings, social conditions, and personal agency, and is further shaped by its implicit understandings (Ravenelle & Kowalski, 2023). These cultural meanings were conveyed during the interviews, primarily through the lens of entrenched fixed working hours (mostly 8–4) within the Czech work environment. This became the predominant time constraint that was reflected in individual interviews. Interviewees frequently contrasted their own flexible schedules with these fixed routines, referring to workers on standard hours as "normal people" or "the majority of Czech workers." However, this contrast between flexible and fixed settings may contribute to creating barriers to daily non-work trips:

> I know that most of my colleagues from Czechia are simply green and connected, and they will see that I am simply not connected. So I tend to always be online, even though I know I don't have to be. But I have this stupid feeling that I have somehow programmed into myself that on a weekday morning, I should just be working. And even though I know I don't have to, I often can't help myself, and just like I'm connected, I can't really enjoy the morning. (Martina)

This statement underscores the potential for harmonizing one's personal rhythm, characterized by temporal flexibility and planning, with the rhythm of others. This rhythm is further exemplified by the work of colleagues (who "are green"), but also by the ingrained rhythm of Czech society (where it is customary to work on weekday mornings). As Martina notes in another section of the interview, she could allocate the morning time she references in the above excerpt for personal leisure activities (e.g., pedicures, brunch), postpone the start of her workday (at the expense of working late into the evening), and thus benefit from the flexible arrangements her occupation permits. However, the conflict with the aforementioned rhythms precludes her from doing so.

The rhythm of colleagues is represented here by visual information in the form of icons displaying their status on the communication platform (i.e., available, appear offline/away, be right back, etc.). While the working hours are not known, the important information that is reflected in Martina's plans is the currently displayed status, i.e., that someone "is green." However, this dynamic gives rise to an effort to synchronize with the rhythm of these colleagues. When a person is not connected and is not showing "green," there is a deviation from the belief that "on a weekday morning, one should be working," and, as Martina mentions, feelings of guilt may arise related to the belief that she is not working at the time or during the time others are working, even though this is contrary to the flexibility allowed in her work.

Conversely, the rhythm of society is shaped by fixed working hours. Radek, from the perspective of transcending the conventional boundaries of working hours and thinking about when he should (or should not) work, says: "It's perhaps about some kind of inner feeling, some kind of subjectivity. Like, it's 11 am on Tuesday, and how come I'm actually at home? Yeah, it's a strange feeling." In interviews with other interviewees, it was mentioned that engaging in non-work activities and related trips during traditional working hours is not "mentally right," "not something they can justify to themselves," or they "feel bad" about it. In other words, this ingrained (subconscious) relationship to traditional working hours prevents them from leaving work and the workplace (home office, as in Martina's case) between 8 am and 4 pm.

However, the conflict between these rhythms can impede daily mobility associated with leisure activities, as individuals tend to adapt to the more dominant rhythm. Despite the absence of an obligation to adjust their work schedules to align with this rhythm, the ingrained nature of this setting in their environment, society, and, to a large extent, in themselves, ultimately prevents them from taking full advantage of their work arrangements, as they subconsciously continue to follow work patterns that do not apply to them. The temporal boundaries that impede their engagement in non-work activities and travel, therefore, stem from the intersection of distinct work environments and the need to adapt to schedules with which interviewees, due to the nature of their work settings, are not obligated to comply. While their daily routine and subsequent journeys are not based on fixed anchor points (especially the start and end of working hours), they may ultimately be strongly subordinate to them.

However, the analysis also demonstrates that variations in work schedules influence not only the negotiation of interviewees' independent leisure time and associated non-work trips, but also the negotiation of shared leisure time and non-work trips with their acquaintances, who are, in turn, subject to fixed working hours:

> It's still strange that I have a lot of friends who have time, as far as I know, from 8 pm onwards, and I've just realized that I don't even have a chance to meet up with them, because when they go for a beer at 9 pm, I say no, I have to go to bed. (Samuel)

In this excerpt, Samuel's flexible rhythm stands in contrast to that of his colleagues, who are more influenced by the spatiotemporal constraints inherent to their work. Due to the adaptable nature of Samuel's work, he is able to start his leisure time earlier than his peers. However, his peers' schedules are fixed and finish later than his own. As Samuel also notes in another part of the interview, this ultimately results in him spending his leisure time with individuals who have a similar schedule to his, sharing their leisure time with each other, during which they can plan joint activities and trips. In terms of planning daily trips and activities, the issue in this case is not whether the trip or activity will take place, as discussed above, but who can or cannot participate. Such an experience may ultimately lead to a tendency to carry out these plans with people who have the same or similar rhythm, which makes it easier to realize these plans and removes barriers to daily travel.

When assessing the impact of work flexibility on daily travel, it is essential to recognize that interviewees must always take into account the schedules of others (colleagues, family, friends), their rhythms, and the spatiotemporal constraints (primarily fixed working hours) to which they are subject. The conflict between these rhythms and different time settings then leads to the creation of barriers, which necessitate adjustments to or the complete cancellation of this travel. Consequently, their daily flexibility and time–space behavior are not solely dependent on themselves, but rather, it appears that this flexibility diminishes during negotiations

with others, thereby showing that the discrepancy between following one's own rhythm and following others' rhythms (Kotýnková Krotká, 2025; Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2021) can have spatial consequences as well.

7.2. Navigating Flexibility Through Space and Distance

While teleworking reduces or eliminates the need to commute when working from home (Zhu & Guo, 2022), the need to commute persists when choosing other alternative locations. Nevertheless, the considerable distances that must be traversed to commute may be perceived as a significant impediment by teleworkers. This may result in the adoption of varied strategies with regard to the planning of work trips and the selection of their place of work:

> Maybe I would find a coworking space that is further away, but I like it better. If I only go there four times a month, then it's probably fine. But if I go there every day, then I'll look for something closer to where I live. (Valerie)

The irregularity of commuting when teleworking, and the associated reduction in time spent traveling to work, can lead to a more sensitive perception of the time spent commuting (Erdoğdu & Watson, 2022). Consequently, the regularity and duration of this commute can serve as significant factors in the perceived efficiency of the journey and the ultimate selection of workplace location. As Valerie, who is considering replacing her home office with cowork, notes in the aforementioned statement, the more frequent her commute, the closer she'll want the coworking space to be. This is primarily due to the time expended on commuting to a specific location, as she thinks about "how not to waste too much time on inefficient mobility." Concurrently, the data indicates that when the commute time to a prospective workplace is minimal, interviewees regard working time to be more productive and efficient, and as Vilma points out: "I actually save the time I would have spent traveling, and that way I can get more done." However, interviews with Valerie and other interviewees demonstrate that the duration and overall perceived efficiency of the journey, as well as the selection of where the work will ultimately be performed, are fundamentally influenced by the extent to which time spent at a potential workplace outside the home (coworking space, office, café, etc.) is used sufficiently and effectively:

> If I went to that coworking space and knew that I would spend several hours there, then the 40-minute time investment wouldn't seem so bad to me, unlike if, I don't know, I decided to go dancing or swimming for an hour and had to travel there for 40 minutes. That's nonsense. (Irena)

The aforementioned excerpt from Irena signifies a scenario in which commuting to an alternative workplace is both rational and effective, resulting in a favorable ratio between the time invested in the journey and the time allocated to the work itself. However, the interviews also indicated a contrary scenario. The interviewees talked about how "it doesn't make sense to go to the office for one meeting" or "unless it's absolutely necessary," or "to travel somewhere [outside the home office] separately" without the possibility of combining the trip with other duties and activities. Consequently, the content and duration of work performed outside the home must offer greater advantages and meaning for teleworkers compared to the time spent commuting. Therefore, if the efficiency of the journey, or rather its final purpose, does not exceed the time required to commute to the given location in the eyes of the interviewees, working from home is preferred, which ultimately eliminates the need for commuting. From the perspective of planning teleworkers' commutes and their overall implementation, an excessively great distance, which would have to be covered on a daily or more regular basis, can act as a barrier. As Valerie's statement above indicates, this

may result in locations closer to the individual's place of residence being selected for more frequent teleworking, thereby reducing the time spent on commuting.

The barriers to planning and carrying out work trips for teleworkers may not only be the distance to an alternative workplace, but also the location itself:

> My biggest enemy is when cafés simply ban computers or don't have Wi-Fi. Not having Wi-Fi is okay, I understand that, but it really happened to me a lot that they just didn't want [laptops] there anymore, which I honestly don't really understand. But it just really annoyed me sometimes that I needed to work, I found a café, I got there, and I discovered that I couldn't stay. (Kamila)

Kamila's professional role as an editor for an online magazine entails the utilization of Wi-Fi and a laptop, which have become indispensable for her work. Cafés are thus the typical place where she works. However, the above statement raises the issue of places in urban space that lack reliable Wi-Fi access and exclude teleworkers like Kamila, making it difficult for them to do their work and plan it at a given moment. This can be attributed to the policies of specific establishments, which may either lack internet connectivity or prohibit the use of laptops altogether. However, as Kamila further elaborates in the interview, this barrier forces her to "walk around the city looking for the right café," which consequently increases her commute time, thereby reducing the time she spends working, and in her words, this "reduces [her] productivity."

Places such as cafés, pubs, and restaurants are often referred to in literature as "third places," with "first place" representing home and "second place" representing the workplace (Oldenburg, 1989, as cited in Kviat, in press, p. 1). Third places were designated for informal meetings, relaxation, and socializing with friends and family. However, the advent of ICT, the increasing demand for Wi-Fi availability, and the disruption of the original spatial constraints associated with the workplace have collectively transformed the nature of these spaces. Consequently, the original purpose of these spaces is beginning to dissipate, and, as in Kamila's case, cafés are becoming a common place for performing work instead of serving as a place for rest and socialization. Working in a café may be a preferred option, mainly because of the lack of distractions at home (e.g., housework), as it provides a distraction from the daily routine and promotes creativity and productivity (Henriksen & Tjora, 2018). In this regard, interviewees have identified several advantages. For instance, they have noted the potential benefits of modifying the work environment or integrating work in a café with other errands in the area, which would otherwise require a separate commute. This possibility means that workplaces, represented by public spaces such as cafés, are expanding into areas where they did not exist before (or were not utilized for such purposes), and their increased number and proximity make them more accessible to workers. According to Couclelis (2000), this fragmentation of activities and spatiotemporal plasticity leads to planners having reduced control over where, when, and what activities take place. Compared to coworking spaces, as other alternative places to work, a further advantage of cafés can be the absence of space rental or reservation fees.

In such instances, the predominant barrier is the setting that restricts work performance (prohibition of laptop use or limited access to Wi-Fi), making it impossible to perform work at a given moment and subsequently resulting in additional and unplanned commuting beyond the scope of teleworkers' plans. Ultimately, this results in the displacement of teleworkers from suitable locations for their work, the need to identify an alternative workplace, and a perceived decline in the efficiency and productivity of their work.

Elldér (2017) mentions that new everyday practices and strategies resulting from telework and flexible working arrangements may blur traditional spatiotemporal constraints, increase the availability of time for non-work activities, and the possibility of choosing new locations based on personal preferences rather than geographical proximity. Conversely, these findings suggest that geographical proximity continues to play a significant role in shaping the daily lives of teleworkers. In this regard, time is a critical factor, which, as Jakub points out, "is extremely valuable." This value is twofold: First, it seeks to reduce the time spent commuting; and secondly, it aims to optimize that time for work activities. The interviews demonstrate that the time and space flexibility enjoyed by the interviewees leads to efforts to optimize and streamline their daily routine (both work and non-work) and related travel as much as possible, thus finding "options that fit nicely into [their] daily schedule."

8. Conclusion

While the presented research supports and builds on earlier studies in many respects, it also offers a new perspective on how teleworkers experience, limit, and modify their temporal and spatial flexibility when commuting. The presented space-time barriers disrupt and subsequently reshape the form of teleworkers' daily journeys, but also when and with whom they can plan their daily mobility. Furthermore, the data demonstrate that telework does not necessarily lead only to feelings of isolation and a lack of social interaction with colleagues (Chen & Zheng, 2023), but in conjunction with flextime, it can also result in isolation from acquaintances whose schedules and rhythms differ from those of teleworkers. This may ultimately result in the undertaking of trips with individuals with whom this rhythm is more readily synchronized. Although Allen et al. (2015) posit the necessity for distinguishing between the impact of telework and flextime on commuting, this research demonstrates the need for further distinction between the impact of such work arrangements on work and non-work trips. The time barriers resulting from these work arrangements can primarily affect the planning of non-work trips and activities that teleworkers wish to undertake (e.g., going out for brunch), while space barriers, conversely, have a more significant impact on work trips and commuting to alternative work locations. As Elldér (2017) observes, whilst geographical proximity may no longer exert the same influence as it once did, the presented data show that proximity to an alternative workplace remains a significant factor influencing the time–space behavior of teleworkers, particularly in cases of regular or daily commuting. The findings of this research suggest that commuting, the selection of an alternative place of work, or the time during which commuting occurs, are influenced not only by sensitivity to time spent on transport (Erdoğdu & Watson, 2022) or efforts to avoid rush hours (Wöhner, 2022), but are also a reflection of the subjectively perceived efficiency of such a journey. This is represented by a balanced ratio between the length of the journey, the amount of work done, and the time spent working at the alternative place of work.

In alignment with Fischer (2004), this research does not perceive the presented time–space barriers as insurmountable hurdles or as an unchangeable consequence of time–space conflicts that interviewees have to deal with. The barriers presented here may have solutions. Nevertheless, the transformation of time barriers and the elucidation of their origins may present a considerable challenge, as they are rooted in deeply entrenched preconceptions and subjective perceptions of when work should be performed. However, once such barriers are overcome, there may be no feelings of guilt stemming from the preconception that this norm is being deviated from. A partial yet positive change in the general support for more flexible work in the Czech labour market in this regard may be, for example, the amendment to the

Labour Code. Coming into effect in June 2025, this amendment aims, among other things, to improve the reconciliation of work and non-work/family life (MPSV, 2025). Whilst the present amendment will not resolve the source of the temporal barriers presented, and the consequences of the changes it will bring can only be assessed over time, it may be an important driver in setting a new work standard—one that is essential for overcoming the aforementioned barriers. Furthermore, the solution to the spatial barrier associated with the absence of an internet connection or the prohibition on the utilization of laptops is chiefly a matter of the specific settings and rules elected by the establishments (e.g., cafés). In order to reach a compromise between the establishment and its users in this regard, possible solutions to overcome these barriers may include introducing free internet access for a limited time, designating separate work zones, setting specific days (e.g., weekends) during which laptops cannot be used, or setting a minimum spend that ensures the business profits from the space used by the teleworker. Nevertheless, this measure may result in disadvantages, as previously discussed in relation to cowork spaces, and may consequently lead to additional (financial) barriers. However, such measures would empower teleworkers to select workplaces based on their preferences, thereby eliminating the need to seek alternative workplace opportunities, extend their commuting times, and experience a decline in productivity, as evidenced by Kamila. Conversely, by modifying their rules, such establishments could potentially appeal to new clientele while preserving the character of a "third place" that serves for relaxation and socialization.

However, the presented research has several limitations and thus leaves room for exploring spatiotemporal barriers in different contexts and other forms of flexible work arrangements that have not been addressed. For example, the research did not deal with digital nomads, who are characterized by hypermobility and free choice in shaping their everyday lives (Mancinelli, 2020), or primary caregivers working part-time (e.g., mothers on maternity leave), for whom childcare may be associated with a number of spatiotemporal constraints in their daily routine and mobility. A further limitation of this research is that it focused exclusively on barriers affecting physical mobility in physical space. Consequently, virtual mobility, which has the capacity to influence physical mobility (Konrad & Wittowsky, 2018), was disregarded. And although this article presents time and space barriers as separate entities, future research could explore the influence of one entity on another, and whether they further influence the time–space behavior of individuals who are affected by them.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The datasets analyzed in this study are not publicly available due to interviewees' anonymity and data protection requirements. A de-identified summary of the data is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

LLMs Disclosure

No LLMs tools were used in the writing of this manuscript.

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