

WORK- 10 questions

1. What will success look like in the 21st Century? How can we rescale the places, settings, systems and artefacts of work to create a new model of work that goes beyond the 20th century economic growth model to meet wider obligations and goals?

The model of the workplace can now be changed as the experience of 2020 has finally proved to many companies that they can run successfully without the physical presence of their workers. Of course some sectors cannot be part of this including manufacturing, hospitality, health service, etc. The goal would be to create a more community based environment where, if less time is lost on commuting more time would be available for volunteering, childcare, care of senior citizens, etc. During Covid those lucky enough to live near a market have discovered that there was no necessity to drive to a large and dull supermarket and that the human interaction was a pleasure. Many medieval marketplaces were destroyed in the 19/20th century to make way for offices and factories with little understanding of the effect on local communities. Now communities need to be brought to the fore. If we are able to rebalance our work/life then a new model can emerge where the goal is a sense of oneness with our community and the care which naturally comes with that when people feel part of the area where they live and work. I found a quote from 1938 - *The Culture of Cities* by Lewis Mumford. 80 years later we seem ironically to be in the same place! *Habitually, people treat the realities of personality and association and city as abstractions, while they treat confused pragmatic abstractions such as money, credit, political sovereignty, as if they were concrete realities that had an existence independent of human conventions.*

2. How can work be woven into the community, locality and environment, alongside business growth? As lockdown has increased our physical connections with our neighbourhoods, how can design contribute to the wellbeing of our local communities in a meaningful way?

If we can alter the location of a large percentage of the workforce's working space to be within a 20 min walk of home that this could alter our neighbourhoods and communities. Business growth can take place outside of the office space. By designing these new work spaces at the centre of communities it will affect the whole community and not just the workers themselves.

3. Business models have traditionally predicated success on scaling up, how might we redesign this model, to make work more human scale? While not all organisations will reduce in scale, could new systems bring together individuals in 'swarms', when needed, to solve a particular problem?

My concept would be to have local work hubs, not divided by company but only that individuals come together in a space to carry out a myriad of work- this would mainly be for the company that employs them, but as they would all be local to the district they would have an invested interest in making a more positive local environment. If the costs of running a business were lowered due to less rent, lower wages as no commute, etc then companies would be less pressured to grow continually instead of being rated by their human qualities like service, happy work environments etc.

4. How can design address some of the biggest human-centred challenges, be it an ageing work force, uneven distribution of work, widespread unemployment or a general dissatisfaction with work as it exists today?

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The uneven distribution of work will always be a challenge for those in manufacturing but once workers no longer need to come to an office where you live is far less important. Therefore unemployment could improve. Other countries have already set up free retraining programs and the UK will need to do this as well. An ageing population that is healthy is not a problem per se so living close to work and walking to the workplace is a desirable benefit.

5. If care homes and poor-quality new building developments are symptomatic of a system that prioritises profit over people, can design help us to better incorporate humanity within our economic models?

Once we remodel the country where possible to be working closer to home it makes sense that both schools and care homes are side by side [The Netherlands is a good examples-this is reciprocally beneficent . If adults work closer to home then elderly parents could also be housed close by around a central hub with facilities for those who are /are not independent but all having close access to their families. Architectural briefs are frequently poor when councils are cash short and also land short whereas with more space being freed up this should become better managed though the briefs should probably be sent out by experts in the sector and not from town planners. Lets also remember that the biggest age group in the Uk population is the 50-59yr. olds -just over 9 millions so a big rethink is going to be necessary as these will become childcarers for their children and eventually be the biggest set of senior citizens the UK has ever had to manage so an effective and radical rethink is needed here to.

6. How can shops and offices, now lying empty as demand for them declines, be repurposed by design?

This is the main idea of my proposal. Areas in the centre of town can be converted into housing and work space rather than offices and shops. The "high street" would then return to being a small number of successful businesses, where, as we did during Covid, people shopped locally, often on foot . There are a myriad of uses other than the usual retail which a closer knit community will require if we can return our towns to becoming a series of community villages each approx. 1.5 /2 miles from one centre to the next centre on average .

7. For people working in jobs where they have little control over the activities or tasks they have to complete, how can work be designed to be more meaningful?

Probably the hardest question of all!

When people feel part of a community there is a greater sense of purpose so a minimal ownership like the John Lewis partnership should help. Again if people could work closer to home so that there is the possibility to have greater activity/leisure time after work this would be constructive. Finally create the possibility of a half-day's community work weekly in order to give an added sense of satisfaction . So in conclusion I am not sure that some jobs can become more meaningful but the quality of one's life could be really improved by no longer commuting for hours and returning home too tired to enjoy any leisure time while having the added cost of rails cards or running a car.

8. How can design help people differentiate between work and leisure when remaining in the same place? How can design aid flexible working, enable greater connectivity both professionally and personally and improve people's quality of life?

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Personally I think that it is good for most people to get out of the house to work but to be working within a 20 min walk of their home. If there are small children it could still be optimal to have a creche facility within this space rather than the isolation of staying at home- however this should be accepted if preferred by the individual. Once the main workforce works is close to home then reaching leisure facilities becomes much easier than before. Unfortunately this will not be possible for those working in factories

9. When workforces are distributed across cities, countries and globally, how can design thinking drive innovation forward - be it chance encounters or unexpected collisions of ideas? Can the design of digital environments adapt in order to not only transmit information, but also provoke interactions, human emotions and thoughts?

The podcast has become an effective medium for the transition of ideas globally. Certainly what is needed is the reverse process where likened people can meet-up virtually to exchange ideas. I came across a design company in California offering free design exchanges [sadly lost the link!] But an online club where one could exchange thoughts and designs could be a starting place. After all hopefully your 'competition' has surely resulted in an effective exchange. I do also believe that universities should aim to be more open in a continuous sense so that one could have a continual dialogue within the area of ones own interests. The explosion of free online courses is a great thing, but so far it does not seem to have space for exchanging thoughts only of absorbing them.

10. How can we design strong and coherent work teams, even when they are not physically connected. If designed communal spaces are vital to relationships between colleagues, and enjoyable for workers, what do these look like?

I do believe that we have all seen the limitations of Zoom, etc to work effectively - screen sharing/conversations between 2 people probably create a closer bond and for many jobs is more effective. Projects can be designed in this way with say a max of 6 people per team so that a Zoom meeting can still work. More and the voices get lost, boredom sets in and the frustration rises. I still think that every so often we will need to meet up in small groups to have a sense of a work team. But, if we alter everything and now all work side by side in a space, no longer divided by company but by your home address there is the possibility of exchange of ideas on a wider scale which should bring enjoyment and a thriving social life which has been severely reduced since the pandemic.