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# **Establishment of flexible work as organizational development: Results from a qualitative case study**

EAWOP Small Group Meeting “Working Anywhere, Anytime:  
Work Flexibility from a Management and an Occupational Health Perspective”  
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## **Establishment of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) as organizational development:**

How do organizations have to change in order to support successful FWAs?

Which challenges and solutions can be identified?

What impact do previous experience with FWA  
and the “maturity” have on how to establish FWAs?

As work changes, how do organizations change?

# The FlexWork Phase Model

Weichbrodt, Tanner, Josef & Schulze (2014)

	Phase 1: on-site bound & strictly hierarchical	Phase 2: flexible as an exception	Phase 3: inconsistent & evolving	Phase 4: flexible & project-based	Phase 5: location- independent & networked
Architecture					
Technology		<b>“Beginner”</b>		<b>“Advanced”</b>	
Policies		little experience with flexible work arrangements		with established flexible work arrangements, wanting to develop and professionalize	
Leadership					
Norms & Values					

## Methods: Qualitative case study

13 cases (teams)

9 different (large) companies

4 “beginners”, 9 “advanced”

for each case:

- interview with team leader (1h)
- group interview with team (1.5h)

topics covered: development on architecture, technology, policies, leadership, norms & values

plus: 3 interviews with experts from IT, facility mgt, HR

qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2014) with MAXQDA, group coding

6 deductively developed main categories, each 10-30 inductively developed sub-categories

→ content analysis lead to roughly 1200 coded text passages

## Deductive main categories for the qualitative content analysis

❖ challenges around flexible work

❖ enabling conditions

❖ hindering conditions

} given (or lacking) conditions which make flexible work easier or harder, “static”

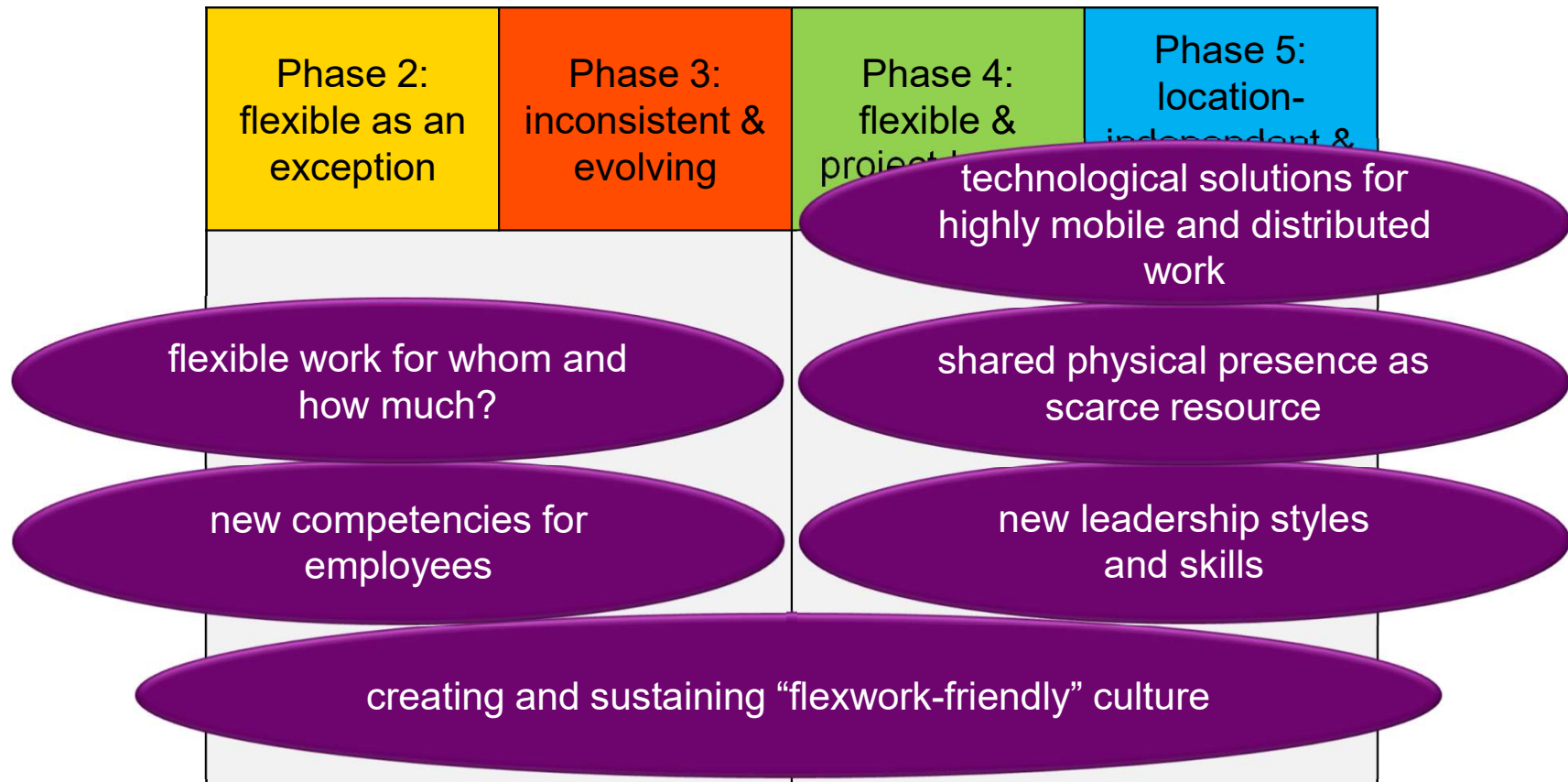
❖ control processes: organizational level

❖ control processes: supervisor level

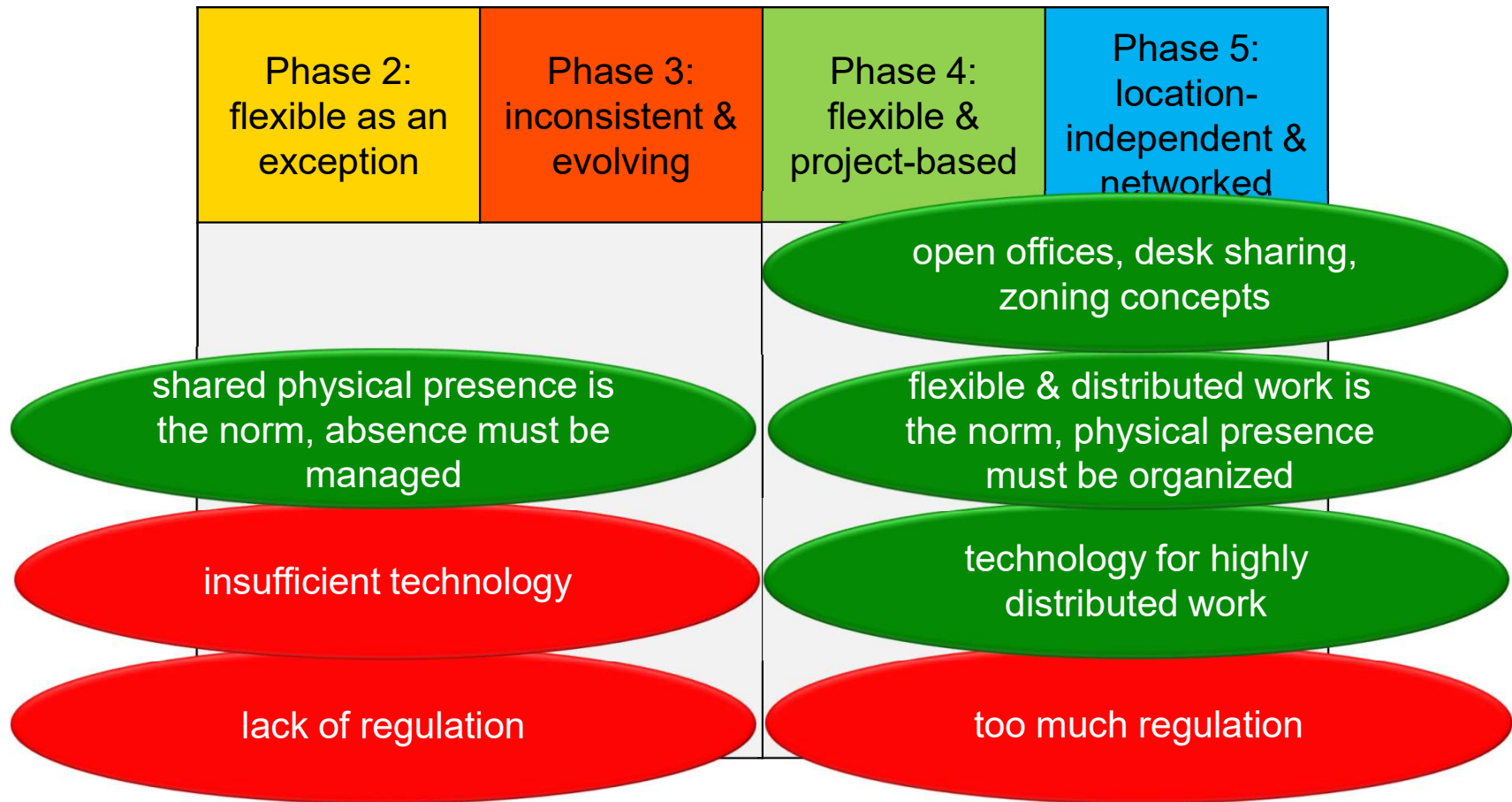
❖ control processes: team level

} Management processes, decisions, deliberate change, “fluent”

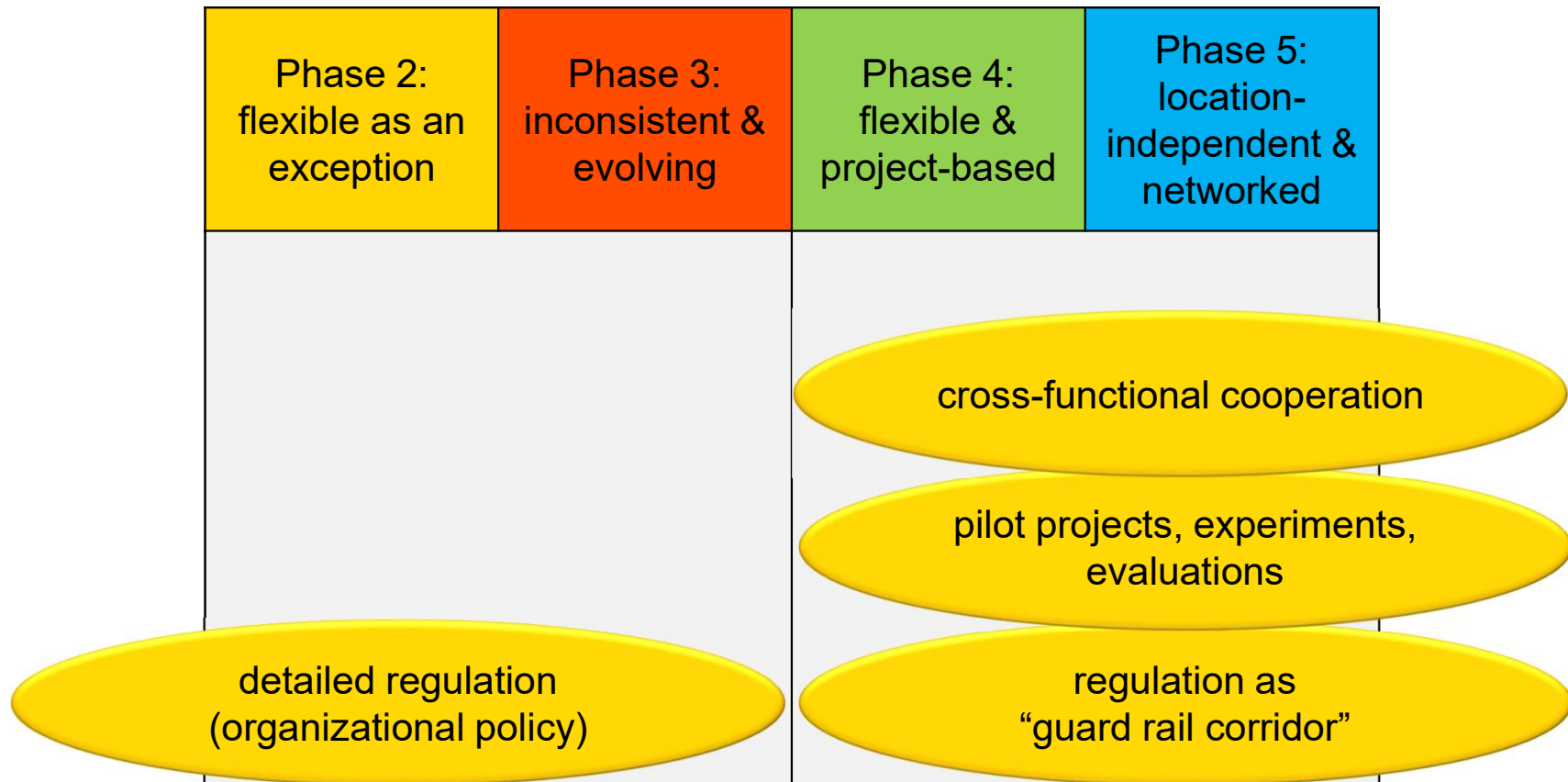
## ❖ Challenges around flexible work



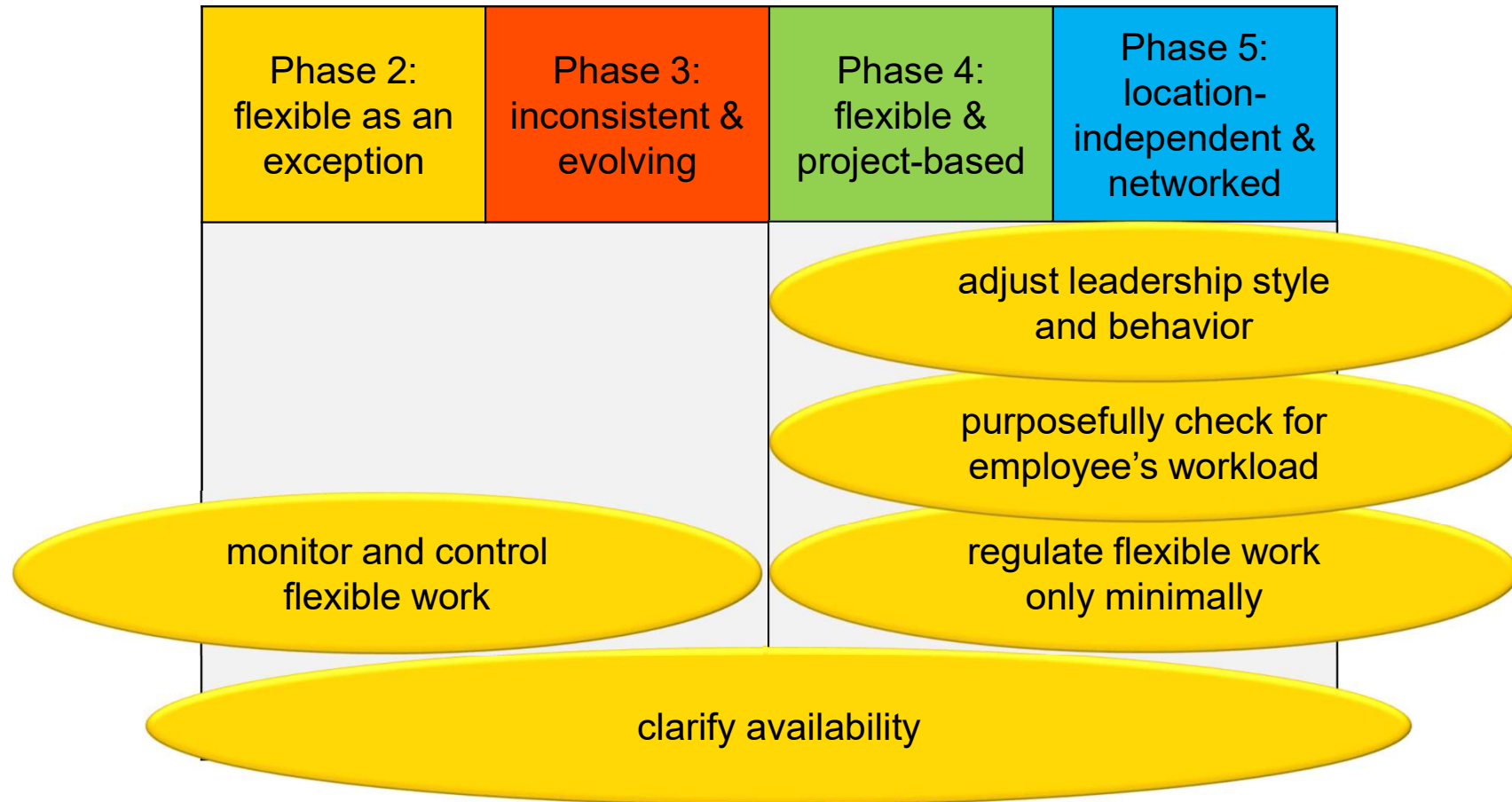
❖ **Enabling** and **hindering** conditions



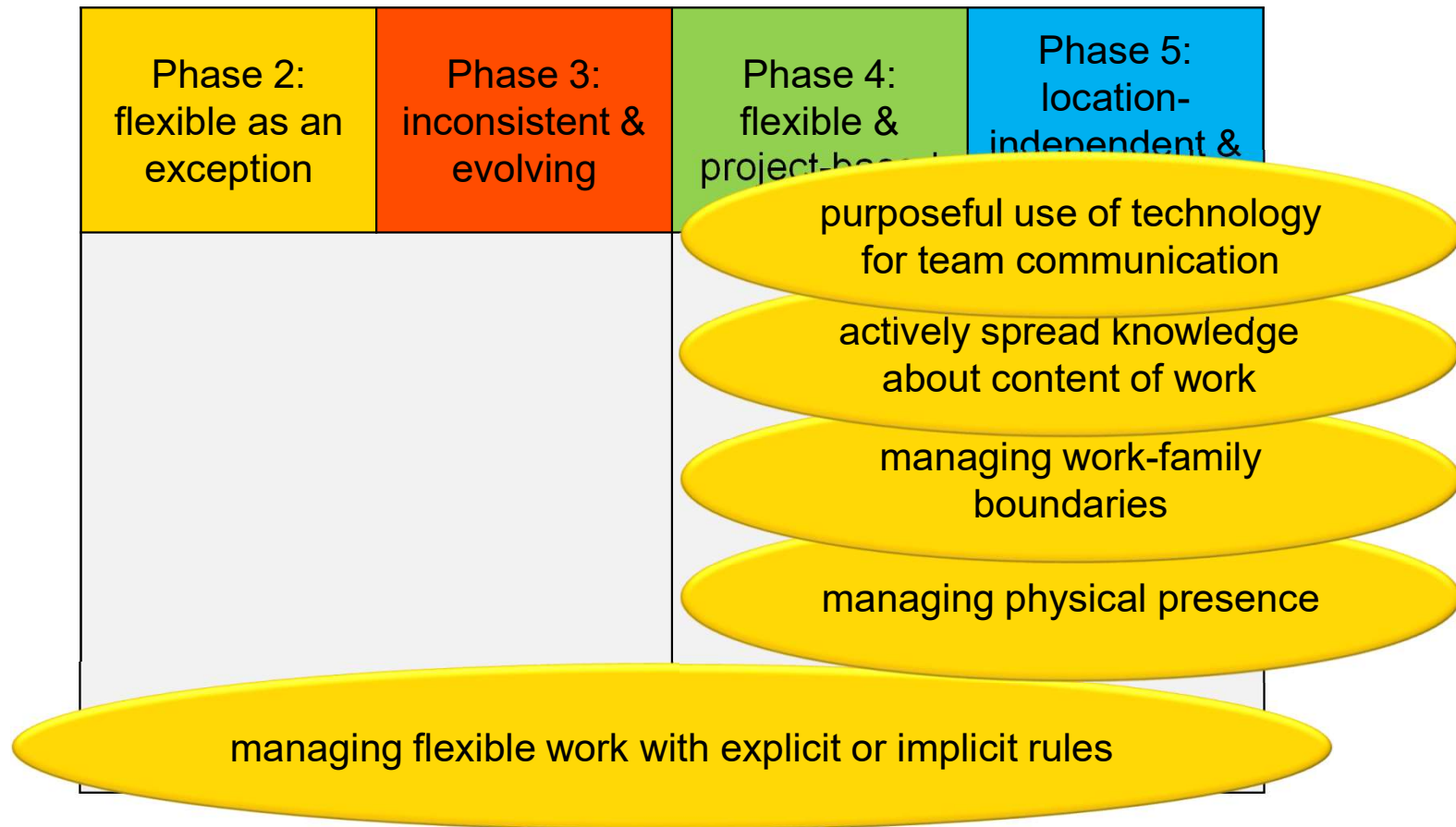
## ❖ Control processes: organizational level



## ❖ Control processes: supervisor level



## ❖ Control processes: team level



## Conclusion

- “Beginner” and “advanced” teams with different challenges different solutions
  - Establishment of FWAs can be seen as a developmental process
  - “Beginners” worried about regulating absence, while “advanced” have to organize co-presence
  - Shift in mental models on what is “normal” flexible work
  - “Advanced” teams can make use of a greater repertoire of management processes
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- As work becomes more flexible, managing it becomes more complex
  - Recommendation and “best practices” should take into account the maturity level!

## Three open questions

- How can our results be generalized (quantified)?
- What about small companies?
- How can we take into account “bad FWAs”?

**Thank you for your attention!**