

# PhD position on ‘New ways of working: in/exclusion of employees with disabilities’ (1.0 FTE)

There is an increased trend among organizations to turn their workplace into a ‘new way of working’ (NWW) (e.g. through activity-based workspaces). Despite a belief that this will benefit workplace collaboration, inclusion and democracy, it remains unsure to what extent new bodily norms of the flexible and mobile employee will benefit or disadvantage people with physical and/or cognitive impairments. Through a mixed-method design, this project aims to uncover the disabling/enabling effects of such working arrangements for an already marginalized group.

## Job description

Evidence of the disadvantage people with disabilities (PWD) face in today’s labor market abounds and scholars have come up with a number of explanations, which all deserve merit. Yet there is a remarkable lack of explanations engaging with spatial aspects of the organization. Although the importance of the physical environment in the disablement of people with impairments has long been recognized theoretically and empirically in other domains such as human geography and architecture, research in management and organizations on the role of space for PWD remains rare.

There is an increasing interest from academics in the spatial trends and fashions that have come to dominate the world of business. One noticeable trend in this regard is the change from ‘cellular closed offices’ and ‘open landscape office’ to ‘activity-based flexible offices’ or ‘distributed workspaces’. Such change in office type is often accompanied by a mixture of other organizational features such as flexible work practices (e.g., schedule flexibility, telecommuting), particular managerial modes (e.g., self-management) and specific organizational configurations of work (e.g., autonomous teams) which aim to make the workplace more democratic and transparent. This ‘New Way of Working’ (NWW) as it is often referred to, in practice for individuals means they no longer have their fixed seat or individual office but interchange their desk in an open-landscape, whilst occasionally working from home or ‘en route’ between workplaces.

This PhD project has as aim to investigate to what extent NWW are enabling and/or disabling the workplace experience of people with disabilities, including people with both physical (e.g. mobility, sensorial, ...) and cognitive (e.g. autism, ADHD, ...) impairments. By bringing together both the designers of such spaces (e.g. architects), those who have ordered them (e.g. management) and the often forgotten users (e.g. PWD), it hopes to sensitize organizations towards issues of ‘universal design’ and accessibility for all, and offer practical guidelines for future design and policy making. For this purpose, a mixed method approach is proposed, consisting of quantitative survey on the one hand and qualitative focus groups as well as shadowing techniques (observations combined with informal interviewing) on the other hand.

The research will be conducted under supervision of Prof. dr. Eline Jammaers and Prof. dr. Laurent Taskin. The successful candidate is expected to:

- perform scientific research in the domain described by completing a PhD thesis;
- present results at (international) conferences;
- publish results in outstanding scientific journals;
- participate in activities of the research groups s/he will belong to, as well as the activities that are part of the PhD training.

## Requirements

We seek highly motivated candidates with an MSc degree in applied economics, business engineering, management, sociology, or a related discipline. We are looking for candidates who:

- have a strong affinity for issues of (in)equality, diversity, social justice and work transformations;
- show an interest in 'Critical Management Studies';
- are familiar with social science methodologies, preferably both qualitative and quantitative;
- have excellent scientific writing and presentation skills;
- are proficient in English and French or Dutch (or prepared to acquire proficiency in a local language)

## Conditions of employment

We offer an initial full-time research grant of one year renewable once, with a possible extension to a total of four years upon successful assessment in the first year, with the specific intent that it results in a doctorate within this period, and depending on an internal selection process.

The grant amounts to 1943,72 € net per month (2019 figure) including social security. More information about working at UCLouvain can be found here:

<https://uclouvain.be/en/research/welcome-desk>.

Starting date: 1 October 2020.

## Department

The candidate will work for UCLouvain, at the campus in Louvain-la-Neuve (30km far from the South-East of Brussels capital, and 30km from Leuven), and be part of Louvain Research Institute in Management and Organizations (LouRIM) and will attend the PhD training offered by the Doctoral School in Management

LouRIM is an institute devoted to theoretical and applied, empirical and experimental studies of management of private and public organizations, including but not limited to research on internal and external functional management processes that are present in all enterprises and organizations. Since management by itself is characterized by its multiple facets, dynamics and interdependence with resource, process and product development, the science of management requires multiple approaches in terms of functional orientation, research methodology and focus. This is why the Institute mobilizes around 30 faculty members and 70 researchers from the fields of economics, information system science, operations research, psychology and sociology to address management questions of societal and economic relevance.

## Additional information

Qualified applicants should send by email (1) a letter of application, (2) curriculum vitae, and, (3) a short 2-page proposal for a research plan relevant to the present position as well as (4) the name, position and email address of at least one academic referee (e.g. previous master thesis supervisor) to Prof. Dr. Eline Jammaers through the 'Apply' button.

The application deadline is June 30, 2020 and suitable candidates will be contacted and invited for an online job interview before July 7, 2020. For more information, and further details of the project, you may contact Prof. Dr. Eline Jammaers ([eline.jammaers@uclouvain.be](mailto:eline.jammaers@uclouvain.be)), or Prof. Dr. Laurent Taskin ([laurent.taskin@uclouvain.be](mailto:laurent.taskin@uclouvain.be)).