

**Developing
Responsible Leadership
for Sustainability:
A Categorical Imperative**
Prof Henri-Claude de Bettignies

**Managing Ourselves
and Our Society:
A Rebalancing Act**
An Interview with
Prof Henry Mintzberg

**Carbon Peaking
and Neutrality:
Transforming Talent
in Higher Education**
Prof Wang Yuanfeng

THINK

**REORGANISING THE
FUTURE OF WORK**

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ON COVER
Rowing team on Yarra River in Melbourne, Australia

Photo: Josh Calabrese / Unsplash

Editorial

In his National Day rally speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong stressed the importance of building a talent pool by attracting global talent to Singapore. John Lee, Chief Executive of Hong Kong, vowed to “seize international talent” in a recent speech. In fact, many governments have recently announced policies to encourage talent inflow and discourage brain drain.

The pandemic and geopolitical conflicts have disrupted the world order and countries are struggling to revitalise their economies. Our education systems are falling behind in producing the skilled local workforce required in the race to innovate and stay ahead - hence the global war for talent.

In this issue of THINK, we share views on how work and employment are evolving under the ‘new normal’, and the relationship between workers and today’s fast-changing society.

Effective leadership is essential to organizations and communities. **Prof Henri-Claude de Bettignies** gave an insightful speech on leadership during a recent event. He kindly allowed us to share the content of his speech, in which he urges political and business leaders to prioritise sustainability above growth and reminds business schools of their role in training responsible leaders.

We also reached out to **Prof Henry Mintzberg** who generously shared his views from his home in Canada through a Zoom interview. He talked passionately about how we should learn from our encounter with COVID-19, and how society needs to rebalance to sustain itself. In a separate article he co-authored with **Hanieh Muhammadi**, they argue that, for the benefit of spontaneous idea generation, Zoom communication should not suppress chance encounters among employees.

To find out how an international employer like Ernst & Young manages its large team of professionals, I interviewed **Yap Seng Chong** in Kuala Lumpur. He has much wisdom and many lessons to share with our readers from his decades of experience in hiring, retaining and cultivating knowledge workers.

In his article, **Prof Wang Yuanfeng** is specific about the kind of talent China needs to nurture in its universities as climate change becomes an existential threat. He proposes ways to equip the future workforce with sustainability knowledge and encourages universities to lead the way in meeting carbon neutrality targets.

Nauveed Salim shares survey data to show the employer-employee disconnect in expectations and preferences in post-pandemic workplaces. He urges employers to exercise empathy to preserve workplace harmony and uplift engagement.

Thammika Songkaeo, who founded a social enterprise to combat textile waste, also sees empathy as a key ‘skill’ she looks for in identifying her collaborators and employees.

Change management expert **Chin Peidi** shares how we could redesign our physical workspaces to raise productivity while promoting inclusiveness as employees expect flexibility in where and how they work.

Based on the social inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, **Chris Oestereich** makes some compelling arguments for Universal Basic Income (UBI) and proposes an experimental approach for its implementation.

While we deliberate the lofty concepts of leadership and work-life balance, work and employment are more bread-and-butter to many others. Among them are the migrant workers of the world who travel far to make a living in foreign lands. **Dr Mahli Zainuddin Tago** wrote a lovely story about the people of Kerinci, Indonesia and how they build their new homes and a better future after decades of labour migration to Malaysia.

Having a good sense of humour often helps us navigate the VUCA world more gracefully. With that in mind, we reprint some Dilbert comics by **Scott Adams** to illustrate some key messages in this issue of THINK more succinctly. Hope you also find them witty and amusing. Enjoy!

C. D. Liang
Chief Editor
September 2022

PROF HENRI-CLAUDE DE BETTIGNIES is the Aviva Chair Emeritus Professor of Leadership and Responsibility and Emeritus Professor of Asian Business and Comparative Management at INSEAD. He is also the Distinguished Emeritus Professor of Globally Responsible Leadership at the China Europe International Business School (CEIBS) and former

Director of the Euro-China Centre for Leadership and Responsibility (ECCLAR) that he created in Shanghai, at CEIBS, in 2006. Between 1988 and 2020, with a joint appointment at Stanford University (Graduate School of Business), he shared his time between Europe, California and the Asia Pacific region.

PROF HENRI-CLAUDE DE BETTIGNIES

Developing Responsible Leadership for Sustainability: A Categorical Imperative

This is a speech delivered by Prof Henri-Claude de Bettignies at The HEAD Foundation Annual Gathering for Advisors and Fellows on 29 March 2022 in Singapore.

To say that we live in 'turbulent' times is the understatement of our century. To say that we live in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world does not begin to capture the reality of the situation in which we currently find ourselves. To lament that we are in a 'crisis' — an event defined as 'temporary' — is to bury our heads in the sand. For the truth is that during the last 20 years we have lurched from one crisis to another.

Consider this: in recent years we have gone from a financial crisis affecting the daily lives of so many people to a health crisis — COVID-19 with its six million deaths and still counting. Both of these have been played out against the background of that overarching crisis, climate change and its multiplicity of extreme events. And always, somewhere in the world, there is a geopolitical crisis — destructive wars in Syria, the Yemen and Afghanistan, rising tensions across the Pacific and most recently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

To lament that we are in a 'crisis' — an event defined as 'temporary' — is to bury our heads in the sand. For the truth is that during the last 20 years we have lurched from one crisis to another.

In retrospect we now realise that the financial crisis of 2008 offered a timely opportunity for the transformation of the role, functions and operations of the banking system and the mindset of its leaders. Sadly, that opportunity was missed. However, the current health crisis of 2020/22 is a second — and perhaps the last — chance to rethink our societal model, our dominant economic paradigm. And this time the opportunity must not be missed. To label climate change as merely a 'crisis' would be a huge mistake, for to counter it will entail a very long fight, possibly an even longer one than we will be able to sustain. But failure to take on this challenge would have devastating consequences for future generations. For them, a return to 'business as usual' could prove lethal.

From Singapore, the current geopolitical crisis in Ukraine might seem a distant event taking place too far away to have a serious impact on the ASEAN region. But this too would be a mistake for Singapore, also a prisoner in the net of our global interdependence. Any genuine appraisal of our global village makes it crystal clear that we all belong to the same 'human community', one which is our 'Common Home'.

An ultimatum on the 1.5°C target

In the last three decades, global greenhouse gas emissions have shot up by more than 60%. Temperatures are now 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels — uncomfortably close to the 1.5°C limit needed to preserve our environment.

Photo: Hugo Jehanne / Unsplash

Today, we are finally beginning to grasp the true extent of our complex interdependence and recognise how quickly what begins as a local or regional crisis can rapidly take on a global dimension that can impact our supply chains, our travels, our lifestyles and our mindsets.

However, a crisis — as we all know — can also be an opportunity for us to change and to innovate. What we are experiencing today is more than a mere transition but a metamorphosis, a ‘civilisation’ change taking place as the cracks in the walls of the liberal and capitalist systems become ever more apparent. The present dominant system has visibly failed to make the planet more habitable or to bring more human happiness and greater equity to our planet. Rather, it has turned humans into a ‘resource’ to be exploited in a system fueled by consumption and characterised by stringent performance demands to meet ever increasing growth objectives.

In this speech I will explore some of the implications of this situation for our planet and discuss how leadership, notably in politics and business, could help prevent the final collapse of our crumbling walls.

In the light of *The Economist's*¹ comment that “the sheer amount of guff written about leadership, management and careers is staggering...” I should perhaps have avoided choosing ‘leadership’ as my theme in addressing today’s distinguished audience. However, after 60 years spent observing the planet, 50 years of teaching management models and peddling theories and concepts and coaching business leaders in Europe, the US and Asia I am convinced that improving leadership skills and developing ‘responsible’ leaders remain an imperative: in fact, a ‘categorical’ imperative. Business leaders must play their part as key actors in the change process that we are all now experiencing. Passing the buck to other stakeholders would be both irresponsible and unacceptable to today’s society.

1. Bartleby, Writing about Leadership, *The Economist*, February 19, 2022, pp 54.



When disaster strikes

The number of disasters is projected to reach 1.5 each day, statistically speaking, by 2030, according to a report released by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. It blames these disasters on a broken perception of risk based on ‘optimism, underestimation and invincibility’ which leads to policy, finance and development decisions that exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and put people in danger.

Photo: David R. Frazier Photolibrary, Inc. / Alamy

With finance in the driving seat and genetic technology and digital innovation seized by hubris, the obsession with growth is leading us all into a perilous, unknown future.

In this short presentation I shall illustrate how and why it is imperative for business leaders, political leaders and citizens to cooperate in order to leverage the present situation and induce the changes necessary to ensure sustainability, welfare and a happy life for future generations. Assuming, that is, that they care about the grandchildren of their grandchildren.

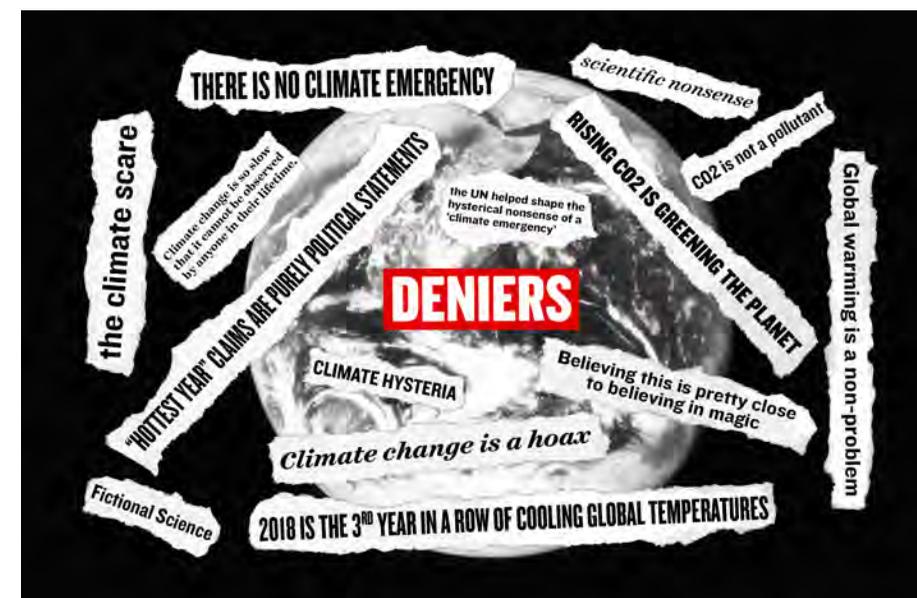
A GLOOMY PICTURE OF THE STATE OF THE PLANET

We all know that the road to sustainability will be long and bumpy, fraught with many challenges and requiring a great deal of innovation. Commitments to taking this road are many and promises are numerous, but real action is still lagging — or rather proceeding at a pace that does not match the urgency. Greenwashing is still flourishing. The need to integrate Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) in management is more or less accepted — though not always understood — but “ESG in its current form is more a buzzword than a solution”² while the road to decarbonising, though promising, is still the road less travelled³.

The planet is burning, yet the rich continue to become richer even as the number of the poor increases. With finance in the driving seat and genetic technology and digital innovation seized by hubris, the obsession with growth is leading us all into a perilous, unknown future. Anxiety and fear about the future are very visible in some parts of the world, leading to a desperate search for meaning in a world of chaos. Against this background the dystopian societies portrayed in many Hollywood productions may not just turn out to be fairy tales, meant to exorcise our fears!

If we are to escape the unhappiest of endings when the earth on which our homes have been built — our dominant socio-economic system — collapses, then a fundamental change in both our mindsets and our behaviour is urgently needed. Four decades ago, the Club of Rome blew the whistle and warned us of the dangers our addiction to growth would bring. The Intergovernmental

2. Kaplan R.S. & Ramanna, K. Accounting for Climate Change, The First Rigorous Approach to ESG reporting, *Harvard Business Review*, November-December 2021, pp 120.
3. Lovins, A., Decarbonizing Our Toughest Sectors Profitably, *Sloan Management Review*, Fall 2021, pp 46-55.



What global warming?

The algorithms behind social media tend to encourage the creation of echo chambers that isolate individuals by systematically manipulating whom they trust. This adversely affects environmental journalism and constrains world leaders from garnering long-term public support when promoting climate-informed decisions.

Source: Natural Resource Defense Council



HSBC subvertising campaign

Poster designs by Matt Bonner for Brandalism's mass takeover of public advertising space calls out HSBC's investments in fossil fuels. In defiance of HSBC's 'net-zero ambition' in 2020, artworks were created by 15 artists parodying and responding to the bank's 'We are not an island' billboard campaign.

Source: Brandalism

Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)⁴ and the COP26 meetings constantly raise the alarm and try to provoke action that will change the dominant paradigm. For the alternative to change is that we bequeath an unlivable planet to future generations. Back in 1996 a wise INSEAD professor clearly warned us that we were on the wrong road: "In my view, life on planet earth itself is at risk. I now think that economic growth as measured by gross national product (GNP) is mostly an illusion... Development along the conventional — increasing GDP per capita — is not necessarily increasing social welfare... I now think that the popular phrase 'sustainable economic growth' as it is currently interpreted by the dominant business and government institutions of our society, is probably an oxymoron."⁵ This frank, gloomy statement was made nearly 30 years ago! Today, its truth still rings loud and clear to those who hear.

4. International Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2022: Impact, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, 27/02/2022, 35p.

LEADERS AND 'RESPONSIBLE' LEADERS: WHAT IS THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETY?

It is a given that solutions must come from the co-operation of political, business and society leaders working in a democratic community. However, to repeat that mindsets must change, that a new model must be developed and implemented and that behaviours must be modified is far easier said than done! The essence of leadership is *the capacity to influence*, and whether in politics, in business or in the civil society leaders — responsible leaders — must be convinced that the road on which humanity is currently travelling is deadly and be willing to take action to drive change *now*. Intellectuals, the media and the civil society must also unite in their efforts to put pressure on political and business leaders to develop institutions that are just, at both national and international levels.

Currently we have a number of leaders who are well aware of the danger we are in. They are working to try and manage the complexities of today's world and societies, to cope with uncertainty and use their imagination to build the resilience necessary for our survival. But sadly, not all leaders are both responsible and active, leaving the number of responsible leaders able to guide the technological and societal transformation we need in very short supply.

'Responsible' leadership has many requirements but notably, it must account for *all* stakeholders affected by a decision and integrate the *long-term* impact of the choices made. Its challenge lies in how to handle competing claims and conflicting objectives, how to prioritise and measure them and then do this under pressure from the multiple stakeholders involved.

The vital competencies required to demonstrate responsible leadership behaviour in this complex ecosystem of a world we wish to change is a very long list indeed. It includes the ability to re-imagine the company's place and role in the world;

5. Ayres, R. U., Limits to the Growth Paradigm, *Ecological Economics*, 1996, Vol. 19, Issue 12, pp 117 & 118.

to leverage the potential benefit of algorithms and digital disruption; to reduce the use, or better control of, marketing tools used to influence and manipulate consumers; to enhance corporate transparency in decision-making; to articulate clearly an ambitious, shared purpose for the firm; to work on reducing gaps (whether they be of gender, nationality, race or ethnicity); to measure, count and focus on what is important; to know how to see problems as opportunities and finally, to generate trust in order to nurture cooperation among individuals and teams. In short, the responsible leader must 'perform and transform'⁶.

6. Leinwand, P., Mani M.M. & Sheppard, B., Reinventing Your Leadership Team, *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 2022, pp 60-69.

And this imperative is not confined to the Western world. Companies in Asia, too, will increasingly be compelled to play a broader role in society, to account for a full range of stakeholders whilst operating in a highly competitive landscape and still climbing the value chain. The shift to services, so visible in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, will also become more apparent in the region as more M&A activity and strategic alliances re-design the corporate landscape. Already we see companies capitalising on the power of data as digitisation spreads rapidly and on an ever-larger scale. Simultaneously the number of digitally savvy consumers will grow as firms thrive in this algorithm world.

Killing rivers for clean air

The Bangladeshi government has been advocating for the switch from polluting kiln-fired bricks to concrete-based 'eco-friendly' bricks, but there are grave concerns about the environmental and ecological damage of extracting river sands to make these bricks, leading to riverbank erosion, biodiversity losses, and pollution due to indiscriminate sand mining.

Photo: Suvra Kanti Das / ZUMA Press Wire / Alamy





Fish in troubled water

The Mediterranean is the world's most overfished body of water. Current overfishing, especially of species such as red tuna and bluefin tuna, has been exacerbated by large-scale industrial fishing vessels. One solution may lie in the development of sustainable small-scale fisheries to restore the health of Mediterranean fish stocks and secure people's livelihoods for the long term. But the issue is far too complex to be solved at once.

Photo: Images & Stories / Alamy

The citizen's expectation of more transparency from business and government will also require both business and political leaders to enhance their ability to explain to society — through education — the possible alternatives available and their long-term vision.

In such a fast-changing environment, responsible leaders will be in great demand to navigate between exploiting data pools and monetising them while avoiding the risk of a backlash from society, albeit a perhaps less vehement one than experienced in western countries. If, as McKinsey suggests⁷, speed and agility are in greater demand in order to manage digital disruption, then responsible leaders will have to place greater emphasis on anticipating their employees' expectations, their wish to find a sense of purpose in their work and — despite more working from home — a thirst for social and personal connection with colleagues. Decision making which integrates ESG with rigorous, reliable and trustworthy measures⁸ will become an imperative.

7. Kumra, G., Ngai J., Sengupta, J., Seong J., Woetzel, J., Building 21st Century Companies in Asia, *McKinsey & Company*, January 19, 2022, 19p.

8. Tomlinson, B., Whelan, T & Eckerle, K., How to bring ESG Into the Quarterly Earnings Call, *Sloan Management Review*, Summer 2021, pp 9-11.

THE RESPONSIBLE LEADER: IN SEARCH OF THE COMMON GOOD?

Today, as we see migration from flooding, water wars, droughts creating civil war (as in Syria) and the rising inequality and vulnerability of the poor, who pay the greatest price for climate change, we can no longer deny its impact on geopolitics. Recent research has clearly revealed the complex interdependence between political choices, business decisions and the citizen/consumer's behaviour. For example, the decarbonisation and transition to a low-carbon economy means that political decisions and regulations must take into account not only national, local and international business conditions, but also the values held by business leaders and a country's citizens. As the research of Landier and Thesmar⁹ demonstrates, tomorrow's political leaders will have to integrate the economic 'value' attributed by citizens into the 'values' they themselves hold as that value shapes the citizens' political and consumer decisions and actions. 'Good' political decisions are often seen as costly by citizens and consumers, as values have an economic cost. Future economists will have to integrate this 'values' dimension, that is the political cost of values, into their models and as education becomes more widespread, this dimension will take on greater importance.

The citizen's expectation of more transparency from business and government will also require both business and political leaders to enhance their ability to explain to society — through *education* — the possible alternatives available and their long-term vision. The creation of a virtuous circle between citizens, government and businesses will frequently require businesses to play a leading role here and sometimes, to initiate the process. The promotion of the circular economy¹⁰, the *écologie intégrale*¹¹, will require significant investment in *education* to facilitate the citizen's understanding of what it means for them and hopefully, win their acceptance of it. However, the search for the elusive Common Good that can serve all stakeholders will remain a real challenge. Mishandled, it could be seen as a concentration of power among an elite of un-

elected CEOs¹², dangerous for civil society and provoking resentment and disinterest in politics among the population. Perhaps, ultimately leading to a complete lack of confidence in the value of their votes.

The challenge for business leaders, then, is to accept that the political dimension of their role is unavoidable and manage it with confidence and care. When it comes to the policy-making process they must remain close enough to policy makers to be heard and ensure they are understood. At the same time, they must remain distant enough to avoid the risk of collusion and the well-documented dysfunctions of business-politics promiscuity.

The bottom line is the need for a high degree of integrity¹³ among highly principled politicians prepared to manage a new economic model that no longer privileges the invisible hand of the market but gives more power to the visible hand of a government able to administer and regulate the necessary transition towards the ecological sustainability imperative. As the dissident Harvard economist, Stephen Marglin, wrote: "Capitalism promotes the common good only when the invisible hand is controlled and enlarged by the very visible hand of the state"¹⁴. He does not believe that the current system of capitalism can resolve the problem of ecological sustainability, nor does he see regulation by carbon tariffs as effective. This implies that more direct government intervention will be necessary and, on a global basis, greater cooperation between the OECD countries and those emerging economies which need to be helped. "The emerging system from the

9. Landier, A. & Thesmar, D., (2022). *Le prix de nos valeurs*, Flammarion, 272p.
Landier, A. & Thesmar, D., Le prix des valeurs sur l'économie et la morale, *Commentaire*, Spring 2022, N° 177, pp 105-109.

10. Atasu, A., Dumas, C. & van Wassenhove, L. N., The Circular Business Model, *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2021, pp 72-80.

11. Leloup, J.Y. (2020) *Vers une écologie intégrale*, Ed. Entreprises, 77p.

12. The Economist, Companies and Democracy: The Political CEO, April 15, 2021.

13. Battilana, J., & Casciaro, T., Don't let Power Corrupt You, *Harvard Business Review*, September-October 2021, pp 94-101.

14. Marglin, S., L'économie du futur ne ressemblera ni au passé, ni au présent, *Le Monde*, February 19, pp 30-31.

The search for the Common Good thus requires politicians and business leaders to work together with the shared ambition and goal of serving the people and caring for the society to which the enterprise is accountable.

current dynamics must answer to the needs of a generation more and more reluctant to accept an economy that threatens the life, and the means of existence of billions of people for the advantage of the billionaires only¹⁵. The search for the Common Good thus requires politicians and business leaders to work together with the shared ambition and goal of serving the people and caring for the society to which the enterprise is accountable. Civil society's increased scrutiny — enhanced by digital networks — of certain lobbying practices, graft, cronyism, nepotism and so on will increase pressure on leaders to be more attentive to the management of these sensitive issues if they want to be able to sleep well.

A TIMELY OPPORTUNITY TO DRIVE CHANGE: BUT WORDS WITHOUT ACTION?

The devastating COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the pace of societal change. It has led us to question our lifestyles, our social links, our relationship with work, with our family, our neighbours and our urban space. It has also brought collective mental fatigue and individual depression. It has made visible issues such as our social inequality, our fragility, the interdependence of countries and technologies, the complexity of our systems, our uncertainties about the future and our relationship with nature. The subsequent pervasive pressure for change in society is having a profound impact. It has induced many more of us to question the process of globalisation; to challenge

the concept of 'progress' and even to question several traditional societal values (marriage, family, ...) and last but not least, to fear the impact of AI and digitisation on society. Several recent studies¹⁶ illustrate how the very concept of 'democracy' and the power of technological development to bring either equity or happiness (or even solutions to the many problems they have created) are being widely questioned. In short, the dysfunctions of the current dominant economic and societal model that has destroyed nature, nurtured corruption, increased income and gender gaps and turned a person into a 'resource', is being widely debated, challenged and rejected.

The mega-changes we are experiencing and the questions they raise have fed the pessimism of the catastrophists and the fears of the collapsologists. They have also contributed to the emergence of nationalist, populist and totalitarian governments. In such an environment, developing responsible leadership for sustainability is becoming an urgent but formidable task. On the one hand we are told that the current situation is unsustainable given the pollution of our air and our oceans, the disappearance of biodiversity, the over exploitation of natural resources, the violation of human rights¹⁷, the growing gaps in our society, the

15. Marglin, S., *Ibid.*, pp 31.

16. Reynié, D., *Libertés: L'épreuve du siècle : Une enquête planétaire sur la démocratie dans 55 pays*, Paris, Fondation pour l'Innovation Politique, Février 2022.

17. Smith, N.C. Scholz, M., & Williams, J., Does Your Business Need a Human Rights Strategy? *Sloan Management Review*, Winter 2022, pp 64-72.

increase in urban violence, rising social tensions, and so on. On the other hand, our leaders tell us that as prisoners of a dominant paradigm characterised by fierce (global) competition and pressure for growth, they are unable to fully eliminate the negative externalities we see today. And this despite the fact that these very forces are the ones causing further cracks in our crumbling walls. The risk of a backlash against big businesses will compound this challenge if and when it becomes necessary to impose behavioural constraints on consumer behaviour, in order to cope with the consequences of an inevitable lower growth rate plus possibly the need for frugality linked to climate change and the decarbonisation imperative. When this happens leaders will need the 'courage' to be even more responsible.

Goodbye, Okjökull

About 100 people climbed for two hours on 18 August 2019 to the top of the Ok volcano in Iceland to where the Okjökull glacier once stood. With poetry, moments of silence and speeches, officials and activists bade goodbye to the country's first glacier lost to climate change.

Photo: Felipe Dana / AP Photo

BUT WHY ARE WE IN SUCH PREDICAMENT?

Our schools and universities produce leaders. We have think-tanks and thought leaders; we invest in research, we produce knowledge; we try to anticipate the future, we encourage and fund innovation. Unfortunately, there is a gap between our words and actions. The elites that run countries and corporations, and the brains who staff our institutions seem neither able to correct the dysfunctions and negative externalities of the dominant model nor to master the complexity of the planet's problems. We have lost our compass; we have been too late in questioning the values that drive our leaders and their ecosystems (of which they claim to be prisoners). The long view is too often missing, and individualism and self-interest override the need to care for each other or aim for the Common Good. Our UN organisations seem unable to produce the appropriate regulations and apparently, lack the ability and resources to see them implemented. It seems that we are all prisoners of the wrong values, of the wrong models, of the wrong paradigm. It is as if we still believe the sun goes around the earth!



Addicted to growth, obsessed by profit and/or earnings per share (EPS), with our vision blurred by self-interest, we are in a high-speed train without a driver. Blowing the whistle to stop it is like trying to empty the ocean with a spoon. Where are we going? We don't know.

MANAGING CHANGE: WHERE TO START AND WHERE FROM TO LEARN?

Could it come from politicians who really care about the welfare of society — the Common Good of their citizens? Or from responsible business leaders who actively engage in decarbonisation and are willing to develop and implement strategies that benefit all their stakeholders? Or perhaps from religious leaders able to inspire their communities, promote responsible behaviour and through religion reduce individual anxiety? Or from the media — if they could only put aside their usual preoccupation with their survival in a digital environment? From the unions that look after the interests of their members and protect their advantages so hardly won over generations? And what about the intellectuals whom we expect

to decipher the current state of society, to create knowledge in order to inspire political leaders, business leaders and public opinion? From the generous concern of NGOs, blowing whistles and promoting health, equity, protection of nature and human rights? Sadly, each of these stakeholders operates in a context where competition seems more valued than cooperation, the individual more than the community and the short over the long term. Change has to do with 'values': If shared values aimed at responsible behaviour geared to the Common Good of society were to become dominant, then we would privilege the 'we' over the 'I', cooperation over competition. Perhaps then we would realise that we all belong to the 'human community' called 'Humanity' for which we need to create an identity and a sense of belonging¹⁸. From such a shift from the individual to community, from 'I' to 'we' a different society would emerge. The leader's role would be one of a servant to others, inspiring and providing 'meaning', making clear a 'purpose', proposing a vision, and generating 'trust' in his or her behaviour: that very trust that several current surveys see as missing in business leaders, in government and institutions¹⁹.

A green alternative to GDP

China is pioneering a new environmental accounting framework known as Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP) which attempts to assign a monetary value to the contribution of ecosystem services to human well-being. In Pu'er City (普洱市), GEP was applied to coordinate urban development and nature conservation, and to evaluate the performance of government agency in natural conservation. It is believed that GEP can provide a more holistic assessment of national success to drive investment in environmental protection and social welfare.

Photo: robertharding / Alamy

Until the recent renaissance of China, the dominant societal model was the western democratic society, often emulated by countries in the South seeking to shape their own visions of 'modernity'. But now that some OECD countries are doubting the long-term viability of their dominant model of individualism and hyper-consumerism and beginning to feel guilty about their abuse of nature and addiction to growth, then finally a new paradigm, hopefully one conducive to a new 'civilisation', is in demand. With the Western model in decline, the Russian model almost in ruins and China with its outstanding economic achievement (the "30 Glorieuses"!) promoting its model beyond its Belt and Road Initiative, emerging economies are searching for inspiration. With the current capitalist model seen as doomed, socialism apparently incapable of keeping its promises, the Confucian society model still being studied²⁰ and the jury still out on the Chinese brand of communism or capitalism, the current thirst for another more appropriate model contingent to our digitalised era and a now multi-polar planet is perfectly comprehensible. Some of today's leaders possessing both *imagination* and *vision* are experimenting, taking risks and putting forward a path towards an alternative model for a just and healthy society.

Such leaders are engaging in the necessary paradigm shift process to build a new societal model that is 'rational and human'²¹ and which fosters greater fraternity, encourages benevolence and promotes more equity. It is a mighty challenge.

The enterprise is possibly the most obvious creator of value in society and business leaders have great resources in terms of creativity and innovation, financial means and influence. But many still appear more concerned with the bottom line (spurred on by shareholders) with growth, return on investments (ROI), EPS and the creation of goods and services targeted to capture

The role of business schools is more vital than ever. They are where business leaders are groomed, managers 'programmed', senior executives enlightened, and knowledge created.

customer expectations and create desire. However, my long experience with business leaders has taught me that it is possible — through education — to bring about the values change needed by society. Education by its very nature is a process of change. It induces change. Education is an effective path for actualising a person's potential. Education needs an early start but is also a lifelong process, particularly as job hopping becomes a regular five-year jump. The responsible leader then should invest in education, his own and others', to actualise potential, to grow talents and nurture a learning climate within the organisation, making a fruitful use of tacit and explicit knowledge.

In this context the role of business schools is more vital than ever. They are where business leaders are groomed, managers 'programmed', senior executives enlightened, and knowledge created. Apart from teaching models of corporate growth development and bottom-line achievements that reward those who take investment risks, business schools must start to focus on alternative ways of handling the conflicting interests among the firm's many stakeholders, and stress that the *purpose* of the firm is not just to make profit, but to be useful to society. This means initiating a serious debate about the purpose of the firm, the leader's role in society, the "reasonable" size of profit and the

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The race to net-zero

The Alliance of CEO Climate Leaders, brought together by the World Economic Forum, shared an open letter at COP26 and called on policymakers to supercharge the net-zero and climate momentum with bold commitments, policies and actions. Signatories include CEO of Bayer, Bloomberg, HSBC, H&M Group, Deutsche Bank, IKEA and Nestlé.

Photo: Colin Fisher / Alamy

'limits' on extravagant executive compensation. It should also focus on other questionable behaviours: subliminal advertising, creative tax avoidance, greenwashing, share buy-back, over-exploitation of nature, pseudo energy transition and so on. Although in Southeast Asia the Friedman model appears still to have many good days ahead, we see more and more leaders going beyond corporate social responsibilities (CSR) and ESG, committing to alternative models (for example B Corp, impact investment, enterprise with purpose) and corporations engaging in implementing active decarbonisation strategies.

CONCLUSION: LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABILITY, WE HAVE NO CHOICE.

To conclude, increasingly aware of massive, entrenched inequality and its impact on the most vulnerable countries and societies, and of the dizzying array of inter-connectedness across the entire architecture of the global system, a path has finally emerged. The argument that I have developed has stressed where the responsibility for escaping our addiction to endless 'growth' and consumption objectives lies. In order to manage our many competing stakeholders' demands whilst operating in a complex and uncertain environment, a paradigm shift is necessary in the thinking and behaviour of both political and business leaders. For only they have the capacity, the power and the means to internalise — through cooperation — the duty to care for every stakeholder, including 'nature' itself. Nature is a key stakeholder that our anthropocentric vision too often defines as a creature to be exploited by man while in fact, as the philosopher Paul Ricoeur said: "We are a creature among the creatures."²² We should be the gardener of 'nature' — nature being like us 'one creature in our Common House'.

The pandemic is the crucible that has most recently caused the ground on which our dominant paradigm was built to tremble. It has forced us to question who and what we are, thus opening unprecedented opportunities for radical change. In this process, business schools could and should play a key role in developing leaders who care for society, who are aware of the climate catastrophe, of human rights issues and the need for a paradigm shift to make business-society interdependence a lever for action. This requires us all to change our priorities, to articulate a clear vision, to define (and be driven by) a clear 'purpose', to challenge the dominant model and its values and to make sustainability a driving strategy force and a core investment. The leaders who walk that path must give voice to their values and to walk their talk. The shift from the shareholder to the stakeholder model is long overdue. Only a business-government dialogue — with perhaps different (but not necessarily antagonistic) objectives —



The renewable energy and community 'magician'

In 2009, Søren Hermansen, an environmental educator and the CEO of Samsø Energy Academy, was named one of the winners of the Göteborg Award for Sustainable Development for his outstanding efforts in creating the modern world's largest climate-neutral society on the Danish island of Samsø. Not only has the island achieved carbon negative and generated energy surplus, 100% of its renewable energy investments are locally owned, which brought about significant socio-economic benefits.

Source: www.visitsamsøe.dk

will make it possible to develop institutions that account for the competitive constraints of the market, in the context of the new 'civilisation' in the offing. If business aims to become the force for good it should and can be, it must accept to review its objectives and practices. Those have produced great achievements and benefits, albeit sadly tempered by dramatic negative, environmental and societal consequences.

Despite the temptation in the West to take a pessimistic view of the future, there is much evidence that change is taking place. This is being driven by enlightened responsible leaders²³ who see responsibility not as an option, but as a categorical imperative. Developing such leaders

for sustainability is a duty. Education must be the means. The matter is urgent if our house is to be saved. The fire has already started. Responsibility is the fireman and responsible leadership the water that can put out the fire. Action is the path to do so before it is too late. ∞

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PROF WANG YUANFENG

Carbon Peaking and Neutrality: Transforming Talent in Higher Education

(Translated by Ben Ning and Soh Xiaoqing | The article was originally written in Chinese)

In China, 'dual-carbon' or *shuang tan* (双碳) refers to the national goals set to reach the country's carbon peak by 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Two recent events highlighted the significant role of higher education in achieving the 'dual carbon goals' (DCG), both in China and internationally. In April, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued the 'Higher Education Work Plan for the Strengthening of Talent Development System for Carbon Peaking and Carbon Neutrality'. In the same month, *Times Higher Education* (THE) released the 2022 World University Impact Rankings which assesses universities against the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the fourth year. The scoring criteria focus on a university's performance in the following: its research on climate change, its use of energy, and its preparedness to deal with the consequences of climate change, which corresponds with SDG 13 — 'Climate Action'. In this article, I will elaborate on my view that in order to develop talents to meet the needs of the DCG, higher education will have to undergo four fundamental changes.

The biggest CO₂ emitter

China was the biggest carbon emitter (CO₂) from fossil fuels in 2020, accounting for 30.64% of global emissions. Its emissions exceed all developed nations combined. The country has vowed to reach net-zero emissions by 2060 with a peak no later than 2030.

Photo: Zhimai Zhang / Unsplash

Since it will take the efforts of multiple generations to achieve carbon neutrality, we need to educate our students to become 'Generation Green'. Their attitudes and behaviours will shape the future of our planet.

1. Change in Philosophy of Education

First, higher education needs to revolutionise its philosophy. Cultivating talents for the DCG is more than a mission to cultivate human resources for economic and social development. In the greater scope of long-term development of our time, education must adapt to the existential needs for sustainability. This is not a lofty ideology, but a fundamental change in how we view education.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) noted that the world is facing the Triple Planetary Crisis — climate change, environmental pollution and loss of biodiversity. Keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and limiting temperature increase further to 1.5°C, as stipulated in the Paris Agreement, is a mission that will decide whether humanity can continue to develop sustainably. Since it will take the efforts of multiple generations to achieve carbon neutrality, we need to educate our students to become 'Generation Green'. Their attitudes and behaviours will shape the future of our planet. Universities should no longer focus narrowly on science, technology, engineering and mathematics education (STEM) based on an outdated efficiency model rooted in an industrial revolution mindset. We need to instil a sense of mission in our students so that they view the arduous battle of achieving carbon neutrality

and addressing climate emergencies as their responsibility to secure the future of humanity. Failure to do so will amount to a failed education.

A United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) flagship report published in 2021, *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*, charted a path to the future of education up to the year 2050. The report believes the world is at a new turning point. It calls for a major transformation in education to repair past injustices and enhance education capacity to act together for a more sustainable and just future based on a new social contract. Fernando Reimers, a Harvard professor and the lead author of the UNESCO report, said, "What good do universities do for society? Who do universities serve? I think that is causing a reckoning within the higher education community perhaps of comparable significance to the reckoning that led to the last major transformation of the university [in widening access] after the Second World War."



"System change not climate change"

Youth climate activist Howey Ou is considered China's Greta Thunberg, taking to the streets to speak out about climate change. Despite criticism, mockery, social pressure and harassments by school officials and the police, she is blazing a new path to raise environmental awareness in China.

Photo: Christoph Soeder / dpa / Alamy Live News

Having the DCG as a key educational goal, higher education institutions need to critically reassess what is expected of them in the era of the climate crisis. China's Ministry of Education has also issued a directive requiring Chinese universities to 'help raise the overall awareness of ecological civilisation and take on the responsibility of educating the public on the new concept of sustainable development'. This is indeed what universities should go all out to deliver.

2. Change in Mindset

Higher education needs to transform its mindset. This, in essence, is a question of how DCG talents should be cultivated. Adding renewable energy courses to the curriculum, or introducing education contents on energy storage, hydrogen energy, carbon finance, carbon capture, carbon utilisation, carbon storage and more to fill the gaps in sustainability education is a short-sighted solution to meet a profound and structural social need. Every profession and every aspect of our socio-economic life needs to be fundamentally transformed to effectively achieve the DCG. Adding new courses and setting up a research centre or two are far from sufficient.

Cultivating DCG talents calls for a systematic pedagogy design. DCG education should engage the university in its entirety and has to be comprehensively mapped out 'based on the rules of new-era talent development, education pedagogy and technology innovation', as required by the Ministry of Education. One of the essential tasks is the cultivation of Climate Literacy and Carbon Neutrality Literacy among our students, much like the cultivation of literacy skills during the early days of the industrial revolution. This involves designing and delivering foundational and general carbon neutrality courses to all of our students. However, we do have to recognise the big knowledge gap in carbon neutrality among our university students. The *2020 China Youth Climate Awareness and Behaviour Research Survey*

reported that, due to limited access, only 19% of our young people have participated in climate education. The gap needs to be closed promptly.

We also need to update and reinforce the curriculums of the relevant academic disciplines in our higher education institutions. Carbon neutrality is based upon the systemic replacement of traditional fossil fuels with renewable energy sources. However, the scope of the transformation goes way beyond the energy sector. The necessary makeovers of energy systems and business models are also applicable to manufacturing, transportation, construction, agriculture, finance, legal and almost every other sector. To prepare our students appropriately for their future careers, the teaching of every academic discipline in our universities needs to be reinforced with the relevant carbon neutrality content to reflect the systemic change of our overall energy model.



Learning sand control during summer vacation

To enhance environmental awareness, children and their parents took part in a summer vacation activity featuring desertification control and learned how to make a straw checkerboard sand barrier at the Shapotou desert-themed scenic spot in Zhongwei, northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

Source: Xinhua



China's Generation Z

Unlike their Western peers, protecting the environment is low on the list of public concerns for China's Generation Z, according to the *2022 Global Generation Z Insights Report*, even though they are more aware of climate change than the previous generations. An expert suggests that China's green initiatives have been part of a top-down agenda and have had little to do with young people and the mass consumer market.

Photo: Dan Porges / Alamy

Furthermore, carbon neutrality is a key component of the *New Energy System+* that involves much cross-disciplinary engagement. This makes interdisciplinary curriculum and professional development a key characteristic of DCG education. In fact, interdisciplinary integration is the source of today's innovations in science and technology and the catalyst that inspires the emergence of new academic disciplines. We should therefore leverage the interdisciplinary nature of DCG education to nurture versatile graduates for a carbon-neutral future. More specifically, our universities should start to introduce secondary carbon neutrality courses under the relevant primary disciplines, while new and interdisciplinary primary disciplines are being established at the national level. This, I believe, is a unique and effective model for curriculum and pedagogy development in the Chinese education system.

3. Change in Pedagogy

Higher education needs a change in pedagogy. The key questions for the delivery of DCG education are: 'Who?' and 'How?' — especially when time is not on our side and the process needs to be accelerated. These are the key challenges most universities are grappling with as they do not have sufficient academic and physical resources for the teaching of DCG subjects.

Education technologies such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) can help to overcome the challenge. The Finnish government, for example, used MOOC to provide free artificial intelligence (AI) training to 1% of its population in a push to build a critical mass of AI-literate workforce among its citizens. Taking a leaf from Finland, Chinese universities can similarly offer a wide selection of high-quality and relevant MOOC courses

International cooperation is also a key component in DCG education, especially when China aspires to play a leading role in the global effort of shaping a sustainable future for humanity.

conducted by domain experts and world-class teachers to their students. That way, students will learn from the best regardless of where they are. The latest carbon-neutral discoveries, technologies, products and projects can also be presented to the students in virtual classrooms in the Metaverse on the 5G network, making the learning experience more immersive and novel.

The three-way collaboration among academia, R&D and industry is also an important aspect of DCG education. Instead of being at the forefront, our universities are often a step behind the socio-economic development of the DCG in theoretical research, technological innovation and industrial development. Universities should therefore welcome lessons and experience from the industry and strengthen academia-industry collaboration in their teaching so as to fulfil their socio-political mission of innovating social advancement. For example, industry experts can be invited to conduct lectures and guide students on their undergraduate projects and postgraduate research.

International cooperation is also a key component in DCG education, especially when China aspires to play a leading role in the global effort of shaping a sustainable future for humanity. Chinese universities should work with their more advanced foreign counterparts in curriculum design, joint research, and the training of both undergraduate and postgraduate students. This will not only

enhance the quality of our DCG talents but will also help to raise the bar for our teaching and research. The Global Alliance of Universities on Climate initiated by Tsinghua University, and the International Universities Climate Alliance supported by Nanjing University and China University of Geosciences are good examples of Chinese universities taking a lead in this area.

4. Change in Campus Operations

Lastly, higher education institutions need to change the mode of operation of their campuses to go beyond being a training ground for DCG talents to also become role models of sustainable operation. First of all, university campuses should strive to be low carbon and achieve carbon neutrality eventually. Being highly-populated sites with a large number of classrooms, lecture theatres, laboratories and other physical structures, university campuses are typically both big energy consumers and major greenhouse gas emitters of their local communities. They, therefore, have the institutional obligation to contribute meaningfully to the DCG.

To allow students to gain hands-on experience in DCG products, universities should use their campuses as testbeds for renewable energy, lithium and sodium-ion batteries, hydrogen vehicles, solar photovoltaic buildings and other green technologies. They should also become the host institutions of a good variety of sustainability-related forums and advocacies. There is no better way to learn something than doing it and participating in its development.

The *Times Higher Education Impact Rankings* on climate action is a noteworthy indicator of higher education institutions' participation in the DCG. The ranking evaluates participating universities based on research on climate action (27%), low-carbon energy use (27%), environmental education measures (23%), and commitment to a carbon-neutral campus (23%). In 2022, the University of

It is a mission-critical endeavour for higher education to play a significant role in the mitigation of the climate crisis and the advancement of modern China.

Tasmania ranked first among 1,406 universities. Being the only Chinese university in the top 100, Fudan University ranked 65th. To the best of my knowledge, none of the Chinese universities has announced a timetable or a roadmap for carbon neutrality. We have a lot more to do for our climate actions compared to our international peers. I am participating in the drafting of the Zero Carbon Standards for Chinese campuses. It will be a big push for carbon neutrality on higher education campuses when the relevant authority publishes the standards in due course.

To conclude, talent development for DCG is no ordinary task. Instead, it is a mission-critical endeavour for higher education to play a significant role in the mitigation of the climate crisis and the advancement of modern China. It can only be realised through our persistent and coordinated efforts in education reform, mindset transformation and systematic planning. ∞

The Chinese version of this article was extracted from the author's blog on ScienceNet.CN, and was first published in Global Times (Chinese edition) on May 26, 2022. The translated version is republished here with the author's permission.



Green university initiatives

As a leading university and the pioneering green university in the country, Tsinghua University is highly influential with regard to the development of green universities in China. Many other universities have designed their own programmes based on Tsinghua's experiences in the green university initiative.

Source: School of Environment, Tsinghua University

FEATURE

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DR MAHLI ZAINUDDIN TAGO

Kerinci to Kuala Lumpur – A Malaysian Migration

*(Translated by Tan Theng Theng | The article was originally written in Bahasa Indonesia)
This article was written on 7 May 2022 at Pulau Sangkar-Kerinci.*

There are many reasons Indonesians migrate to Malaysia. In recent decades it has generally been motivated by economic motives. If traced further, there are other more interesting reasons for the move. In the case of the Kerinci people who entered Malaysia from the turn of the 19th century to the 20th, they initially entered Malaysia to escape the pressure of Dutch colonialism which had begun to take effect in Kerinci. The next generation entered Malaysia as part of their pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Mecca. They reproduced there and became the focus of the next generation who entered Malaysia for reasons of visiting family. As the economic crisis hit Indonesia in the late 1990s, migrating to Malaysia became an alternative to enduring a stagnant economic life at home. Habizar, who is the inspiration behind this story, is one of the young Kerinci people who are looking for good fortune in Malaysia. Interestingly, while he was taking his graduate degree in Kuala Lumpur, he worked as a migrant worker to sustain himself.



The sense of historical pride in maintaining the name of Kampung Kerinci is strong. I'm lucky to have passed this station. Hopefully one day I can stay in touch with fellow Kerinci people there.

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

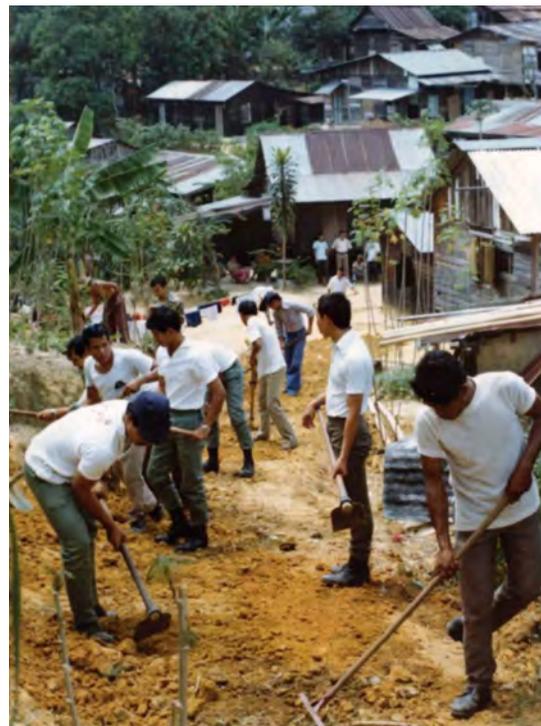
mid-2016

A professor is waiting for a bus to the Universiti Malaya (UM) campus. This American Cornell University alumnus and Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) professor is currently a visiting professor at UM. A young boy who is also waiting for the bus catches the professor's attention. This young man's appearance is simple. It turns out that they are both Indonesians, and a warm dialogue rises up between these two generations. The young man is pioneering the future. He works as an Indonesian worker in the UM complex. However, unlike Indonesian workers in general, he is also registered as a Master's degree student at UM. I am fortunate to have met these two great people. The professor is Professor Sjafrin Sairin. After completing his stint at UGM, he is now my colleague and fellow lecturer at UM. The young man Habizar is from Kerinci. We were both going home for the holidays. I met him in Ujung Pasir, the beautiful lakeside village of Kerinci. Habizar is the inspiration for this article.

Kerinci people have migrated to Malaysia since the 19th century. One of the pioneers was Haji Abdullah Hukum. He entered Malaysia when he was 15 years old with his father in 1850. In Malaysia he is known as the founder of the Kampung Kerinci settlement in Kuala Lumpur at the turn of the 19th century to the 20th.

This village is now an elite area in the Malaysian capital — inside stands UM, the State Mosque and other magnificent buildings. Abdullah Hukum and Kerinci Village are important stations on the LRT transportation hub for the royal capital. In 2012 Kampung Kerinci had changed its name to Bangsar South. However, due to local Malay protests, the name Kampung Kerinci was reinstated. The sense of historical pride in maintaining the name of Kampung Kerinci is strong. I'm lucky to have passed this station. Hopefully one day I can stay in touch with fellow Kerinci people there.

The people of Pulau Sangkar, my hometown in Kerinci Hilir, entered Malaysia from the early 20th century onwards. They left Kerinci to escape the Dutch colonialists who had arrived in 1901. The next generation entered Malaysia in the 1920s.



Kampung Kerinci in the 70s

In its heyday, Kampung Kerinci had a big settlement of slum squatters comprising locals as well immigrants from Jambi, Sumatra in Indonesia. As development extended into the area in the 90s, some of the squatters were demolished to make way for the development of low-cost flats and medium-cost apartments.

Source: www.carigold.com/forum/threads/transformasi-kampung-kerinci.636995

This group was on their journey for pilgrimage and were transiting in Malaysia. Furthermore, much later in the 1980s, the people of my village began to migrate to Malaysia again. The main motive was to establish friendship with predecessors whom had already settled in Malaysia. The peak of the migration of the Kerinci people, including those from our hamlet, to Malaysia occurred in the 1990s, especially after the earthquake that devastated Kerinci in 1995. The situation was exacerbated by the economic crisis that hit the region as the price of coffee and cinnamon fell sharply. I have published an article about this titled *Preserving Ancestral Land and Ethnic Identification: Narratives of Kerinci Migrants in Malaysia*.

In Malaysia the Kerinci people live in groups in many places, generally according to their hometown origin. Many Pulau Sangkar people live in Hulu Langat, in the village of Semungkih. I visited Hulu Langat twice. On my first visit I stayed at Kak Mastura's house. Interestingly, even though she is not a Kerinci person, she has developed the Kerinci cultural art in the form of Rangguk Dance. For this reason, together with her husband, Bang Syahril, who is of Kerinci blood, they founded the Ethnic Bamboo art studio. They vigorously promote Rangguk Dance at various events in Malaysia. On my second visit I stayed at Yumpaek's house. This brother from my hometown is married to a fellow Kerinci person who migrated there. Later I found out that the Kerinci people don't only live in Hulu Langat — they spread in all directions, including Kuala Lumpur.

The number of Kerinci people in Malaysia fluctuates in relation to the socio-economic conditions in their home community. When an economic crisis hit home, the numbers travelling to Malaysia increased. Malaysia provides a safe haven at times of economic downturn in Kerinci. During this time of crisis, a group of about 50 people from my village left for Malaysia, old and young. Amongst them was my fifth sister, Ms Muslim. When the Kerinci economy — and that of the Kerinci Hilir area in particular — began to recover, one by one they returned to their hometowns, my sister included. She had planned to be expelled by the Malaysian government



The secret valley of Sumatra

The Kerinci valley is like a donut hole within the Kerinci Seblat National Park, with more than 300,000 people living here. Rich volcanic soil helps support the population, which grows rice in the level valley, and mostly cinnamon, coffee, chilies, cabbage, cauliflower, potatoes and tea in the hills and plateaus. Its lowest point, Lake Kerinci, is an important source of fish for the region.

Source: www.wildsumatra.com/about-kerinci

because deportation meant returning home for free. To ensure the same she made sure she was deliberately arrested by the Malaysian authorities. Now the number of people in my village in Hulu Langat can be counted on the fingers. Those who stayed on are generally those who have raised families there.

However, this condition does not apply to people from Ujung Pasir, one of the villages in central Kerinci. There are still many of them in Malaysia. For them, Malaysia is not just an alternative. Malaysia is the best choice for developing their economic status. Limited land in the hometown is the cause. Ujung Pasir is indeed located in the Kerinci area with a relatively dense population and a small amount of agricultural land. Another common livelihood is being a fisherman in Kerinci Lake. But the income is not as beautiful as the view of Lake Kerinci. Therefore, economic limitations in their hometowns are a driving factor and economic opportunities in Malaysia are a pull factor which help convince many Ujung Pasir people to migrate to Malaysia. The effect, according to Habizar's father Nazahir, "More than 120 beautiful houses in Ujung Pasir are the result of migration to Malaysia. Only a few belong to civil servants."

The number of people who make the journey from Ujung Pasir to Malaysia is supported by the well-developed transportation and communication

systems. A strong social network exists among these groups who flow from one place to another. Here, a Mrs. Dewi is ready to arrange the crossing to Malaysia. Her group takes a car to travel from Kerinci to Dumai. After sailing for four hours they will arrive at Port Klang in Peninsular Malaysia. From here they only need to take a one-hour train ride to Kuala Lumpur. In the capital city of Malaysia, there are many relatives from my hometown who have already arrived. So leaving for Malaysia is not something foreign to the people of Ujung Pasir. This includes young people who have just graduated from high school, or those who have completed their undergraduate studies and have not yet found a job. One of those is Habizar.

Habizar was born and raised in Ujung Pasir. But his parents had migrated to Malaysia after the 1995 Kerinci Earthquake. So, since childhood, Habizar lived in his hometown with his grandmother. Money for the cost of living and schooling was sent by his parents from Malaysia. After graduating from SMA Negeri Kerinci, Habizar continued his studies at the English Education Study Program, IAIN Kerinci. Habizar completed his undergraduate studies in 2012. He aspired to become a lecturer. So he registered as a Master's student at Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP) in Padang but he was not accepted. Unfortunately, good fortune was not on Habizar's side as yet with his dream of becoming a

His status is no longer a traveller, even less so an illegal immigrant. He is now a graduate student at Universiti Malaya, one of the few world-class universities in Southeast Asia.

lecturer not achieved. In a sad mood, Habizar left for Malaysia. He intended to visit his father who had become a migrant worker there.

It turns out that in Malaysia Habizar gained new inspiration. He met several young people of the same generation who also came from Kerinci. They, like Habizar, had big dreams and aspirations. They came to Malaysia not only as workers but also students. Their tuition was paid for by relatives who worked there. Among them there were those who had successfully studied at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and become lecturers and even deans at Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Jambi. So Habizar followed in their footsteps. He enrolled as a Master's student at UKM and at UM. It seemed that Habizar's dream of becoming a lecturer still had a chance to be realised.

At first Habizar entered Malaysia as a traveller. He obtained a one-month visa. When the visa expired, Habizar returned to Kerinci. After a few weeks in Kerinci, Habizar received an email from UM that he had been accepted as a postgraduate student at the university. So he went back to Malaysia. Now his status is no longer a traveller, even less so an illegal immigrant. He is now a graduate student at UM, one of the few world-class universities in Southeast Asia.

To lighten the burden on his parents, Habizar went to work. Like many people from his village in Malaysia, Habizar worked in cleaning services. On another occasion he took advantage of his college vacation to become a photocopy officer at his campus. When he left for campus, Habizar brought two sets of clothes: a cleaning service uniform and some ordinary clothes. After work, he changed from his uniform into his regular clothes to attend lectures. As a worker, you often experience things that are common for Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. On one occasion he was hit by a police raid. He came home late at night because he was doing a lot of homework in the campus library. Unknowingly he had been scouted and suddenly arrested by the authorities. But Habizar could show his ID card as a UM student. Malaysian police then released him and apologised to him. Habizar's hard work led to success. He successfully completed his Master's degree at UM.



Habizar (left) at his graduation ceremony at UM
Source: Dr Mahli Zainuddin Tago

Ujung Pasir, the shores of Lake Kerinci

D-2 Eid al-Fitr 2022

I am in touch with Habizar. The atmosphere when I meet with him and his family is warm. We are joined by his wife, his two children, his mother-in-law and some of his fellow alumni from IAIN Kerinci at his father's house. His father Wo Nazahir is outside, busy organising the garage. Innova, Habizar's car is parked neatly outside. Happiness radiates from Wo Nazahir's face. His struggle to migrate to Malaysia has paid off. He has a nice house and his son Habizar is now a civil servant lecturer at Jambi University. When I asked when he was going to Malaysia again, he replied with a smile, "Just in Ujung Pasir for now. I don't know if later...". Malaysia is not something foreign and distant for the people of Ujung Pasir, nor for the people of Kerinci in general. But it is difficult to abort the decision to spend his retirement life in Kerinci. ∞



Dr Mahli Zainuddin Tago (left) and Habizar's father
Source: Dr Mahli Zainuddin Tago

MANAGING OURSELVES AND OUR SOCIETY: *A REBALANCING ACT*

An Interview with
Prof Henry Mintzberg



Illustration by Maguma

Prof Henry Mintzberg is an author and educator on business and management. He is currently the John Cleghorn Professor of Management Studies at the Desautels Faculty of Management, McGill University, Canada, where he has been teaching since 1968. He was also a Visiting Professor at INSEAD in France and the London Business School in England.

Throughout his career, Prof Mintzberg co-founded the International Masters Program for Managers (impm.org), the International Masters for Health Leadership and also a venture CoachingOurselves.com, all of which are novel initiatives for managers to learn together from their own experience. He also authored 20 books, including *Managers not MBAs* and *Simply Managing*, and published almost 200 articles, commentaries and videos.

Prof Mintzberg holds a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from McGill University, and a Masters and PhD from the MIT Sloan School of Management.

It has been many years since we worked together to start up an executive management programme in China. Has management education changed in the last 10 to 15 years? Has your view on management education changed?

Technology has changed, culture has changed, society has changed but business, organisations and management education have not changed much fundamentally.

I think the MBA is a design so established that it is hard to change. Fads came along — stakeholder values, social responsibilities and so on. We are still obsessed with leadership, but the more we are obsessed with leadership, the less of it we get.

In 2000, Joseph Lampel and I studied the record of 19 Harvard Business School MBA graduates who were superstar CEOs in 1990. We found that

10 of them clearly had failed not long after 1990. The performance of another four appeared to be questionable. Only five appeared to have done well. A couple of other studies also found that MBAs did worse than non-MBAs as chief executives, but they were paid more.

MBA programmes are not a good way to learn management. They are effective in teaching certain functional skills, for example, finance and marketing. However, you simply cannot teach management to some 25-year-olds in a classroom using case studies. Management is like swimming; you have to be in the water and start to swim in order to learn. Similarly, you can only learn to be a manager by managing.

I think the International Masters Programme for Managers (IMPM) we started is a more effective and logical way to train managers. Unfortunately, not many people have copied it because most schools thought it is too radical a change.



Prof Mintzberg teaching at IMPM
Source: IMPM.org

International Masters Program for Managers (IMPM)

Founded by Prof Mintzberg, IMPM has been ranked the #1 International Executive programme for five successive years from 2017 to 2021 by Eduniversal North America. IMPM boasts an innovative approach that focuses on impact in the organisation by designing its programme around managerial challenges instead of functional silos. It is taught by world-class faculty from five top management schools in five countries, and leverages the collective wisdom of a supportive community of diverse participants.



After so many years of the ‘manager vs leader’ debate, many workplaces are still being run by lofty leaders who don’t manage, and ‘kiss up and kick down’ managers who don’t lead. Shouldn’t we just give up and dismiss this as ‘human nature’?

If I were thin-skinned, I would have given up a long time ago. The situation is getting worse and worse. I maintain that any chief executive who has to be paid hundreds of times as much as their workers is not a leader, period. That means almost no chief executives of major American corporations are leaders, and I believe that. So, are we incapable of changing? No. There are lots of people who are decent, who are doing good things. It’s the selection process and the training process. The conventional MBA should be recognised for what it is, which is training in business functions or business skills. It is not training in management. Nobody should be selected to manage simply because they have an MBA degree.

In my book *Bedtime Stories for Managers*, there is a story about two nursing managers. The first manager ran her unit in the hospital with energy and enthusiasm in which people worked happily. Unfortunately, she was replaced by a mean-spirited MBA after she retired. In a few months, the place suffered such low morale that even the doctors tried to avoid it.

“THE CONVENTIONAL MBA SHOULD BE RECOGNISED FOR WHAT IT IS, WHICH IS TRAINING IN BUSINESS FUNCTIONS OR BUSINESS SKILLS. IT IS NOT TRAINING IN MANAGEMENT. NOBODY SHOULD BE SELECTED TO MANAGE SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY HAVE AN MBA DEGREE.”

I am not pessimistic about human nature. I am pessimistic about the forces of the status quo that won’t entertain a rethink of fundamental things.

You coined the term *Communityship* in 2009 and described it as something that stands between individual leadership and collective citizenship, or something leadership should be embedded in. Teamwork is also about a group of people working together to achieve a common goal. What’s the difference between *Communityship* and teamwork?

Well, teamwork is narrower. In a way, teamwork means *communityship* within a team. *Communityship* is a term I used for the whole organisation or the society. I think they are in the same spirit, but teamwork is about accomplishing projects, whereas *communityship* is about accomplishing the success of the whole organisation in the longer term. Teams are temporary by definition, but communities will stay on for a set of common and bigger goals. You need strong cohesion among teams for the good of the organisation. To me, having strong teams within a strong community is ideal.

You said repeatedly in your books and articles that effective organisations are communities of human beings, not collections of human resources. What are the differences between the two? What gives rise to these different attitudes?

First of all, I hate the term ‘human resources’. To me, it demeans us. I’m not a thing, I’m not a resource, I’m not a human asset, I’m not human capital; I’m a person! Those are economic terms that are coldblooded and anti-human and we should get rid of them. What we want are resourceful human beings, not human beings as resources. When we don’t need a resource, we throw it away. If you start getting rid of human resources, the human beings who remain will be discouraged.



The grounding of Boeing 737 Max

The fatal crashes of two Boeing 737 MAX aircrafts in 2018 and 2019, causing a total of 346 fatalities, called the company’s reputation into question. It is believed that after Boeing’s 1997 merger with aerospace giant McDonnell Douglas, the culture changed completely, gearing towards a more cut-throat culture devoted to keeping costs down and favouring upgrading older models at the expense of wholesale innovation.

Photo: Alamy



Trip to Suzhou

Prof Mintzberg visiting a classical garden in Suzhou when he was there to launch the Chinese Masters in Practising Management (CMPM) programme at Renmin University of China (中国人民大学) in May 2009.

Photo: CD Liang

Companies usually start as communities. They build up with an entrepreneurial spirit, they are proud of their workers, there is a sense of purpose, and they are almost like families. As they grow bigger, they get listed in the stock market and Bang! the technocrats take over, pressure comes from the analysts, and they are expected to keep growing. But if you keep pushing and pushing and pushing, you'll run out of ideas to grow. When that happens, you'll start to cheat or cut corners; you'll stop R&D, you'll get rid of maintenance, and you'll fire workers. It's plain destructive.

When Apple became the first company with a USD one trillion market value, the market asked, "What's next?" the next day. Some banks in Canada got their employees to sell products they knew were bad for their customers because they were being squeezed to produce more shareholder value. They couldn't do it honestly, so they did it dishonestly. Some companies could keep coming up with good products, like 3M for a long time, but not everyone can do that.

By the way, location matters, too. If you are in New York, for example, you get all the pressure while playing golf with the stock analysts. Look at Boeing. Boeing is a classic example of an organisation gone horribly wrong. Seattle is where all its energy is. It has all its engineering excellence, novelty and capacity. They moved their corporate headquarters

to Chicago, and again to Washington after the 737 Max crisis. In other words, they are moving their management further away from the guts of their organisation. They have become a lobbying company instead of an aircraft company.

How have organisations changed post-COVID-19 in the so-called new normal?

The one thing that I'm aware of is remote working. On one hand, this is good because it makes things easier. You and I are talking now — I am sitting in my living room in Canada, and you are in your office in Singapore; I got on five minutes before and didn't have to travel to Singapore to have this conversation. This is amazing! Sure, we could always have done that before COVID-19, but now we are more inclined to do it. I get a lot done when I work from home.

On the other hand, nobody ever bumped into somebody else by a coffee machine on Zoom. All that chatter, all that conversation, all that open-ended, loose communication is gone! So, despite its convenience and other benefits, Zoom has its drawback because it takes us away from our natural and spontaneous selves. Meetings on Zoom are scheduled. People no longer meet by chance and start to exchange views and good ideas. It is also hard to build trust with someone you have only met on the screen.

I think companies that are closing their offices and going to operate only on Zoom are making a big mistake because they will lose the informal communication and cohesion among their people. I wrote a blogpost called 'Zooming ahead? Not so fast!' on how certain elements of management and communication are lost when people don't interact in person. A better arrangement is probably a hybrid one. You can have employees coming into the office regularly for at least one or two days a week, together, so that trust-building and informal interactions can still happen.

specifically, has the art, science and craft triangle of management tilted more toward science in recent years?

I think it depends on what you are managing. For example, if you work for Google, you better be on top of the relevant technology. If you work for Amazon, you certainly need to understand the science and technology elements of its logistics. However, retailing is also about getting out there, being in the stores, seeing what's going on, seeing what people want and getting a feel for it.

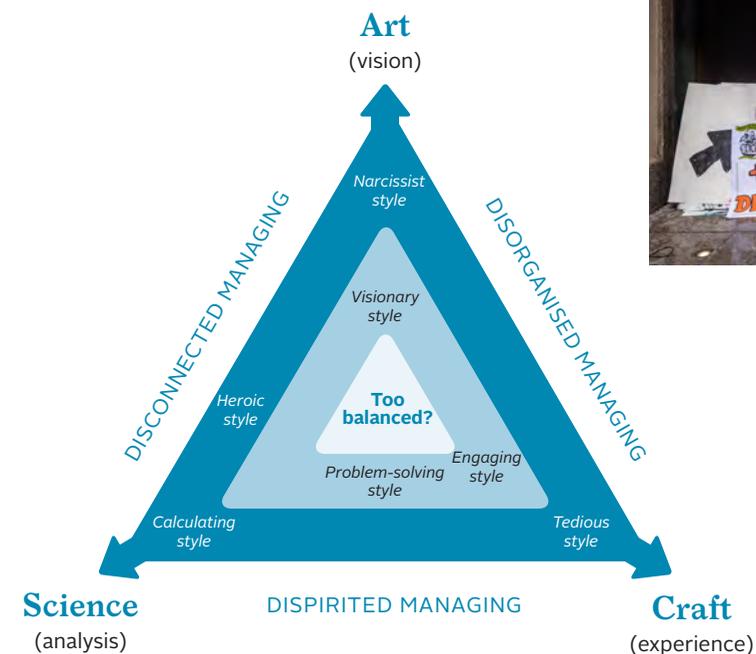
The pandemic has also accelerated the adoption of certain technological tools, for example, virtual reality, AI and big data. How have these technological innovations changed the role of a manager? More



Cyber Monday march on Amazon

Demonstrators left boxes with sad faces and protest signs outside Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos' USD80 million penthouse on Cyber Monday, one of Amazon's biggest sales events of the year, in New York City on 2 December, 2019.

Photo: Pacific Press Agency / Alamy Live News



THE ART-SCIENCE-CRAFT MANAGEMENT TRIANGLE

Prof Mintzberg created his art-craft-science triangle as a visual way of demonstrating his view that management is a practice, and that, to be effective, managers need to create a "dynamic balance" between the three elements of the triangle, which are art (ideas and vision), craft (learning from experience) and science (analysis of knowledge and data). This triangle can also be used as a tool to identify different management styles by looking at how combinations of the three categories might manifest themselves in managers.

Source: <https://www.changeboard.com/article-details/17105/where-do-you-sit-on-mintzberg-s-art-science-craft-triangle>

“ORGANISATIONS BUILD UP COBWEBS OF BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURES THAT ARE EXCESSIVE, AND THE PANDEMIC GIVES US OPPORTUNITIES TO STREAMLINE SOME OF OUR PROCESSES.”

Incidentally, I think Amazon is making a big mistake right now by throwing open their warehouse to almost anybody. If you go onto Amazon to look for something, you'd see a whole list of very similar products, each repeated three or four times at different prices. They have lost control of it. Maybe they are so busy managing the technology that they are not thinking through the retailing side of it. I would switch in a minute if somebody else offers me the same logistics service. What I wish for is a Costco on Amazon. Costco thinks for me, Costco chooses for me, and it is absolutely reliable. It would present only one or two options of what I am looking for and they are often very good products. I would not hesitate to buy what Costco recommends to me because I know it is looking out for me.

In hindsight, there are probably some lessons we can learn from how we handled the COVID-19 pandemic. What, in your view, are the most important management lessons COVID-19 had taught us?

When we introduced the IMPM programme at McGill University, it was a new pedagogy and a new programme. We had to go through 11 committees, and it took us a year. When COVID-19 came along, McGill University changed, not just one, but *all* its pedagogy in weeks so that the learning could go online. So, what COVID-19 teaches us is that we can make very radical changes very quickly if we want to or have to. Organisations build up cobwebs of bureaucratic procedures that are excessive, and the pandemic gives us opportunities to streamline some of our processes. It also lets us recognise that science could be blind when scientists are stuck in a certain paradigm.

Let me give you an example. I read in a study done early on in the pandemic that pollution is probably playing a major role in the transmission of COVID-19, and the virus could be carried further than two metres by polluted air in polluted places. I could not get that published. I could not even get through to a friend who worked in the middle of it all in the World Health Organization (WHO). There is not enough

Seaching for beaver sculptures

In his free tme, Prof Mintzberg can be seen canoeing on Lac Castor (Lake Beaver in French) in search of beaver sculptures.

Source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7My9mZUUVs



evidence, he said. A colleague at McGill who is an aerosol expert also resisted the thought of outdoor COVID-19 transmission through pollution; he is an indoor aerosol expert. And yet, almost everything I hypothesised in April 2020 turned out to be true.

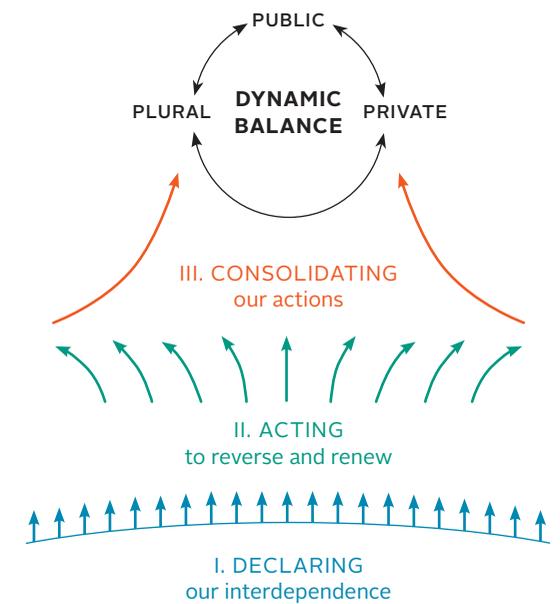
When we are stuck in a crisis where millions of people have died, I think we should ask ourselves ‘Why not?’ instead of ‘Why?’ because, as has been said, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. We can’t wait for years for research evidence. Instead of just locking down the whole economy, maybe we could have locked down the polluting parts of it. We are so hooked on the status quo that we can’t see past it. We are afraid to let go of our dogmas. We now have an opportunity to do something about the pollution problem and the pandemic problem at the same time, and I hope the authorities can seize the opportunity.

In your book *Rebalancing Society*, you urged the public, private and social (plural) sectors to work together to fix today’s unbalanced society. If you are looking for people to lead and manage the efforts to rebalance society, what kinds of leaders and managers will you be looking for? What attributes should they have?

People whose minds are open.

Frankly, I think rebalancing society is going to take off on the ground, not from leaders. When a black activist asked President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to support him, Roosevelt said ‘I want to support you. Now go out and make me do it!’. So, even for someone like Roosevelt who was so creative and open, there has to be a community, a ‘plural sector’ community, to initiate things on the ground. Just like the Reformation — Martin Luther was just an ordinary monk, but he changed the whole religion. It’s people on the ground who get the ‘leaders’ to act.

There is a YouTube video about a guy dancing in the park. You should watch it. Just go on YouTube and search ‘leadership dancing in park’. You’ll see in the three-minute video the role of the first follower, and how leadership actually works in reality.



PATHWAY TO BALANCE

Prof Mintzberg advocates a grounded reformation to make our way to a dynamic balance. Reformation requires *communityship* in the form of local initiatives that consolidate into a global movement.

Source: <https://rebalancingsociety.org/ii-the-pathway-to-dynamic-balance>

You said you are focusing your attention on helping to wake up the world to the implications of an unbalanced society. Can you tell us what you’re working on specifically?

That’s the RebalancingSociety.org website. There are tons of stuff on there. There’s a table to help you decide whether you want to act as a business, in government, in a community, or as an individual on your own. When you click on a dot on the table, you will see examples of how you can potentially play a role. I tried to make a comprehensive list of roles people can play in taking meaningful actions to rebalance their society. There’s also a page where people can sign *The Declaration of our Interdependence* — ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are created dependent — on each other, our earth, and its climate...’. You can get a sense of it in five to 10 minutes, after which you can spend hours on it.

All kinds of people from here and there have visited the website and got in touch with me. Young people are more inclined, no doubt. There is a lot of interest in Japan and Brazil, too.

Can you tell us what beaver sculptures are and why you collect them?

(While answering this question, Prof Mintzberg was walking around in the living room of his country home, showing us his vast collection of beaver sculptures using his phone camera.)

Some of these pieces are big, some are tiny. When beavers can't find rocks to place at the base of their dams, they make rocks using logs. I have a stick outside, which is perfectly straight, and it is about 10 feet high. They had eaten all the bark but hadn't

cut the stick yet. Beaver sculptures are simply what beavers leave behind. I don't take them off their dams or their lodges. I take them out of the water or off the land.

Do you see that one up there? They wouldn't put it on the dam until they had taken the branches off. Otherwise, they couldn't drag it on. So, the interesting ones are not the ones they use in construction. The interesting ones are those they abandon for whatever reasons, and we find them everywhere. Here's another example. I was paddling my canoe in the lake, and I bumped into something. I had no idea what it was, but I managed to tie a cord around it and dragged it back with my canoe. It must have weighed 100 pounds or more. I dragged it onto the shore, let it dry, and it kind of looks like a Henry Moore, doesn't it? Beavers have strong teeth!

Why do I collect beaver sculptures? I just think they are beautiful. I picked one up from the water during a canoe trip many years ago, and I started my collection. I like them maybe also because beavers are busy engineers. Being an engineer myself, I guess I'm drawn to the idea of these very constructive and energetic animals building all these dams and lodges. Unlike driftwoods, which are artwork by nature, beaver sculptures are artwork by mammals. Imagine if I could have a show of beaver sculptures at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) one day because all the shows at MoMA are done by mammals. ∞



Prof Mintzberg's collection of beaver sculptures
Source: Canadian Geographic



PERSPECTIVE

HANIEH MOHAMMADI is a PhD candidate at Desautels School of Management at McGill University, Canada. She is also a Business Advisor at Emergex SR&ED, a firm specialising in tax credit claims for scientific research and experimental development (SR&ED), e-business (CDAE) and digital media. Hanieh's passion lies in helping companies innovate in their management practices and break from old-school

management frameworks. She has experience delivering strategic insights for leading private sector companies and top think tanks. Hanieh holds an MSc in Strategic Management from Sharif University of Technology, Iran and a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Harvard Kennedy School.



PROF HENRY MINTZBERG & HANIEH MOHAMMADI

Zooming ahead? *Not so fast!*

Here the screen is a focused reality, even when each of the participants comes to it from the rich and varied reality of their own home.



Why virtual meetings are so exhausting

The unprecedented explosion of video calling in response to the pandemic has shown that virtual interaction can be hard on the brain as a result of the increased cognitive demands. Many people are reported to suffer from Zoom fatigue, feeling exhausted or burned out by any kind of video call or conference.

Photo: Vadym Pastukh / iStock

We are smitten with the latest videoconferencing technology much as a lover is smitten with a new partner. We notice everything that is wonderful and nothing that is not — for a while, at least. Then the reality sets in. And the worrisome becomes more obvious, sometimes too obvious—unless the relationship is going to work. Of course, the sooner the wonders and the worries are appreciated, the better. Accordingly, before we close down too many offices, let's review the benefits of this technology briefly, of which we are well aware, to give greater attention to its drawbacks.

CASUAL CONVENIENCE WITH SURPRISING STRUCTURE

We used to travel to the office and walk to our meetings, or we would spend hours in an airplane to get there. Now, a few seconds before the meeting begins, we amble over to our laptop in the convenience of our own homes and log on. Lo and behold, everyone is there in plain view. What could be more casual, or more convenient?

But wait. Don't be fooled by such apparent informality. What may seem casual in execution can be rather formal in organisation. These videoconferences can be a lot more tightly structured than most meetings at the office.

They are not random; they are pre-planned with predetermined sets of participants, each focused on one screen, one frame, in his or her e-box. In other words, videoconferencing can be orchestrated. There is, of course, a reality on that screen—as there is reality everywhere, and not just in the 'real world', whatever that is. Here the screen is a focused reality, even when each of the participants comes to it from the rich and varied reality of their own home.

Of course, many meetings at the office were carefully scheduled too. But once started, they didn't have to remain that way. People could move around, chat aside, get attention to question the frame. And many more meetings were never scheduled at all - they simply happened. Somebody walking by a door could start a conversation, two



Team col... laboration

A recent study published on PLOS ONE suggests that videoconferencing can inhibit the ideas that grow from group collaboration, dubbed 'collective intelligence', as it disrupts audio cues and causes unequal contribution from all stakeholders. For example, delays in or misconfiguration of the audio can distract participants from the main content of meetings. Bad audio quality also can make the speaker sound less intelligent, competent and likable.

Image: Tom Fishburne@marketoonist.com

people at a coffee machine might speak. Think of how much constructive business was conducted that way back then.

Have you bumped into anyone on Zoom lately? Or have you had much banter at the end of a video call? Caught up on news? Consolidated a relationship? We go back to our own solitary coffee machines. Don't look for close encounters of any kind on this technology.

Do you plan to attend your favourite business conference online this year? Joining sessions virtually will be convenient, but don't expect to meet the person who could become your next best customer.

Are you in favour of bashing the bureaucracy, or flattening the hierarchy? Then have a look at that screen. In a corner is a 'mute' button you can use to block out your sound so that no-one can hear your dog barking, or you talking on another call. On just one of those laptops, however, is something more formidable, like the conch shell in 'Lord of the Flies'. There, one mute button can mute all the others, enabling one person to control the conversation: decide who gets to speak and for how long. Bash the dissent, elevate the hierarchy. Try waving a hand to get attention then! Alternately, when no such button exists, be prepared for chaos in any meeting of more than a few people. Have you been on a large family Zoom call recently, with everyone talking at once (like a cocktail party without being able to take anyone aside)?

Lateral vision is as important in management as it is in sport. We can no more play basketball with our eyes fixated on the net than can we manage an organisation with our eyes fixated on a screen.

MASS COMMUNICATING MINUS COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION

It's amazing how many people can be brought together on a videoconferencing call. One of us gave a live podcast on his latest book, with an audience in China of 50,000. Every single listener was close by, at their own screen: speakers at full volume in intimate conversation with whoever asked a question, as if there was no-one else there with you. What a change from speaking in a hall, with someone at a microphone asking a question, to hear the answer from a distant podium. On the screen at home, both parties are right there, for all to see, seemingly inches from each other, and from everyone looking on. (Be careful about that little blemish on your cheek.)

The problem is that such intimacy disappears as soon as another person appears on the screen: easy come, easy go in this wired world. And when that 'Leave Meeting' button is hit, gone is any sense of community that may have tried to raise its head. One of us had a number of video conversations with a CEO for purposes of research. But it was only when they met face-to-face that she felt they really got to know each other, thus enabling the project to move forward.

A sense of *communityship* beyond leadership is key to the harmonious functioning of any organisation. Good organisations work hard to establish this.

That sense of community doesn't disappear with videoconferencing among people who have already been in close touch, but is it enhanced? And can it develop in the first place within a group of people who don't already know each other?

A colleague reported that his daughter appreciated the chance to continue her yoga classes virtually, instead of having to stop them. But she complained that "I can't hug them!". It's tough to express warmth, let alone trust, on a screen.

ORCHESTRATED HARMONY OR SPONTANEOUS CREATIVITY

Have you seen one of those wonderful orchestra pieces performed upon the screen, with everybody playing so harmoniously together, each in his or her electronic box? This was, in fact, as constructed as an edited film: they all played apart until someone put it together. The alternative, with no conductor, is the cacophony of "Happy Birthday" that you have probably sung to a relative on a Zoom call.

Imagine what that podcast in China did for that book, with everyone's attention drawn to it for an hour. What could be better for an author, or a CEO having to make a point to the company minions? But how about when a CEO, or anyone else, who needs an innovative design or a clever solution to a nasty problem needs to communicate?

Back in 2019, a few of us could pile into a conference room in the presence of a white board with papers strewn across a table, while we engaged each other enthusiastically to come up with something novel. We walked around, shared notes, scribbled on the board, took each other aside to get in deeper. How to replicate this on a videoconference call? What's to see beyond the screen, what's to do beyond the keyboard? Click for spontaneity? Hit the "Serendipity" key?

Lateral vision is as important in management as it is in sport. We can no more play basketball with our eyes fixated on the net than can we manage an organisation with our eyes fixated on a screen.



SO PLEASE, NOT BACK TO THE SAME OLD, SAME OLD 'NEW NORMAL'

In 1975, one of us published an article that portrayed managing as a lot more messy than planned, described in a *New York Times* article as 'calculated chaos' and 'controlled disorder'. This was not bad management, it was a necessary way of managing, given the dynamics of the job. Since then, unfortunately, much of this has been sanitised, thanks to the steady replacement of a more grounded management style provided by lofty leadership in many established organisations. This has left no few 'leaders' cooped up at the 'top', with their eyes fixated on the bottom line. Perhaps, therefore, the greatest danger of the new videoconferencing is that it can exacerbate the very form of leadership that most needs to be challenged.

Don't get us wrong. The videoconferencing technology is wonderful, in its place, as is every other technology. Use it, but please — not to your heart's content. ∞

A VR 'Meetaverse'

Facebook launched a virtual reality 'office', Horizon Workrooms, where users can host meetings with cartoon avatars of their colleagues, as part of Mark Zuckerberg's ambition to turn the platform into a 'metaverse'. Bill Gates predicts that within the next two or three years, most virtual meetings will move from 2D camera image grids to the metaverse.

Source: Horizon Workrooms

PERSPECTIVE

CHIN PEIDI is a Director of Workplace Strategy and Change Management with Turner & Townsend, based in Jakarta. She has over 15 years of experience in real estate and brings an in-depth knowledge of Workplace Strategy and Change Management, adopting a people-

centred approach to transform spaces, operational processes and behaviours to address evolving business needs. Originally trained in urban planning and economics, she has worked with both corporate and public sector clients within Asia-Pacific.

CHIN PEIDI

The Physical Office and Remote Work in a Post-COVID World

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed the way we work. As lockdowns swept through the world, companies and employees were thrown into the deep end of remote working overnight. Workers found themselves having to adjust dramatically to home offices, crying children and a blurring of work-life lines. With the pandemic abating, yet another shift is taking place. As the call to return to offices increasingly becomes the norm, organisations and employees alike are recalibrating expectations of the traditional 9 to 5 workday.

IS REMOTE WORKING HERE TO STAY?

While we fumbled through the initial establishing of virtual meetings and their dos and don'ts, companies found that employees generally remained effective and productive while working remotely. In the wake of the pandemic, many organisations are now re-evaluating their offices for a downsize and refresh.



For employees, remote working meant avoiding the drudgery of the daily commute, and the ability to better address personal commitments while working from home.

For employees, remote working meant avoiding the drudgery of the daily commute, and the ability to better address personal commitments while working from home. In return for this flexibility, the employees' window of working hours was observed to have widened and overall working hours increased.

Although more are returning to the workplace, the consensus is that remote or hybrid work arrangements will persist and be more widely adopted than at pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, organisations will continue to experiment and calibrate the extent of remote working that best suits their culture and operational needs.

INEQUALITIES EXPOSED

Looking back at the 'great remote working experiment', the benefits and limitations of working remotely have become clearer.

Not all roles are created the same

Knowledge workers focused on information gathering and processing have greater opportunities to perform their roles remotely in an effective manner. These knowledge roles account for 20% to 30% of jobs in advanced economies and are concentrated among highly skilled and educated workers.

Work requiring physical tasks, the use of fixed equipment or specialised machinery simply cannot be performed remotely. Many of these activities are predominant in lower-wage occupations that have greater exposure to larger disruptive trends of automation and digitalisation. Remote working offers no upside for these roles, and in fact, spotlights the socioeconomic disparity.

Established teams performed better

Virtual meetings became the norm for team collaboration during the pandemic. Data on collaboration patterns showed that overall meeting hours increased during the pandemic, driven by the ease of organising virtual meetings. However, interactions have become more siloed, with more collaboration hours clocked intra-team and less so across teams.

Established teams were better able to adapt to the switch to virtual collaboration, as they benefitted from familiarity with each other and well-practised processes. With offices closed, newer teams were deprived of ‘water-cooler’ moments and other informal interactions to build rapport and establish connections to perform as a team.

Remote working also posed an additional challenge to new hires during the pandemic. New hires missed out on onboarding activities and had fewer opportunities to be immersed in an organisation’s culture and network with fellow colleagues. New entrants to the workforce were also hard hit — remote working curtailed exposure to the softer skills in a professional setting, and the opportunity for face-to-face coaching.



New entrants to the workforce were also hard hit — remote working curtailed exposure to the softer skills in a professional setting, and the opportunity for face-to-face coaching.

Personal circumstances impacted remote working ability

During the pandemic, some executives vouched for increased productivity while working from home. This could well be the case if one had access to a home office or perhaps, the luxury to work from a vacation home. The more common scenario was the scramble to carve out makeshift areas for work and cobble together ergonomic furniture solutions — a colleague of mine had fashioned a ‘sit-stand’ desk from an ironing board.

In Asia, the smaller average residential homes often meant a lack of dedicated work areas and spaces shared by a multi-generational family. Access to reliable internet connectivity and having the right electronic devices and hardware to support remote working, was often more accessible to those of a higher socioeconomic status. The internet fees and higher utility costs incurred while working from home could also be seen to act as a regressive tax.

What working from home means for women

In Asia, women often take on the nurturer and caretaker role in the home. Mothers who maintain a professional career are also often expected to bear dual burdens of childcare. This makes working from home more challenging for women and may set them back in their careers against their male colleagues.

Photo: AsiaVision / iStock



Avoiding the worst of both worlds

To Dropbox, hybrid work creates two fundamentally different employee experiences to manage, giving rise to issues around equality and inclusion. That is why in October 2021 the company rolled out the ‘Virtual First’ model — remote work as the default and the norm, whereas the office for occasional in-person collaboration. Dropbox intends for all employees to have roughly the same mix of remote and in-person interactions, with the goal of merging the best of both worlds rather than split the company into two kinds of employees.

Photo: Matt Winkelmeyer / Getty Images

The impact of remote working was mixed for individuals who were caregivers. For primary caregivers, working from home meant working two jobs in one space, making it difficult to separate work and life. This impacted productivity and increased the risk of burnout. Yet remote working provided more flexibility to juggle errands, accompany family members to appointments without taking time off or to simply fit in more quality time with loved ones.

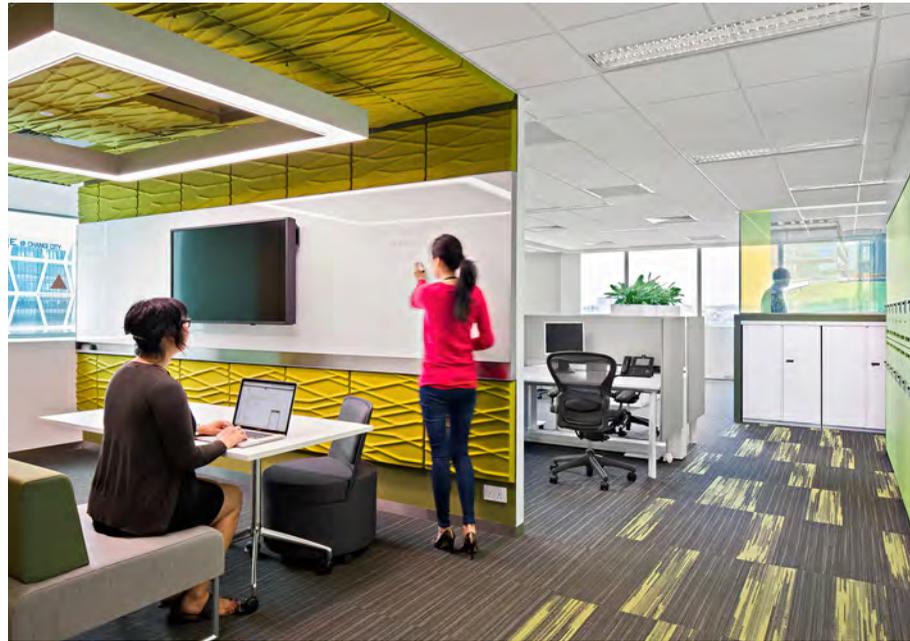
HOW CAN COMPANIES RESPOND?

As we slowly but surely emerge from the pandemic, organisations navigating a best-fit remote working model have the opportunity to perform a culture refresh by supporting employee wellness and proactively addressing the inequalities caused by remote working.

Persona-driven approach

Hybrid arrangements will increasingly become the norm. Nonetheless, companies should be prepared for a period of experimentation to discover an optimum level of remote working. It is risky to predict future office requirements based on current turn-up rates or even perception surveys, as this has been skewed by prolonged working from home arrangement during the pandemic. Organisations must first understand the current state of their workforce, and the drivers for employees coming to the office.

Adopting a persona-based approach can be useful — employee personas are models that categorise complex similarities (or differences) into rich profiles that describe preferences of tasks performed in the office, desired frequency of return and other needs and expectations. This in turn informs the types of spaces and experiences the office can provide.



Reinventing the workplace

By marrying the elements of activity-based workspace, technology and flexible workplace policies, Cisco Connected Workplace creates collaboration and network-enabled solutions using its suite of products and services to meet the evolving needs of a diverse and multi-generational workforce.

Source: <https://www.cycloneinteractive.com>

There is a natural ebb and flow to collaboration. Employees may come together to understand a brief, then break up in pairs or alone to process information and ideate.

in a well-designed office. Social spaces should also be provided that create a sense of connection; for example, literal watercoolers (or coffee areas) that encourage employees from different departments to linger, nooks that support mentoring and networking sessions and arenas that showcase events and celebrations.

There is a natural ebb and flow to collaboration. Employees may come together to understand a brief, then break up in pairs or alone to process information and ideate. Offices should thus continue to provide the option for focused work such as ergonomic desks and quiet areas. This is to allow employees opportunities for respite between meetings, to catch a quiet moment to recharge or clear emails and maintain productivity for the day.

A company that has been using employee personas long before the COVID-19 pandemic is Cisco. To guide the redesign of its workspaces, five employee personas were identified:

- **Highly mobile:** travels extensively to customers or partners — salespeople, account managers, systems engineers
- **Campus mobile:** internally mobile and interacts cross-functionally — business development managers, executives, manufacturing, and logistics
- **Remote/distance collaborator:** non-mobile — analysts, customer service and support, HR, legal, marketing, training, programme and product managers
- **Neighbourhood collaborator:** mobile within group — engineers, finance staff, many managers
- **Workstation anchored:** desk-bound, highly focused individual work — administrative staff, software and network engineers

Cisco launched its workplace redesign project in 2011 and more than 90% of its buildings have

since been transformed. A variety of desk styles, interaction spaces and meeting rooms were created. For instance, sales teams had more huddle spaces while engineers had more standard desks. Teams that interact more closely with each other were also placed closer to one another. As a result, from 2012 to 2017, Cisco's global real estate costs decreased by 26% despite a 7% increase in the workforce¹.

Collaboration vs. Concentration

With increased remote working, there will be a greater emphasis on collaboration and connecting with colleagues when in the office. Organisations should provide spaces to support both process-driven and social collaboration. 'Formal' collaboration spaces could include meeting rooms, training facilities or even team suites that can be booked for in-office team days. These spaces should be tech-enabled to allow for an inclusive meeting experience for both in-person and remote participants. Video calls and messaging apps have worked well to facilitate virtual collaborations. However, they cannot replace the rich and serendipitous interactions that occur

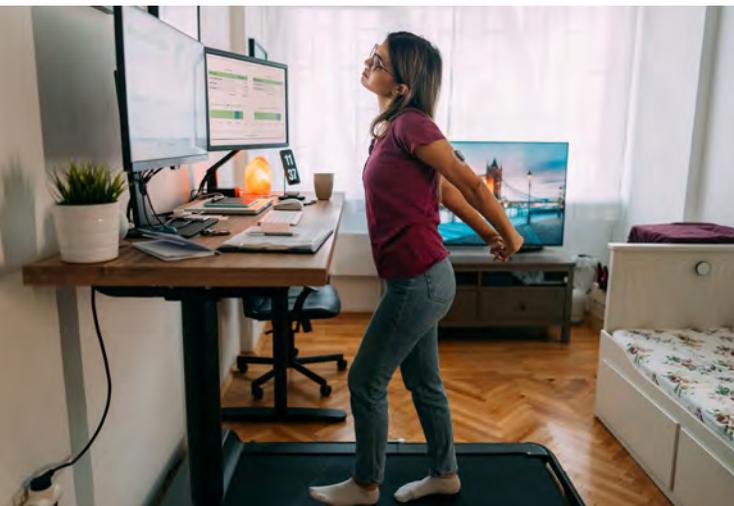
¹. Cisco Connected Workplace: More Productivity and Satisfaction, Less Office Space and CO₂, Dec 2018.

Biophilia offices

Biophilic design is capable of improving the well-being of those who use the space through reconnection with nature. In addition to the emotional qualities that vegetation can bring, it has the ability to filter noise, air, lighting and allow for a milder climate, which result in team productivity and more optimised services.

Source: IHI Innovation Center [i-Base] / Nikken Sekkei





The ergonomics of working from home

A home office that is not optimised ergonomically can increase the likelihood of back pain and spinal health issues stemming from poor posture. The American Posture Institute notes that it can also lead to lower metabolic rate and respiratory dysfunction.

Photo: martin-dm / iStock

Organisations also need to recognise that some employees may still opt to work from the office as a default due to the lack of conducive workspaces at home. Google had led the way early in the pandemic, by reimbursing employees up to USD 1,000 to pay for equipment to help them work from home. To further level the playing field, a remote working allowance could also cover other costs such as internet subscriptions or even co-working memberships.

New team norms

Engagement rates of the workforce have been observed to have fallen during the pandemic², meriting a call to return to the office by companies. With employees prioritising flexibility in their workdays, companies should adopt an inclusive return-to-work strategy focusing on attracting rather than mandating workers' return.

In addition to having the right spaces, companies should equip employees with the awareness and mindset for hybrid working. For a start, companies should establish clear policies addressing whether

². Insights from the State of the Global Workplace: 2022 Report

or not employees are required to be in the office, and if there is a minimum or a maximum number of days for office presence. Companies should communicate the rationale for the policies, for example, role requirements, building cohesion or wellness considerations.

Managers should work with their teams to establish agreements and norms for hybrid working arrangements. These can range from basic hybrid meeting etiquette (camera on/off, mute when not speaking, limiting side-bar discussions among in-person meeting attendees), or even designated in-office team days.

A more comprehensive onboarding experience may be beneficial to ensure that new joiners have adequate opportunities to build meaningful networks despite less time in the office. Fresh graduates, in particular, should be encouraged to have regular check-ins with their team and would benefit to have buddies and mentors assigned.

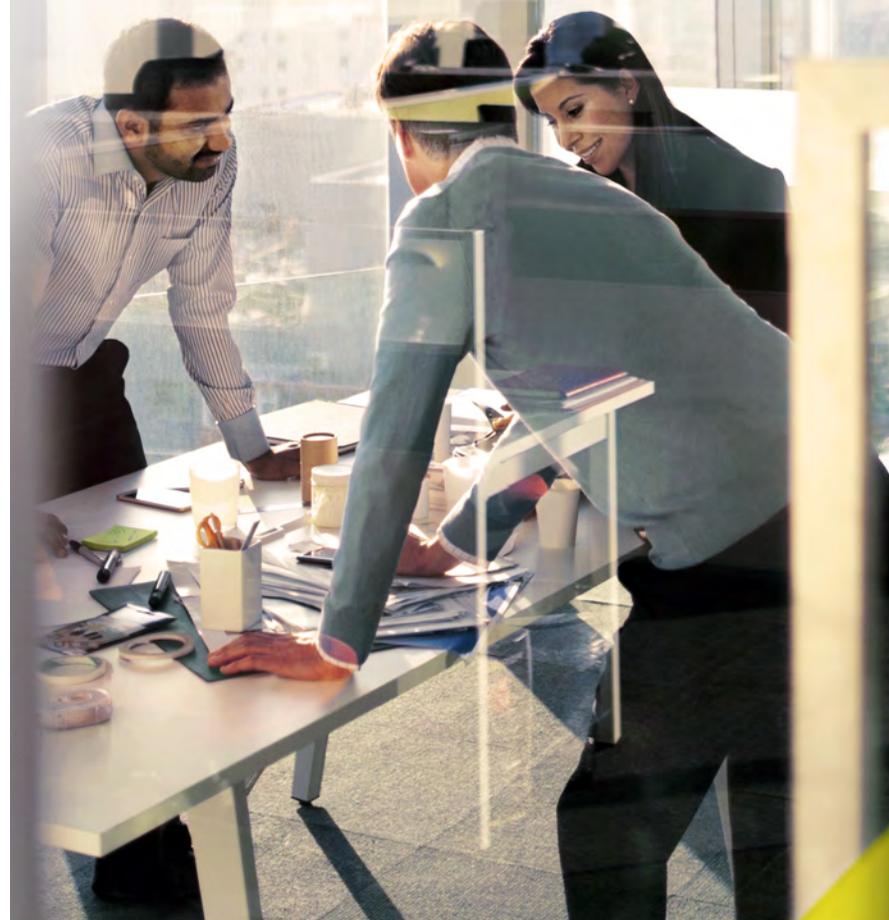
CONCLUSION

The uptake of remote working during the pandemic has disrupted our view of the 9 to 5 office workday. While remote working has its benefits and limitations, the majority of employees want increased flexibility to manage when and where they work. In response, organisations should look to provide flexibility as an amenity to employees and evaluate how to enable employees to work effectively beyond the physical office.

The physical office as we know today, will continue to play a key role to bring employees together face-to-face. Taking a persona-driven approach can uncover the drivers for employees coming to the office – this will allow organisations to right-size and create the right mix of spaces to bring people together. As employees return to the office, needs will evolve, and companies will need to iterate on models that are the best fit. Rather than taking a wait-and-see approach, this review of the physical office is an opportunity for a culture refresh and for organisations to proactively address inclusiveness. ∞

MANAGING TALENTS IN A GLOBAL PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATION

An Interview with
Yap Seng Chong



Yap Seng Chong graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from University Malaya in 1986. Yap had his entire career with Ernst & Young (EY), which spanned 35 years, two of which were with the London office, providing various types of assurance and business advisory services across a diversified clientele portfolio. He had previously held positions in EY as Head of Assurance Practice, Professional Practice Director and ASEAN Regional and Country Independence Leader prior to his retirement in 2021.

He was a member of the Interpretation Committee of the Malaysian Accounting Standards Board. He had also served in various capacities, including Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee and Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee, when he was a Council member of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants.



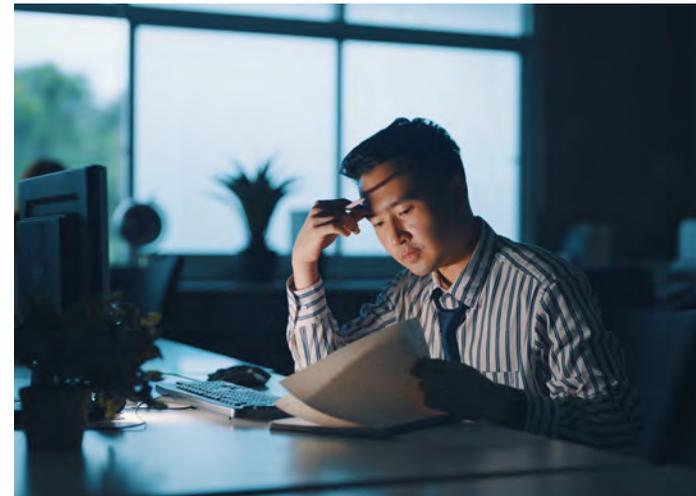
Yap Seng Chong at his home office in Malaysia
Photo: Yap Seng Chong

Please tell us about the HR characteristics of your organisation.

Ernst & Young (EY) Malaysia has 12 offices, and our audit clients account for 30% of the market capitalisation in Malaysia. We have a total workforce of around 4,500 employees nationwide. While this is quite a sizable workforce for a leadership team of more than 100 partners to manage, we are still a very small operation compared to EY's global workforce of 312,000 people in 150 countries.

As everyone knows, auditors work long hours and always have tight deadlines to meet. Given such a demanding working environment, we have a high employee turnover rate which was more than 30% in FY21. On average, our non-managerial employees stay with us for 2.2 years, whereas our managerial employees typically have a tenure of 10 years or more.

Given our high staff turnover, we hire all year round for both experienced professionals and entry-level employees. However, we do have a major recruitment drive every year to recruit fresh university graduates. We also hire interns to work for us during their school holidays, with the hope of converting the good ones to permanent employees after they have graduated.



Is the Great Resignation happening in Asia?

A trend that saw millions of people resign their jobs in the US and then Europe in 2021, is currently a matter of concern across the Asia-Pacific, with reports of talent shortages in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Photo: RealisticFilm / iStock

What attributes did you look for while hiring new employees?

Given the demanding and complex nature of our work, we look for candidates who are technically competent, meticulous, inquisitive, resilient and versatile. They must also be good team players since we often work in teams. Being able to support each other effectively could make the stressful work environment a lot more tolerable.

Since we spend much time working directly with our clients, some of whom can be quite difficult at times, we require our colleagues to have good people skills. They need to be open-minded, objective, observant, perceptive, diplomatic and have a good sense of humility.

However, integrity is the quality we cannot emphasise more in our line of business. We expect our colleagues to be highly ethical and able to make the right judgement calls in ambiguous situations. Many of us had seen how the once-largest professional auditing firm Arthur Anderson LLP was brought down by the Enron case.

Does EY recruit on university campuses? Do you recruit overseas graduates? How do you compare local Malaysian graduates with overseas graduates?

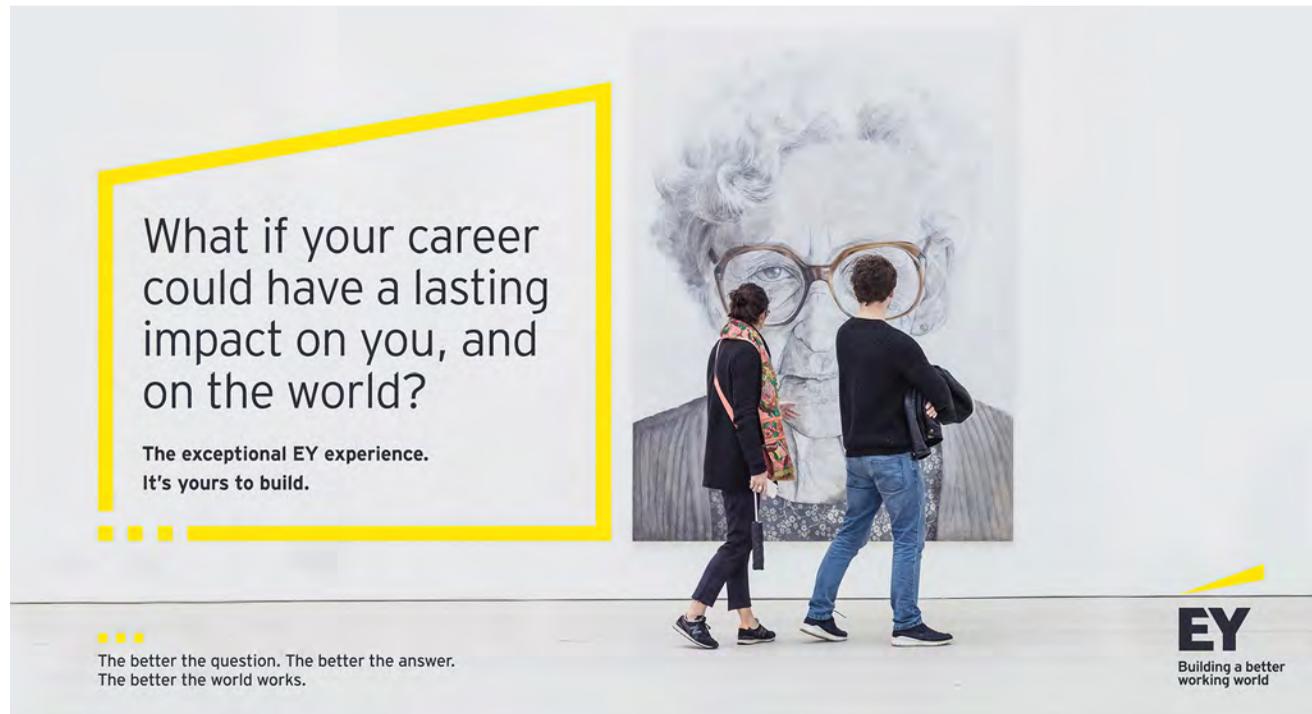
Yes, we recruit graduates from both local and overseas campuses. For overseas recruitment, we participate in job fairs in cities with many Malaysian students, for example, London and Melbourne, targeting young Malaysians who might return home to work for us. As long as they have the right traits to be good auditors, we welcome them regardless of where they are educated.

Generally speaking, overseas graduates have a better command of English and they can therefore communicate better. They often have a broader outlook as well, having lived abroad. However, we do have some very eloquent and capable employees from the top local universities, too.

“OUR CLIENTS HAVE GROWN IN SIZE AND THEIR BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS HAVE BECOME A LOT MORE COMPLEX. AS A RESULT, WE NEED A LARGER TEAM TO SERVE EACH OF THESE CLIENTS.”

You had spent more than 30 years with EY. How have the HR needs of EY changed over the last 30 years?

30 years is a long time and many things have changed since I joined EY as a fresh graduate. Most significantly, our clients have grown in size and their business transactions have become a lot more complex. As a result, we need a larger team to serve each of these clients.



The rise of the millennial workforce

It is forecasted that by 2025, as much as 75% of the global workforce will be millennials, bringing a whole new set of demands and expectations on the modern workplace and its culture. Providing a collaborative and inclusive work environment will be more important than ever.

Source: EY Careers on Facebook

We had approximately 300 auditors when I joined the practice in 1986 and we now have a headcount of more than 1,600. Because of the volume of our work, our employees have also become more specialised, either in the industries they serve, or in the nature of the audit work they do. As you can imagine, we need a very strong and proficient HR department to manage a professional workforce of this size, especially when we have such a high staff turnover. On top of that, we have to constantly compete with other firms for the talents we need to sustain our business. Needless to say, we also have a very robust and comprehensive HR process to manage our recruitment, retention and people development, which has evolved over the years.

In short, HR is a constant challenge to us, but I guess it is also one of our competitive advantages.

How about the employees? How do you compare yourself to the new recruits of EY today?

Well, Malaysia has been developing fast in the past decades, and every generation grew up in quite a different social environment. So it's probably unfair to compare generations of employees directly, but I can share some personal observations about our young colleagues today.

First of all, young people today are more sophisticated socially and financially. Instead of single-mindedly trying to 'make money' and become rich, as we tended to focus on in our younger days, they are driven by making decisions that lead to financial stability. I think this is a reflection of society becoming more affluent, and they no longer have to worry about feeding themselves and having a roof over their heads. Instead, they tend to pay attention to things like work-life balance and giving back to the community. Because of such social awareness and health awareness, they are less hesitant to leave a job when they think they cannot achieve the balance they seek, sometimes without having a new job secured.

Secondly, our young employees today are certainly more at home with technology. They were born around the time or even after products like cell phones, the internet and personal computers were introduced into the market. Most of them cannot even imagine a world without email, mobile phones and Google, which is the world we grew up in. They are the so-called digital natives, and they are quick in learning how to use digital tools to help them in their daily work.

Lastly, they are certainly better multitaskers than we are. I think this is because they were brought up in a richer and more complex environment in which a wide variety of things were constantly stimulating their senses. They have learned to juggle multiple tasks and multiple responsibilities better than we do. Compared to them, we sometimes find today's world too hectic and we have to try harder to shield ourselves from all kinds of distractions.

“WE HAVE ACCOUNTANTS AND AUDITORS WHO ARE HIGHLY VERSATILE AND ADAPTABLE AT ALL LEVELS. THEY FOLLOW VERY SIMILAR PROCESSES AND SHARE THE SAME VALUES.”

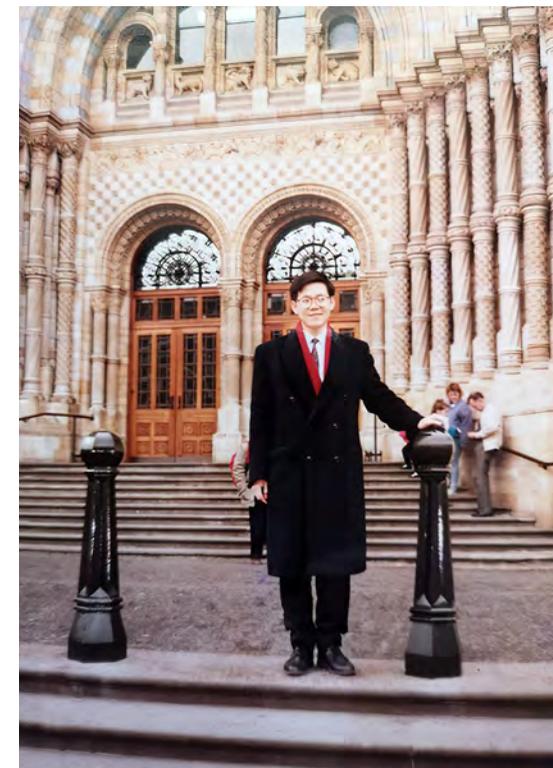
I understand that you served regional clients and worked with EY offices in different countries. Are there differences among EY employees in these offices from country to country?

Not really. I didn't see significant differences among our employees from different countries in the region. This is probably because accounting practices and auditing standards are quite uniform across different jurisdictions in today's globalised business environment.

In our HR practice, we have pretty uniform hiring criteria and preferences in different country offices. Because of that, we have accountants and auditors who are highly versatile and adaptable at all levels. They follow very similar processes and share the same values. Most of them are good at handling multinational clients and collaborating with colleagues from other countries. In fact, this is how we commit to delivering seamless and consistent audit services to our international clients.

What attributes did you look for when you tried to identify employees for promotion into leadership roles?

We expect our managers and partners to work with multiple clients and lead multiple teams. So, besides good technical skills, they are expected to have



Yap Seng Chong visiting the Natural History Museum when he worked as a young auditor in London during the early 90s.

Photo: Yap Seng Chong

good project management and time management skills in order to lead well in a very demanding work environment. Knowing how to prioritise and being resourceful are also very important qualities to possess when there are always important deadlines to meet.

We also expect our leaders to have good people skills. They must command the respect of our clients and those who work with them by being proficient and impartial, but understanding and open-minded at the same time. Humility and empathy are therefore two important traits we look for when we try to identify our future leaders. They must also exercise good self-discipline so that they can set an example for those who work with them.

Lastly, but most importantly, we look for integrity. In fact, integrity is what defines our line of business and what we commit to. Our leaders must be able to exercise good judgement in order to make responsible decisions and recommendations based on their professional knowledge. They must also have the courage to defend their professional decisions and recommendations when they are challenged.

Is employee retention a major challenge in EY? Please tell us about your retention strategy. What do you think is the most effective way to cultivate loyalty with your employees?

Employee retention is indeed a constant challenge for us and there is always a war for talent out there. The weakening of the Ringgit is making it worse because our employees have some universal skills that are in high demand in the neighbouring countries.

The most basic strategy for employee retention is of course making sure they are fairly compensated. This has to come with a highly transparent performance evaluation and compensation system that ensures the perceived value of and contribution by the employees are aligned between the company and the employees themselves. To most professionals, a fair employer is probably more important than a generous employer.

Employees also need to feel that they have some degree of control over their work. In other words, they need room for decision-making instead of just following orders. When they make decisions, they

“TO USE A CHINESE METAPHOR, WE PRIDE OURSELVES AS THE SHAOLIN TEMPLE OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES WHERE THE CHOSEN ONES LEARN TO BECOME THE BEST IN THE FIELD.”

have a sense of ownership and are more likely to have a positive attitude even when the work gets tough. On the contrary, if they are just passive followers, they are more likely to develop negative emotions that spread among the team and erode loyalty.

A sense of pride is also important. For this, we have our strong brand to leverage, and we regularly invest in publicising our talent brand to remind our employees that we are a prestigious employer where good people choose to work. To use a Chinese metaphor, we pride ourselves as the Shaolin Temple of professional services where the chosen ones learn to become the best in the field. We augment that by offering referral bonuses to encourage our employees to bring their friends into our workforce. When you bring in a friend, you endorse your employer and you're less likely to leave.

We also invest in our employees' well-being and professional growth to try to extend their tenure with us. For example, we allow flexible working hours and remote working arrangements as long as good work is delivered and deadlines are met. Our employees are also given time off and support for professional development. In addition to on-the-job coaching, each of our audit professionals spends at least 40 hours each year on professional

education to keep abreast of new technology, emerging issues and changes in professional standards.

Did the COVID-19 pandemic affect your HR policies and practices? How and why?

The last two to three years were certainly a very taxing period for our HR department. As we navigated the remote working challenge, keeping our employees engaged was very crucial. While we set up and sustained virtual teams to continue with our work, we also had to provide additional counselling to make sure our people stayed engaged and connected.

Fortunately for us, we activated our global crisis management plan even before the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. That provided us with a set of uniform response protocols for the coordination of travel, meetings and events. It also helped us to manage infection cases in our offices and to protect our workforce through contact tracing, safe workspace practices and other safety measures.

In the longer term, the pandemic has certainly given us the opportunity to re-examine our HR practices and respond to the greater awareness among our employees about work-life balance. There is definitely a need to put in place some new policies to sustain a more agile and resilient workforce while continuing to attract and retain the talents we need. Higher flexibility in working hours and remote working are two areas we are experimenting with.

Many jobs are being disrupted or even replaced by automation tools supported by artificial intelligence, big data, robotics and other forms of technology. Are professional services provided by EY being disrupted too?

We serve a wide variety of clients across many sectors. In the past decades, almost every industry had to continuously adapt to the new social and business environments brought about by



Performance management

To prepare its workforce and business for the future of work, EY has introduced a series of global talent programmes, including LEAD, a framework that connects people's career, development and performance. It features a digital personal dashboard that provides an intuitive way for EY people to view their feedback from teams, and track their progress in real-time, placing the focus on individual's career journey and aspirations.

Source: ey.com



Audit technology

EY Canvas, EY Helix and EY Atlas are the three foundations of EY digital audit: EY Canvas is their online audit platform; EY Helix is their data analytics platform, and EY Atlas is their cloud-based knowledge platform that delivers the latest accounting and auditing content.

Source: ey.com

technological advancements, especially progress in internet technology and mobile technology. In order to serve the needs of our clients, we need to adapt, too. The COVID-19 pandemic has also pushed us to adopt new technological tools to sustain our work and to keep our employees safe. However, technology is more of an enhancement to our work than a disruption, at least for the time being.

Generally speaking, technology has impacted us in the following ways:

First of all, we use digital technology to streamline our audit workflow and documentation. That helps to make us more efficient and gives us better control of our processes. Our global digital audit platform also helps to standardise our methodology and provides better data security. All these translate into higher quality audit work for our clients.

“WE USE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO STREAMLINE OUR AUDIT WORKFLOW AND DOCUMENTATION. THAT HELPS TO MAKE US MORE EFFICIENT AND GIVES US BETTER CONTROL OF OUR PROCESSES.”

Secondly, technology helps us to communicate better among ourselves and with our clients. Instructions, requests and feedback can be instantly communicated and properly routed through the client portal on our digital platform. A primary audit team can also direct execution and receive timely updates from audit teams in multiple locations.

Thirdly, a suite of data analyser tools on our technology platform helps us to organise and analyse audit-relevant data, assess risks and produce audit conclusions. With the help of such tools, we can handle a larger amount of data in a shorter time, and produce more robust analytical output.

Going forward, we expect to integrate other more sophisticated technology into our audit processes. We foresee a higher degree of automation, and the use of AI in risk assessment, for example.

As a very experienced recruiting manager, what advice do you have for new graduates hoping to build a career in a prestigious professional firm like EY?

Draw up a realistic plan for your career, set ambitious but achievable goals, and keep your focus so that you can build technical depth over time. At the same time, learn to be flexible, resourceful and open-minded so that you can develop the ability to adapt to the fast-changing environment. ∞

PERSPECTIVE

NAUVEED SALIM is the Regional Director of Sales at EngageRocket. He is an accomplished human resource strategist who has been helping companies of all sizes succeed in their technological transformation and organisational growth.

With more than 10 years of experience in Southeast Asia and Australia, Nauveed is passionate about employee experience. He strives to enable human connections at scale through the use of enhanced technology and advanced analytics.

NAUVEED SALIM

Resolving the Business-Human Disconnect that Plagues Organisations Today

The gap between what employers want and what workers need is a common occurrence for most organisations. In fact, it makes up for many watercooler conversations amongst employees at work. Employees want better benefits and fair distribution of workloads, which is often at odds with the business priority of greater throughput and higher margins. Both employers and workers are aware of this disconnect, yet few know how to navigate it successfully.

In the last two years, the disconnect has become more prominent and even taken on new dimensions due to the pandemic. Particularly when it comes to remote or hybrid work, employees and leaders or employers seem to want different things. This divide might widen in the face of future changes (for example, another COVID-19 surge or the risk of a looming recession), causing a rift in the workforce. Many organisations have already felt its effects during the Great Resignation¹.

1. <https://hbr.org/2021/09/who-is-driving-the-great-resignation>

THE STATE OF THE EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE DISCONNECT

76% of employees do not want to return to full-time office work. In contrast, senior executives working remotely are three times more likely to want a return to office (RTO)².

66% (two-thirds) of executives believe they are being 'very transparent' regarding their 'post-pandemic' policies. Only 42% of employees agree³.

68% of employers say they have strengthened their well-being value proposition in response to the pandemic. Just 51% of employees feel that organisations are more focused on their well-being⁴.

Employees prioritise relational factors in the workplace like **trust, flexibility and a sense of belonging** more than employers seem to understand⁵.

2. <https://futureforum.com/pulse-survey/>

3. Ibid

4. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/hr-survey-finds-significant-disconnect-between-employer-and-employee-perceptions-of-wellbeing-301484650.html>

5. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>

Left unaddressed, the negative sentiments that might have propelled the employee to intend to leave in the first place could snowball into disengagement from their work and reduced productivity.

As a result, there is a deterioration of overall workplace satisfaction, which impacts both employees and the organisation. In March 2022, we conducted the National Work-Life Harmony survey in collaboration with National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and garnered more than 3,300 respondents across 10 industries. From the study, we found widespread burnout among the workforce, with only about half satisfied with their work-life balance. A staggering 78% of employees — that is nearly four in five workers — feel burnt out at work, which is made worse when employers fail to address the disconnect and resolve such issues promptly⁶.

WIDENING GAP DUE TO RECESSION AND JOB UNCERTAINTY

For a while, employees could at least look for alternative employment opportunities when dissatisfied with their current workplace. Research indicates that 64% of employees who have recently quit, had another offer at hand⁷. However, this may no longer be the case if a recession does come about. An environment of economic turmoil and job uncertainty could rejig employee-employer dynamics and cause a shift in favour of organisations.

6. <https://www.engerocket.co/work-life-harmony-report>

7. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>



Gen Z disconnect

A 2021 Deloitte survey of 8,200 Gen Z workers in 45 countries found that nearly half (49%) make decisions about where to work based on personal ethics. In this environment, Gen Z's concerns regarding diversity, inclusion and sustainability must also become the concerns of the organisations for which they work.

Photo: Edwin Tan / iStock

What this means is that employees may need to reconsider their stance about changing jobs. If the recession does come about, many would potentially need to think about their priorities and choose to stay at their current job — whether or not it is preferred. Left unaddressed, the negative sentiments that might have propelled the employee to intend to leave in the first place could snowball into disengagement from their work and reduced productivity.

As the disconnect ripples further with a possible recession on the horizon, organisations must be proactive about bridging the gap.

CONVERGING BUSINESS NEEDS WITH EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS

As a general rule of thumb, the following approaches could serve as good first steps toward better connectedness between employees and employers.

1. Listening to Workers' Feedback

A main reason why the employer-employee disconnect arises is because organisations do not always collect or listen to employee feedback. For example, a McKinsey report found that employers believe 'looking for a better job' to be a top cause of attrition⁸, while employees overwhelmingly base their decisions on internal factors within their organisation like interpersonal relationships, trust, manager support, or the feeling of being valued. When organisations rely on their instinct or prior assumptions at the time of making decisions, it is unlikely that these will align with employees' aspirations.

Astonishingly, research suggests that 66% of organisations have designed or are designing post-pandemic workplace policies with little to no direct input from employees⁹. The ability to make decisions based on experience, instinct and subjective knowledge was a traditionally valued quality among managers — it is now time for this

to change. Instead, organisational leaders should aim to listen to employee feedback in a formal, structured manner to be able to collect actionable insights. This will ensure that RTO and other decisions are aligned with employee expectations and do not widen the disconnect.

This shift to data-driven decision-making starts with a robust employee feedback programme that can gauge worker sentiment at key moments of the workplace experience. It can reveal how the employee is feeling, the organisation's strengths, and where it is falling short at specific milestones — such as onboarding or right after a major policy change. Managers can also collect regular feedback through short surveys to better align team-specific decisions. Over a period of time, feedback data aggregation will begin to reveal the trends and even power generally accurate predictions on employee needs.

8. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>

9. <https://futureforum.com/pulse-survey/>

The world's number one best workplace

DHL Express has been named as the world's number one best workplace in the annual list published by Great Place to Work Institute™ (GPTW) in partnership with Fortune Magazine. "One of the key elements of our strategy is focused on the people who work for DHL Express. Without the engagement of our great people, we would not be able to deliver excellence to our customers as we do today," says Regine Büttner, Executive Vice President HR, DHL Express.

Source: DHL



Making decisions based on a culture of prioritising employees can go a long way. By investing in factors like work-life harmony and flexible workplace arrangements, employers can expect an uplift in engagement.

Customers of EngageRocket are well aware of the importance of collecting employee feedback. Some of our employee-minded customers conduct annual engagement surveys, periodical pulse surveys, and also surveys for critical moments in an employee journey — such as onboarding, promotion and exit. This way, the employers have a robust view of what employees are going through according to their life stage and the recent situation.

2. Employees as 'Internal Customers'

Over the last decade, employee-centric workplaces have started to prioritise their workforce using similar principles as a customer-centric organisation. Employee experiences (EX) can be designed in a manner parallel to customer experiences (CX). Metrics like net promoter scores (NPS), that were previously reserved for measuring customer satisfaction and loyalty are now equally applicable for employee sentiment. Measuring and improving on the right aspects of EX is a key factor in bridging the employer-employee disconnect, since it demonstrates that the organisation values its workforce.

By treating employees as internal customers, organisations ensure that they invest in their well-being and do not cause scenarios that could become an attrition risk. For example, if location and scheduling flexibility are top priorities for the workforce, the company gathers and assimilates this knowledge through feedback programmes. It then rolls out policy changes in line with demands for flexibility and also ensures that the culture encourages flexibility in the workplace.

Making decisions based on a culture of prioritising employees can go a long way. By investing in factors like work-life harmony and flexible workplace arrangements, employers can expect an uplift in engagement. This has outsized benefits for the business. According to the top human resources consulting company Gallup, businesses with highly engaged employees experience up to an 18% rise in productivity. Highly engaged teams also see a 43% decrease in employee resignations¹⁰.

10. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/321725/gallup-q12-meta-analysis-report.aspx>



Flexible work arrangements

In April 2022, the tripartite partners — Ministry of Manpower, Singapore National Employers Federation and National Trades Union Congress called for practices such as working from home and staggered hours at the workplace to be made permanent, even though the government has relaxed its COVID-19 measures and allows all employees to return to the workplace.

Photo: enviromantic / iStock

It is also important to keep in mind that employees' experience has a direct correlation with business metrics. In 2017, Jacob Morgan, founder of The Future of Work University, spoke with leading psychologists, economists and business leaders from around the world. From his study of 150 or more participants, he found that highly experiential organisations earn four times the average profit and two times the average revenue compared to those who do not invest in the employee experience.

For one of our customers, they used the employee feedback they collected to determine the best working arrangements that would accommodate employees' needs. Initially, the employers were keen on implementing a fully remote work arrangement as they assumed this is what their employees would want. However, upon conducting the feedback programme, they found that many prefer a hybrid arrangement — where employees get to choose the days to go to the office. The employees enjoyed the collaboration and socialisation that comes with the office environment, but do not want to feel 'forced' to come in every day.

3. Empowering Managers

Managers, team leaders and departmental or business unit heads tend to be the last-mile connection between an organisation and its workforce. They are in charge of communicating and executing policy changes. They are the ones interacting with employees every day, reaching out to offer support, and often the ones making day-to-day decisions that shape employee lives and work experiences.

From EngageRocket's own findings, managerial trust and support have a clear impact on employee engagement, whether knowingly or unknowingly. Our research has found that an employee's ability to openly discuss their issues with managers is the most significant predictor of engagement¹¹.

11. <https://www.engerocket.co/report-state-of-the-employee-experience>

Since EX differs from one team to another, managers need to be able to nurture their team members and make decisions tailored to their own team dynamics. However, not all managers are equipped with the innate managerial or leadership skills necessary for them to do so. The complexities in a modern workplace can make it difficult for managers to navigate their team dynamics and take the right actions.

This makes it crucial to empower managers through appropriate training, the right set of tools, and a degree of autonomy. However, there is still a considerable challenge. EngageRocket's research reveals that as many as 42% of HR professionals find it difficult to involve managers in the process of taking action. This is not due to the lack of intention or will, but simply because managers are often not properly equipped to bridge the divide.

One way to empower managers is by providing them with data about their team members' sentiments and performance. Following that, leadership teams or HR can provide them with recommendations of actions they can take to improve their team's well-being and engagement. This will give managers a solid starting point to begin making changes for the better of the organisation, starting from their team.

LEADING THE WAY WITH EMPATHY

The problem of the business-human divide is not new, and with the looming fear of recession and slower growth for companies, the disconnect may worsen. Employers may start to consider a more aggressive work-from-office plan as markets shift in their favour. This could be counterproductive as employees show up in the office but actually get less done.

As a way forward, the keyword for employers, leaders and managers is empathy. In the context of the workspace, it is about making workers feel cared for in a sincere way. Empathy starts with listening to what workers need and goes all the way to taking action that will improve their well-being and engagement. ∞

How the Singapore Land Authority (SLA) streamlined onboarding and ensured employee engagement in tumultuous times?

At the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Singapore Land Authority (SLA) faced challenges adapting to the new norms of working from home (WFH) and transitioning from a 'partially digital' organisation to a digital-ready one almost overnight. In standing up to the challenge, the HR team leveraged the EngageRocket platform to conduct surveys and obtain real-time insights at crucial points of the employee journey. This included the onboarding process for new joiners, as well as during COVID-19 and post-circuit breaker period to understand the change in employee expectations and any new requirements that might be emerging.

The surveys found that the employees felt stressed out and less productive when WFH, and appreciated communications during the crisis. Based on these insights, SLA took three immediate actions:



1. Investing in enhancing mental health of employees

SLA procured a dedicated counselling service whereby employees can call, email or meet with a counsellor face-to-face to ease the transition during the WFH period. Supervisors are also encouraged to go through a Health Promotion Board (HPB) supported training programme to learn how to support mental well-being at the workplace.

2. Starting a productivity fund

Besides equipping employees with personal laptops and other essential work equipment, SLA also introduced a productivity fund of SGD 150 per employee to cover the additional expenses that employees may incur when working remotely.



3. Launching a mental well-being campaign series

SLA conducted an active ongoing electronic direct mail campaign to disseminate useful information like how to cope during the circuit breaker. Townhalls and meetings hosted by the senior management team were also conducted to keep staff updated on the pandemic situation, how it has impacted the work of the organisation as well as HR and well-being initiatives rolled out to help employees.

STREAMLINING THE ONBOARDING PROCESS FOR 60 NEW HIRES IN 2020

SLA implemented EngageRocket's structured onboarding solution designed to improve employee experience and drive engagement. Survey delivery and analysis across different onboarding milestones are automated so that organisations receive ready insights that they can act on. 60 new hires were onboarded via this process, and SLA encouraged them to provide feedback and respond to surveys in order to fine-tune the onboarding experience.

Source: <https://www.engerocket.co/case-studies/sla>

PERSPECTIVE

THAMMIKA SONGKAE0 is Managing Director of Two Glasses, a company that combats textile waste in multidisciplinary ways, as well as Head of Partnerships and Development at Rainshadow Studios, which makes art and theatre that move audiences to confront their relationship with the climate crisis. Thammika graduated from the University of Pennsylvania (M.S.Ed., Higher Education) and the University of Texas at Austin (M.A., Comparative Literature), and has received fellowships and grants from institutions including the

Smithsonian Freer|Sackler Galleries. She is also a former Penn Social Impact House Fellow, World Economic Forum Global Shaper and Bread Loaf Environmental Nominee and Scholarship recipient.

Thammika challenges her audiences to question their own habits of (over)consumption and creates tools that allow them to carry out their journeys of change. *Changing Room*, the film she is producing, will premiere at The Projector in Singapore in June 2023.

THAMMIKA SONGKAE0

Empathy as Intelligence

It is a pity that empathy is not more of a highlighted skill in school, as it is important in human resources, especially for those who actively work on solving pressing world issues. Ari Wallach's article in the BBC, *Why We Need to be More Emotional to Save the World*, points out, "If our species wants to enjoy a long-term future, it might need to tap into the very human qualities of emotion." This is an idea that many funders of potential solutions and problem-solvers underestimate during their grant review processes or pitch sessions. In my line of work, which aims to address climate change and environmental degradation by stirring humans towards action, our teams understand that emotions are key to solving humankind's most pressing problems. When we asked a group of engineers, who were building a climate-change-themed escape room with close associate Rainshadow Studios last November, what made them adopt climate actions as individual citizens, they mentioned having watched Instagram reels of struggling animals on thinning ice sheets. They subsequently adopted empathy for the fatty, blubbery mammals and changed their actions in Singapore in hopes that actions *here* would improve life for seals and polar bears in the Arctic and Antarctica.

How long did their actions last? About one month.

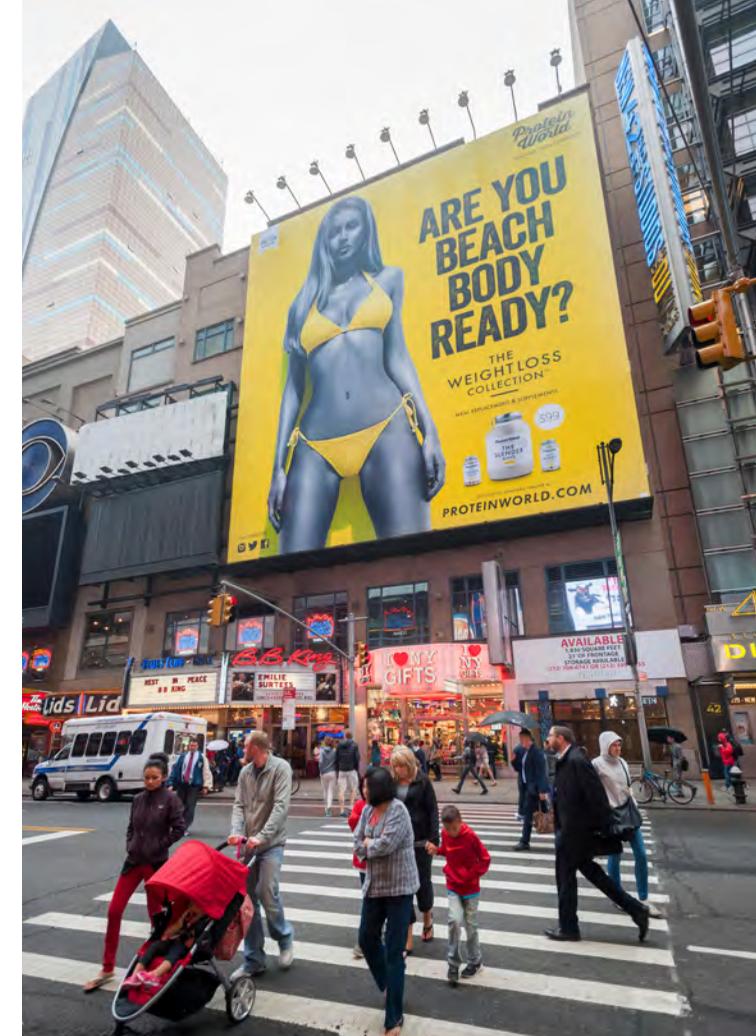
Body shaming

A billboard for Protein World asking whether you are "beach body ready" in Times Square in New York in 2015. The advertisement featuring model Renee Somerfield elicited controversy when they appeared in the UK where they were accused of fat-shaming and perpetuating an unrealistic body type.

Photo: Richard Levine / Alamy

Many of the people who join our teams are not themselves permanent environmental activists and need materials like visual reels to continue their engagement in environmental action. Many of them, like our target audiences, go through spurts of climate action which wane over time and need jolts to remain activated. It is not unreasonable or academically dubious to expect emotions to do this work of boosting. Daniel Goleman's seminal text on emotional intelligence, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More Than IQ*, outlines how deeply rooted emotions are in the brain, contrary to popular sayings that link them to what has subsumed the role of an intellectually inferior organ in decision-making — the heart. Wallach sums up the reasonableness of working with emotions, writing, "We have learned that emotions can be harnessed to guide us toward rational choices and cooperative action. Emotions can be geared toward long-term thinking and behaviour and are essential to the evaluation of simulated possible futures, known as 'pragmatic prospection'."

I look for emotional intelligence in the job candidates whom I interview for the growth of my company, Two Glasses. Two Glasses works closely to develop partnerships for Rainshadow Studios, but also on its own specifically within the scope of textile waste — a growing, yet entirely preventable problem. While technological innovations to create circular consumption in fashion are heavily and urgently needed, Two Glasses works on changing consumer mindsets, arguably the root of "all that buying" that leads to "the dirty secret behind the world's fashion addiction. Many of the clothes we donate to charity end up dumped in landfill, creating an environmental catastrophe on the other side of the world" (Besser, 2021).



Emotions can be geared toward long-term thinking and behaviour and are essential to the evaluation of simulated possible futures, known as 'pragmatic prospection'.

Marketers understand well that consumption is a product of psychology. Technology, at most, is the enabler and accelerator of consumption, not the root of want. Many marketers do what our teams wish was not done: they infiltrate traditional and social media and remind the ordinary citizen to fantasise, to want, to buy, even when the latter has no need. In other words, they 'empathise' with the feelings of inadequacy that many consumers have and suggest to them that buying their products is a solution.

I look for emotional intelligence and am especially thrilled when I see signs of practised empathy in a potential employee. In the business of changing mindsets, we cannot do our work if we cannot put ourselves in the shoes of the people we want

to change, since the change we want to create forms best without antagonistic confrontation — a style which many deem as off-putting — but through alliance. Today's global politics exemplify that trying to change someone through overtly antagonistic measures leads to backfiring and deepened divisions, with both parties reinforcing their own behaviours. Understanding why someone disagrees and where he, she or they are coming from can help build trust between speakers. From here, a meaningful and sincere dialogue can help

The fast fashion trash mountain

Around 40% of the used clothes imported into Accra, Ghana — one of the world's largest second-hand clothing markets — are unsaleable due to their poor quality and end up rotting in landfill sites, creating an environmental catastrophe. The issue of overconsumption is exacerbated by the rise of fast fashion.

Photo: Muntaka Chasant / Shutterstock Editorial

to develop a shared conversation, within which differences are better understood. Here, if one wishes to not only listen but also make a change, one can gain insight into how opponents think and thus be influenced. Middle Ground, a YouTube series by Jubilee whose self-inscribed description is 'Feel more. Think more. See more in others.', is an example of a platform that activates emotional intelligence in difficult conversations to address contemporary issues.

One of the projects that Two Glasses is working on with The Dance Circus uses empathy as a force for change. *Changing Room* is a short film that raises questions about how the feelings women have towards their bodies in changing rooms lead to purchasing behaviours that ultimately damage the environment. What does our time spent with insecurities have to do with environmental damage? Changing rooms, where many scrutinise their own bodies and spend time considering how they will fix or hide imperfections, are often where fantasies of solutions rooted in 'the next purchase' begin.

The film will premiere in mid-2023 with screenings followed by Q&A sessions, where our own team opens up, sincerely and empathetically, with the audience. As a team of mostly women who have been marketed at from our earliest memories, our goal is not to point fingers at other women who buy clothing they do not need, but it is to say: We see your desires for beauty and social acceptance in ourselves, and we see us in you. We think we understand at least a little of how the landfills of Accra, Ghana, have come to carry our globally derived textile waste, until the locals can only walk on clothes we used to think we needed or would love.

In our work, where the utmost dream is that most consumers would stop buying the average of 34 new pieces of clothing a year while throwing away 27 in the same amount of time, after wearing an item only seven to 10 times, it is necessary that we be able to form a mass — a community of a shared vision. If just half the Singaporean population subscribed to our call, landfills might be able to see 80 million fewer items of clothing each year.

When I am on the lookout for a new team member and see signs of emotional intelligence — be it in the way they behave towards a suboptimal waitress during a café interview, the way they apologise when they are wrong, the way they listen, or the way they handle feedback or a difficult question — I am on the lookout for human capital that can activate a cloak of invisibility on their own ego and focus on seeing the dynamics of the room, how their interlocutor feels, how their options of responses may pan out, and how they can steer conversations. After all, we are in the work of understanding how to trigger responses in others. This is not technology.

Technology can do a fantastic job of cleaning up the world, but mindsets can arguably do more.

Hard skills can be found relatively easily in Singapore and though I do not discount their necessity, I would not relegate emotional intelligence as secondary in importance or desirability. The world relies on people who have emotional intelligence, who can envision the responses of others, to move the masses. My work sees job candidates with high emotional intelligence as central and crucial, in any line of work. Problems of any kind will need a mind that understands how to solve them, as close as possible to their root cause.

Many of us advocating for emotion-activating approaches for environmental action still meet funders who look at us with doubt, the irony being that many scientist colleagues advocate for our approach, as Wallach's article shows. Funders will still prefer to put their attention and pockets towards technological innovations, which, no

doubt, are utterly necessary. However, we would nudge them to do the work of understanding the central role that emotions have in creating social and environmental change. Education, too, would become a more effective driver of social change by focusing on hard *and* soft skills, with empathy at its core.

Technology can do a fantastic job of cleaning up the world, but mindsets can arguably do more. Overconsumption, wars, and many manmade atrocities towards one another and the environment are products of mindsets gone haywire. Empathy could come close to becoming a panacea. Today's human capital, largely morally obligated to not cause more of a mess, would need this, among a host of other feelings known as 'self-transcendent emotions.' As Wallach writes, "These emotions — which include feelings of empathy, gratitude and awe — evolved to help manage social relationships with others and orient humans to a world that is bigger than themselves... Self-transcendent emotions allow people to manage complex, cooperative situations without needing to overtax their resource-intensive, rational thought processes. They also help delay the need for instant gratification or reward... Harnessing empathy — specifically transgenerational empathy — can help us make decisions that impact us for the better both today and for generations to come." ∞

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What motivates action?

A study published in *The Journal of Environmental Education* suggests that focusing climate discussions on the risk to humans can cause people to unconsciously think about death, which activate defence mechanisms, such as denial and repression. On the other hand, describing a threat to other kinds of creatures people care about can elicit empathy, compassion, a sense of potential loss, and a desire to protect.

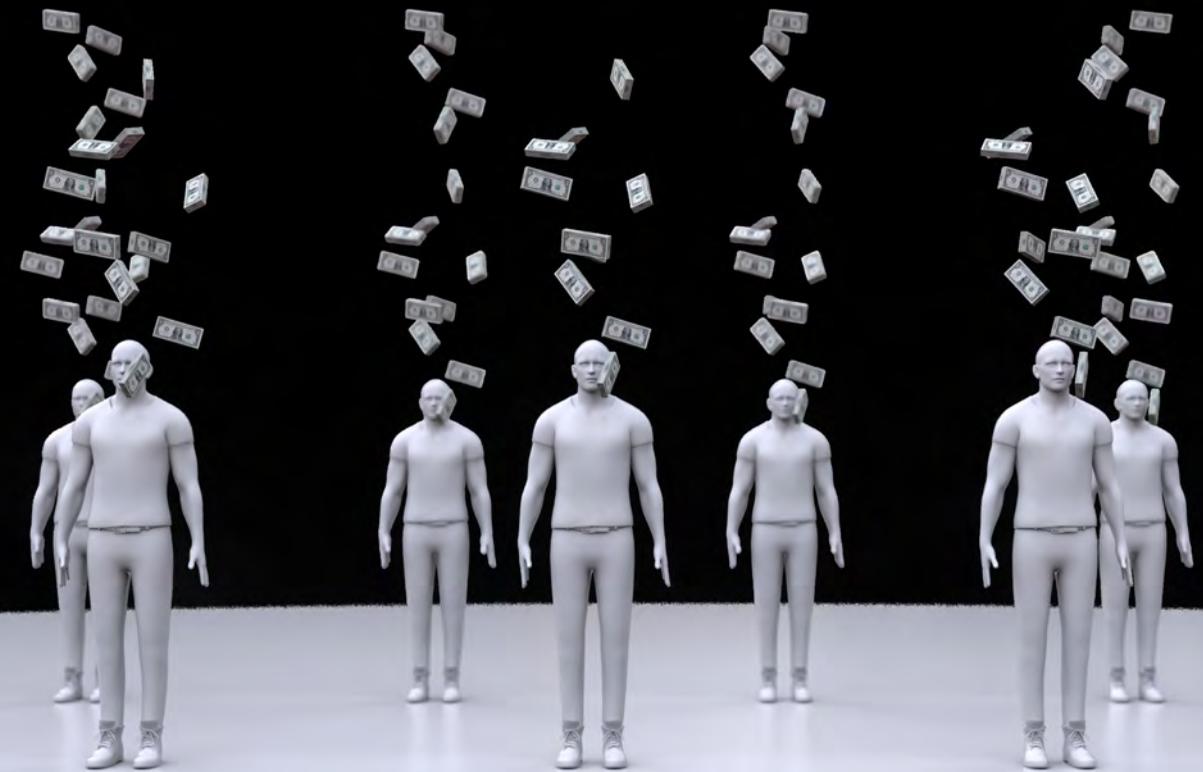
Photo: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



PERSPECTIVE

CHRIS OESTEREICH is the publisher of the Wicked Problems Collaborative, an independent press that focuses on humanity's biggest challenges. He formerly led zero waste programmes in the grocery industry and he now helps communities and organisations shift towards the circular economy via his firm, Linear to Circular. He is currently developing Morph Bags, a brand that will work directly with informal workers to upcycle waste materials into high-quality, useful products

like totes, handbags and cases. Chris is a co-founder of the Circular Design Lab, an effort that teaches design and systems thinking to community members who want to foster positive change to systems challenges. He is also a lecturer and former faculty member in the social enterprise programme at Thammasat University's School of Global Studies, where he teaches courses on social innovation and advocacy.



CHRIS OESTEREICH

The Pandemic, Work and Universal Basic Income

This article is adapted from Chris' book 'Pandemic Capitalism: From Broken Systems to Basic Incomes' published in 2020.

With no other option, people suffering from hunger and those at risk of the same are forced to compete. Porous safety nets worsen the issue. These conditions are not due to chance.

WHERE IS THE GREENER PASTURE?

In the time of hunter-gatherers survival was the order of the day. With limited opportunities for storage and preservation, groups spent much of their time securing food for the near term. Staving off hunger was a mandatory item on the daily to-do list. If the available food sources started getting depleted, hungry people moved on before it became a problem.

In 2016, the World Food Programme estimated that 800 million people were undernourished — over 10% of humanity. But the problem is not that there is not enough food — there is more than enough — it just does not go around. The UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) estimated that one-third of the food produced globally went to waste in 2011, and it might be as high as 40% in the US¹.

Our systems are designed for waste. The problem stems from our collective choices. Our governments prioritised concerns around individual wealth over those of collective human needs.

The masses struggle so that a relative few can enjoy fabulous excesses. Necessities go unfulfilled while the privileged indulge in perversities. And unlike in those bygone days when hunter-gatherers could move on to greener pastures, moving is often not an option. If you cannot afford subsistence where you are, how can you move to

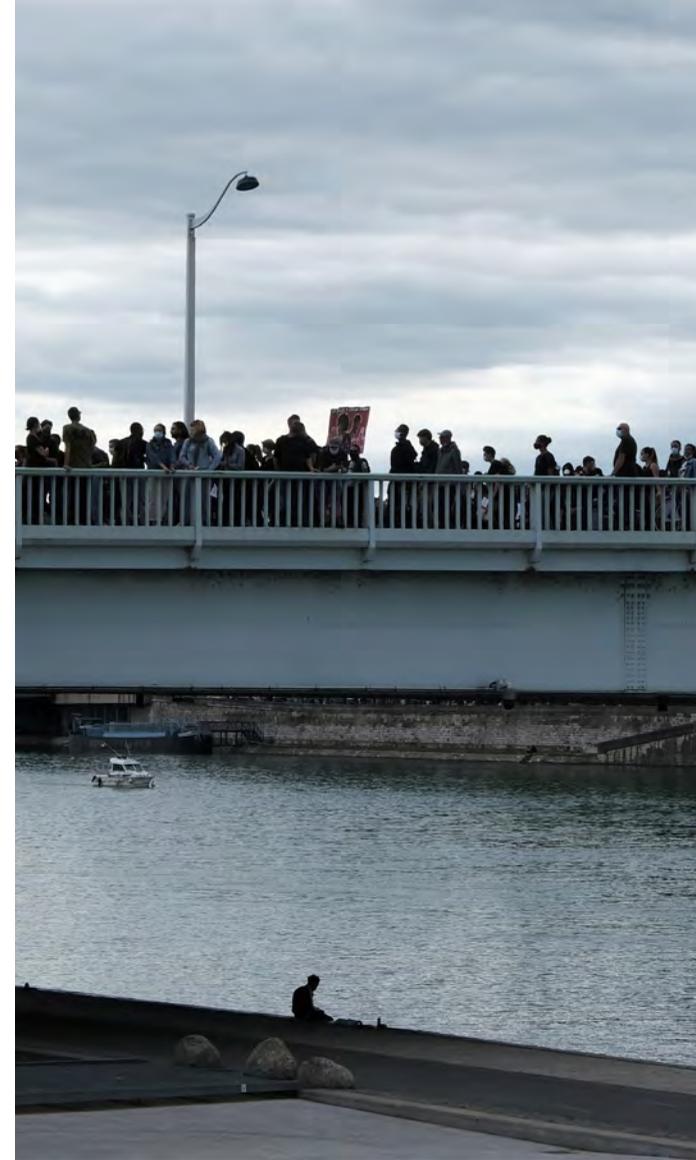
a place where you could? And on top of the costs of migration, countries are generally making it harder in response to internal backlashes. Those with desired expertise or deep pockets can still move around, but they are not the hungry ones.

With no other option, people suffering from hunger and those at risk of the same are forced to compete. Porous safety nets worsen the issue. These conditions are not due to chance. Instead, it is part of a deliberate project. Scholars Deborah Grayson and Charlotte Millar tell us that neoliberal thinkers have long worked to transform human nature. They note that 'early liberal thinkers in the 19th century thought that people naturally were rational economic agents and if you liberalised society enough people would' automatically begin to compete².

In practice, that meant deregulation, which was paired with premeditated precarity. Protections were removed, and scarcity was introduced. Rather than becoming 'rational economic agents', the mass of men were taken as hostages to a system that continually robbed them of voice and choice, while it coerced them to strive ever harder just to keep their heads above water. It did so while convincing individuals that systemic problems are individual failings. *Convincing us to hide our circumstances in shame was a trick worthy of supervillains.*

Adherents tell us profits are the best incentive for driving progress. But what evidence do we have to support that idea? Belief is a poor substitute for proof. We know the profit motive drives some of us, and maybe all are motivated by self-interest to some degree. Even so, there are plenty of other factors driving human behaviour.

1. "Hunger," World Food Programme, 2016, accessed March 21, 2020, <https://www.wfp.org/hunger>; "Food Loss and Food Waste," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), accessed March 21, 2020, <http://www.fao.org/food-loss-and-food-waste/en/>; Office of the Chief Economist, "Food Waste FAQs," US Department of Agriculture (USDA), accessed March 21, 2020, <https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/faqs.htm>.
2. Deborah Grayson and Charlotte Millar, "How to Stay Human," openDemocracy, May 23, 2016, <https://opendemocracy.net/transformation/charlotte-millar-deborah-grayson/how-to-stay-human>.



The root of our problems

A recent research of the British Journal of Social Psychology suggests that exposure to neoliberal ideology increased loneliness and decreased well-being by reducing people's sense of connection to others and by increasing perceptions of being in competition with others.

Photo: Alexis Fauvet / Unsplash

THE ROAD NOT YET TAKEN

Satisfying our needs individually limits our ability to respond collectively. Think about climate change. The more we produce, the bigger the problem becomes. Now think about how much of the work that is performed is not beneficial in terms of satisfying human needs? It is worth considering whether we even need everyone to work. I am sure many would argue that such a notion is not true in general, but the coronavirus outbreak confirmed that at least sometimes, we are all better off if a lot of people do not go to work (and maybe we still should not). Let's dig in on the general argument.

Our current system is based on jobs with 40-hour workweeks. The social contract it represented worked for a long time for many people, but it has become a broken promise for far too many of us. We are stuck in a system that does not adapt to the amount of work that is needed, nor the amount allotted to individuals, at a time when we need to drastically change both of those factors. In other words, if we all need to do our part, then maybe our parts all need to be smaller.

We are so used to relying on work for our economic security that the idea of not having to do so seems outlandish. Instead, we are accustomed to a system in which we play an increasingly frantic loser-take-none game of musical chairs. But it does not have to be that way. If we reframe our thinking about the economy to abandon competition for our primary needs, the solution becomes clear: a universal basic income (UBI).

Why should we believe one takes complete precedence over the rest? We know things like the desire to foster community, help family and friends, or the compulsion to work on humanity's problems drive some of us to do things that are not directly beneficial to ourselves. To buy into the neoliberal position, we have to accept the idea that selflessness is illogical or at least self-limiting. I'll pass.

Each of us has a mix of forces pulling us in different directions. At best, the profit motive is an oversimplification. At worst, it can be a destructive force without equal. That force needs to be restrained.



Effects of a UBI during the pandemic

Amongst all the UBI experiments around the world, the longest-running and most ambitious attempt is currently underway in Kenya. Since 2016, nonprofit GiveDirectly has been sending direct cash payments to more than 14,000 Kenyan rural households. A study shows that Kenyans who received a daily UBI equivalent to USD 0.75 were less likely to go hungry, suggesting how a UBI may help the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations survive crises.

Photo: Joerg Boethling / Alamy

coming in each month. This money would have the added benefit of reducing any loss of spending and thereby lessening the negative demand shock of the downturn. Imagine how differently the millions of new unemployment claims might affect the economy if all those people could count on regular UBI payments, rather than be stuck hoping for help from their government.

Such a programme could circumvent the problems with our current approach, as safety nets are often targeted for cuts. Conditions limit the number of recipients and sliding scales reduce the amount distributed. With those it is easy to continually cut benefits. Alternatively, a universal programme limits the opportunity for the erosion of benefits — the ongoing death by a thousand cuts. A UBI would also open the door to shifting away from our job-based economy wherein benefits like health insurance are tied to full-time jobs, a historical accident that fosters insecurity in the best of times and risks catastrophe during a pandemic. Under such a system some people might choose to squeak by on their basic incomes. Although the usual reaction to that is often negative, the rich already get to live well off the income from their

holdings. Why should the poor be demonised for not 'earning their keep'?

Before adopting a new idea, it is important to think about what the impact might be. The question is not whether a UBI scheme would help those who are struggling to make ends meet (it would), but whether it might create any undesirable effects.

If we cut the dependency on work for economic security, would we risk not being able to meet society's needs? The production of necessary goods and services is already occurring and although it will continue to evolve, it seems unlikely that this would suddenly unwind with the introduction of a basic income. Some people might choose to work less, but those who were struggling would be able to consume more, thereby reducing precarity and the resulting anxiety. Prior experiments, like the one run in Canada during the 1970s, have not uncovered problems along these lines.

That said, we probably need more experiments and research around those tests to better understand macroeconomic impacts. Doing so is vital to understanding systems that are both complicated

Imagine how differently the millions of new unemployment claims might affect the economy if all those people could count on regular UBI payments.

Let us imagine a monthly payment that provided a moderate income floor but did not remove the support provided by existing safety net programmes. With a regular stipend of sorts, all would have an easier time making ends meet in an increasingly uncertain economy. Such a programme might simplify matters by reducing the total amount of programmes necessary while reducing the administrative burden. Such changes could also remove the need for wasteful, destructive efforts like means-testing. Everyone gets a regular deposit from the basic income programme. Rich or poor, sick or well, young or old, it does not matter. If you are alive, you qualify.

Basic incomes would also provide a bit of financial padding for future downturns. Those who lost their work income would still have something



The Swiss basic income vote

On 4 October 2013, Swiss activists dumped 8 million 5-cent coins (one per inhabitant) on the Bundesplatz in Bern as a celebration of the successful collection of more than 125,000 signatures for their federal popular initiative, which forced the government to hold a referendum on whether or not to incorporate the concept of basic income in the Swiss Federal Constitution. In 2016, however, the referendum was rejected with a vote by 77% to 23%.

Source: Stefan Bohrer / <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=41384146>

What would the world look like if we enabled people to choose a collaborative orientation, rather than being forced into a competitive one?

and complex (as human societies are). We would learn through trying and we would have the chance to make mid-course corrections if needed.

What about its social impact? Some will look at a UBI as an undeserved handout that would detract from social cohesion. We should take such concerns seriously and work to understand them. Doing otherwise would likely reduce support for its inception. Having a better understanding of the concerns would enable us to study the effects of UBI tests with the goal of proving or invalidating such concerns. If the concerns were proven, such findings should be shared, and the programme should be rethought. If not, we would have evidence to help relieve the related anxiety. We will not get past the idea that basic incomes turn us into a lazy society without addressing the concern directly.

Others will likely see it as a path to stronger bonds through the reduction of precarity and the increased opportunity for connection through the reduced need for paid work. Volunteering and helping are much easier when you are not working multiple jobs just to pay the rent.

Basic incomes offer us the opportunity to slow down and rethink society. They could offer us lives with far less striving by giving us a modest level of security. Young adults might not have to worry about limiting their career choices to paths offering security alone. They also might avoid gambling on future earnings with student loans. A basic income scheme would also support artists and journalists, something that is dearly needed as their industries continue to struggle.

Instead, people might choose to carve out new paths wherein a balance between work and other efforts come together as parts of a whole life. That, rather than bits of a life squeezed in at the margins, sounds nice. Maybe then we could shift our focus from measures like return on investment (ROI)



Experiment in Finland

The findings from Finland's 2-year UBI experiment are intriguing: the basic income in Finland led to a small increase in employment, significantly boosted multiple measures of the recipients' well-being, and reinforced positive individual and societal feedback loops.

Photo: Tapio Haaja / Unsplash

Combat youth homelessness

Santa Clara County in California, US will soon launch a pilot programme to send out unconditional payments of USD 1,000 a month from April to August 2023 to homeless students in their final year of high school in an effort to ease their transition into higher education or work opportunities. There are roughly 15,000 unhoused high school seniors in California.

Photo: Dorothy Alexander / Alamy



to something like a return to community (RTC). Tracking social, environmental and economic benefits against their associated costs, including qualitative measures, could help guide us towards a virtuous cycle.

If you know what it is like to live with insecure work or income and the sorts of power imbalances that it leads to, please believe better is possible — that humanity is not destined to be a laboratory for wickedness. What would the world look like if we enabled people to choose a collaborative orientation, rather than being forced into a competitive one? Imagine a future in which the masses have their basic needs fulfilled by a reliable basic income system. In that future, service towards others might fill the hole left by the evaporating disquiet of precarity.

SHARING THE BOUNTY

Inequality, disease and climate change—these are just a few of the wicked problems facing humanity. What we are doing is not working. You know it. I know it. Those receiving the blunt end of the economy know it. The few doing fabulously know it. Anyone who is being honest knows we cannot go on like this. As Herbert Stein's Law states, 'If something cannot go on forever, it will stop.'

If we are going to change the economy so that it might begin to work for all, we first need to change how we think about it. Doing so requires us to think through fundamental questions, such as the origin and nature of wealth. Let's do that together.

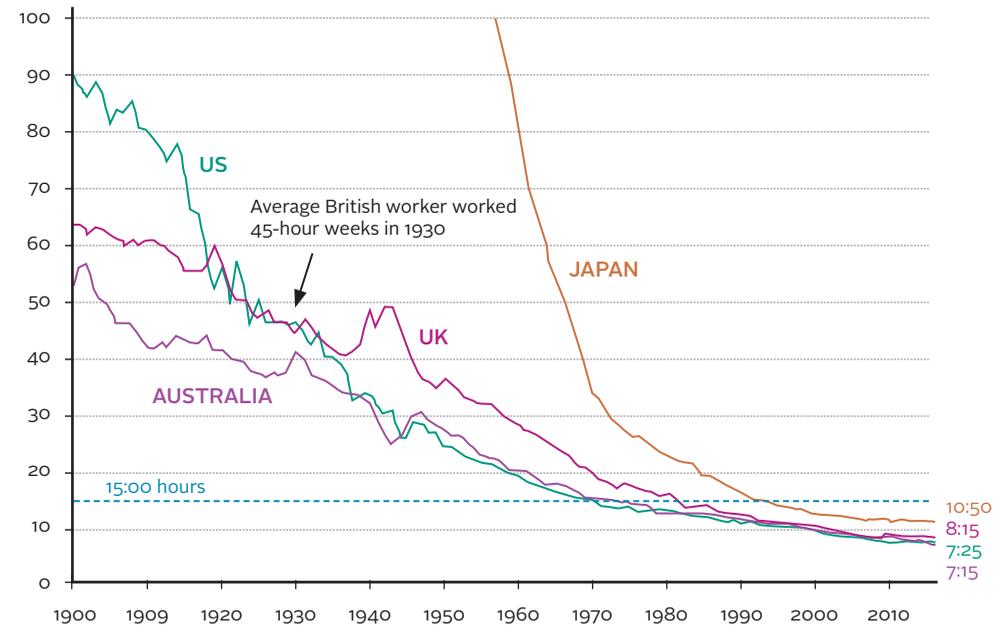
Categorically, humanity benefits from three things: (1) the bounty that is afforded to us by nature, (2) our social inheritance — everything humanity has learned, created and otherwise accomplished in the past, and (3) everything productive that we do in the present.

Nature's bounty gives us many benefits, including the habitat that affords our existence. The sun provides us with warmth and photosynthesis and drives the water cycle. Its light is increasingly converted directly into electricity that powers our homes, businesses and a growing number of our vehicles. It also provides us with the energy stored in fossil fuels that have long powered our societies.

Next are the benefits passed down by our forebears, which are the combined knowledge and wisdom gained from the sum of human experience. To harness the sun's energy we needed thousands of years of scientific and technological progress — from wheels, writing and mathematics to engineering, code and material sciences. Individuals provided pieces throughout many lifetimes. Progress was collective.

We all stand on the shoulders of giants today — albeit unevenly. The chart below shows the hours required to match the output of a UK worker's 45-hour workweek in 1930. The effort needed to get the same productivity today runs between seven and 11 hours. Think about that. A little overtime on Monday could net the same output today as a workweek gave us 90 years ago. Back in 1900, the same level of productivity took 90 hours in the US.

HOURS REQUIRED, PER WORKER, TO MATCH THE AVERAGE BRITISH WORKER'S OUTPUT IN 1930



Source: Toby Phillips, "We Have the Tools and Technology to Work Less and Live Better," Aeon, October 23, 2019, <https://aeon.co/ideas/we-have-the-tools-and-technology-to-work-less-and-live-better>.

Imagine telling your great-grandparents that progress helped you match their output in about 10% of the time. Then imagine their response if you told them people still work 40-hour workweeks while many struggle to get by.

The third category looks at the gains from what we do now. These include all the fishing and farming, building and buying, creating and consulting, and everything else that benefits humanity. I think it should also include childcare and housework, lending a helping hand to our neighbours and visiting people who are alone. Everything that matters should count.

Take a step back again. What does modern society value? Few societies pay people to take care of their children or to do their laundry, but society benefits from children being well cared for and everyone wearing clean clothes. And what

of our wage earners? As the pandemic took root in New York, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urged people to cease non-essential domestic travel. At the same time, the Department of Homeland Security made exceptions that allowed people who worked in trucking, public health, financial services and food supply to continue working. In other words, those whom received exceptions were considered essential. However, the compensation that these essential workers receive often does not match their vital role in the economy. For example, in Washington state, out of the 36,000 workers who received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly known as food stamps) in 2018, more than 10% were Wal-Mart employees. Amazon, Safeway and McDonald's

employed over 1,000 claimants each. The economy could not function without these workers, but they were not paid a living wage.

What truly matters becomes clear in a time of crisis.

We should consider why so many of the people providing critical services struggle to get by as well as what we might do to correct that problem³.

If we look at the three categories, the first two were given to us: our natural income and our societal inheritance. In another world the gains

³ Neil McNamara, "Wealthiest Companies In WA Employ Thousands On Food Stamps: DSHS," Patch, September 9, 2018, <https://patch.com/washington/bellevue/s/giamm/wealthiest-companies-in-wa-employ-thousands-on-food-stamps-dshs>.

Why no one in Spain wants to be a waiter anymore

There are 50,000 job vacancies for waiters in Spain despite a national unemployment rate that still hovers around 13%. Spain's hospitality workers have for years been complaining about long hours, night shifts that go unpaid, wage cuts, job instability, unpaid holidays and employers paying them under the table to avoid having to pay tax and social security. *Están hartos* as they say in Spanish, they're fed up.

Photo: Jesus Merida / SOPA Images / ZUMA Wire / Alamy Live News



Humanity has abundant resources available. We are just not very good at sharing them. It is time to find better ways to organise our societies that recognise our circumstances and deliver broadly beneficial outcomes.

from them might be spread around equally via a progressive taxation system. But that is not how it works here. Instead we have laws and rights that allow us to make claims on places, things and ideas. In theory, these rights enable us to prevent theft (or at least deal with it). In reality, what we have now is an antiquated mess that fosters inequality. If we can agree on that, what should we be able to claim, and what resources should be shared?

In an age of inequality, many must continually strive harder and harder just to keep their families fed, clothed and sheltered. They do so on a planet where much of the food that is grown goes to waste, where we destroy unsold garments and homes sit empty. On top of this the climate is careening towards catastrophe. Maybe it is time to rethink the rules and give everyone a chance to have a decent life without all the strife?

Humanity has abundant resources available. We are just not very good at sharing them. It is time to find better ways to organise our societies that recognise our circumstances and deliver broadly beneficial outcomes. If you look at the categories laid out here, it is possible to see the opening for basic incomes to flow out of the things our forebears and nature gave us. By how much is an open question. For now we need to reframe the possible, to look at society with new eyes and think about what we might do to make it civil once more.

If you take another look at the graph in this article, you will see the dotted green line that represents a point where the average British worker's output for a 45-hour workweek in 1930 could be matched by a 15-hour workweek in a variety of places. Japan was the last to do so of those included in the graph, and they did it around three decades ago. With that in mind I will suggest that the prospect of a two-day workweek is not an absurd notion.

TOWARDS A BETTER NORMAL

While the coronavirus pandemic is wreaking havoc, it also affords us something precious — a moment to think. This is something the systems we live in have long robbed us of. We should not waste the opportunity.

To start with we need to question our fundamental assumptions about how to organise the economy and society in general. We should think about what we could change and what the effects might be. With that I will give you a few questions to chew on:

- What if we had a different system, one that took care of the primary needs of a majority rather than the greed of a few? What might that system look like?
- How could a UBI help support that system?
- Whose support would we need to make it happen?
- How could we get more experiments going?
- What can we do with the data we have from existing experiments?
- How can we tell the stories of the positive impacts on real human lives in ways that will compel others to support such change?
- What are you willing to do to help make it real?
- What are you willing to accept if we do not?

When we poke and prod complex emergent systems the outcomes are often not what we expect. That is okay. We live and learn and try again with the new knowledge in tow. ∞



Dilbert is an American comic strip written and illustrated by Scott Adams, first published on April 16, 1989. It is known for its satirical office humor about a white-collar, micromanaged office with engineer Dilbert as the title character. It has spawned dozens of books, an animated television series, a video game, and hundreds of themed merchandise items. In 1997, Adams received the National Cartoonists Society Reuben Award and the Newspaper Comic Strip Award for his work. Dilbert appears online and as of 2013 was published daily in 2,000 newspapers in 65 countries and 25 languages. Source: Wikipedia



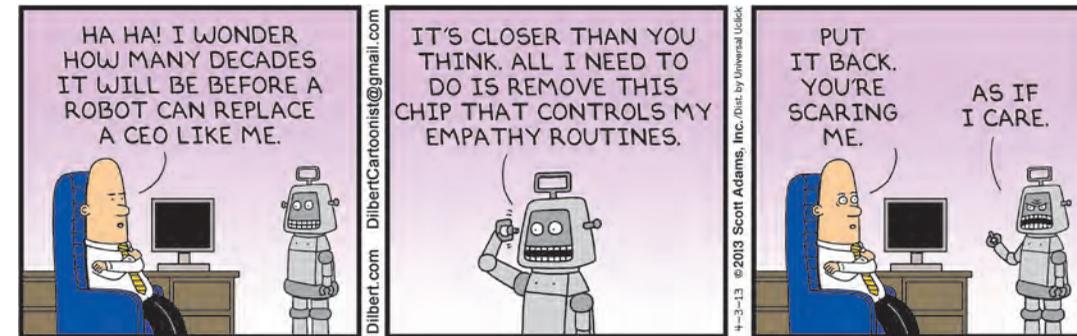
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Are employees a resource, capital, an asset or a community?



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