

ANSE SUMMER ONLINE SPECIAL – KEYNOTE SdR – 190821, 10.20 – 11.00
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ONLINE ALL DAY. IMPLICATIONS OF PERVASIVE DIGITIZATION FOR SUPERVISORS AND COACHES

by SIJTZE DE ROOS

GOOD MORNING, GLAD TO MEET YOU ON SCREEN, IF NOT QUITE IN THE FLESH. NOW WE ARE ALL ONLINE, ALL DAY EVEN, AND TOMORROW AS WELL, LET'S GO.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE YOU THROUGH A FEW SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF BEING ONLINE ALL DAY. SINCE THE OUTBURST OF COVID-19 NOT ONLY SUPERVISORS AND COACHES ARE HOOKED UP 24/7, PRACTICALLY *EVERYBODY* ALL OVER THE WORLD IS NOW.

THIS DRASTICALLY RESHAPED OUR GESTURES – FROM HANDSHAKING TO SWIPING – OUR MOVEMENTS, OUR DAILY EXPERIENCES AND OUR SENSE OF TIME AND PLACE. WE ARE 'HERE' AND AT THE SAME TIME 'THERE', ALL DAY LONG, EVEN IF IT HAPPENS TO BE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

IT MOREOVER CHANGED THE WAY WE SEE AND EXPERIENCE OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER, THE *FEEL* OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION AND OUR RELATIONS WITH TECHNOLOGY - ESPECIALLY TECHNOLOGY WE DO NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND. DO WE *DEAL* WITH TECHNOLOGY OR ARE WE *DEALT* WITH BY IT? ARE WE LIVING IN PHYSICAL REALITY OR ARE WE PART OF A MATRIX-LIKE VIRTUAL WORLD WE HAVE LEARNED TO TAKE FOR REAL? IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ME AND MY AVATAR?

HOWEVER THIS MAY BE, THE MERE FACT THAT WE STILL CAN COMMUNICATE IS JUST GREAT. THE ONLINE CHALLENGES, CHANCES AND POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS AND OFTEN EXHILIARATING. YOU WILL HEAR MORE ABOUT THIS DURING THIS ONLINE FEAST. AND YOU CAN READ ABOUT IT IN THE LATEST ISSUE OF THE ANSE JOURNAL

REVVED UP BY CORONA, THE PROCESS OF VIRTUALIZATION REALLY TOOK OFF, PICKED UP SPEED, SWITCHED IN HIGH GEAR AND FORCED US TO RETOOL, RESHAPE AND (FURTHER) DIGITALIZE OUR TRADE. AND WE DID!

WHILE OUR BODIES ARE 'AT HOME', WE NOW ROUTINELY COMMUNICATE AND WORK WITH OUR CLIENTS 'ON THE OTHER SIDE' OF THE SCREEN. WE MAY TOUCH THE SCREEN, BUT NOT 'FEEL' THE CLIENT. THE VIRTUAL SPACE WE SHARE IS SPLIT BY THE MEDIUM WE USE; THE MEDIUM THAT PERHAPS SHAPES US MORE THAN THAT WE SHAPE IT.

THIS OPENS POSSIBILITIES AND MAY SET PEOPLE FREE. IT SOMETIMES MAY BE EASIER, FOR INSTANCE, TO SHARE YOUR PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS ONLINE THAN FACE TO FACE IN REALITY. YET SOMETIMES IT ALSO MAY SET US MORE APART AND COMPLICATE OUR WORK.

SO, FIRST AND FOREMOST WE HAD TO ADAPT OUR SENSE OF PLACE AND TIME, TO REORGANIZE OUR FEELING OF PHYSICAL SPACE INTO FEELING BY SCREEN, AND TO ADAPT AND REFURBISH OUR WORKING STATIONS. AND WE DID!

WHAT MORE DO WE HAVE TO TAKE IN ACCOUNT?

SECONDLY, WE HAD – AND HAVE - TO VIRTUALLY *RE-EMBODY* OUR WORKING AREA AND SHAPE IT INTO A *TRANSITIONAL SPACE*

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT OUR CONSULTING ROOMS – BE THEY REAL OR VIRTUAL - SHOULD EMBODY THE SYMBOLIC QUALITY OF A *TRANSITIONAL SPACE* IN WHICH PEOPLE FEEL FREE TO LEARN, TO REFLECT ON THEIR VIEWS AND WAYS, TO STICK THEIR NECKS OUT AND GO THROUGH POSSIBLY PAINFUL CHANGES.

IN SHORT: OUR (NEW) VIRTUAL WORKPLACE, TOO, SHOULD EMBODY THIS TRANSITIONAL QUALITY.

THIRDLY, WE NEED TO CREATE VIRTUAL WORKING SPACES THAT ARE BOTH ‘OPEN, PUBLIC AND INVITING’ AND AT THE SAME TIME ‘CLOSED, PRIVATE AND INTIMATE’.

1. OPEN AND INVITING FOR ‘INSIDERS’ TO LOOK OUT INTO THE WORLD AND BROADEN THEIR VIEW
2. OPEN AND INVITING FOR ‘OUTSIDERS’ TO FEEL INVITED AND STEP OVER THE TRESHOLD. OPEN TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, SO THAT BOTH IN- AND OUTSIDERS MAY BE INVITED TO MOVE OUT OF THEIR CLOSETS
3. CLOSED AND INTIMATE FOR CLIENTS TO OFFER THEM A SUFFICIENTLY SAFE AND PRIVATE SPACE TO LEARN, TO CHANGE, TO TRANSFORM UNBOtherED BY DISRUPTIVE INFLUENCES
4. CLOSED AND INTIMATE FOR THE PRACTITIONER TO DEVOTE HIM/HERSELF TO THE CLIENT(S) IN FRONT OF HIM/HER

LEARNING AND CHANGING NEED OPENNESS TO THE WORLD AS WELL AS THE CLOSURE OF INTIMATE SUPPORT, AND THUS REQUIRE SAFE SURROUNDINGS, BE THEY REAL OR VIRTUAL.

TO BE SURE, HOWEVER, BY ‘SAFE (LEARNING) SPACES I DO *NOT* MEAN THE ‘SAFE SPACES’ STUDENTS AT AMERICAN (AND EUROPEAN) UNIVERSITIES NOWADAYS CLAIM FOR THEMSELVES, SO AS NOT TO BE CONFRONTED WITH INFORMATION, FACTS, INSIGHTS OR IDEAS THAT DIFFER FROM WHAT THEY IDENTIFY WITH, THAT MAY MAKE THEM FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, IN WHICH THEY ‘DO NOT RECOGNIZE THEMSELVES’ OR WHICH DO NOT ‘REPRESENT’ THE SOCIAL GROUP THEY FEEL THEY OUGHT TO BELONG TO.

WHAT I MEAN IS QUITE THE OPPOSITE. LEARNING, CHANGING AND GROWTH ARE ALWAYS CHALLENGING AND NOT SELDOM WILL COME WITH UNCOMFORTABLE AND UNSETTLING FEELINGS (NEXT, OF COURSE, TO THE SHEER JOY OF ‘GRASPING THE POINT’, THE BROADENING OF YOUR VIEW, THE DEEPENING OF YOUR INSIGHT AND UNDERSTANDING, AND THE GROWTH OF YOUR DEXTERITY. THAT’S EXACTLY WHY WE NEED TRANSITIONAL SPACES THAT ARE BOTH OPEN AND PRIVATE. THERE WE LEARN TO CONFRONT AND HANDLE THE INHERENTLY UNSAFE ASPECTS AND DIMENSIONS OF LIFE WITHIN AND AROUND US. THERE IS NO GROWING WITHOUT AT LEAST SOME PAIN. COME OVER HERE AND LEARN TO FACE IT, I’LL BE WITH YOU. AND YOU’LL BE WITH ME

SO FAR SO GOOD. BUT HOW TO KEEP OUR TRANSITIONAL SPACES SIMULTANEOUSLY OPEN, FREE, SUFFICIENTLY CLOSED AND SAFE? WHAT POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES OF OUR VIRTUAL WORLD DO WE HAVE TO RECKON WITH?

- WHAT WE FIRST OF ALL NEED, IS *AWARENESS* OF UNWANTED AND UNFORESEEN EFFECTS. WE HAVE TO BE *AWARE* AND *ALERT*. ARE, FOR INSTANCE, OUR CYBERSECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN ORDER?

WHAT MORE IS THERE TO BE AWARE OF? AN OVERVIEW OF QUESTIONABLE AND EVEN DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS OF VIRTUALITY MAY BE FOUND IN A HIGHLY RELEVANT ARTICLE OUR COLLEAGUE VOLKER WALPUSKI PUBLISHED IN THE FIRST ANSE RESEARCH BOOK. APART FROM SHOWING US MANY TELLING EXAMPLES, WALPUSKI ARGUES THAT:

- THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN PRESENCE VS REMOTENESS AND PRIVATE VS PUBLIC HAVE BECOME POROUS AND BLURRED
- MORE AND MORE WE ARE FORCED TO LIVE BY THE LAW OF TOTAL AVAILABILITY > WORK IS ALWAYS THERE, WE ARE ALWAYS AT WORK: *HOW OFTEN DO WE NOT CHECK MESSAGES FIRST THING IMMEDIATELY BEFORE OR AFTER JUMPING IN OR OUT OF OUR BEDS?*
- THE MEDIUM SEDUCES US TO ADAPT TO ITS POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS. IT ‘FRAMES AND ENCAPSULATES’ US, CHANNELS OUR THINKING AND SHAPES OUR BEHAVIOUR (AND EVEN OUR SELF-CONCEPTION) > WE INTERNALIZE THE DEMANDS OF VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY
- ‘FOMO’ – THE FEAR OF MISSING OUT – IS CLOUDING OUR MINDS. FREQUENT USE OF OUR E-DEVICES, ALL DAY ACTIVITY ON SMART PHONES AND SOCIAL MEDIA SOON CAUSE US TO

INTERNALIZE 'COMPETITIVE BENCHMARKING'. MEASURING OURSELVES AGAINST SUCCESSFUL OTHERS MAY HAVE A DEBILITATING EFFECT ON OUR SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE.

- AND FINALLY: PERMANENT AVAILABILITY LEAVES US NO PLACE TO HIDE. THERE ARE NO SAFE SPACES WHICH CANNOT BE INVADED.

IN SHORT > UBIQUITOUS COMPUTERING OFFERS US MANY ADVANTAGES, FOR SURE, BUT IT ALSO INTENSIFIES OUR FEARS AND FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY, INCREASES OUR PSYCHOLOGICAL VULNERABILITY, DIMINISHES OUR SENSE OF SELFCONTROL AND HEIGHTENS OUR STRESS-LEVEL. ALL IN ALL, LIVING A DIGITALLY FAST LIFE IS LIKE DRIVING A SLOW CAR ON A FAST TRACK, DESPERATELY TRYING TO KEEP UP SPEED

ONCE WE ARE AWARE OF ALL THAT, AND TRY TO AVOID IT AND NAVIGATE RESPONSIBLY THROUGH VIRTUAL SPACE, WHAT ELSE DO WE ENCOUNTER?

- (a) The relentless digital transformation and commodification of the consulting trade
- (b) The urgent matter of cyber(in)security

LET'S EXAMINE THESE INTERTWINED TOPICS A LITTLE FURTHER. BASED ON COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH, SILICON VALLEY INSIDER AND HARVARD PROFESSOR SOSHANA ZUBOFF MAKES UNEQUIVOCALLY CLEAR HOW:

- WE NOW ARE PART AND PARCEL OF A GLOBAL SYSTEM OF BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION THAT THREATENS HUMAN NATURE QUITE LIKE INDUSTRIALIZATION DID IN THE 19TH CENTURY. IN FACT WE ARE INCORPORATED BY IT, AND FAR TOO OFTEN WE DON'T EVEN REALIZE IT
- VAST WEALTH AND POWER ARE ACCUMULATED IN OMINOUS "*BEHAVIOURAL FUTURES MARKETS*", WHERE PREDICTIONS ABOUT OUR BEHAVIOUR ARE BOUGHT AND SOLD. WE ARE UNDER PERMANENT SURVEILLANCE
- HUMAN BEHAVIOUR – INCLUDING PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR - IS TRANSFORMED INTO COMMERCIALY USABLE DATA. WHAT OF COURSE FOLLOWS IS DATA MINING, DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA PROLIFERATION; ALL BEYOND OUR CONTROL. '*SILICON VALLEY KNOWS MORE ABOUT US THAN WE DO OURSELVES. WE ARE CONSTANTLY TRACKED AND TRACED: OUR SHOPPING ROUTINES ARE FOLLOWED AND ANALYZED, OUR MOVEMENTS AROUND TOWN, OUR HEALTH DATA, OUR MEDICINE CONSUMPTION, OUR DRIVING RECORDS. ARE THOSE- TO NAME BUT ONE EXAMPLE - NOT A POTENTIAL GOLDMINE FOR INSURANCE COMPANIES?*
- CONSEQUENTLY, OUR DATA ARE NO LONGER OURS. THEY ARE OWNED AND FREELY USED BY THE "BIG FIVE" > MICROSOFT, GOOGLE, APPLE, AMAZON, AND SO ON. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS FREE INTERNET! YOU PAY WITH YOUR DATA
- IN CONCLUSION: OUR DATA - AND EVEN OUR SELVES AS PRESENTABLE PUBLIC IDENTITIES (OR 'BRANDS') - HAVE TURNED INTO COMMODITIES ON A GLOBAL MARKET WITHOUT ANY DEMOCRATIC OVERSIGHT
- AND WORST OF ALL: WHAT STARTS WITH PREDICTION ENDS AS CONTROL > THE SURVEILLANCE SOCIETY, TO WHICH WE - ONLINE "ALL DAY" - WILLINGLY AND UNWILLINGLY FEED OUR DATA. *AND THOSE OF OUR CLIENTS!*

ZUBOFF IS NOT ALONE IN HER CRITIQUE OF SURVEILLANCE SOCIETY. THERE ARE MANY OTHERS, SUCH AS THE GERMAN SCHOLAR VOLKER NISSEN.

HE ARGUES THAT DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IS FORCING THE CONSULTING INDUSTRY - OF WHICH WE ARE PART - TO INNOVATE AND MODIFY ITSELF FROM A *FACE TO FACE (PHYSICAL) DELIVERY MODEL* TOWARDS A *VIRTUAL DELIVERY MODEL*.

UNDER THE PRESENT CONDITIONS OF PERVASIVE COMMERCIALIZATION AND COMMODIFICATION THIS WILL INEVITABLY LEAD - AS CAN ALREADY BE SEEN - TO *ALGORITHMIC CONSULTING* ON THE BASIS OF DATA-MINING AND DATA-ANALYSIS, AND THUS TO MODALITIES SUCH AS *SELF-SERVICE CONSULTING*.

UNDERLYING AND FACILITATING THESE DEVELOPMENTS ARE STANDARDIZATION OF PROBLEM FORMULATION, THE ISSUE OF BUILT IN BIAS AND THE EVENTUAL REDUNDANCY OF HUMAN INTERVENTION: SMART DEVICES ARE TAKING OVER AT LEAST PART OF OUR WORK

THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION IS: WHAT'S *IN* THESE ALGORITHMS? IT MAY BE ANYTHING. IT MAY BE VERY WRONG, OR DISCRIMINATING, OR LEAD TO UNLAWFUL AND UNETHICAL PROFILING FROM WHICH THERE IS NO ESCAPE. AND *WHO* FEEDS AND CONTROLS THEM?

CLEARLY, DEALING WITH BIG TECH AND BIG DATA IS LIKE DEALING WITH BIG PHARMA: A POLITICAL ISSUE

OKAY, WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT? ARE WE COMPLETELY HELPLESS?

NO, BECAUSE WE AT LEAST CAN COMMAND THE POWERS OUR TRADE HAS TO OFFER.

- WE COULD REFLECT – AND HELP OUR CLIENTS TO REFLECT – ON FAR MORE THAN JUST OUR PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES
- WE COULD ALSO REFLECT ON OUR SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ON THE VIRTUALIZED CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH WE PROVIDE OUR SERVICES
- WE COULD HELP OUR CLIENTS TO DO THE SAME IN THEIR PARTICULAR, PERSONAL, PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL SITUATIONS
- AS SUPERVISION AND COACHING ARE REFLECTIVE TRADES, *WE CAN DO JUST THAT. AND WE SHOULD*

IN A MORE PRACTICAL SENSE: IF WE CAN DO ALL THAT, WHAT *SHOULD* WE DO MORE?

- ON A PERSONAL LEVEL: STAY AWARE AND ALERT. NEVER THINK YOUR DIGITAL SECURITY IS IN PERFECT SHAPE. IT IS NOT. IT WILL NEVER BE. KEEP WORKING AT IT
- REALIZE THAT IT'S NOT ONLY - OR EVEN IN THE FIRST PLACE - A PERSONAL MATTER, FAR MORE IT IS A COLLECTIVE ISSUE AND THUS DEMANDS COLLECTIVE ACTION AND ORGANIZATION
- THEREFORE: ACTIVATE AND MONITOR OUR PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. PUSH FOR A STRONG, ACTIVE AND OUTSPOKEN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION AND PLAY AN ACTIVE PART IN IT
- ACTIVATE AND MONITOR OUR POLITICIANS. LIKE HANNAH ARENDT ADMONISHES US: ACT LIKE RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS (AND PROFESSIONALS). LIVE A *VITA ACTIVA*. TAKE A STAND AND MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE FOR THE COMMON GOOD

BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT'S AT STAKE: WHAT KIND OF WORLD WOULD WE (AND OUR CHILDREN) WANT TO LIVE IN? A WORLD IN WHICH WE ARE - AS FAR AS IT HUMANLY GOES – MASTERS OF OUR (REAL AND VIRTUAL) FATE? OR A WORLD IN WHICH OUR FATE IS MASTERED FOR US BY BIG BUSINESS, BY BIG TECH, BY SURVEILLING GOVERNMENT SERVICES, BY FACELESS TECHNOLOGY?

BOTH AS CITIZENS AND AS PROFESSIONALS, WE HAVE TO TAKE A POSITION. WE CAN'T STAY NEUTRAL.

CONSIDER THIS: BY 'NEUTRALLY' TURNING AWAY FROM THE WORLD OUTSIDE OUR WINDOWS AND FROM ALL OF WHAT IS GOING ON OUT THERE AND MAY THREATEN US - *BIG TECH, MELTING ICECAPS, GEOPOLITICAL DANGERS, WARS AND ALL KINDS OF DISCRIMINATION, SOCIAL FRICTION AND ENMITY* - AND BY LIMITING OURSELVES TO A SOLIPSYSTIC SAFE HAVEN, AN IMAGINARY COCOON OF PRIVATE CONCERNS ONLY - WE WILL (INADVERTENTLY OR PURPOSELY) COLLABORATE WITH EXACTLY THOSE POWERS THAT WILFULLY SHAPE OUR FUTURE WITHOUT US AND LEAD US TO WHERE WE NOT WANT TO BE

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