



**HOME RENAISSANCE FOUNDATION
WORKING PAPERS
Number 130**

**Specifically Human. How Work and Home Epistemologically
Imply Each Other. Models and Metrics of Relational
Workplaces**

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Paper delivered at Home Renaissance Foundation VI Experts Meeting:
“Nurturing Healthy Relationships at Home and Work”, IESE Business School,
Barcelona, 8-9 July 2024

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Abstract

In the first part of the paper, we discuss the effects of the postmodern epistemological crisis regarding the concept of work and of work organization, to reformulate the question about the future of human work. Secondly, we offer a characterization of caring as a specific component of human work that people experience at home and of the specific dynamics that hold it. Thirdly, we offer a dynamic characterization of the human work in a given workplace also mediated by technologies and we introduce a case study of relational workplaces we have been working on. We thus present the metrics we developed in order to account for changes in the level of the employees' engagement in that given workplaces and in the light of the relational epistemological framework we base our work on.

Alone together – Human Work and Work organization: the epistemological crisis

During the Industrial Revolutions the human work was significantly reduced to a task-performing activity (Bertolaso and Rocchi 2021; Marcos 2001; Bertolaso 2021). Such reduction to functional tasks and evaluations was due to a wider epistemological crisis that had its primary result in a reductive concept of human work and of its role in creating social bonding and in healthy dwelling and protection of the natural world we live in.

A mechanistic account of living systems, more in general, has been shaping our understanding of nature, bringing to a dichotomic view of what we consider natural or cultural. In summary, the Cartesian view and separation among what is in our mind and in the world out there, has been affecting the way we deal with complex dynamics and developmental strategies. Automation, accessibility, acceleration, and a quite often autoreferential and individualistic notion of autonomy have become the standards of success and safety.

But in this process, economy and science more in general have shown their vulnerabilities and limits. Global events such as the ecological problems or the pandemic periods have shaken the certainties we were relying upon and societies suffer because they have been treated in their foundational aspects, i.e. the roots of the social bonding. The possibility of an healthy co-existence relying upon differences and integration has often become a wishful thinking. Efforts and aspiration to inclusion easily ends up with homogenization processes in which the particular disappears and creativity and responsibility have no further a real space.

Moreover, in organizational sciences scholars and practitioners have been challenging the mechanistic and reductionist paradigms suggesting the need for a change of paradigm, towards systemic approaches and organizational models (reviewed in Bertolaso 2021).

Finally, the dynamic dimension of these new paradigms is currently showing that the contemporary challenges for integration are not a mere problem of how we conceive parts and wholes in a system, or of how we conceive the space and the territories in which we live, it is also a problem of a different understanding of time and identities.

When dealing with complex systems, in fact, we have to take into account the coupling of the peculiar processes that shape their dynamic stability and history. At the crossroad of all the above-mentioned issues, therefore, there is a philosophical and practical challenge: a different understanding of what we call 'problem' and of how we can solve it and, therefore, of the work we do to solve them.

The reductionist heritage, in fact, have strongly affected the way we have been conceptualizing problems: mainly understood as something we cannot control, something we cannot measure (quantitatively) and evaluate through a mechanistic paradigm, and for which at some point 'simplicity' emerges in terms of 1:1 relationships, which are symmetrical, repeatable and standardized. Well posed problems eventually are those that admit mechanistic solutions.

At the crossroad of these theoretical and practical issues there are the emerging dynamics that affect the workplaces and the work processes in the occidental world.

Full Paper awaiting publication