

POSTERHEROES

HUMANS AT WORK

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BRIEF

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**I don't like work – no man does –
but I like what is in the work:
the chance to find yourself.
Your own reality – for yourself,
not for others – what no other
man can ever know.**

Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (1924)

In contemporary society, work represents not only the main means of subsistence for human life, but also the element capable of guaranteeing security, responding to the needs of belonging and self-fulfillment and defining the relationship between oneself and the others in a wider context.

The world of work, however, in recent decades has undergone a very rapid transformative process and it has been influenced, on a global level, by a wide range of factors, with specific consequences in different territorial areas.

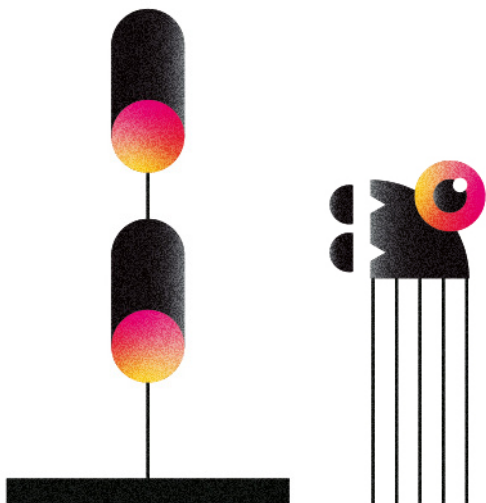
While on the one hand, globalization has made production, exchanges and transactions faster, more flexible and efficient, on the other hand, the persistence of pre-existing critical issues and the presence of new challenges are now more evident.

Work and technology: between potentiality and risks

Starting from the 70s, technological development has gradually introduced tools like artificial intelligence and automation, which brought about changes in the organization of work and human resources saving. Moreover, beyond the mere increase in productivity, the digital interfaces helping to carry out working tasks have paved the way for the improvement of safety, health conditions and worker satisfaction, turning the workplace into a more flexible and collaborative environment.

Regarding the new professional opportunities created by digital technology, data analysis and participatory design systems, online communication and distribution platforms have made it possible to shorten time and distance in the creation, sale and circulation of goods and services. As a direct consequence, new employment scenarios were born: e-commerce, just-in-time production, home delivery services, online freelance networks, coworking and codesign, crowdfunding and countless professions related to social media and data management – from the financial field to healthcare. Finally, the digital monitoring of the entire production flow contributes to guaranteeing the quality standards of the processes from the environmental and social sustainability points of view.

The inevitable risk, however, is the phenomenon of “technological unemployment”. Particularly, if a large number of professions and jobs (mainly based on repetitive and non-creative tasks) will become obsolete quicker than the discovery of new working positions and opportunities.



Work quality and work-life balance

Today, some of the new multinationals, local companies and start-ups are creating jobs and opportunities for economic and social development, promoting productivity, decent work and territorial growth.

In addition to adequate remuneration, health and safety protection and the adoption of welfare systems, the business objectives of the most forward-looking companies comply with current labor policies, including the reorganization of work aimed at reducing the work week of employees, based on Work-Life Balance, and the extension of smart working to more professional categories. The model known as “996” – working hours from 9 am to 9 pm, six days a week – is gradually replaced by the model proposed by the Danish and Finnish governments, with its, on average, 30 hours per week and a better balance between working and private life.

Fair work and non-discriminating policies

The crisis of the current socio-economic paradigm has a direct impact on human life, raising new and old concerns: the lack of safety standards in certain sectors, especially in illegal jobs, and the issue of deaths at work; the precariousness of jobs and the resistance of companies to offer long-term contracts, the regulation gaps in new professions (which triggered protests like the one of home delivery service workers); youth unemployment and the difficulty of reconciling work and the ambition of building a family; discrimination in the workplace due to differences in gender, age, country of origin, sexual orientation, and the consequent disparity in monthly wages. Everything seems to be all but overcome.

Environmental and social sustainability

Promoting a sustainable growth of a territory means to establish business activities that do not harm the environment and which, at the same time, stimulate the economic development of the community.

Often, the massive demand for low-cost products (clothing, furnishings, technological gadgets ...) from the Western hyper-consumerist market consolidates some production practices that overshadow the importance of decent working conditions in people's lives. Sustainable production

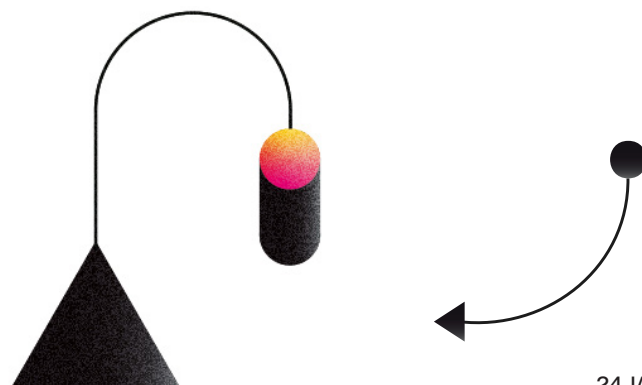
and consumption, on the other hand, aim to “do more and better with less”, increasing the benefits in terms of well-being deriving from economic activities, which guarantee quality standards in the environmental, economic, ethical and social aspects. This process involves different stakeholders, including companies, consumers, policymakers, researchers, scientists, retailers, media and development cooperation agencies.

Economic migrants and new slavery

While in some parts of the world the new quality standards of working environments are being redefined, in other areas, the lack of supervision by government bodies and the intrinsic difficulties of the territory, make it difficult for the population to achieve dignified economic conditions. In fact, although extreme poverty rates have decreased significantly in the past 30 years, one in five people in developing regions live on less than \$ 1.25 a day, especially in the regions of southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, as shown by data on economic migration.

The improvement of living conditions pushes people to migrate in order to provide for their families, often finding employment in work sectors that locals have abandoned because considered as humiliating or low-paying.

Economic migrants hope to find in work a new form of social integration in the host community, but they often run into further economic and social obstacles. Bureaucratic barriers in obtaining permits and consequent clandestinity, precarious living conditions, discrimination, marginalization or insufficient integration, scarce contractual protection in terms of personal insurance and social security contributions, discrimination and exploitation, forced labor and violation of rights, human trafficking and illegal recruitment, violence, blackmail, abuse: these are the new forms of slavery.



GOAL: DECENT WORK

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A few years ago, the International Labour Organization has introduced the concept of “decent work”.

ILO is a specialized agency of the United Nations in charge of promoting internationally recognized social justice and human rights, in particular, to those concerning work in all its aspects. In its activity, ILO aims at promoting a positive scenario in which employment is carried out in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity for men and women, with self-respect, in well-being and guaranteeing personal development for each human being. These are all key requirements for the achievement of sustainable development and social justice.

The Posterheroes competition, that has reached its 9th edition, aims at supporting ILO in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, stimulating active thinking on these issues:

What future scenarios open up in the relationship between human beings and work?

How to enhance the role of the human factor in human-machine interactions and strengthen social and professional ties through virtual interfaces?

How is the global labor market being reconfigured between new opportunities and essential rights?

How to globally reprogram workflows, resource supply, distribution of goods, while respecting the territories and workers, locally and internationally?

What daily and legislative actions should be implemented to support the fight against discrimination and abuse in workplaces and in community life?

Are freedom and self-realization becoming the key elements of our growth process?

What is the value of decent work in defending social justice?

Posterheroes invites the creatives of the global community to express themselves through a poster of 70x100 cm.

Projects must be uploaded on www.posterheroes.org from 27 January 2020 until 13 March 2020.





www.posterheroes.org
staff@posterheroes.org

A project by **plug** and FAVINI

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