

European Alliance Against Coronavirus

Friday 17th July 2020 at 8:30

The post-Covid-19 workplace

Working format is based on “Gilles Rules”:

1. conceptual framework
2. needs and disruptions
3. solutions

Speakers:

- Pablo Gonzalez, Batch Arquitectura, Smart City Cluster

[Link to session's recording](#)

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Covid-19 and workplace

The Covid-19 pandemic has abruptly **transformed the way people work and interact** around the world. Nonetheless, current circumstances are accelerating some trends that were already ongoing. Those trends will become the norm in a shorter time than expected and due to the pandemic, in the next 12 to 18 months, we might see changes that otherwise would take 5 to 10 years.

During this session, Pablo González from Batch Arquitectura, presented some insights about the possible new routines in the office. Indeed, the **purpose of the office has changed with the extensive use of remote work** and it is necessary to find new ways in which the workplace can be productive and make people feel safe.

To find new and innovative solutions, it is important to pay attention on this topic:

- **what will the post-Covid-19 office look like?**
- **how will space needs in the workplace change?**
- **how can the workplace secure the health of the employees?**

The proposal of the Smart City Cluster

The Smart City Cluster developed a white paper for the organisation of the workplace. It takes into account a two-phase process: a **first pre-vaccine phase in the short term** and a **second post-vaccine phase in the mid/long term**.

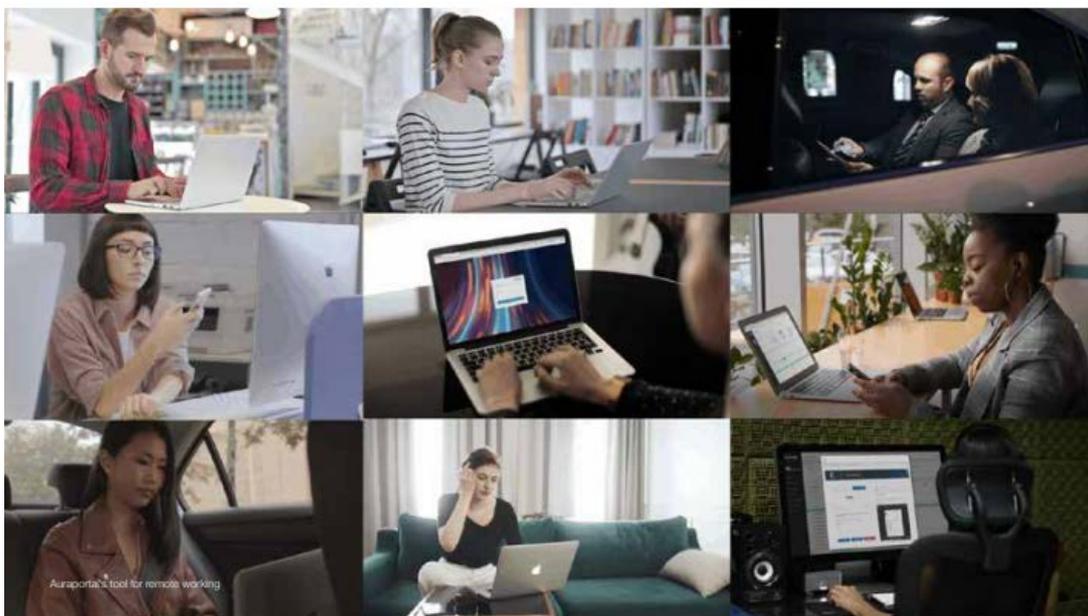
What is need now in a pre-vaccine scenario is very different from what we will need once a vaccine will be available. In the short-term, the need to provide indoor health and safety for the worker are forcing us to implement social distancing measures that were simply unthinkable before the pandemic. One of the main consequences is an **increase of the distance** between posts and reducing the capacity of different workspaces. As a result, and with an increase in remote work, **we will find a**

lower number of square meters per employee. Another focus will be on how our buildings operate in terms of air quality. The **success of this change will be based on the capacity of the office to adapt to all scenarios (predictable and unpredictable)** in the next months and years. Adaptability will be a key feature in the post-Covid-19 office.

Our workspaces must allow all changes needed to guarantee the wellbeing of the employees and the productivity of work teams. **To reach all that we must pay attention to 3 aspects:**

- **Design** to make flexible spaces (current and new) and to boost human capabilities in tasks that can only be performed in person
- **New health and well-being with indoor air quality and HVAC mechanical systems,** facility services such as hygiene (achieving a new dimension) and automation for the office to become “touchless”
- **Digital tools** to obtain a seamless transit between remote and in-person work and back, optimising the office use and, on a building scale, managing incidences and monitoring energy performance. Technology must allow to follow the right metrics to make the right decisions

The **office of the future** in a post-vaccine scenario will no longer just be an addition of work posts, desks, or benches. It **will be a collection of spaces to catalyse human abilities.** This way, it will host mostly face-to-face, creativity, design and any other type of work that require presential contact. The rest of the tasks will be performed remotely. Furthermore, there is the **need to adapt secondary spaces** (toilets, canteens, circulation areas and others) to the new normal. In addition to this main purpose in the new office, a second purpose rises: **the representative use.** Optics are one of the utmost importance and corporate values which must be conveyed to the staff and to the outside (both office visitors and media communication).



2. IDENTIFICATION OF DISRUPTIONS

First disruption: Covid-19 impact on workplaces

Evidence: The main disruptions of this session have already been anticipated in the conceptual framework. The first concerns the very strong acceleration that Covid-19 has brought on to change what was already underway and which would materialize further in the coming years. The pandemic forced companies to integrate remote working and social distances into the way employees are managed. The way people work, go to work, and conceive work has changed. Researches presented by the experts show that in the short term, 60% of the staff will work in 100% of the spaces available pre Covid-19. The objective during the pandemic period (short-term) is to maximize remote working and provide safety, health, and hygiene in the offices (compliance with sanitation rules and social distances). Despite the constraints, the goal remains to maximize productivity (through concentration, collaboration, and shared knowledge).

Geographical impact: EU

Stage of value chain: human resources

Character of the disruption: impact on workplace management

Time frame: short term

Recommendation:

- Agile implementation of safety measures in the office
- Adaptable redesign of the office space to increase security of the employees

Second disruption: post-Covid-19 workplace configuration and management

Evidence: The second disruption concerns the way in which workplaces will need to be designed after the pandemic crisis. In fact, many companies consider remote work as a permanent change. Experts state that in the long term, about 40% of staff will work in 60% of spaces. The main characteristics of new workplaces are:

- Design space to ensure right distances
- Design expansion of flexible posts
- Design office with space for secondary uses (restrooms, transition areas)
- Re-design bar/canteens/restaurants
- Design and build surfaces with easy-to-clean materials
- Maximize the use of digital tools to boost social distances and productivity
- HAVC systems to ensure air quality
- Guarantee health, hygiene, safety (digital tools for hygiene, new “touchless office”)
- Work tasks that require face-to-face relation, creativity, design. The workplace will no longer be a collection of desks and offices
- Representation of company values towards the staff and the exterior (both visitors and media)

Geographical impact: EU

Stage of value chain: human resources

Character of the disruption: impact on workplace design

Time frame: medium – long term

Recommendation:

- Many companies are moving towards more flexible contracts and in some contexts, they are thinking of adjusting (reducing) the salary for people who do smart working.
- This re-configuration is an opportunity for the European companies' value chains. In fact, it is possible to unite supply chains and value network companies that deal with the supply of digital tools, suitable materials and instruments to build these new offices.