

Ne[x]t Working



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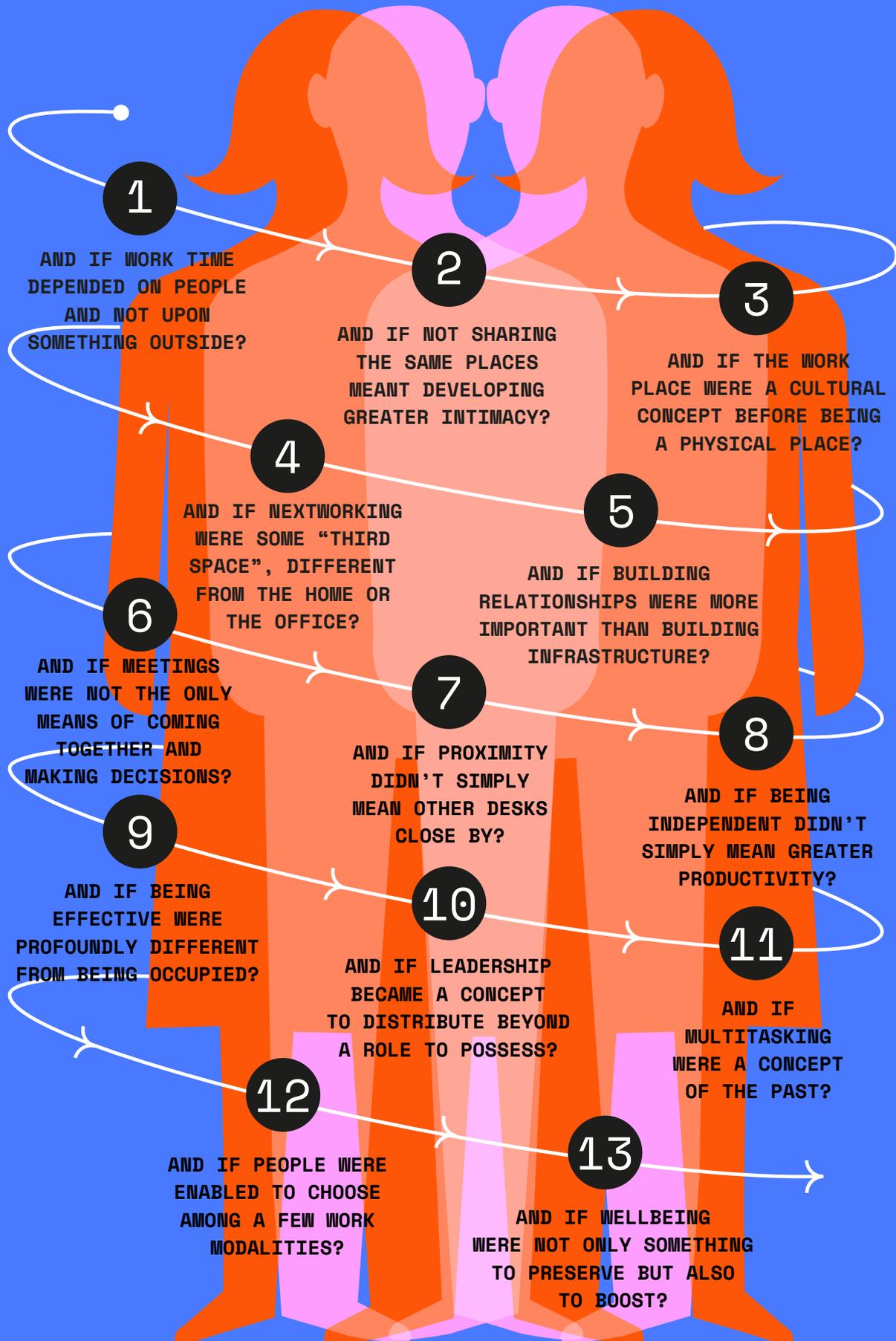


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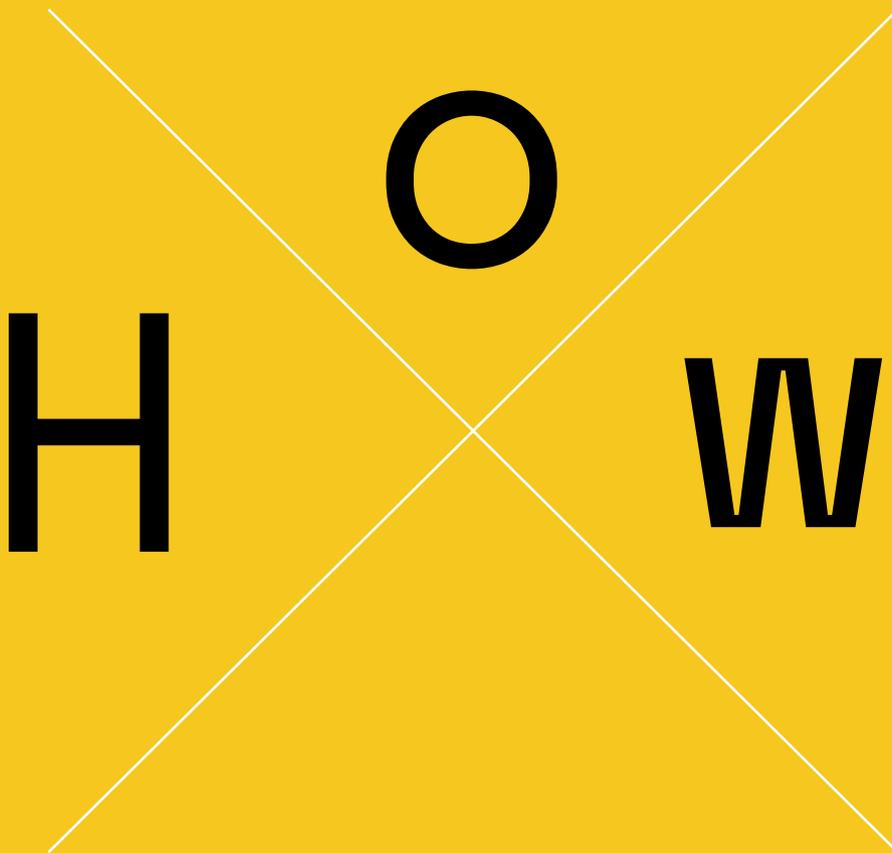
CONTINUE...

This instant book will continue to be enriched by contributions from: psychologists, designers, managers, anthropologists, sociologists, researchers, entrepreneurs.

They'll find places for multidisciplinary reflection to nourish fresh outlooks.

Next Working

We need a new narration



- * How will the generation of those who experienced COVID emerge transformed?
- * How will it change our way of experiencing meeting and collaboration spaces?
- * How will it change our way of experiencing and organizing time?
- * How will we understand, include, manage and intrigue each other from “different distances”?

Welcome to reality: the virus hastens on and is changing everyone's habits. The result remains the same at all latitudes: normality, as we knew it, has momentarily disappeared. Dining out, an aperitif with friends, a weekend "out of town" - none of these is possible anymore. Even the actions we took for granted are gone, like dressing up for work or having breakfast at the bar before going to the office. Spaces, too, have changed: home is now "out there", the balcony has become our interface and our digital is now our desk, the true environment within which we conduct our social lives.

The situation we're experiencing requires our adaptation. Much has changed now and we find ourselves forced to think and act by doing "old things in a new way". Perhaps that was our slogan before. Now it's an obligation. It has us experimenting with new practices, new rituals. We tell each other "We didn't choose this" and, as often happens, that formula can hide an alibi. However, faced by such a sudden and radical change, we need to be fully ourselves - present in all that continues to depend upon us. And that is no small thing.

One lesson we'll take "home" with us is that of having understood we can't

bend reality to our desires and that we're unable to choose the rules of the game. Does that have us feeling fragile and helpless? No, it simply leaves us with the awareness that we must return to seeing reality for what it is. But here's the question I ask myself as entrepreneur and designer: How does one return to designing the future? The tsunami that's overwhelmed us has set our compass in crisis, undermining our ability to see the future, yet we need to go back to Imagining and Seeing the future, redesigned. This applies to our "We" as people, our "We" as an organization, our "We" as a community and society. It is a need.

It's a new narrative we need, some outlook ahead that motivates us to endure over the coming months - inspiring us to imagine the future for the better. A narrative that helps us understand what might happen next. Next. That's just it.

But how?

Firstly, we should consider this emergency as a window in our life as organizations by which to accelerate our design of new ways of working as well as new ways of more sustainable relationships to which we can make space in the future. Here's how we can read the ongoing epidemic as a strategic challenge that can make us stronger - restarting with a new

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vision that's even more open and inclusive than before.

To begin with we must find and ask ourselves the right questions. An oddity that generates no questions can only spell an unproductive lack of ease, fomenting disorientation.

One question we're thinking about is "How shall we change the way we work?" Except that over the coming months we'll be committed to saving our work, "so how shall we emerge from it transformed?" "By which new rituals?" It little suffices anymore to speak of REMOTE WORKING (even that language is to reconsider) So: What will NEXT WORKING be like?

How will the generation that's experienced COVID emerge transformed?

We're all inexpert - everyone (young and old) united by a common experience that, like any trauma (some significant, unexpected event), has impact upon our way of perceiving, living and acting.

How will our way of experiencing our space of meeting and collaboration change?

NEXT SPACE - The challenges are clear: today our work is a job in relation to others who're not "physically present". As such, the sociability of work is becom-

ing something else.

And if our sociability were also made up of bonds that identified us - bonds whose physicality served precisely to distinguish them from those that were solely "digital"? What then? And upon re-emerging towards normality could we choose between physical and digital which collaborative meeting space to adopt? Will it be possible to return to being together in collective contexts? We are social animals. It's natural for us to meet for socialization and to unite, yet these are all possibilities that can't be taken for granted anymore.

How will our way of living and organizing time change?

NEXT TIME - As is evident, our relationship with time - not only with space - is changing too. That's not in the sense of new appointments and/or deadlines but as a new sense of synchrony. It's a new present, a new now - also because our place, within this now, has hardly been lightened. Quite to the contrary ... in some sense we've become a pivot, an intersection through which things pass or from which to at least supervise what passes. How shall we organize our agenda of priorities? Will the management of our work and personal times meet and merge, thereby redelineating the limits and perimeters of standard schedules? Will it change the way we organize our ac-

tivities, appointments and meetings with others?

How will we understand, include, manage and motivate people who are at “different distances”?

NEXT ORGANIZATION - We've had to replan and redeploy people and resources in a new way - one that was unanticipated.

Our business has splintered into people's homes. We've had to exhaust our organizational thinking. We should reconsider old patterns and break them down, invent new models that motivate, primarily, before they be technologically accessible and sustainable.

Now, after a few weeks, we're able to start evaluating the effects of our choices. However, at the same time we realize that our organizational thinking continues to remain “under fire” and challenged. He must continue to think about solutions for the now, for what's around the corner, for the future.

NEXT LEADERSHIP - In rising to the challenge, how will our leadership evolve? And here the challenge merges with another “emergency” - that of roles of responsibility. Perhaps never as before, leadership and organization are now two sides of the same coin. We struggle to conceive of the need to reorganize ourselves this structurally with-

out some guide who is capable of keeping our eyes elevated above ground level. Even if the future we most need now is that of the short term, it's always a future to which any true leader can look and plan for.

NEXT OUTLOOK AHEAD - How will we reconceive our organization's outlook ahead in sense terms - that vision that keeps us inspired, guides the actions of our people and updates our identity? While indicating a direction, our outlook ahead can also to lend internal cohesion to our organization.

Questions to which we've no need of answers

Experience after experience we'll build a new alphabet. Here we shall only succeed if we seize every opportunity to experiment with fresh practices and new rituals and take the time to understand what works and what doesn't, to share our results as we accelerate our understanding of the “herd” - all the while sharing and collaborating. For this much we understand: to emerge from this we need to create a system, and swiftly. If governments are only able to show themselves enclosed within their borders then it's we companies that have always traversed geographic borders and included different cultures that can truly collaborate. Because the world is one, and it remains one!

We can plan and design a method to arrive at a clearer vision of an unimagined context

There's no expert we can quiz

Here we all start from the same position - we are people of the same generation, all united by non-experience.

Yet we can plan and DESIGN a method towards a clearer vision, including interpretative models and different disciplinary perspectives by which to better "see" reality without surrendering to simplifying intentions to recompose the tiles of a complex context that still remains unimagined. Here's why we began developing an INSTANT BOOK on NEXT WORKING to help us put together angles and experiments that we'll do gradually or in which we'll participate.

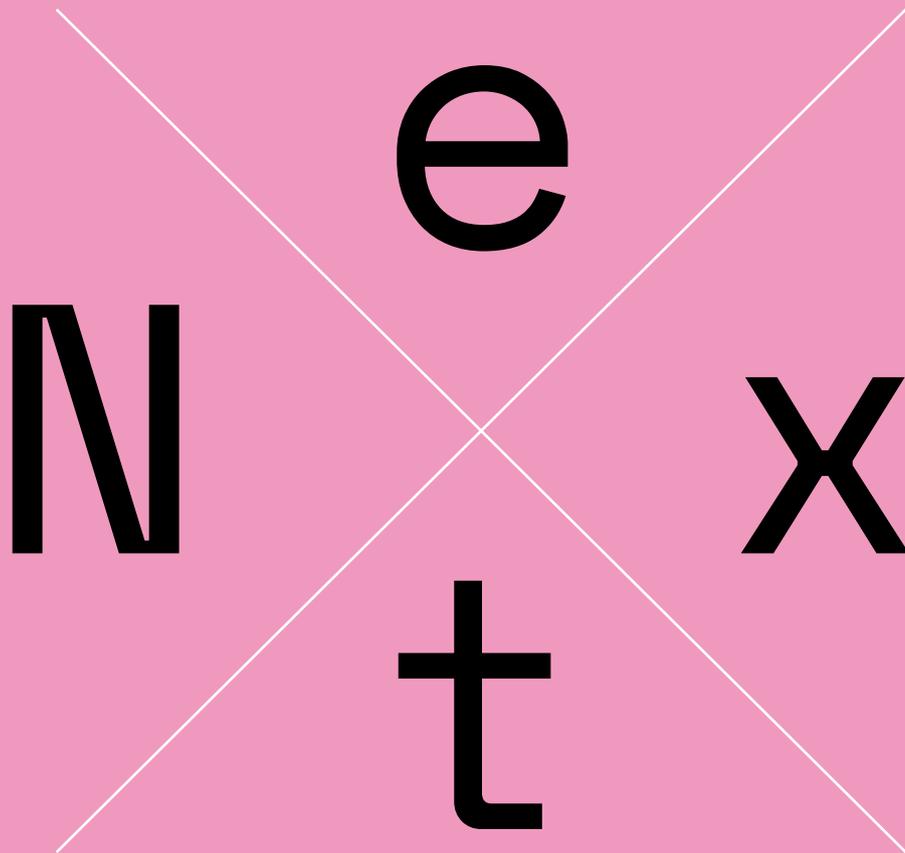
By its very nature, design seeks to interpret complexity by grasp-

ing its sense structures (the ability to see), it undertakes the indication of a pathway (the ability to predict), rendering it visible (the ability to show). Here's why we conceived of activating a dialogue, a conversation, but also some confrontation between different points of view by which to imagine, negotiate and process what we've termed "NEXT WORKING".

I close off with one last thought. For us, difficult choices lie ahead: management of the emergency, the sweat of making people, families and our area all safe, of ensuring business continuity with few resources - not only as change in substance but also as shape change. Will we be able to apologize for the mistakes we inevitably make?

Ne(x)t Space:

A wide space enabling new convergences.



* What does it mean to design a next-space that enables meeting, relationship, collaboration?

* What are the enabling factors, what are the limits, what are the opportunities?

Working increasingly means designing usable spaces. These must be enlivened, populated, enabled. Any software or tool suffices little in «setting up a broad space» and new way of working. The greatest risk comes with copy-pasting physical workspaces into digital workspaces by replicating exactly the same logic, the same rituals, the same distances. That is ineffectual to achieving aims.

Convergence is the operative word.

1. Convergence of new distances to overcome the perception of isolation

We needn't think any longer of a widespread network of many connecting *bricks* and so more spaces. Instead we should think of space as a *single brick*. A few years ago we spoke of the world as being 1. The same is true for widespread space. We should conceive setting up a **single ne(x)t space** within which people can be made agile in their roles, tasks, objectives and shared rules of engagement. Redesigning distances for an extended space means planning people's involvement and active roles respecting the achievement of set goals.

2. Convergence of new collective working methods with shared tools extended to the whole group.

Generally speaking, software and technology help us - or, rather, they offer us solutions that enable people to have new ways of working. The risk here is to go overboard with the tools. I've seen video-calls with 5 collabo-

rative working tools all open at once where people got lost behind technologies and no longer had a clear goal. **Preparation and simplification** are essential to setting up the ne(x)t space. Identification of the work tool to deploy as well as definition of the sharing and interaction mode are all fundamental in determining the direction of the **ne(x)t space. It's not the physical tools that are important anymore but physicalising visualization of the collective work output.**

3. Convergence as a new on-and-off concerning times, breaks, interactions, sessions, a fresh rhythm.

Converging times that don't go wasted is the new challenge. The first target to identify is action times of **each specific ne(x)t space**. Rhythm is essential to define pauses, the passing of instructions and interactions. Allocating the right time to the preparation phase in designing the rhythm of the **ne(x)t space is fundamental to the session's success.**

In sum, following more than 30 days of remote working and more than 70 ne(x)t-space experiments at different levels, I can say that experimenting with ne(x)t-space today means preparing the convergence of a new space identity, shared and co-designed with all participants, defining distances, on-and-off moments, methods and tools.

We must design new interaction models



I'm not crazy
about gluten
burgers.

* Can we still collaborate in this context of indispensable physical separation?

* Do you wish, in any collaborative model at a forced distance, to develop new relationships?

We're all sponges soaked with emotions. We're complex beings who continuously imbibe moods and sensations - even within professional contexts or in the most aseptic cultures, ostensibly distant from the intimate, private dimension. The qualitative and quantitative investment of any personal resources we put into our actions depends on that. Our relationship and interaction with other human beings (that "relatedness" touted by the most solid psychological theories on motivation) is the real lifeblood by which we nourish ourselves and that stimulates or inhibits our behavior.

Gluten meat is really delicious when prepared "glutenously".

Then there's this virus that isolates us physically - a threat that leaves us no choice (denying the equally fundamental motivational axis of "independence") save that of misanthropy. It does this most underhandedly, playing upon the fear of generating pain and suffering for ourselves or, worse still, for those "in relation" to us.

Can we go on collaborating in this context of indispensable physical separation? Sure we can! Technology has never been readier to support us, making us extremely efficient. Can you do it at will within any collaborative model at a forced distance? That's unlikely if you neglect the emotional dimension of your participants and there's no exit time from the situation in sight.

However -and fortunately- we remain beings who don't give up easily and who know, even when beset with difficulty- how to find evolutionary stimuli as we renew our outlook and find creative solutions.

And when it comes to collaboration, once we're over the euphoria of "it can be done thanks to this or that software application and a sufficiently large and stable bandwidth" then it becomes necessary to start designing and implementing new ways of interacting that don't buffer but are fundamental, are not surrogate but wise and aware, and which put people at center rather than operational efficiency alone.

Let's not generate expectations that'll create evident qualitative disillusion in the mid to long term. Neither let us deceive by saying that every physical experience, whether collaborative or training, can be superbly substituted thanks to some great technology. Concerning the idea of the gluten burger, which simply recycles an old one altered by a completely different substance: though we might prefer some good, sustainable, healthy food for our nourishment, it won't replace what we were used to before.

Therefore,
collaborating in
Coronavirus times
means inventing a new
language, reconsidering
and breaking down old
patterns, inventing
new models that are
emotionally
motivating before
being technologically
workable.

Leadership: reset or restart?

*

What does it mean to design a next-space that enables meeting, relationship, collaboration?

*

What are the enabling factors, where are the limits, which are the opportunities?

Simone Colombo

Our ability to make predictions had already gone into crisis for quite some time. We're writing a unique and painful page in our history and nobody can tell what's on the next page. The Coronavirus has brought some awful terms to our daily conversations in business: epidemic, pandemic, war, tsunami, emergency, quarantine, infodemic, reconstruction¹: no one had a plan for what's happened and we're still learning to cope with it - in all areas of our life, in freedom and in wealth. In only a few weeks, various economic growth ratios have gone from a historic high to a minus 25-30%². Our life has changed in just a few days and we get the feeling this change is only at the beginning. "Until recently our challenges as managers were organizational transformation, automation, artificial intelligence, skills gaps within organizations. Now, from day to night all has changed, with people concerned

about the future of their work and their life"³.

The strength of this big bang was such that "there was no need to convince anyone: it was clear to everyone from the start that the next day would be the same as the day before"⁴. We're experimenting and experiencing new actions. But are we updating our operating system by installing the new programs we will need

or are we resetting the system itself? Is this a restart over these weeks or is it a reset? And if it is a restart, is this the new normality and will it be forever⁵? Or if it's a reset, what should we prepare for in the daily life of our businesses? Are we really ready and willing for "totally digital mode"? Digital affords us the possibility (with difficulty and by redesigning our interactions) to keep part of our activities alive. "It's fortunate we live in a digital age"⁶.

¹ http://www.treccani.it/magazine/parolevalgono/Le_parole_del_Coronavirus/index.html

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51706225>, with specific reference to the stock market from the beginning of the epidemic until 3 April.

³ Josh Bersin, "New work realities", Tuesday, March 31 - hosted by HR Executive Magazine. The "trust barometer" published by Edelman on 19 January 2020, reveals that 83% of collaborators fear losing their jobs owing to phenomena such as automation, recession, the gig economy, lack of skills. The report is based on an online survey conducted in 28 countries, with more than 34.000 participants interviewed between 19 October and 18 November 2019. A period in which the healthcare emergency hadn't yet arisen. Data which, presumably, is still higher today and could maybe affect 100% of the interviewees. <https://www.edelman.com/trustbarometer>

⁴ Analia MacLaughlin, EVP, People and Campus, PVH Europe. Testimonies during webinar (see above).

⁵ Analysis by the Austrian daily Die Presse predicts that this situation will endure for a further 1 year, with different intensities from Country to Country, <https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-euro-peans-crave-normality-but-remain-patient/a-53002476>

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We're all aware of it: it's as if we'd suddenly accelerated towards the final state of the digital transformation. But habits don't just change like that, overnight. In many cases the response to the emergencies of businesses and their managers has been similar. Firstly: give people all the information to access and use every online tool available to them (I wonder why that hadn't been done before). Secondly: help them to manage well, from home, their time, their health and their own pace. Thirdly: give

them the available training resources, especially on how to transform their workspace, even collaboratively, into a totally digital logic. Fourth: give resources to support curiosity and spread culture thinking - not only of collaborators but of their families too. Fifth: guide people in choosing and following what is priority and what is most important⁷. The first three points are emergency management and partially recover what you had to do initially. The fourth introduces an inclusive,

6 Alberto Rossetti, psychotherapist and author of *Nasci, cresci e posta. I social network sono pieni di bambini: chi li protegge?*, Città nuova, 2017 in an interview on www.webecome.it of March 2020.

7 Simon Brown, Chief Learning Officer, Novartis. Testimony during webinar cfr. supra. Brown speaks of an accurate selection on Coursera of free training contents for parents and families, with over 4000 people online in the arc of a week.

wellbeing logic that extends the responsibility of companies to the social fabric of their people, beginning from the families. The fifth introduces a typical leadership theme, only now it assumes a more radical importance. Should the projects we were managing before the emergency be taken forward or not? Should we suspend and rethink them because conditions have changed or would adjustments suffice to render them consistent with our new context? Here too: Do we need to reset or restart them in a new way? To stop or proceed, despite everything? I've found myself grappling with that decision several times. Has what we started earlier become even more radically important or is it likely to become superfluous and counterproductive? It isn't enough to say that it depends upon the project itself because the strategy might have changed and its replacement may remain still unknown. I think leadership within companies has an unrepeatable op-

portunity to reset, provided there is willingness to act. Take action to eradicate the most harmful difficulty experienced before the coronavirus - which is of making things happen. Because too many decision-making levels, too many procedures, too many processes, too much digitalism, too much collaboration as well as too many services and too many products have had the effect of not letting us make the right decisions at the right time. We devised these to protect ourselves (and even made them agile) but often they ended up hindering us. This emergency will outdo weak signals so we're forced to understand what's no longer needed and save what really matters. Making these decisions will demand courage but it will be vital, literally, to make them. We shall have to do better with less, we shall have to be frugal yet no less innovative. Indeed it's the contrary we'll need⁸. As managers we also have an unrepeatable opportunity to restart,

8 Navi Radjou, innovation strategist, https://www.ted.com/talks/navi_radjou_creative_problem_solving_in_the_face_of_extreme_limits?language=en

9 Paul A. Argenti, Communicating Through the Coronavirus Crisis, HBR, 13/03/2020 https://hbr.org/2020/03/communicating-through-the-coronavirus-crisis?utm_medium=email&utm_source=news-letter_monthly&utm_campaign=leadership_activesubs&utm_content=signinnudge&referral=00206&deliveryName=DM74973

because people who are fearful tend to seek the voice of their leaders more frequently and trust their indications more⁹. That “there was no need to convince anyone”, testified these days by Simon Brown (Novartis) in his story, reveals the new conditions and new responsibilities to which leadership must now be able to respond.

Today companies and their managers must be able to look not only at sustainability- to all the families connected to their company as well as to the social fabric in which the company is inserted. Social impact is a transformative process - already started by some organizations before the coronavirus crisis but which must now accelerate dramatically. These are the companies that have reconstruction of our Present in hand because they are the institutions in which people invest the greatest trust¹⁰. The ethical dimension and the ability to keep one’s promises are two open questions and the answer depends, first and foremost, upon our actions as managers and on what we ask of our collaborators. We have to be ethical, tell the truth, take care of people, our business and

our customers. We will have to make difficult and sometimes painful decisions (some of us have already done so, right ?!): only credible, consistent managers will do it the right way. First we’ll need to demonstrate the skills required, be attentive to what our actions communicate: face the problems, try to make our actions count, make it clear we really care, that our life is at stake. We shall have to listen more, share what we learn, build our stories and act. We shall have to demonstrate: not just dispense advice and instructions but act. Delegating takes on another meaning within this ethical dimension: there’ll be things we won’t be able to delegate anymore and others we’ll have to delegate, whether we like it or not just - just to focus upon what’s priority. And within this choice to act and delegate we’ll display our reliability and worthiness of the trust people place in us. Each within their responsibility and doing their bit - and perhaps more besides.

¹⁰ <https://www.edelman.com/trustbarometer> (see above)

When interpersonal distances are (un)limited

- * What role does intimacy play in remote working?
- * Will intensive remote working repay us after the epidemic?
- * How do we wish to work in the future?

“Can I work in my pajamas from home?” And then: “What are the correct clothes for my home office?”.

These are not ‘wrong’ questions, but I don’t think they can be solved through tutorials and video guides.

That would be the easiest way, of course.

It’s the most popular route. **In this way the term “remote working” went viral, almost as much as the virus did - the real one.** Yet we can hardly afford to dismiss any questions - even the most superficial ones. Because the search for answers unites us all. It concerns a profound issue to be addressed: **that of the emergence of a new work culture.**

Let’s begin with the facts. Owing to the coronavirus, millions of people have found themselves working from home. Everything happened suddenly. Some of us had no experience, others had never used the necessary digital tools (even if we’d had them available for years). Most of us identified work with some physical place: a place to meet customers and have coffee with colleagues. Experts, thematic blogs and columns were all born - from evening to morning. A new ecosystem of information ready to give us all kinds of advice, to work efficiently - even from home. The gurus suggest self-discipline

and that we always wear professional clothes as if we really should go to the office. They also warn us of the potential risks: having the refrigerator always to hand can make you put on weight. And there’s no lack of practical ideas: how to use virtual backgrounds during video conferences. All this is certainly useful, yet it remains short-sighted.

The challenges to be faced lie elsewhere. And they’re far more complex. Let’s face it: we don’t yet have the necessary skills for this new collaboration mode. Even the most advanced Silicon Valley companies have worked that one out.

Working remotely requires a re-think of our relationships and our culture - not just within organizations. Our colleagues or customers are suddenly inviting us to meetings in kitchens, living rooms or impromptu studies. We find ourselves close - incredibly close - to each other. Despite the physical distance, we share a part of our intimacy. **We live and work in spaces where interpersonal distances have become (un)limited.**

Social distancing and remote working are precautions necessary to slowing the spread of Covid19, yet the consequences extend far beyond the health sphere. For many of us, private life and work activities had already been

Trustworthiness and trust really aren't options anymore:

both are essential ingredients to supporting relationships that have become more intimate, direct, informal and unstructured

separated by very thin borders. Now there's complete encroachment: the barrier of home privacy has fallen. And the solutions cannot be limited to flexible hours. **Reliability and trust are not really an option anymore:** they are the essential ingredients to supporting relationships that have become more intimate, direct, informal, unstructured.

We know: **trust** must first be gained, though mutual support -between managers, customers and colleagues- is not a mere commodity to be exchanged at this stage. Let's call it a "**non-repayable investment**" to evolve our next working. Share screens, use real-time tools, type a document with four (six? eight?) hands while experimenting with new software... all this increases the possibility of errors.

But **making mistakes and trying again is fundamental** when it comes to launching new practices. I think we really need this.

Then there's a contingent question on the tables of organizations: **will all this pay off in the future when the pandemic is under control?** I think that as humans we are naturally conservative and have powerful comfort zones. Here I'll hazard a prediction: soon the emphasis on remote working will deflate. As soon as possible, we will crave (true) I'm having an unrepeatable oppor-

tunity: it's unlikely (hopefully) we'll relive such a massive suspension of traditional rules. **Today we can experiment as much as possible, explore the -infinite- potential of digital tools,** understand which ingredients feed digital relationships and which practices we shall definitely need to avoid.

We have a responsibility: don't waste this asset.

It must nourish guidelines, evolve into consolidated practices, forge new links between people, organizations and new business scenarios (because people's needs and behaviors will change too).

It's a sad period, we should say that free of rhetoric. The virus is a genuine threat and it can return. Yet today we have, and can ask ourselves, the most important question: **how do we wish to work in the future?** And personally I don't give a fig whether we'll be collaborating in pajamas or in more formal outfits if what we have is shared thinking and mutual trust.

Stay friendly, stay safe.

Videoconfe- rence solution

“Count me in!”

* How much can we really manage to remain working efficiently when forced far away from others? from colleagues, from the teams we galvanise, from our boss?

How far can we really stay and work effectively when compelled to be far from others? From colleagues, from the teams we galvanize, from our boss? From Customers! A week, maybe ?! Then you look around and ...

We seek to build new proximities - not physical but comprised of glances, of appointments, of new rules and routines, of conversations. Conversations become our space and we choose to be in the most useful and inclusive of them. Sometimes time is prolonged and we enter more deeply into the sense of our words, our gestures and our behaviors with others.

THE SCREEN helps us: it's a bit like a mirror. It tells if you're tidy, if you have the right expression. It reveals how many smiles you give and how many you receive. It has you reading the other's tiredness.

There's the **DIGITAL BREAKFAST** with all the editorial staff every morning at 9: the order of the day is established, priorities, round table discussion, any arising difficulties. It's something that wasn't done before and we're quite sure we'll continue to do it going forward when we really choose to do so.

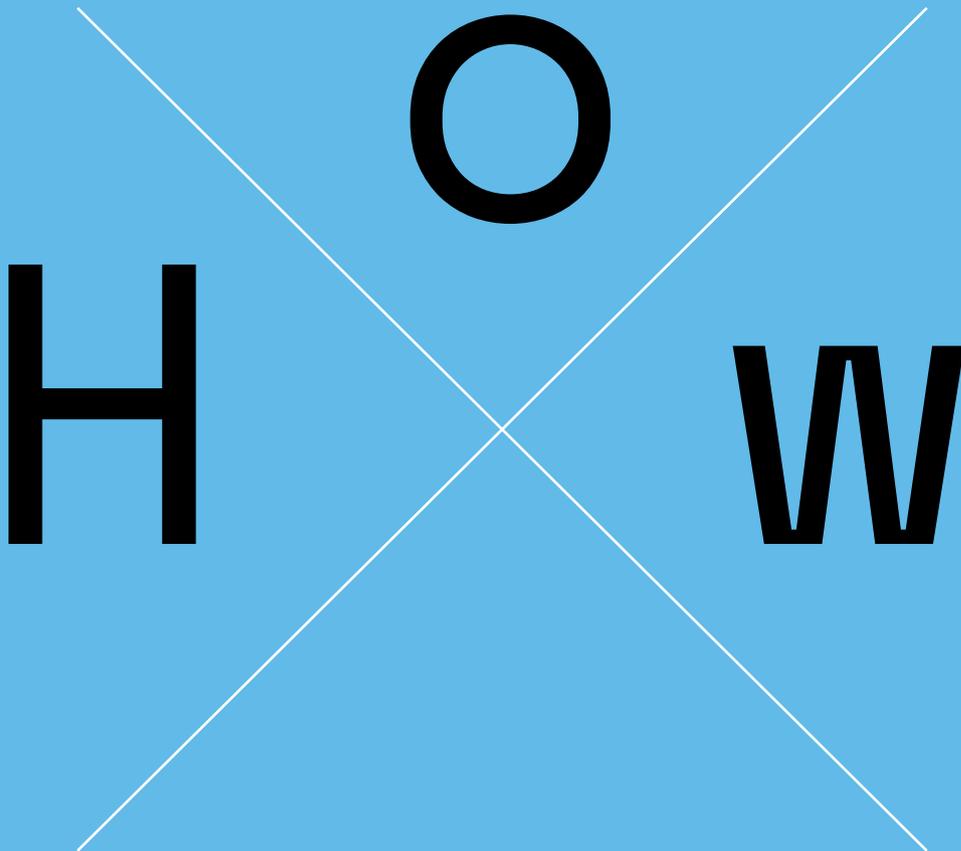
I share the table with a colleague of mine and now we try every day to watch each other in videochat -for at least a few minutes. Sometimes we just look at each other, a bit like Abramovic in her "The Artist is Present" performance: the look is never indifferent. We control the level of stress,

as if we were saying "**I am present**". And after two minutes we say things that make us laugh very loudly :-)

There are and always will be distant people: international teams, customers in Rome or Genoa, physically-distant people - and not only, conversations in which we struggle to make an entry, projects in which not everyone is on board.

Over these weeks **we're learning to get closer, to facilitate ourselves, to use technology to do this, but above all to feel the need for closeness and read it in others.**

“The first days of work in times of Coronavirus”



- * How do we build a new normality?
- * How do we create spaces of courage?
- * How do we form a new way of working?

For some young colleagues there was no **beginning**.

There was a very brief start with the same old things done in offices throughout the world: the welcome, the tour among colleagues, the red tape, that key to the coffee dispenser, the computer and the five-digit security code to the main entrance. Then everyone went home. Home to work from their **bedrooms**, which is often one’s favorite place in the world, or to work from the kitchen, together with parents or flat mates.

We create space of courage

When emergencies crop up it’s the needs of the most junior among us that usually get sacrificed. It’s they who lose basic information even if it’s they who are the resources upon which **new normalities will be built**.

We create spaces of courage, also for the future, because the “We, who are weakest,” that is, all those who must face some new organization, can claim spaces of independence. Because what’s happening has taught us all to chip in.

One can’t turn around and apologize for how things get done.

Shores are needed.

When interacting, activities are coordinated, information is exchanged and expectations and behaviors get influenced. Because coordinates change, normality need not be replicated

in such spacial-temporal situations as these. So new rituals must be planned. For example, alongside that flood of calls during which we’re all together, it’s necessary we plan “appointments” with people in a dimension that’s even more intimate and personal.

Within the timeless space of these days, rites are still more useful.

The networking effect

If we’re able to create a network with people just feshly arrived, if we know how to immediately take care of them, then we’ll be able to model a new way of working – maybe because what’s happening may never end completely but only transform us.

There won’t be a before and an after because we will be all new.

The background is a solid pink color. Overlaid on this are several large, solid black shapes: a diamond on the left, a circle at the bottom left, and a complex, multi-lobed shape on the right. The text 'Work factory of identity and meaning' is written in white, sans-serif font, centered over the diamond and circle shapes.

Work factory of identity and meaning

* Se il lavoro si fa nemico, il lavoratore si trasforma in tossina.

Try to get too close to a lazy-bones and you violate the secret safety margin that seems registered in his DNA. He stops looking at you with that usual, dreamy expression and quickly hides himself - an elementary but rather effective safety mechanism.

A harvester of peaches recognized to be of quality once told me that the success of their fruit also derives from the rule of distancing. During Spring one

eliminates a part of the buds to avoid "crowding" along the branches and so the plant can better nourish what fruit survives. Encroaching urbanization over the past two centuries that's still in progress has prompted a systematic violation of that rule of distancing and correct distribution, thereby causing deprivation of a fundamental means for placing ourselves within space and so as to "define" ourselves

The loss of personal identity and resultant unnatural veering towards individualism starts here.

A disorderly and antisocial response to that undressing, an erroneous means of reaffirming that sacrosanct right to not get lost beneath the wave and to remain a particle, separate though identifiable as singular condition for being called by name - an indispensable premise for cooperating. That desire becomes increasingly poignant as we get stacked up within work spaces - like a compressed file, over-populat-

ed and anonymous. Half of my patients have become this way owing to illnesses accrued in the workplace. A distortion of being "cured", because work, together with friendship and love, is among the three vital tasks - those areas by which we contribute to the evolution of the world as it endows us with purpose that lends meaning to our existence.

Work is not simply work,
but one of the greatest sense
factories.

For this reason, rethinking
places and the culture of work
has become an absolute necessity.
If work becomes an enemy,
the worker turns into a toxin.

Firstly, for itself, since suffering consumes, then for others, because those who suffer will stop cooperating, often surrendering to the temptation of social indolence - a form of behavior that calls to mind the role of those who remain asymptomatic during the pandemic we're experiencing. The damage they produce remains perceived, though deadly, because they're barely identifiable and so easily infect the environment, weakening the entire system - which remains defenseless.

If someone on our team just rests their hands on the rope in a tug-of-war competition, pretending to pull, then it will go unnoticed

though we shall lose the contest. Workplaces within which we spend most of our

Waking hours are ideal environments for attacking individualism in favor of the individual - two synonymous terms, albeit poles apart. Where there is more of the individual there is greater cooperation, greater altruism, variable increases in productivity. Where individualism has imposed itself, because the individual remains at a distance and struggles to find their own personal space, then the system will collapse inwardly, imploding, since its supporting beam will have corroded.

People, organizations, environment.

Dimensions upon which to build a new balance.



- * And if networking were a “third space” different from home or the office?
- * What if being independent didn't just mean greater productivity?
- * And if leadership became a concept to distribute as well as a role to possess?

For years we've worked to bring a bit of home to the office and now, without much ceremony, the office has taken over our home. We've tried to make our work smarter. Suddenly we're experiencing something that resembles forced (remote) labor. What does all this teach us? For me, two dimensions come to mind: the former personal, the latter organizational.

As for the personal, beyond the greater concern that everyone expresses and which regards our health and that of our loved ones there's one aspect that has much to do with our knowledge of ourselves. It's difficult to first imagine how we could react to an enforced situation that relegates us within our four domestic walls for such a long time.

The question we're all asking ourselves is: "With what does this experience leave us?".

I see three things, among many:

- the ability to organize our days while trying to make them as normal as possible;
- the rediscovery of little things and small gestures, of rituals that strengthen;
- solidarity among colleagues and towards people who share our condition, as well as others who are unfortunately less lucky than ourselves.

However this moment leaves us with other interesting side ef-

fects and here I come to the second dimension, which is that of work.

We definitely take home:

- an almost miraculous sense of urgency in dealing quickly and effectively with the things to do during an emergency;
- looking at what's essential by shedding the frills and those redundancies that were often imprisoned within company rituals;
- a drier and denser work time that's not without some unexpect-

ed consequences;

- certainty about what we've argued for years: that largescale agile work isn't only sustainable but also more effective in many cases. The things I mention comprise the best part of an effort that shouldn't go wasted once we've returned to -relative-normality. And it's precisely the term "new normal", already widely used, that represents the real challenge now. In other words, face this fresh phase strengthened by what this period has taught, by learning to find a new balance - not only with the surrounding environment but also

with the organization in which we work, with the people we meet, with ourselves. Will we make it? That depends a lot upon the business decision makers, but a lot on each of us too.

It will depend on how many questions we'll be able to ask ourselves, with care. Of the thirteen lucid questions I read when looking at the infographic at the beginning of this instant book, which I task myself with defining a "doubtery", I choose three to which I feel I can provide as many, quick, reactions.

And if nextworking were a "third space" different from home or the office?

I am convinced that added to the discussion on "workplaces", which will keep the experts of different disciplines engaged for a long time, it remains essential to take care of other space typologies - those more metaphorical such as that which concerns the self and is intended as the need for a new individual balance, but also for some fresh expression within the organization.

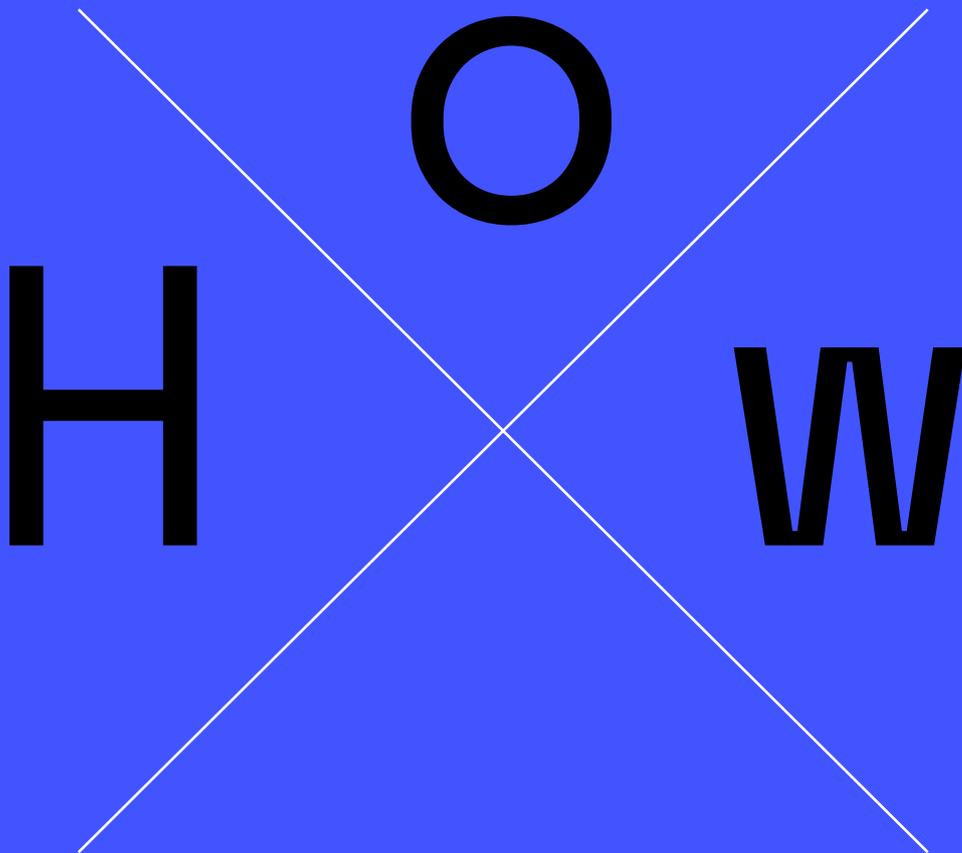
And if being independent didn't only mean greater productivity?

This intriguing question can open new outlooks that have much to do with the possibility of making a new pact between company and people by which the entrepreneurial dimension, often imprisoned within the narrow space of the traditional organization, can take unprecedented forms and meanings.

And if leadership became a concept to distribute rather than some role to possess?

Well-designed remote working isn't enough. We need to redesign leadership that knows how to "lose control". If "trust" is indeed the characterizing term for this suspended time then perhaps the moment has arrived to give it the weight it deserves - also by thinking back to those managerial paradigms by which companies are guided.

Questions from the “greats”



* Come possiamo pensare il lavoro in modo nuovo?

One of the prophecies that always struck me about Fahrenheit 451 - Ray Bradbury's science fiction masterpiece novel - refers to the evolution of television. In the dystopian world conceived by the novel, people use home entertainment in an “immersive” way: they study jokes during the day and in the evening, comfortably seated upon their sofa, they watch their favorite shows. Netflix + Zoom + virtual reality = not bad for a book written in 1953! Now if we want to be pessimistic it all looks a little like what's been happening these

days, whether work days or not, during this time of quarantine: sitting at home we play some scripted role written by someone else (which we understand only in part). Yet if we wish to be -if not optimistic- a little less pessimistic, then we can stop focusing upon the next line and try looking a little further. The tremendous impact of what's happened remains indisputable and all agree that we won't return to “normal” - whatever that somewhat obsolete term may represent for us.

But how are we to interpret this “no return”?

Having to rebuild our house from the foundations (and, incredibly, Covid-19 has very quickly given us that possibility), a series of options remain to us:

1. We can do all as before, in all respects and for all things.
2. We can remake the outer facade but adopt new technologies for all the parts that are not visi-

ble (the electrical system, pipes, home automation).

3. We can do something different, both externally and internally (perhaps with some reference to the past with a postmodern twist).
4. We may build no house: maybe leaving a simple lawn, or consider

a library or even a runway ...

In this sense, analyses circulating around our current situation and on prospects for the future are (rightly) oriented towards the first two choices, much less towards the third and fourth.

Rightly so, because something even needs to "cling", since the business continuity remains important, etc. However, perhaps it's equally important to conceive of something more ... discontinuous.

Let's do a mental experiment

What would John Stuart Mill have said of the current pandemic? And Karl Marx? And Charles Darwin?

What kind of house (?!) would they have designed?

Alas we are dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants and though this be only rhetorical hyperbole, it nonetheless helps us understand that the time has come to ask some questions of ourselves that are more "radical" (not in the strictly political sense):

How can we conceive of work in a new way? What about mobility? And the emotional and relational dimension?

Of course, the practical impact of all our proposals will necessarily have to deal with reality and with the need to respond to problems of contingency, though it will perhaps do so with another momentum and with another outlook.

As we're reminded by one of the most influential thinkers of recent years, the philosopher and sociologist Sla-voj Žižek, we've all

become too fatigued by, and for, our work. We need to release new energies, understanding how to reconceive ourselves and our world. The temptation to devise new procedures (points one and two) gives organizations security. Yet it's really only by dreaming and imagining that we can truly evolve in the social and individual sense (points three and four).

To quote the main character of another science fiction cult movie, *Fight Club* (1999)

**"I dream of a world
where . . ." over to each
one of us to finish the
sentence.**

Between optimization and
the right to
laziness

*

Perceiving the future
means separating the
wheat from the chaff

Marino Niola

Covid-19 forced us towards an obligatory and unscheduled upgrade. Within a few months we'd already made a leap which, under normal circumstances, would have taken years. We believed we were facing an emergency of the moment and, as a side effect, we began building the future.

We thought we were reacting to something of cyclical scope. Instead we acted within a scope that was structural. At a leap we've waded through much of the digital divide that lays claim to a country's development. We quickly learned all the forms of "existence optimization" of which remote working is only the most trivial aspect.

Difficulties force humanity to separate the wheat from the chaff between immediate profit and what truly affects us. It's no coincidence that gossip and the electoral view of politics have taken a back seat. It calls into question that ecosystem of information which often builds its offer upon the model of weather forecasts - incessantly giving importance to alleged storms, crises and clashes. Now the poverty of that approach is emerging strongly, which is great. Upon extending our gaze further we see an added effect of this emergency, which is the acceleration of our trust processes.

Above all, in the world of work the trust placed in a collaborator allows talent to emerge and affirm itself.

Typically that's a path which takes time. However, trust is no longer a tool of exchange during this phase. Instead it's a long-term investment by which all are given the opportunity to experiment and plan.

Once out of the tunnel, this leap forward will prove invaluable to us. To quote the poet Dylan Thomas: "Life always offers you a second chance. It's called tomorrow".

I believe the virus has given us fresh opportunities to conceive anew certain forms and modalities of work we'd deemed immutable.

Now's the time to exit those mourning process dynamics and begin thinking about what we wish to retain from this experience. Amid history's great turns there's always a thing lost and a thing gained. And we should be especially careful to capitalize upon what we've gained. We focused in this first phase upon efficiency and speed - the physiological benefits of digital. Our next step is to strike a balance between these

forms of "thought tweets" and new ways of making space for relaxation as we evaluate possibilities, actions and reactions. We've discovered that many things can be done remotely. However, since optimization isn't simply stress overload and an intensification of work, that speed up also warrants a right to laziness: an essential condition, I think, for regeneration and renewal - all to reset the thought machine.

It was precisely during this phase that we fully realized how vitally important guaranteeing work is - just as maintaining job guarantees is no less so. There's a fresh desire for security emerging. The question of welfare, for instance - a twentieth century conquest now considered a costly burden to be scrapped- is undergoing an urgent comeback. Over these years

we've conceived of well-being either from an exclusively economic or healthcare perspective. Yet well-being devoid of any consideration of 'being' remains an empty concept, and we're beginning to understand as much. We had imagined that some of us could reach it individually. But the most important battles are either won together or everyone gets lost.

**... yet well-being
devoid of any thought of
'being' remains an empty
concept.**

The background of the slide is a solid yellow color. Overlaid on this are several large, solid black geometric shapes: a circle at the top, a large irregular polygon in the center, and another circle at the bottom right. The text is white and positioned over these shapes.

Is the future punishing us with contactless work?

* Why are we this fragile?

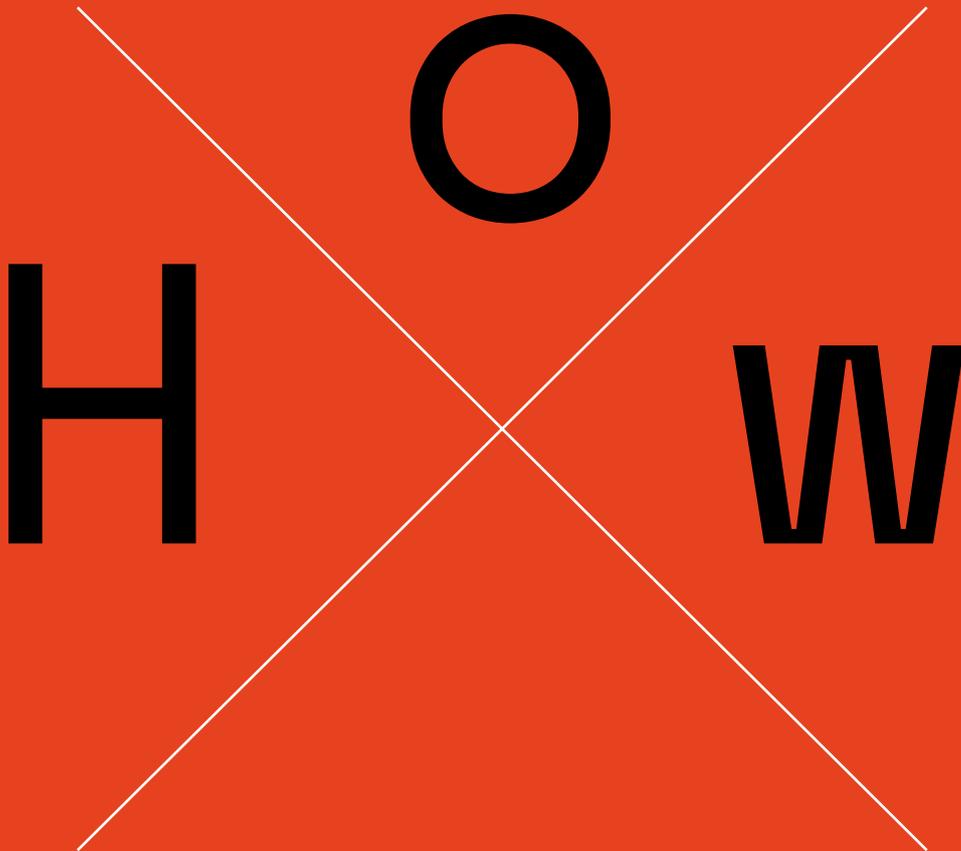
Coronavirus as divine punishment
For catechists and moralists, it might symbolize a great revenge. No more promiscuity - not even at work. Kindly keep your distance and, finally, introduce contactless work - which, like any contactless payment, ensures touch-free transactions and processing. In other words, we should only speak of digitization and extreme virtualization via meetings comprised of holograms and reality enhancements, with its consequent effect upon the human species. It's obvious: after 8 hours of Fortnite (the video game) or forced virtual labor, the human mind collapses into displays of solely repetitive performances (hardly innovative). Heaven forbid. The human being is a social animal (as Aristotle said and wro-

te), more similar to ants or bees than even the solitary eagle, from which we might at least glean a composed audacity to live and work as we wish - which is currently denied us. The real issue now isn't the future of work but the health of the future. How is it we're not in a very good but rather very poorly state of health, with almost 24 million chronic (or perhaps imaginary) patients in Italy? Why are we this fragile? Why are we so drugged by medicines and other garbage? Nay, Covid-19 is no curse, though perhaps it's a punishment from other kingdoms (from animal to vegetable to that of inanimate minerals) - all fed up with our delusional, destructive presence. It's simple: having poisoned the earth, the earth now poisons us.

What we need now is a rapid spread of contagious sustainability,

a good epidemic to render us all the more empathetic and likeable to the planet that hosts us. So can one return then to working and making a disturbance.

Let's learn from the surfers out there
Seizing opportunities without time-cramming



- * Can indulging this contingent situation represent an opportunity?
- * Can adaptating prove more effective than imposing?
- * How disposed are we towards giving of our time?

Before the contagion went viral the west and the east experienced an enduring relationship of cultural contagion - a liaison that has roots in antiquity and leaves its traces in the founding myths of our civilization, as in the abduction of Europe from Asia by Zeus - the joint, symbolic representation of an original promiscuity and an irremediable separation which, perhaps definitively, has marked the future development of two parallel approaches - philosophical, social, economic and private. And if one of the effects of the crisis is to enlarge, as with great magnifying glasses, some cultural elements of a society, it conversely facilitates comparison, too, with potential alternatives. Let's see some examples, today, of companies engaged with averting a drop in the employment of their employees. Among these is an important American bank that's chosen to reassign over 3000 of its employees¹ to call center duties, many of whom freshly-hired and unrelated to customer care dynamics. But tech and insuran-

ce multinationals² also create job marketplaces from which less tasked employees can select duties to perform based upon their skills. These measures, aimed at guaranteeing that employees keep working, appear to betray some defect in our form of western thinking: an unconditional belief in the effectiveness of direct action. Respecting the examples shown: productive efficiency can be guaranteed by keeping employees working, even at tasks unrelated to their skills or aspirations. From the other side of this perspective there's the eastern suggestion which perhaps those from the East have forgotten³.

A concept of efficacy⁴ which, by disruptive action and as an emergency measure, counters the search for opportunity in every situation. Just as a surfer doesn't oppose the wave but rather rides its momentum to obtain the result s/he's after, so a more "eastern" point viewpoint of the crisis we're going through can suggest some means of supporting it and obtaining advantageous results.

1 <https://www.businessinsider.com/bank-of-america-shifting-some-employees-roles-amid-coronavirus-2020-4?IR=T>

2 <https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-the-coronavirus-crisis-is-redefining-jobs>

3 <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-03-09/Employee-sharing-helping-companies-get-through-COVID-19-0qvFZWc67m/index.html>

4 F. Jullien, Pensare l'efficacia in Cina e in Occidente, Laterza, 2008

Who among us during this period of isolation, perhaps even in spite of it, hasn't found them selves reflecting a bit deeper about themselves, their habits, their aspirations?

The lockdown has brought with it an almost inevitable predisposition to reflection, from which we often shy away either voluntarily -kept busy by films, TV series, reading or other occupations- or by forcing ourselves to perform any number of work chores, which tend to proliferate in precisely this period. Yet the time afforded us during the lockdown can be considered an opportunity to let this contagion of reflection spread by supporting it rather than suffocating it with some job that's forced and often an end

in itself. How many managers are actually willing to grant this opportunity, to indulge it, like that surfer with the wave? How many agree to leave time -apparently unproductive- to their collaborators in order for them to develop some reflection of their role and aspirations? It could be an opportunity to both share reflections and direct collaborators towards tasks that are better suited to their inspirations, aiming for a productivity driven by gratification rather than by mere occupation.

Self-organization and smart working: devoid of any foundations, forget the dizzy heights

- * By which levers should we act when designing an organization oriented towards smart working?
- * From what perspectives should we study this new phenomenon?
- * Which new leadership styles are emerging?

From 11 March 2020 - start date of the lockdown in Italy - remote working entered the homes of many Italians. We entered, without a plan, in the wake of the Coronavirus emergency.

The March 8th Decree of the Prime Minister reads in article 2, paragraph 1, under the letter 'r': "The agile working method governed by articles 18 to 23 of Law 81 of 22 May 2017 can be applied by employers over the duration of the state of emergency referred to in the 31 January 2020 resolution of the Council of Ministers treating of any subordinate employment relationship, in compliance with the principles dictated by the aforementioned provisions, even in the absence of the individual agreements envisaged therein". Thus, remote working can be applied, for now, even without any agreement between an institution and its employees. At the university where I've been working for 40 years, remote working was applied to a limited percentage, as in all Italian Public Administrations (5% in 2017, 8% in 2018, 16% in 2019). In March 2020 we arrived at 100% with all technicians and administrators in remote working and all courses in distance learning. A genuine revolution.

Yet technologies for distance learning have been available for at least 20 years. Indeed, telematic universities were established in Italy by the Decree of

17 April 2003 of the Minister of Education, University and Research, Letizia Moratti.

Within Italian public universities we've made more progress in distance learning and smart working in the last 2 months than we have over the last 20 years - which only equals the progress of surgery during the First World War. In sum, a decidedly "paradoxical" source of progress for medicine.

Meetings of collegial bodies, too, all get convened via video conference: study course councils, department councils, faculty councils, academic senates, boards of directors, evaluation teams, lecturer conferences, etc. Who would ever have conceived of this? Who would ever have proposed it? Who would ever have imagined it? Here reality has overtaken fantasy.

But it's not all rosy-colored. Many lab technicians require laboratories that their homes lack, and many administrators aren't in a position to be effective from remote since their work was, and remains, structured to be performed frontally and so with the viewers present. In other words, we find ourselves before a discontinuity heretofore unseen within our organizations, which we must face whilst trying to capitalize upon things that have improved even as we equip ourselves for yet others that need, instead, to be reformulated.

First consideration: we've experienced that much can be achieved remotely, at even lower cost and with better results.

Second consideration: as to organization of the former - with

most activities carried out frontally - never shall we return as before- remote work will increasingly become a structural part of the job.

Third consideration:

One can't improvise with remote working; revisiting the organization of work is necessary - a thing far more difficult - a change in the culture of both workers and managers is necessitated.

In reality, when designing organizations oriented towards remote working the levers upon which to act are manifold: organizational policies, or rather rules and guidelines treating of time flexibility, work place, choice and work tool personalization; digital technologies supporting communication and collaboration (in unified communication, social networks, the cloud, mobiles, etc.); new work space layouts and, finally, behaviors and styles of leadership that are linked to the culture of both employees and those who lead them.

Also, many perspectives remain out there by which this new phenomenon can be studied: labor legislation, technology, ergonomics, organization, culture. For the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, Remote Working (or Agile Work) represents a method for executing that subordinate employment relationship characterized by the absence of hourly or spatial constraints as well as organization in phases, cycles and objectives, all established by employee-employer agreement - a modality that helps the worker to reconcile

the hours of life and work while simultaneously encouraging the growth of productivity”.

Milan Politecnico’s Observatory defines this as “a new managerial philosophy based upon restoring flexibility and autonomy to people when choosing spaces, schedules and the tools to deploy

when confronted by a greater responsibility for results”.

What’s clear is that adopting Remote Working doesn’t mean having people work from home once a week and using new telematic technologies. That would be a parody of Remote Working.

Within the perspective of a truly “agile job”, organizational confines remain hazy. That too becomes a platform of connections, allowing people to solve problems while seizing new opportunities.

Remote Working is, above all, a paradigm that makes provision for revising the organization of work and leadership styles within the work culture ambit. As Tristan Rigendinger claims on page 24 of this Instant Book: “A fresh work culture must emerge”. If Nobel laureate physicist Philip W. Anderson stated that “the emergency, in all its infinite variety, holds the mystery more fascinating than science”, to pa-

raphrase his words, then we might as well conclude that “self-organization, with all its infinite variety, represents the most fascinating future for organizations”.

Today this perspective is all the more evident as so many Italian organizations - prompted by the Coronavirus - have taken the route of agile work. The title of this contribution summarizes the thesis supported here: that wi-

thout the “basis” for self-organization we can forget the “dizzy heights” of smart working.

In fact, on one hand agile work presupposes self-organized workers, self-leaders, and intra-entrepreneurs and “context building” leaders on the other. Permit me a “heroic” synthesis and I shall attempt here to outline four leadership styles. The style differences are identified by an intersection of four variables: leader role (active or passive); leadership effectiveness (present or absent); organization (one mind or many); governmental style (absent government, control, garrison).

Laissez-faire: the boss is passive, selfless, doesn't stimulate, doesn't collaborate, takes no responsibility, makes no decisions, provides no feedback. S/he goes unrecognized as leader by the employees; within this series, leadership is by election rather by nomination! The group doesn't cooperate and is not very cohesive. Control is absent and leadership is ineffectual. Organization remains attributable to one mind, viz. that of the boss.

Command: the boss is a manager, s/he's fond of taking command, being imposing, and is self-centered at times. Employees feel themselves to be subordinates. Here leadership remains only partially effective. Organization stems from one mind

and ensures partial control. We're used to a leadership that controls, but this reduces the leader to a mere controller. Yet we need, as suggested by Roberto Battaglia on page 43 of this Instant Book: “to redesign a leadership that knows how to forfeit control”. And as Ferrari historian Mario Andretti reminds us: “If everything's under control then you're going too slowly”.

Conduction: the boss is an enlightened person, s/he remains active and leads employees towards the destination. ‘Leader’ means precisely that: conductor, from the verb to lead, i.e. condurre. Here leadership is effective and control remains total, even if the organization remains limited to one mind.

Construction: the manager works to ensure that all employees become self-leaders. S/he builds a context of shared values, outlines a vision around which to mobilize everyone's efforts, provides energy for change, transfers the contents for professional techniques, sets an example. In turn, the employees develop not only skills but also self-motivation, which forms that basis of emergency processes ‘from below’ which makes self-organization happen.

The leader is no longer the one guiding her/his people towards some destination: instead each finds their own way within a self-leadership logic.

The leader becomes a builder of contexts by which everyone becomes their own leader on a regular basis.

Control is no longer central to the boss but operates instead from the employees themselves, at the peripheries. Here, for the leader, the transition from “control” to “garrison” is sealed. The organization is no longer one mind but many: those of all the collaborators. The effectiveness of leadership is due not solely to the manager but to whole group in its entirety.

Laissez-faire (negative) is rarely encountered in our organizations; the more common styles are command (negative) and conduction (positive). The best leadership style - that of construction - remains rare and typical of organizations called upon to operate in situations of great complexity, to which they respond with self-organized models rather than with hierarchical models.

In an organization that promo-

tes self-organization the manager shifts from a simple role to a complex one, from the “planning and control” of activities to the “creation and supervision” of the context itself - one in which true motivation is self-motivation, the result of a shared vision obtained by the example of the leader, who supplies the energy to change.

To manage this growing complexity, it's appropriate to focus on participation and upon the assumption of responsibility by everyone within a logic of intra-entrepreneurship. Here we require an intelligence that's spread out, inter-connected, self-motivated and self-activated. It is not resolved at the center. The future lies at the periphery - an area inhabited by “smart workers”. Next Working lies in the hinterland, frequented by “smart people”. Why so? Because innovation arises from the suburbs, far from any dominant models that systematically occupy the center.



(In)visible Leadership

* How much are we able to respond to, or silence, stimuli without being overpowered by them?

* From which “points of interior stability” can we recommence from a new normality?

In this new work dimension we're experiencing, within almost all industries and at every level we need to revisit such concepts as visibility and presence to ensure stability in the face of change while managing to maintain balance within our system when everything seems beyond our control.

In the space of only a weekend we barricaded ourselves in our homes, or wherever else hosted us on March 8, relying upon our improvisation skills.

Yup. Because if there was one thing "not to do" it was to remain motionless and await the return of "normal".

The event that sent shockwaves through our lives has acquired, as it continues to do, an exceptional, extraordinary character (although, as Nassim Taleb points out in his March 30 interview with Bloomberg, Covid-19 can hardly be termed a "black swan". Instead the "White Swan 'Coronavirus Pandemic Was Preventable'"¹. I've followed several people in coaching meetings and online training sessions in recent months, an altogether new experience

for me as well as for most people I met, with whom joint experiences were shared - all of which far exceeded both my own expectations and theirs.

This fresh way of relating has allowed me to observe and at the same time experience how distance changes our experience of this "improvised" remote working.

I discovered how everyone tried to recreate their own "pseudo-normality" so as not to completely lose control of their life and work.

How s/he chose physical spaces and set the different work stations up, each one rigorously "home-made (like bread and pizza), comfortable to a greater or lesser degree and often in simultaneous co-working with the rest of the family.

What experience have you had with the various remote communication apps and platforms, such as backgrounds and "digital-dress code", or which have you decided to adopt to present yourself at "imaginary" work tables or remote meetings, choosing whether, and when, to "put yourself out there on the spot".

Is everyone both "shielded" and "exposed" at the same time?

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BjVTm7F11Q>

Not with protective wear and viral risks alone but in a among (IN)visibles.

Paradoxically, not physically seeing others and not being seen has reduced everyone to both involuntary “archer” and “target” of dozens of stimuli: telephone calls, emails, WhatsApp messages, video calls - not to mention radio, TV, the Internet.

Many (too many), by which every “tiny living space” was quickly filled.

Yet it was also an unrepeatable opportunity for VISIBILITY. Many people, such as those I met at a distance in recent months, have had the time and space to observe each other as well as their old and new patterns of behavior, including effective and ineffective ways of functioning. Guided by questions and stimuli for reflection, they all realized:

- * how “ably” they’ve managed to respond to the multiplication of stimuli without being overwhelmed but by erecting bulwarks instead
- * what really allowed or prevented them from:
 - o either muting the phone or powering it off, or else cutting the connection so as to claim some necessary half hour to focus upon something important
 - o deciding whether or not to be distracted by each single email or choosing when “not to respond immediately” without “feeling bad” about it
 - o finding space during the day, or not, to either “get out” and reactivate their muscles or to take their eyes off their faces, free of any anxiety of “wasting time”
 - o topping up their energy and seeking out small “recovery” spaces - even to simply become aware that “we breathe” (we’re very careful about what we eat and on average we do it twice or thrice a day - yet hardly so when considering how we breathe, even if we do it something to the tune of 20,000 times a day, knowing

that conscious breathing is the only way of finding a balance between states of stress and calm)

- * realizing how much they've become capable at "organizing" their time, apparently dilated yet often "compressed" and out of control.

They discovered personal, and unexpected, "stability points" which allowed them to remain balanced while "putting under crisis" those certainties that proved instead to be "points of fragility" to be overcome so as to make way for fresh paths towards doing and being. Whether they occupied the role or not, everyone had somehow to become "leader of themselves" a bit more, learning to independently orient themselves within the ne-

bula in the absence of adequate tools of navigation, previous knowledge or "reliable" maps. Step by step, day after day, they entered and forsook temporary "cocoon" which, though not always facilitating a transformation into butterflies, proved nonetheless to be excellent incubators for reflections, experiences and insights - all precious resources for building a "widespread leadership" of people - even before roles.

Ne[x]t Working



Never lose
sight of the
big picture

*

The transformation by
remote of ADNKronos

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As company a news agency is bizarre. It operates on the edge because ministers and CEOs, governors and general managers all await real time information about what happens - which includes which analysis, decisions and declarations to depend upon. It's a machine that never stops, all day, every day - feeding radio, press and TV. The industry tangle of the press agency is that it reports news at the exact moment it occurs, and this poses production and organizational problems that can be summarized in a simple observation: a news agency cannot cease, ever.

With this irreversible cornerstone, the pandemic emergency posed a technical-managerial challenge hitherto unseen for Adnkronos, even if it concerns a professional community (of about 300 permanent employees plus a further 450 in loco collaborators) already accustomed

to deploying technological tools and having to deal with the production of text, audio and video content.

Within about two days, on around March 9, every single central editorial staff member of the peripheral editorial personnel and of the local and international correspondents saw their activity entirely from remote, thanks to collaboration amongst editorial staff and technicians. This made it possible to avoid any interruption to production while no longer having to reach and attend, editorial offices, branches, public buildings and companies.

In short, production never stopped.

Thus, the primary objective of the revolution was almost immediately centered, by the presence and mobilizing of all information flows, within some format - and always guaranteed. However, it wasn't all daisies and roses.

Technical success also heralded the illusion that continuing technological investments made over the past ten years and the natural bent towards digital of a press agency (paper-free,

rotary-free, logistics-free) would all suffice in addressing the emergency.

In fact, within the first week it was noted that the complex organism of the news agency had lost something while continuing to operate at full capacity. But what? The realization was not immediate, owing to the sheer avalanche of a thousand emergencies and the frenzy of the moment. Then the problem slowly revealed itself: as a body the 'press agency' is endowed with a collective consciousness of sorts, i.e. the ability to correlate facts and statements, news of the moment and outlooks upon the future. All the rhodium-plated, natural mechanisms that operate under any normal circumstances outside the pandemic emergency had been upset. Over those initial days of remote production, that collective conscience had displayed a mismatch: each individual worked with a great spirit of self-sacrifice, albeit detached from everyone else. Yet for a news agency the gestalt psychology motto holds true: the whole is more than the sum of its indi-

vidual parts. Evident already at first glance is that the breakdown was decisive: individuals soon began fixing the pieces of this collective consciousness together to recreate an interconnective system between those who write about politics, health and economics and those who report the news - reconstituting a community endowed with the ability to 'connect the dots' by way of facts and thereby transforming mere accounts into an organic, complete narrative. A move from the simple story of single facts to an understanding of interdependent events.

The result of this process of community rebuilding has afforded Adnkronos the chance to achieve unexpected results: its digital audience has soared to such heights that it surpasses the scope of any other news agency - even rising above the much renowned Ansa agency, a result never achieved before. But beyond provisional results, it's the lesson that matters most.

Whether socially distant or close by, IT exchange can hardly suffice. What's needed is time set aside to share our in-depth interpretation of events. Only this way can we become capable of a broader, unspecialized understanding.

Consequently, it's only by 'joining the dots' that we can assist in the improvement of institutions, companies and businesses.