University of Kent

Kent Academic Repository

Valsecchi, R, Balta, M. and Morgan, Rachel (2025) *Re-building and Re-inventing Workplaces*. Frontiers in Sociology, 10 (2025).

Downloaded from
https://kar.kent.ac.uk/108521/ The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from
https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2025.1538872

This document version
Author's Accepted Manuscript

DOI for this version

Licence for this version
CC BY (Attribution)

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record
If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts
If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in ***Title of Journal*** , Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries
If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies).

frontiers

Re-building and Re-inventing Workplaces

Raffaella Valsecchi[1*], Maria Balta[2], Rachel Morgan[1]

[1]Brunel Business School, College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences, Brunel University London, United Kingdom, [2]Business School, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kent, United Kingdom

Submitted to Journal:
Frontiers in Sociology

Specialty Section:
Work, Employment and Organizations

Article type:
Editorial Article

Manuscript ID:
1538872

Received on:
03 Dec 2024

Journal website link:
www.frontiersin.org

In review

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest

Credit Author Statement

Maria Balta: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Validation, Writing – review & editing. Rachel Morgan: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft. Raffaella Valsecchi: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

Keywords

Post-COVID-19 Pandemic, re-building organisations, new work structures, flexible working, Well-being, Supportive leadership

Funding statement

The author(s) declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Generative AI disclosure

No Generative AI was used in the preparation of this manuscript.

In review

Re-building and Re-inventing Workplaces

During the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses and organisations have had to adapt rapidly to survive, with remote and hybrid work becoming the norm. This shift has highlighted both the benefits of flexible working, such as increased productivity, and challenges like household intrusions and isolation. Organisations are reorganising practices to manage remote performance and engagement effectively. The rise of digital technologies has facilitated quicker interactions but also revealed gaps, especially in sectors like education, where issues such as inadequate IT infrastructure and reduced face-to-face interaction have emerged. The pandemic has also led to increased sick leave, underscoring the importance of employee health and well-being, often overlooked by HR managers. Many businesses have faced significant uncertainty, prompting them to reinvent their operations. This situation offers a chance to rethink workplace structures and practices.

This research topic explores how organisations can rebuild and reinvent themselves in response to these challenges, focusing on lessons learned to foster adaptability and success in an ever-changing landscape. The papers for this Research topic reflect on the necessity of adapting to new work structures and prioritising employee-wellbeing. The papers include explorations of the need for effective management strategies as businesses shift to remote work settings, while highlighting the importance of reflective practices, continuous training and supportive leadership in challenging times.

In review

Below we summarise these papers briefly, starting with Mustaffa et al. 's study on the effects of communication, training, and transformational leadership during COVID-19 in Malaysia underscores the necessity for businesses to adapt to remote and hybrid work environments. It highlights the challenges of balancing flexibility with issues like isolation and household intrusions. Effective employee engagement strategies are crucial as organisations reshape their structures post-pandemic, emphasising health and well-being. The research calls for reflection on past practices while innovating management approaches. It also stresses the need for improved IT infrastructure to support remote work. Ultimately, the study aims to foster adaptable, resilient workplaces that prioritise employee engagement and well-being.

Yang et al.'s research on High Involvement Work Practices (HIWPs) highlights their impact on employee well-being and service outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic. As organisations shift to remote and hybrid work, HIWPs can enhance service performance through customer orientation but may also increase workloads, leading to work-family conflict and reduced well-being. The study underscores the need for supportive leadership and the adaptation of management practices to prioritise employee health. Reflecting on past experiences is crucial for developing strategies that balance work demands with employee support, fostering healthier work environments. By integrating these insights, organisations can enhance resilience and adaptability in a changing landscape.

Building on Durkheim's concept of anomic suicide Ozbilgin et al. highlight how weakened institutional policies can lead to workplace suicides, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As organisations shift to remote and hybrid models, the need for strong support

systems becomes critical due to increased isolation and mental health issues. The study identifies dehumanisation and misrecognition as key factors contributing to employee well-being challenges. It emphasises the importance of implementing effective practices that acknowledge employee needs and advocates for a proactive approach to prevent work-related suicides. Ultimately, it calls for strategies that foster employee engagement and mental health, creating resilient workplaces.

Exploring equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) challenges in universities, Toroghi et al. examine the effects of neoliberal managerialism and the COVID-19 pandemic on institutional practices. While remote and hybrid work models have increased productivity, they have also led to isolation and stress, reflecting toxic workplace cultures. The authors argue that a competitive focus on efficiency often undermines inclusivity, exacerbating biases against marginalised groups. They propose the NEAR framework—Noticing, Empathising, Appraising, and Responding—to cultivate a compassionate workplace culture that prioritizes EDI. In the post-pandemic landscape, fostering organisational compassion and inclusivity is essential for building resilient, supportive environments that enhance employee engagement.

Lastly, Diaz et al.'s exploration of ongoing professional training for social education practitioners underscores the urgent need for adaptability amid societal changes, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. As organizations shift to remote and hybrid models, challenges arise in fostering effective practices. The study highlights the importance of continuous training in mental health, management, and mediation. The pandemic has revealed vulnerabilities in traditional work structures, emphasizing health and well-being. Both business and education sectors must reflect on past experiences to re-imagine their practices. A compassionate, ethical approach can foster supportive environments, enhancing individual well-being and organisational resilience in serving diverse communities.

Utilising diverse conceptual and methodological perspectives, the articles in this research topic emphasize the need to adapt to new work structures during challenging times. They highlight the importance of employee well-being and equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) while examining effective management strategies for businesses transitioning to remote work environments.