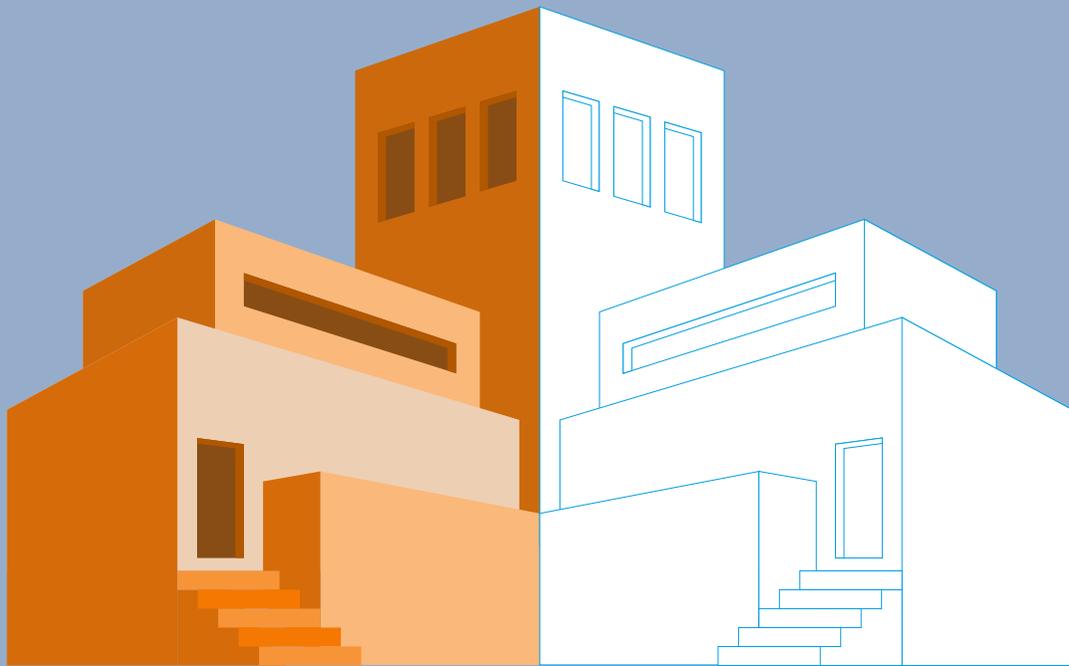




# MAG

MONOGRAPHS

1 | 2024



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beautiful buildings

# Contents

## 3. Beautiful Buildings

by Michela Cannovale

## 4. Places. Space. Time

by Giuseppe Salemmè and Letizia Ceriani

## 10. Work, the dawn of grandchildren

by Eleonora Frascini

## 12. Ezra Pound: "Time is not money, but it is almost everything else"

by Nicola Di Molfetta

## 16. Maps of power

by Letizia Ceriani

## 30. Interview in the metaverse

by Ilaria Iaquinta

## 37. Desks

by Letizia Ceriani

## 49. In the homes of tomorrow's partners

by Giuseppe Salemmè

## 53. Mario Cucinella

by Eleonora Frascini

## 59. Tommaso Ghidini

by Michela Cannovale

## 65. Torre Velasca

by Eleonora Frascini

## 71. Rosanna Ghetti

by Michela Cannovale

## 79. Josef K.'s courthouse and the labyrinth of the law

by Nicola Di Molfetta

## 83. The foosball loneliness

a novel by Nicola Di Molfetta

## 91. Hot Buildings

by Nicola Di Molfetta

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# Beautiful Buildings

by Michela Cannovale

We have long pondered on the most straightforward way to present the content of this monograph to our readers. Aware that the title might be misleading to some, we want to first clarify what *Beautiful Buildings* is not. It's not a magazine solely focused on real estate, architecture, design, urban planning, or engineering. Nor is it a compilation of the most aesthetically pleasing or unattractive buildings in our cities, nor those from specific historical eras.

Beautiful Buildings delves into the realm of spaces. Workspaces, meeting areas, and places of learning. It explores places where the business community gathers, reconnects, and identifies with. It discusses how these spaces have evolved over time, vacating and embracing new realities. It also reflects on how the concepts of space and time have become increasingly intertwined, interpreted, and redefined by those who inhabit these places.

Buildings, as vessels, have melded with their contents, imbued with new values that transcend mere physical dimensions or aesthetic design, encompassing temporal and moral dimensions as well. This is what makes them beautiful: stripped of their material and aesthetic trappings, they transform into the static backdrop against

which relationships are forged, woven with the rhythms of an extraordinary revolution. A revolution that is sparked not only by technological advancements but also, and perhaps more significantly, by the maturation of new inquiries and awareness. A revolution that materialized during the epochal Covid-19 pandemic that engulfed the world from 2020 onwards. It was then, during the lockdown, that the notions of space and time changed as never before, prompting the imperative – the awareness, indeed – to contemporaneously reconsider the spaces and temporal rhythms of our lives. As the virus tested the resilience of populations across all five continents and forced us to unprecedented interventions in both

public and private spheres, digitalization came to our aid, propelling remote work into the forefront as a novel mode of work organization. Not the sole mode, but a significant one.

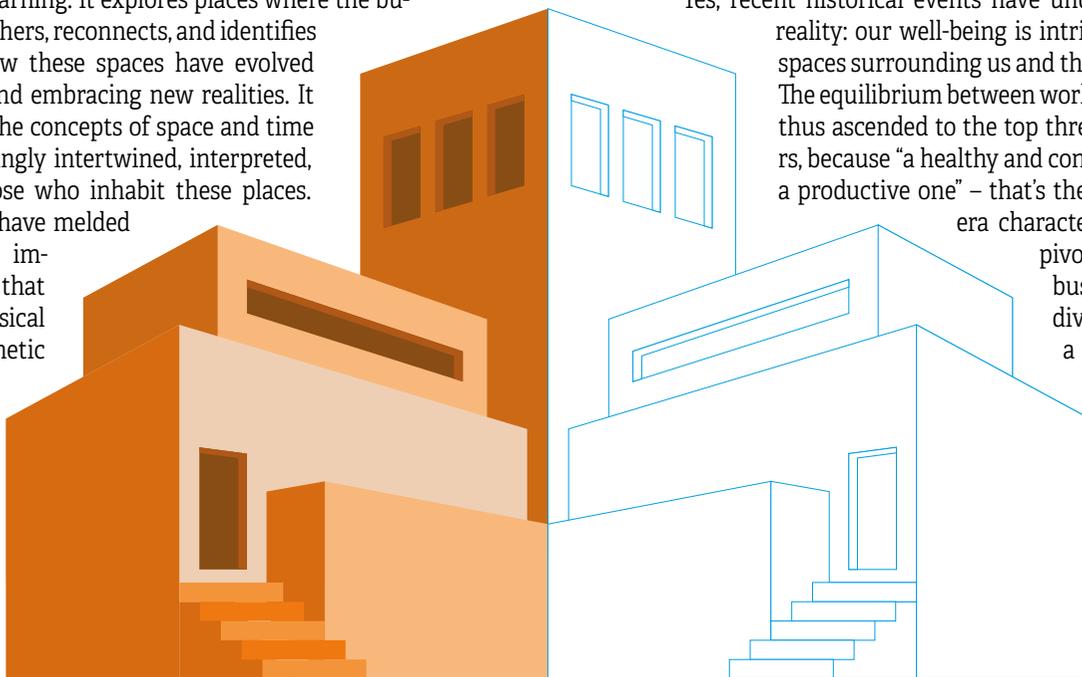
Meanwhile, climate change played its part, compelling us to hasten towards a mandatory ecological transition to reevaluate resource utilization, energy consumption, wealth generation, and the essence of humanity.

Yes, recent historical events have underscored one salient reality: our well-being is intrinsically linked to the spaces surrounding us and the time at our disposal. The equilibrium between work and personal life has thus ascended to the top three demands of workers, because “a healthy and content workforce is also a productive one” – that’s the ethos of our era. An era characterized by yet another pivotal transformation: business spaces have diversified, embracing a plethora of genders, religions, cultures, and generations, spanning from Boomers to Zoomers.

This all is what *Beautiful Buildings* is about. It is the professional seated at their desk, as

well as the architect envisioning office spaces. It is the scientist looking ahead to 2028, when we will relocate our residence to the Moon, and it is the first lady president of a gentlemen’s club. It is the law firm opening an office in the Metaverse, but it also is a courtroom with low ceilings, labyrinthine corridors, and crowded rooms. And much more. And much more.

As we reflect, striving to delineate the transformations occurred so far, the quest for insights into the future that awaits us remains perhaps the most fascinating part of the game.



## Places. Space. Time

# If our relationship with work hasn't improved despite gaining flexibility on where to do it, what else do we need?

by Giuseppe Salemme and Letizia Ceriani



### *Progress or Utopia?*

"A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias" Oscar Wilde wrote. In the process of trial and error, humanity has always aimed for a better version of itself. Change emerges from an idea prompted by reality, by the most urgent current events; it's the genesis of every revolution.

It's almost midnight. A woman is working on her computer to meet the last deadline of the year. She's at her home desk; a cat sits next to her. Suddenly, both of them look out the window. Fireworks burst in the sky: the new year has come.

The New Yorker chose this image - "Deadline," by Italian illustrator Bianca Bagnarelli - as the cover of the first 2024 issue. It's a vivid portrait of the condition of many knowledge workers in the post-pandemic era.

Four years ago, a sudden event forever changed this generation's relationship with space, including workspace. Working from home was initially an obligation; then, for some, it became a right. For many professionals, the concept of a "workplace" lost almost all spatial connotation. Even the obligatory commuting routine made up of trains, trams, traffic, and parking, is increasingly optional. Initially, it seemed like the realization of a utopia: men and women reclaiming their lives back by reclaiming their living space.

But the utopia never really came to be. The legitimization of remote work was immediately followed by phenomena such as "great resignation" and "quiet quitting": people who voluntarily resign en masse, or who simply impose on themselves every day not to do anything more than the bare minimum on the job. Apparently, simply being able to work remotely did not give workers the control over their lives they hoped for; on the contrary, it often increased their stress and made them feel even more trapped (see the box on page 7).

At this point, doubt arises: if our relationship with work has not improved despite gaining flexibility in where to do it, what else do we need? The much-discussed 4-day work week

(addressed in Eleonora Fraschini's article in this issue) today looks like the panacea for all the world's ills, just like smart working did four years ago. But perhaps it's not that simple: maybe even a great idea, if poorly applied, can have disastrous effects. What if that's exactly what happened with remote work? What if its hasty implementation ended up sidelining other important factors in a worker's life, like the importance of the quality of the spaces we spend our days in?



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## Beautiful Buildings

If that's the case, then we wouldn't be even more stressed and unhappy despite smart working, but precisely because of its lazy and clumsy application.

### WE (USED TO) WORK

Let's start from the beginning. Actually, from the end: on November 6, 2023, Wework files for bankruptcy in Canada and the United States. The New York-based company, founded in 2010, acquired office spaces to then rent them out. In 2019, it was the largest office tenant in Manhattan and had business in 24 countries worldwide; at one point it was valued \$47 billion. But above all, over the years, Wework managed

to make the concept of coworking cool: flexible and shared workspaces, equipped with all the technology and organization necessary to allow employees, workers, or freelancers to work effectively from the place most congenial to their needs: near home or a client, close to their children's school, or the gym.

Wework's business model, in the long run, proved to be unsustainable (although the group's foreign subsidiaries are still active, including in Italy).

Covid lockdowns dealt a decisive blow to the North American activities, which were fatally affected by the sharp drop in the value of office

real estate. "Coworking was put to the test by remote work; the desire to share spaces was crushed by the need to isolate," journalist Biagio Simonetta wrote on *Il Sole 24 Ore*.

This same trend continues today, even in Italy. Many companies have reduced office spaces: if employees are not in the office for all or part of the working hours, why not save money by selling or renting out the excess space? Recently, in Milan, Unicredit subleased twenty floors of the iconic skyscraper in Piazza Gae Aulenti; the same was done by Deutsche Bank and Bnp Paribas with their respective headquarters. Even the "glass shard" on Via Gioia,



which has been housing Intesa Sanpaolo Group employees for less than a year, will be included in the “rationalization of directional assets” process by which the bank aims at reducing its office spaces by about 258,000 square meters throughout Italy.

## THINK SMART

In 2023, the number of Italians who worked remotely for at least part of their working hours increased again both in large companies (+2.2%) and in SMEs (+11.8%); this means about 100,000 more remote workers in one year, say the data from the Smart Working Observatory of Milan’s Politecnico. In general, in larger structures, the only year-on-year decrease of remote workers was recorded in 2020, right after the pandemic peak. From then on, the increase has been constant: today, about 51% of employees of large companies work remotely, and 96% of these companies say they have introduced a smart working model or are about to do so; for SMEs, this percentage is 56%. Only in micro-enterprises (with fewer than 10 employees) and in public administrations the use of remote work has decreased steadily after 2020.

The fundamental problem behind these numbers is that many smart working policies are

not that smart. The very definition of smart working implies an exchange: the worker is given flexibility on spaces, hours, and work tools; and, in return, they accept greater accountability for the results they achieve.

The obstacles that companies (especially smaller ones) encounter in implementing “true” smart working are of various kinds: economic, technological, cultural. And legal, too: some of the principles of Italian and European labour law are too rigid to accommodate any kind of flexibility on the workplace. “More and more companies, for example, don’t require their workers to clocking in and out everyday; but they clash with norms that presuppose the exact measurability of working hours. Norms whose non-negotiability was confirmed by the European Court of Justice in 2019,” explains Aldo Bottini, labour lawyer at the Toffoletto De Luca Tamajo law firm.

According to Bottini, at the heart of the smart working debate there’s a great misunderstanding: “The idea of many is that smart working is a welfare measure; something granted only to make workers happy. It’s a wrong conception.” And the post-pandemic legislation has not helped clarify this ambiguity: “By conti-

nually extending the possibility of resorting to ‘simplified’ smart working for categories such as parents with children under 14, we have accredited the idea that it was a ‘treat’ reserved to some protected categories, rather than a new form of work organization.”

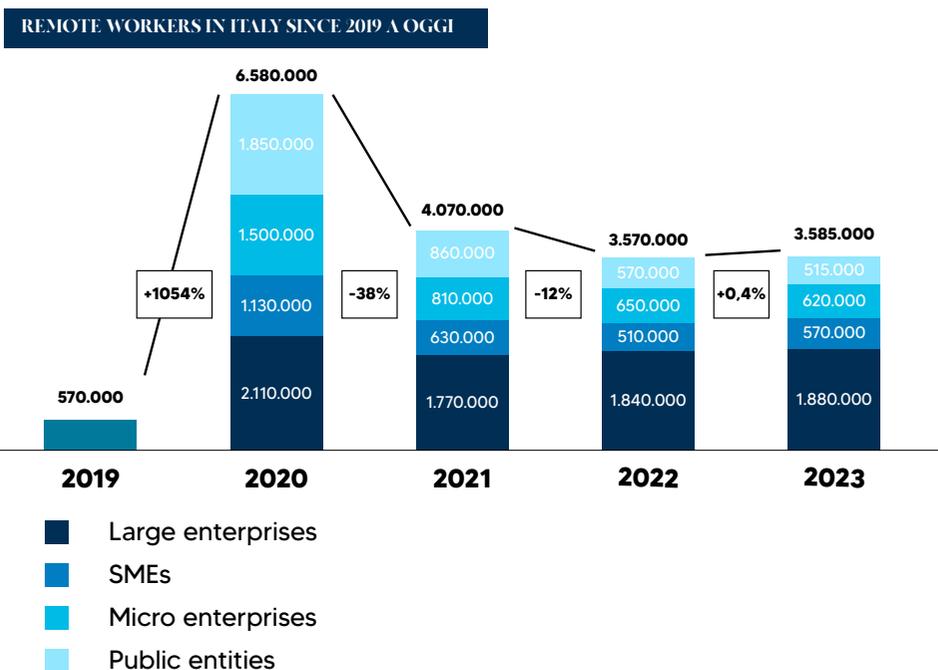
In some cases, this misconception may have also had some positive repercussions. Recent initiatives by companies such as Luxottica and Lamborghini, which have introduced the 4-day work week in their manufacturing plants, have been linked to the demands of those workers whose tasks cannot be performed remotely. From this perspective, the shorter work week would represent a kind of “blue collar” counterpart to smart working. But, Bottini reminds us, “although it has positive consequences on personal well-being, the short week is also an organizational tool aimed at making people work better and more productively.”

Henry Ford understood this well, being among the first major industrialists to give Saturdays off to his employees in 1926, while also doubling their pay. He correctly anticipated that by doing so, the hours worked/cars produced ratio would improve; and that with more free time and more money in their paychecks, car sales would also increase. Compared to Ford, even a tech guru like Elon Musk appears outdated: known for his aversion to flexible working arrangements, Musk has reportedly chosen to abolish them both at Tesla and at X (formerly, Twitter).

## DISENGAGED

The presence of a leadership capable of handling the new ways of working is not a negligible component in distinguishing between “mature” smart working, usually the prerogative of large companies, and “informal” smart working, typical of SMEs. “The first thing to do, if you wanted to introduce smart working into an employment contract, would be to train managers in managing remote workers,” confirms work psychologist Paolo Lanciani, one of the founders of the De Micheli Lanciani Motta practice.

Among the many companies offering managerial consultancy services and coaching aimed at training better leaders for the benefit of welfare and productivity, the American company



Source: Milan’s Politecnico Smart Working Observatory, november 2023

## Beautiful Buildings

Gallup publishes every year the State of the Global Workplace report, in which it measures the level of satisfaction of workers worldwide. Italy generally does not fare well. Even in 2022, despite the positive global trend on employee engagement, which has reached and exceeded pre-pandemic levels, Italian workers were last in Europe for satisfaction: only 5% of employees feels truly engaged in their work, the report says.

The data seems in line with some peculiarities of Italian's entrepreneurial fabric, characterized by a high number of micro-small enterprises and a low number of large enterprises, compared to the European average: in 2020, 45% of employed in Italy worked in companies with ten employees or less (compared to 30% in France, 19% in Germany, and a EU average of 29.5%), while only 21% were in structures with more than 250 employees (compared to 33% in France, 37% in Germany, and a EU average of 33%). In recent years, smaller entities are also those that have encountered more difficulties in implementing flexibility in a truly smart way: only 15% of SMEs have a "mature" smart working policy, which combines flexibility to the employee with a change in paradigms

based on which their work is evaluated. The remaining part, made up of the so-called "non-smart remote" workers, has been found by Milan's Politecnico to have lower levels of well-being even compared to those who are "forced" to face traffic or public transport strikes every day to get to the office.

### MAKE SPACE

It seems that our conflicting relationship with smart working has at its core a fundamental misunderstanding on its nature, compounded by a lack of culture and adequate leadership to support it, which is particularly felt in smaller environments. There's one last element to consider, and it is the most neglected one: workspaces. If we look at how work ambience has been adapted to new organizational work models, the data is unforgiving, even for entities with more resources: only 34% of large companies have ongoing or planned workspace revision projects, and only 38% have planned training activities aimed at their proper use.

This is a non-negligible aspect: as work psychologist Paolo Lanciani explains, "to perform at their best, even at work, people need a set: that is, formal and visible elements that give

a perimeter within which to move, that make you feel part of something. The workplace falls within these." This concept does not cease to be valid with remote work, especially for younger workers: "An experienced professional, aware of his role and what he is doing, can work well both from home and from the beach; in a suit and tie or in shorts. But if we think the same applies to someone on their first day of work, we are overestimating their potential," Lanciani continues. "Flexibility must go hand in hand with people's maturity. For those who relocate to another city in order to work, for example, the workplace becomes even more fundamental in order to integrate and internalize their role."

At this point, one could think about allowing only senior employees to work remotely; some companies actually choice this approach in the past months. But this type of policy is based on the same misunderstanding for which flexibility remains a privilege reserved for a few; and not a new, potentially more productive way of working.

Then perhaps the real solution to the dilemma lies in going back to the starting point. If the office is irreplaceable, let's treat it as such;

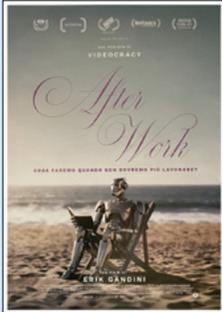
### VIRTUAL SPACES STRESS US OUT MORE. HOW DO WE GET OUT OF IT?

Why are we always tired? Overwhelmed? The stress level of the average employee in recent years has increased: according to a study by Bva Doxa and Mindwork, in 2023, 76% of Italian workers (+14% from the previous year) experienced at least one symptom of burnout: exhaustion, decreased efficiency at work, mental detachment, cynicism.

One possible cause of this peak in stress seems to be the increase in time that workers dedicate to digital communication; an increase normalized by the pandemic. A report by Microsoft has shown that in 2022 the average employee spent 57% of their working time on emails, chats, and video conferences; in fact, one in four workers spends the equivalent of an entire workday each week just reading and writing emails. Also, the total time spent in video calls increased by about 250% between 2020 and 2022. Of course, even smart workers are not immune: according to Milan's Politecnico, three remote workers out of ten suffer from technostress or overworking.

Some might say this is the price to pay for the luxury of working from home or behind a desk, rather than in a hospital or a mine. But, although emails and virtual work environments (platforms like Slack or Microsoft Teams) are designed to increase business productivity, when they end up creating a constant flow of notifications, requests, meetings, and other distractions, they risk causing the opposite effect. "Even minor context shifts are productivity poison" said writer and computer science professor Cal Newport in an interview with *The New York Times* in January 2023. "We used to multitask, and then research came out and said you can't literally multitask. Your brain can't have your inbox open next to the memo you're writing while you're also on the phone." This is why Newport has theorized the concept of slow productivity (which is also the title of his latest book, unpublished in Italy), which in intent should replace today's hyperactive workflow: not by sacrificing the efficiency of digital communication, but by organizing it better, for example by dedicating only certain hours or days to email communication; or by instituting meeting-free days.

## FIVE WORK STORIES TO WATCH. ACTUALLY, SIX



**After work** (2023), by Erik Gandini.

What does work mean for young Koreans? Or for Kuwaitis? And for an Italian heiress? This all-Italian documentary shows that behind the concept of work there is nothing absolute, neither inevitable nor eternal.



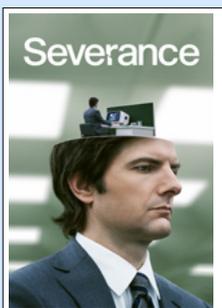
**Full time** (2021), by Eric Gravel.

It's a French film about commuting, and how it can affect mental health, career, and productivity (especially if you have children). Very anxiety-inducing. The New Yorker wrote: "Next time you rush for a train, think. Consider why you're running late, why it matters that you catch this train rather than the next, why you expect that the train will show up promptly and get you reliably to your destination, what the consequences to you and others will be if it stops running—or doesn't show up—and you're late."



**Perfect days** (2023), by Wim Wenders.

The company that manages the famous (and beautiful) public toilets in Tokyo contacted him to propose filming a commercial. But Oscar-winning director Wim Wenders eventually turned it into a film: a small masterpiece on how one can find the meaning of their existence in serving others and in the simple pleasure of a task well done. Unless, of course, you end up doing the work of two people alone.



**Severance** (*Severance*, 2022), from an idea by Dan Erickson.

Employees of a company undergo a procedure that completely separates their personal lives from their work lives, creating within one body two "selves" unable to communicate with each other. This TV series takes the concept of work-life balance to the extreme; but the severance soon proves to be unsustainable.



**The office** (2001 e 2005), from an idea by di Ricky Gervais.

The ultimate workplace sitcom. In fact, sitcoms: the original version, the British one, is colder and sharper; the American one, the most famous, is warmer and more romantic. But the creator is the same, and in both, there is a lot of laughter, thanks to a cringey comedy that makes fun of all the stereotypes of office life (some of which feel absurdly real).

## Beautiful Buildings

and therefore, let's re-imagine and improve it to best suit the company's and all workers' needs. So that actually going back to the office can be a conscious and convenient choice, and not a constraint. Massimo Roj, architect at the Progetto Cmr studio, specializing among other things in office space planning and interior design, says he has always been an advocate for a functionally-organized office: "At home, we are used to moving from one room to another depending on what we need to do; while traditionally in the office, you only work at your desk," he says. If the work itself cannot become smart, then at least the place where you work can: the traditional fixed or flexible workstations can be accompanied by spaces for work meetings and informal encounters; phone booths and places for silence and privacy; all of these with good lighting and some greenery. Nowadays, these qualities are often difficult to find even in one's own home; and in the office they can be reinforce the relational and social dimension of work. "We need to bring people back to the office by offering something that helps them do their job, but also with adequate equipment and spaces to meet the individual's needs. In some projects, for example, we have installed treadmills and exercise bikes in an attempt to improve the psycho-physical conditions of employees. Remote working - Roj continues - was useful during the emergency and can be convenient. But today the data says that efficiency has decreased and stress has increased: this happens when work and personal needs overlap and one can no longer manage their own day." The great challenge for companies, argues Bian-

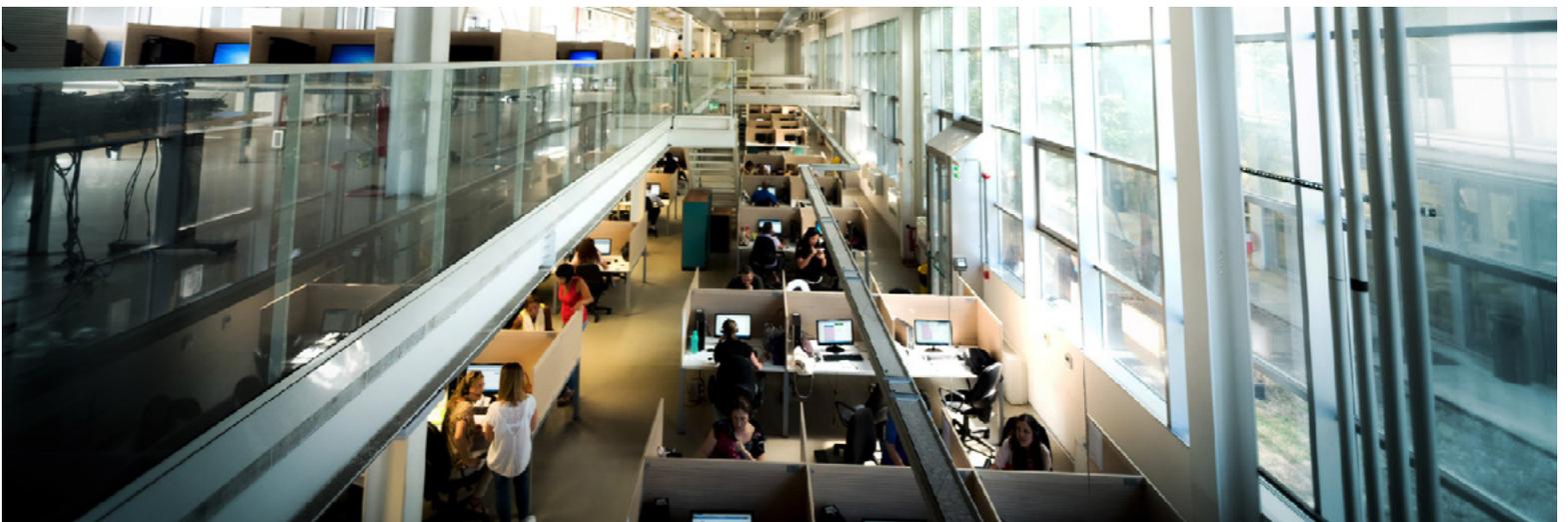
camaria Cavallini, who, in addition to being a psychologist and trainer, serves as customer success & operations director at Mindwork, "is not to reconcile or find a balance between life and work, but to look at people through a holistic lens." To achieve this desirable perspective, we need to abandon the image of the worker inherently divided between life inside and outside the office. Individuals are made up of "needs, beliefs, emotions, values, thoughts, and actions," and relationships. That take shape in space, happening inside and outside of us.

### THE OFFICE IS THE NEW TIE

Some American companies have interpreted these guidelines in their own way, aiming to make their offices more *instagrammable* (someone has called "envy offices" the products of this strategy) and using them both to bring their employees back to the office and as a marketing tool. It is precisely this latter purpose that should primarily drive employers to equip themselves with offices that are functional and well-maintained; and, above all, consistent with the type of business. Andrea Camaiora, founder and ceo of the communication agency The Skill and Ludo Real Estate, a company that offers consulting to companies in the field of interior design, is convinced of this: "Every business building has its own imprint: some look like aristocratic palaces, some prefer a colder and more modern approach. Anyone will like one style more than another, but the problem arises when the appearance is not consistent with one's corporate identity," explains Camaiora. "There are structures, even

large and successful ones, whose offices are designed and furnished in a mediocre and cheap way: what idea do they give of the services they offer? A law firm's work should be oriented towards accuracy and attention to detail: what does it communicate if it does not also present itself this way?" The example seems particularly fitting: lawyers have always made a uniform of a certain type of look; and the principles behind the importance of wearing a tie or a gown remain valid even when translated into the broader workspace. Which therefore needs to be thought out, designed, and built with at least the same care as dressing for an important meeting. And possibly with even more attention: a job interview lasts a few minutes; we spend years in the office. If one does not feel at home, leaving it will become his only goal.

Imagining workspaces as open ecosystems can be an interesting methodological hypothesis. Elena Granata, professor of Urban Planning at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Milan's Politecnico, in her latest book *Placemaker*, collects many examples of virtuous design. Inclusive, three-dimensional, empathetic spaces, conceived to "organize collective life," interpreting a work life in constant evolution. Not as a virtuoso exercise, but with the aim of observing the evolution of professions related to places and uncovering the questions of communities of workers.



# Work, the dawn of grandchildren

A century ago, John Keynes imagined a 2030 where technological progress would leave people with so much free time that they wouldn't know how to occupy it. Today, with the introduction of the short workweek in an increasing number of companies, perhaps we are beginning to see the first steps of this evolution.

---

by Eleonora Fraschini

“For the first time since Creation, man will face his true problem: how to use his life, free from economic concerns, to occupy that time, which science and technology will have gained for him, to live wisely, pleasantly, and well”. Although they may sound current, these words were uttered by John Keynes in 1930 during a conference in Madrid. The economist, despite the city experiencing the effects of the terrible crisis of those years, managed to instill his presentation with a tone of hope that, as the title suggests, is addressed to the men and women of this century: Economic Opportunities for Our Grandchildren. In the scenario described by Keynes, which to his contemporaries might have seemed utopian, progress would have facilitated human work to such an extent as to generate a technological unemployment, a joblessness (or perhaps idleness) caused by technology. Nearly a century later, we are still searching for a balance that allows us to reconcile work with the possibility of “living wisely, pleasantly, and well”. We use different words - work-life balance, remote work, flexibility, short workweek - but the goal is always to find a compromise between productivity and worker happiness.

“If the pandemic and smart working have effectively marked the overcoming of the traditional concept of the ‘workplace’ and its typical spatial limitations, in the last year we have witnessed an at-

tempt to rethink work time, evidently with a view to seeking the ideal productivity and a better work-life balance”, confirms Luca Garramone, partner at Orsinger Ortu. “The reduction of working hours is not an entirely new concept in the world of production and has been a topic addressed for over a century”.

Indeed, more and more companies are experimentally introducing the four-day workweek and flexibility tools. At the end of 2023, collective agreements were announced signed by EssilorLuxottica and Lamborghini, involving blue-collar workers and sectors typically industrial such as automotive. Agreements have also been signed by Leonardo and Sace, and new elements of flexibility have been introduced by Intesa Sanpaolo, Fastweb, Plasmon, Abb, and other companies.

In EssilorLuxottica, the reorganization provides that workers, who from next year choose to join the new hourly model with “short weeks”, can carve out twenty days a year for their needs, mostly on Fridays, mostly covered by the company and residually by individual institutions, without impacting salary.

According to Piergiorgio Angeli, human resources director of the group, “the new corporate contract will allow for significant reconciliation, benefiting also those who cannot bring work home, bringing factories closer to new smart working methods. It is a double-track



## Beautiful Buildings

flexibility, because while it protects income and frees up time and personal space, it returns to the company in terms of dynamism and long-term sustainability, opening up the opportunity for a fixed and stable position for over 1,500 new colleagues”.

Sace, the company controlled by the Ministry of Economy and Finance that supports the growth of Italian companies, started following the “Flex4Future” organizational model in January. The unlimited activity-based smart working was thus introduced, “shifting the focus from the concept of “number of days in the office” to the content of the activities performed”, explains Gianfranco Chimirri, chief people officer of Sace. “We want to work smartly, asking ourselves when it makes more sense to be present and therefore enhancing the synergies between teams. It is with this in mind that we have decided to maximize flexibility by introducing the four-day workweek on a voluntary basis for a total of 36 working hours. Each of us is free to plan the day off as they see fit, based on the activities they have to carry out”.

According to Chimirri, everyone can benefit from this mode: “Our goal is to increase both company productivity and the well-being of our people. Offering greater flexibility will also allow us to attract the best talent from outside, to retain those we already have inside, and to create opportunities for all those who need a better work-life balance”.

This management of work can also become an additional drive for the efficiency of activities: “If we want to dedicate less time to work, we know that we will have to focus only on the activities truly necessary to achieve our goals, perhaps eliminating useless meetings, or using all available technologies that can allow us to focus only on core activities and high added value. And in this, artificial intelligence can only help us”. Rethinking time and work organization in order to increase productivity through the improvement of the well-being of the workers involved, in the hope that we can actually “work less but better,” is it possible then? The answer - according to Garramone - depends on the ability of companies to achieve the goal. “The agreements on

the “short week” are in the experimental phase and can become definitive (and as such constitute a real turning point) only where companies manage the difficult task of positively defining the expected performance and productivity, and these are effectively guaranteed despite the hourly reduction with salary invariance. Only in this way would it be possible to redefine the historical conception that sees our work relationship centred on the relationship between the temporal availability of the psycho-physical energies of the employee and their remuneration”.

We are thus in the experimental phase of what could be a great change in the world of work. “For the current experimentation to consolidate and become structural, and also be implemented on a large scale by an ever-increasing number of employers and not just by the large companies that have so far led this innovation, the challenge inherent in the productivity pact that the ‘short week’ entails must be overcome”. To achieve this goal, it is necessary on the one hand to clearly identify the desired results and productivity, and on the other hand, increase the sense of responsibility of the workers. “The change - Garramone concludes - will not particularly affect individual contracts but the approach to work and its organization: it is necessary to break the belief that work performance is measurable solely in terms of time”.

In 1930, Keynes concluded his speech on the relationship between work and private life warning his listeners: “Beware! It is not yet time for all this. For at least another hundred years, we must pretend that “what is right is wrong, and what is wrong is right’ (from Macbeth, W. Shakespeare, ed.), because what is wrong is useful and what is right is not. Greed and self-interest must still be our idols for a while. Only they can lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into the light of day”.

The century is almost over, the effects of technological progress are increasingly present in our lives, as well as the need to rethink work rhythms. Whether this is truly the beginning of a new day, only time will tell.



Luca Garramone



Piergiorgio Angeli



Gianfranco Chimirri

# Ezra Pound: “Time is not money, but it is almost everything else”

In 1933 the poet held a series of lectures at Bocconi in Milan. In ten meetings, he built his economic syllabary. An intellectual effort that cost him dearly. He was banned, like Galileo in 1633. He served twelve years in a mental hospital for fascist propaganda. A poet can be crazy. But not an economist

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by Nicola Di Molfetta

Yet, something true was there. Something that would not be swept away by time and history. Something terrible. Something that frightened the contemporaries and to which, perhaps, we might decide to return today were it not for the fact that we are talking here about economics and not literature. Among the beautiful buildings we pass through with our lives is undoubtedly that of knowledge. And among the blocks that make up this imaginative monumental theorem, the most severe and for many impenetrable is that of economic science, where knowledge tends to take on the appearance of dogma in the name of progress, welfare and growth. It happens, however, that sometimes a hand rises and that finger points to the king and his nakedness. If a child does it, one smiles and moves on. If an adult does it, the matter can become complex. A problem, even, if the person in question has a voice that for authority and (today we would say) visibility, makes noise.

Ezra Pound, the vate who revolutionised the lyrical canons of the 20th century (Allen Ginsberg, the father of the beat generation, claimed that without the Cantos he would never have written Hydrogen Jukebox), devoted equal importance to poetry and economics. Not on a whim. But out of duty, sensitivity and a sense of artistic responsibility.

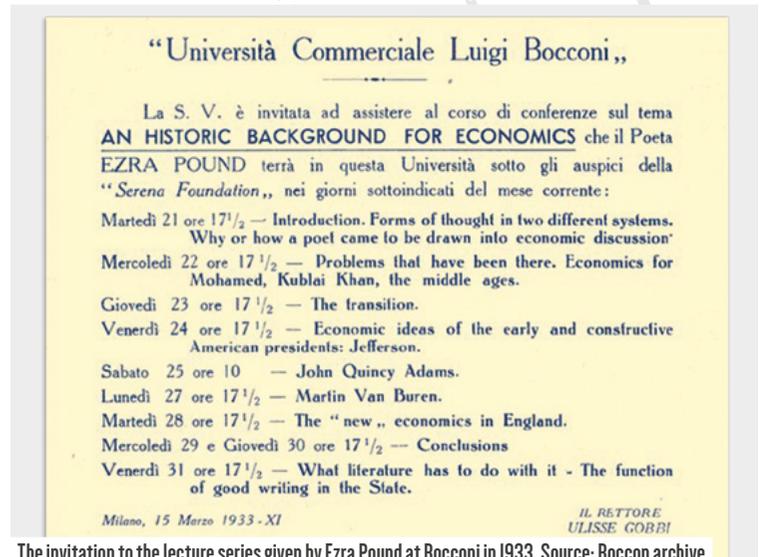
The construction of Ezra Pound's economic thought had its most flourishing site in Milan. The year was 1933. And the poet, a native of Hailey in Idaho, who had taken up residence in Italy, in Rapallo, where he had followed his wife, the English painter Dorothy Shakespear, for almost ten years, was invited by former rector Angelo Sraffa to hold a series of lectures at Bocconi. His economic thinking had begun some time ago. But few were willing to give him credit. A poet may be mad, but an economist is not.



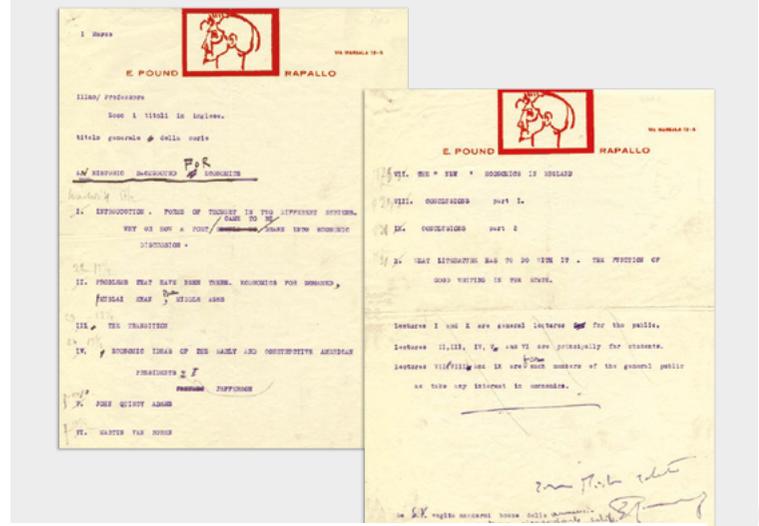
**Pound was not insane. But his belief took on the tones of heresy uttered without hesitation within the edifices of economic doctrine which, as such, did not postulate theories but dictated dogmas**

Ninety years on, there are two things that remain imprinted on Poundian theory. The first has the charm of uchronic suggestions. The second, that of prophecies. The first concerns the concept of money/money. The second that of time/labour.

For Pound, money was to be a tool and not an end. A means to be used and not an asset to be accumulated. For the poet, money was to be a 'certificate of work accomplished' to be distributed in the form of 'legal tender notes' that would enable everyone to obtain the goods he needed to live a decent life. 'The function of money or of a currency or credit system,' he wrote at the end of his ABC, 'is to get goods to the consumer, that is, to the whole people.' Pound had seen it happen. He knew it was possible. His grandfather, Thaddeus, a former Lieutenant Governor and Senator from Wisconsin, had run a lumber company and founded a railway company by minting his own currency. The Chippewa Company's coin carried the words 'Will pay the bearer on demand fifty cents in goods or timber'. 'This coin,' writes Pound, 'was in use and was never refused,' and



The invitation to the lecture series given by Ezra Pound at Bocconi in 1933. Source: Boccon archive



The letter in which Ezra Pound communicates the titles of his 10 lectures. Source: Boccon archive



then adds that a coin so made 'discharges the primitive conditions of honest coinage' without the public having to pay any 'usury'.

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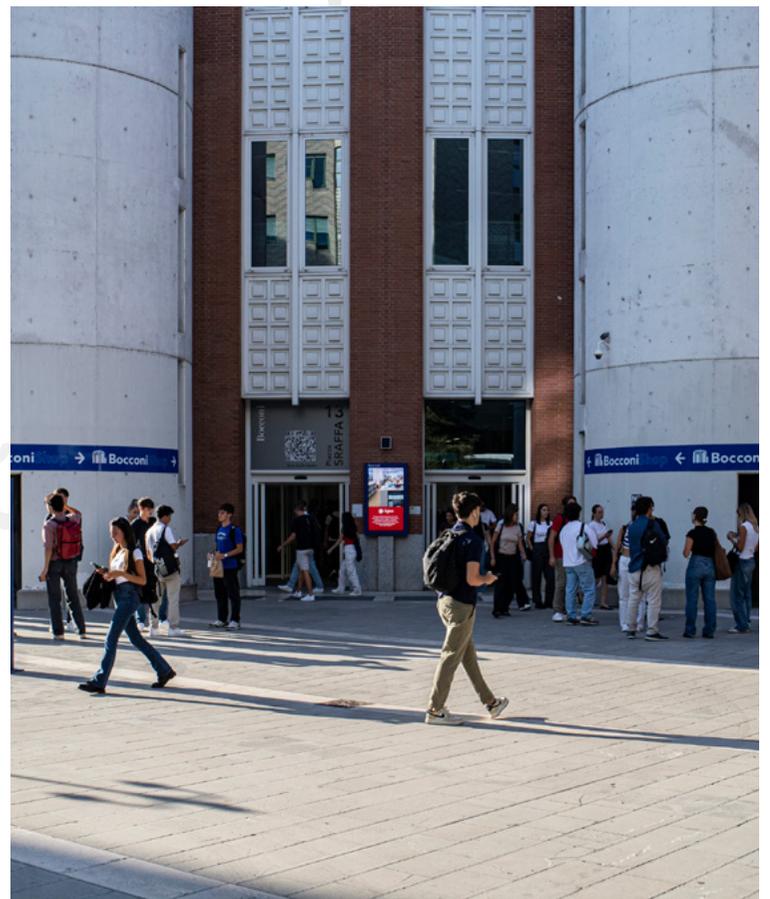
From this view of money and its function, derives the view that Pound expresses regarding work and the time to devote to it. Since, in fact, "everyone must be able to obtain a certain number of such certificates without torment and without excessive worry", those who govern will have to "use their intelligence" to establish what that work will be used

## POETS AT BOCCONI

The ten lectures held by Ezra Pound at Bocconi in March 1933 inaugurated a custom that in the following years saw the Milanese university host other great personalities from the world of poetry. Among the illustrious passages of which memories and testimonies are preserved is that of the Guatemalan Miguel Angel Asturias, in 1967, after receiving the Nobel Prize, and then that of Pablo Neruda in the early 1970s. In particular, Neruda was a guest at Bocconi, during his period of exile in Italy, and held a series of seminars for the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, which was later followed by a memorable lectio magistralis the day after he was awarded the Nobel Prize, in 1971. A particular testimony to this passage has been found: a bust, depicting the Chilean poet, inside a cupboard on the third floor of the Via Gobbi building. More recent, finally, was the meeting that the Italian writer and poet, Aldo Nove, held as part of the 'Sapere a tutto campo' courses hosted by the university in March 2008.

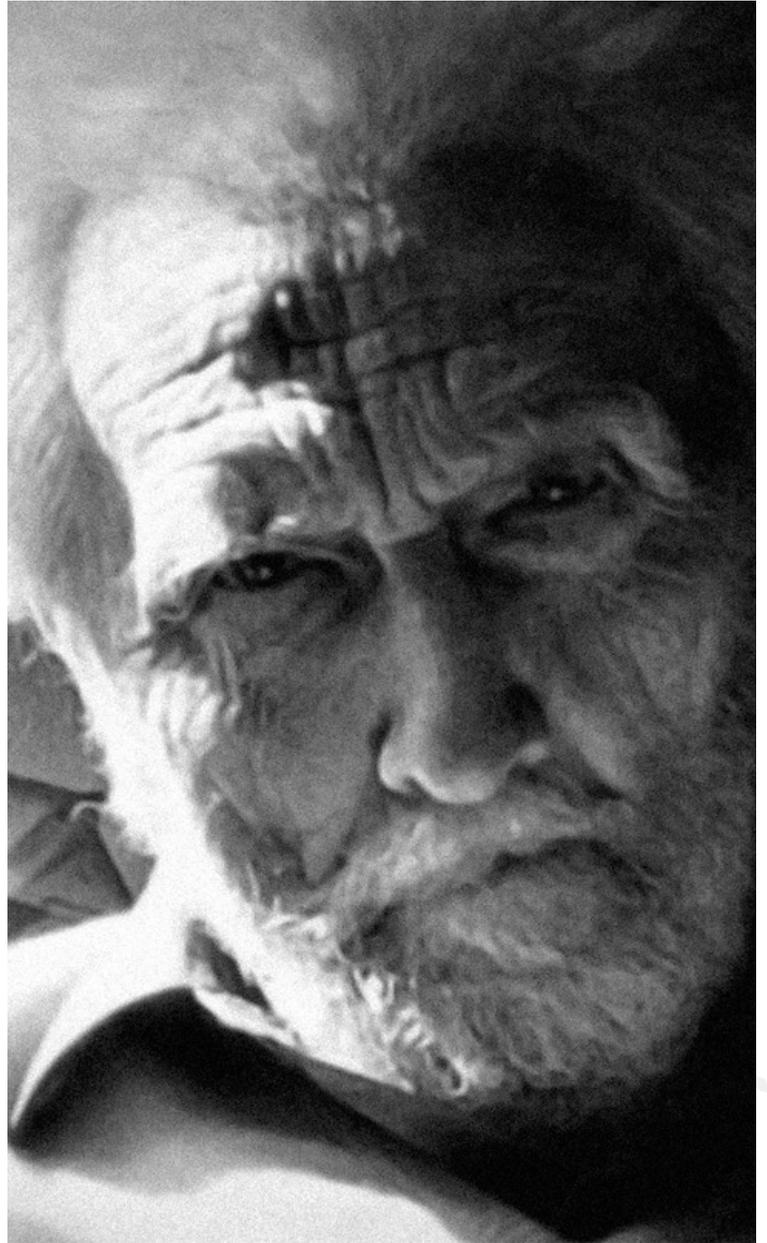
**The vision of the economic issue was based on the meaning of life and respect for the human being, for whom money was to be reduced to a means and not an end of existence**

for, and how much each person will have to work for in order to be remunerated in such a way as not to have unmet needs. A goal that, according to Pound, also by virtue of technical progress (today we would say technological) can only be achieved by making everyone work less. "Nowadays the only economic problem that requires an emergency solution is that of distribution. There are enough goods, there is an overcapacity to produce goods in superabundance. Why should there be those who



starve?" is the question steeped in childlike innocence. And here comes his solution. "Considering money as a certificate of completed work, the easiest way to continue to distribute it (in legal tender) is to distribute work. ... Let the man work four hours for pay and then, if he still feels like working, let him work like an artist or a poet, let him beautify the house or tend the garden, let him exercise to stretch his legs or bend his back over a pool table or sit and smoke ... I know from experience that one can live infinitely better with very little money and a lot of free time than with more money and less time. Time is not money, but it is almost everything else'.

Pound comes to the confrontation in the economic debate with a volitionist spirit. "It will be objected that I am trying to base a system on will instead of intellect". But to this (probable) objection he responds by saying that 'no economic system is worth a fig if goodwill is lacking. No abstract economic system will work if people are not prepared to act with reason'. After all, 'no book can completely replace a man's thinking. There are things so obvious that it takes a genius to grasp them. Or a madman. Pound would insist on these ideas for a long time, which would cascade into his speeches against the US entry into the war (he had already written in ABC: 'An economic system in which it is more profitable to manufacture arms to tear men to pieces than to grow wheat or make useful machinery, is a disgrace and its supporters are enemies of humanity'), becoming veritable invectives against usurocracy, vehemently pronounced in a series of 125 one-hour speeches on Radio Roma. Nazi fascist propaganda, said his American compatriots, which led first to his arrest then to psychiatric internment for twelve years. The words of the economist Pound had struck where the system was unwilling to tolerate cracks. That it could cost him dearly, the poet realised as early as 1933. 'If any of the author's opinions are wrong,' he writes in the finale of his ABC, 'he will be only too happy to correct them provided the contrary is proved, but he will not alter them merely to please those who procure customers for cannon-makers and pricey economists. (...) I have personally heard one of the leading and most despicable exponents of this band of forgers present himself as an 'orthodox economist'. 'Orthodox' physicists and bureaucrats condemned Galileo'. But this prospect was not enough to silence the poet whom everyone still remembers today at least for the aphorism that 'If a man isn't willing to take some risk for his opinions, either his opinions are no good or he's no good'.



### THE POET'S QUESTIONS

In the long exchange of letters between Ezra Pound and Girolamo Palazzina, the famous administrative director of Bocconi University who between November 1932 and March 1933 was responsible for organising the poet's lectures at the university, at a certain point there is mention of the topics that were to be discussed in the artist's opening lecture. The topic is about poets and the economic debate. And the summary that Pound offers his interlocutor is a set of questions that he will answer once he takes the chair. Why and how does a poet get involved in the cold science of economics? Does the poet flee poetry and become an economist? Does economics have something to do with poetry or does it spoil it? Do they think I run away from tradition? Among the illustrious predecessors of his poetic interest in economic science, Pound cites Dante and his Divine Comedy, which is full of references to the vicissitudes of economics in history. Suffice it to think of Philip the Fair's invective against counterfeit money in the 19th Canto of Paradise: '...Lì si vedrà il duol che sovra Senna induce, falseggiando la moneta, quel che morrà di colpo di cotenna...' Just as the economy feeds on art and beauty. And in this regard the American poet recalls the figure of Ernest Fenollosa, art historian, orientalist, professor of political economy at the Imperial University of Tokyo, who was the protagonist of a romantic life: an economist who became an aesthete.

# Maps of power

Milan, Rome, Paris, Brussels, Frankfurt, Madrid

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by Letizia Ceriani

The verb “to map” has many and various meanings: on the one hand, it means the representation on maps of data about certain geographical phenomena; in its biological sense, to map means to establish the location of genes on individual chromosomes to construct the chromosome map and the genetic map; in a more general sense, it can mean to represent an aspect or situation of reality or a phenomenon within a map. When it comes to mapping a city, it intersects the various meanings of the term and the science related to it.

There is also another, more interesting way of studying the city object, which consists of in a geographical-literary approach that explores urban landscapes in its most significant spatial issues. In this sense, this research was born with the intention to map the legal and financial centers of Europe, in the cities of: Brussels, Frankfurt, Madrid, Milan, Paris and Rome.

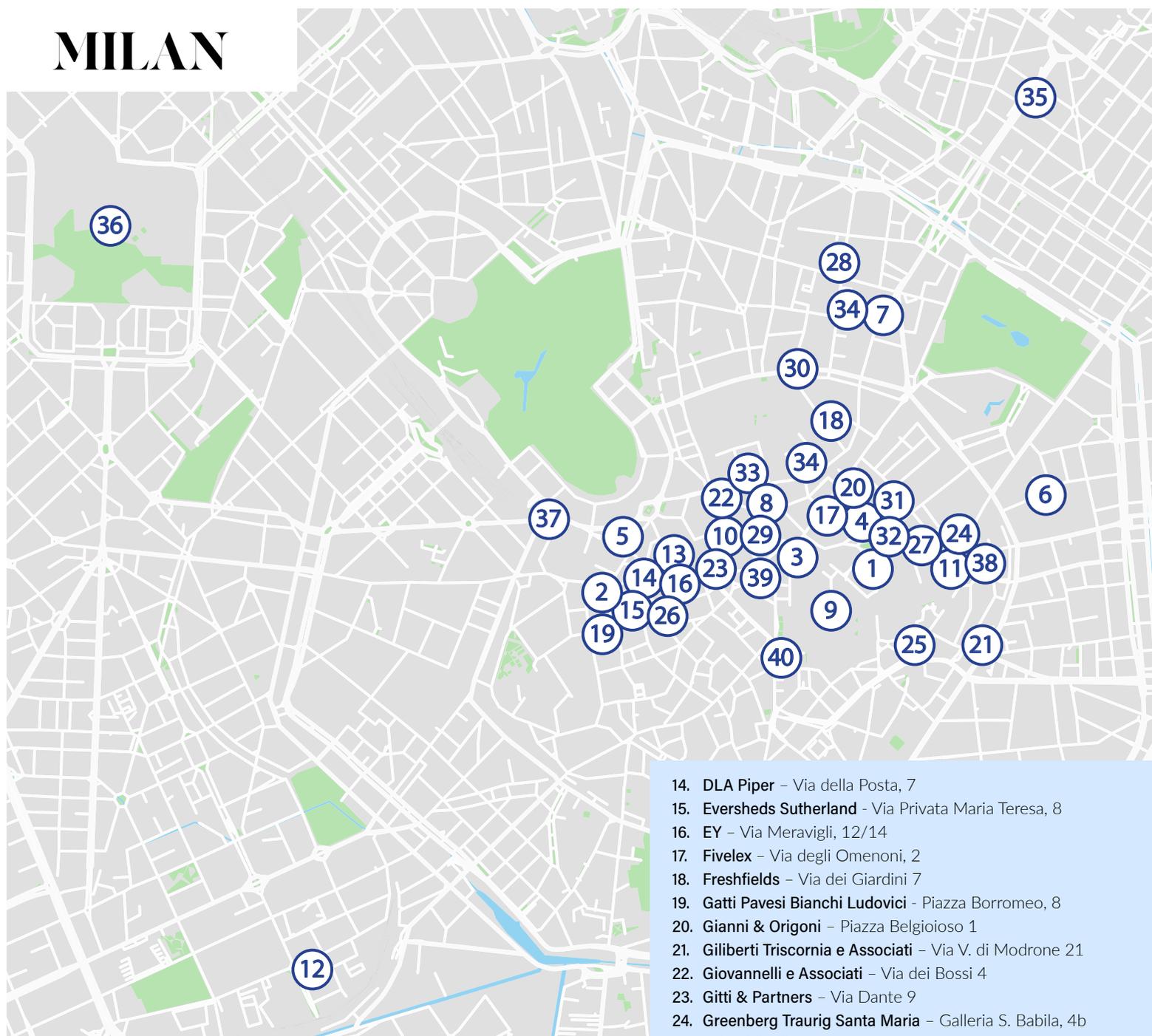
And this is what we did with the help of Colliers Italy, which constructed for us representations of the distribution of legal and financial power in these European capitals, based on a representative sample (but without claim to exhaustiveness) of law firms and corporations.

“Looking at the various maps (Italy, France, Germany, Belgium and Spain), we can see that in all cities, companies have settled mainly in the Central business district (Cbd) - speaking is Simone Roberti, head of research at Colliers Italy - This choice was made for a few historical reasons. First and foremost, being located in the most central area of the city, they are able to have offices that are rather difficult to reach. Also, they are able to have offices where they can welcome their clients' outsiders for their meetings. The fees may be higher, as they approach those considered prime, but because of their activities they manage to maintain a certain balance. Going into more detail, if we look at law firms, we observe their presence in the Cbd but also in other parts of the city, such as in Rome, Milan and Brussels. This increases in firms specializing in corporate finance, in all the cities analyzed. Their spread is also related to different dynamics, such as the desire to be in new and modern properties as well as in areas that have involved a rehabilitation and redevelopment project. Four years after the Covid, some locations have changed habits, but I believe that only some companies will move elsewhere-as happened to Crédit Agricole, which is now located in Montrouge, a municipality near Paris-while most, especially law firms, will remain in the city center.”

## Beautiful Buildings



# MILAN

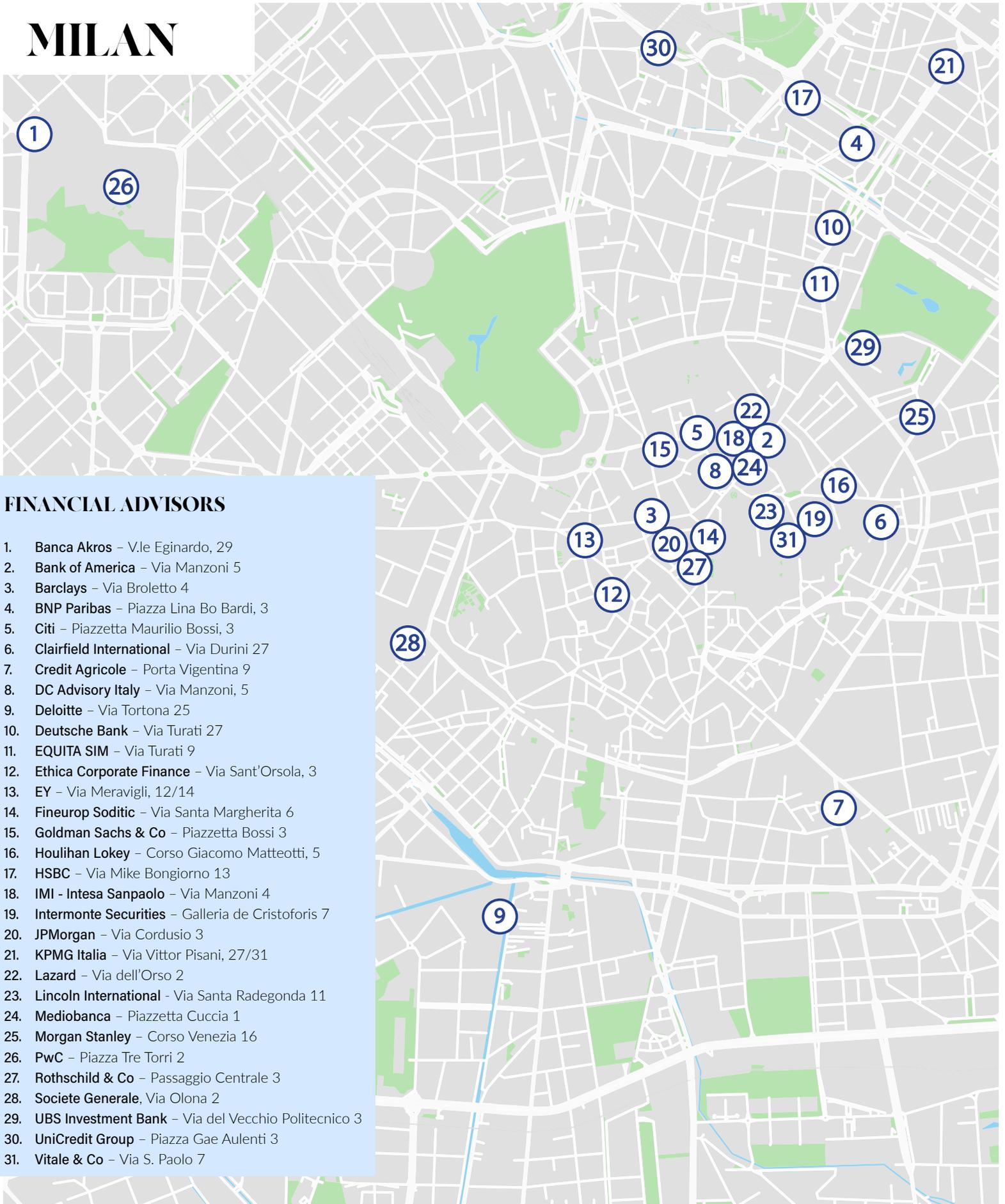


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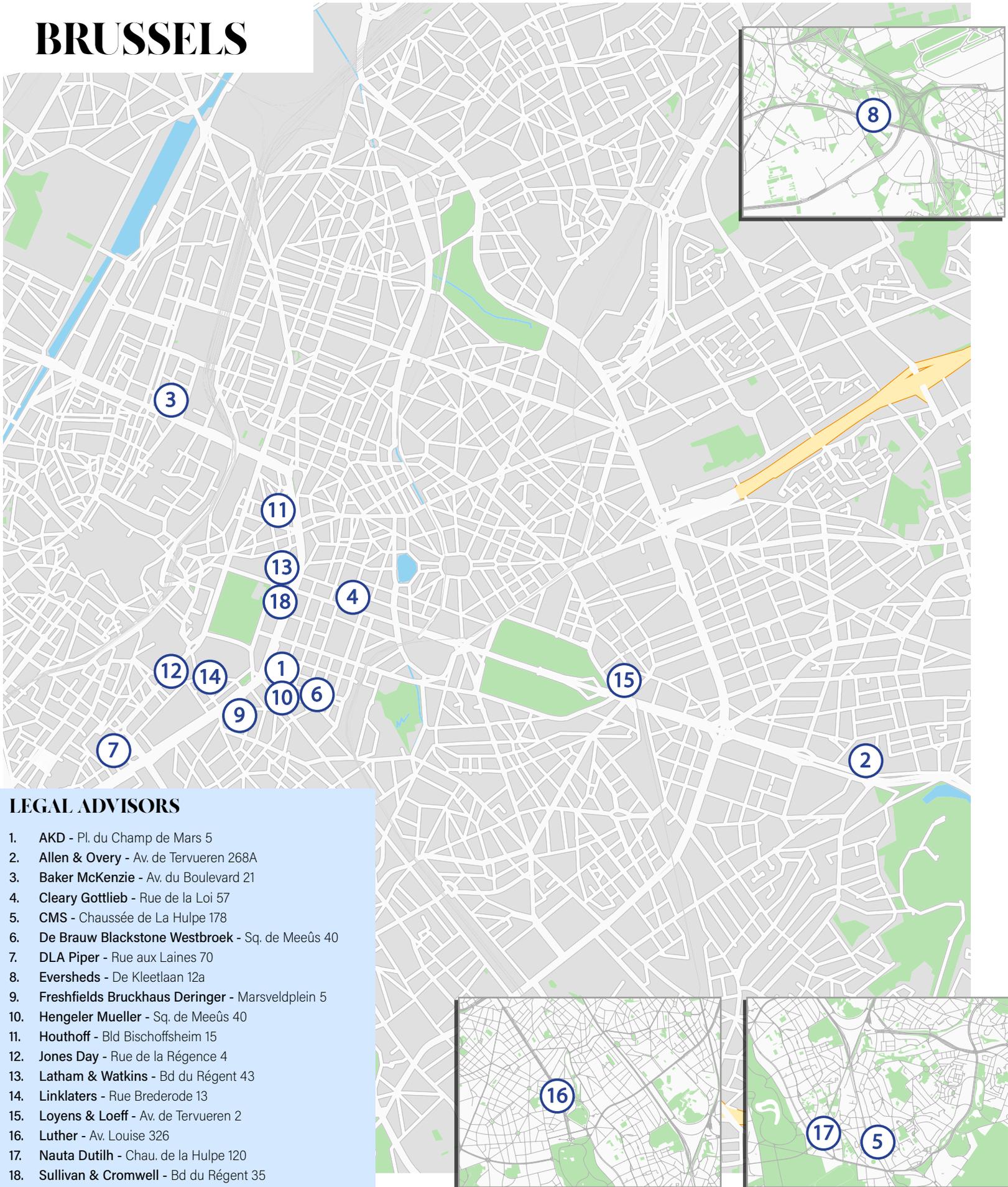
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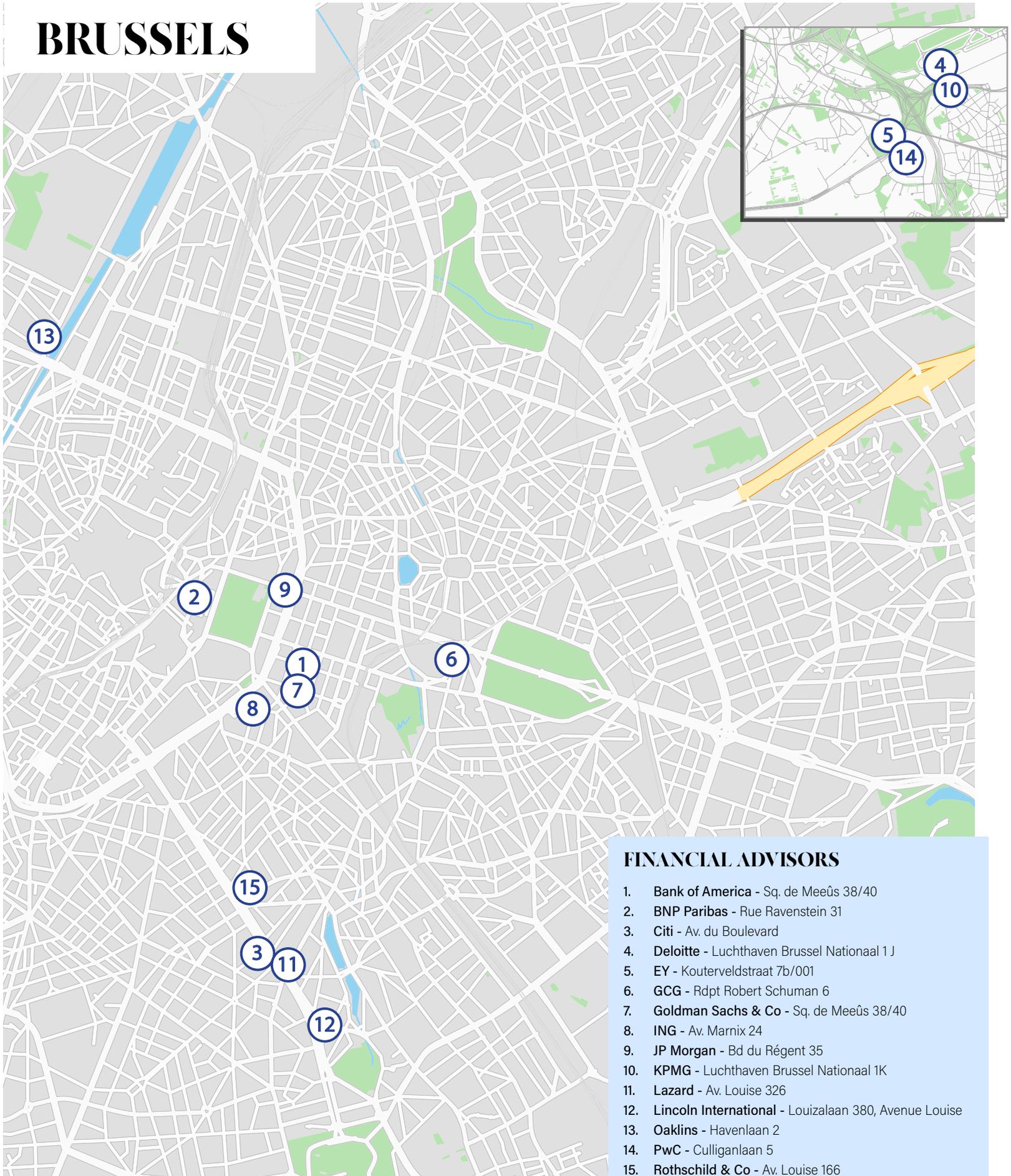
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10. **KPMG** - Luchthaven Brussel Nationaal 1K
11. **Lazard** - Av. Louise 326
12. **Lincoln International** - Louizalaan 380, Avenue Louise
13. **Oaklins** - Havenlaan 2
14. **PwC** - Culliganlaan 5
15. **Rothschild & Co** - Av. Louise 166

# FRANKFURT



## LEGAL ADVISORS

1. **Allen & Overy** - Bockenheimer Landstraße 2
2. **Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton** - Neue Mainzer Str. 52
3. **Clifford Chance** - Junghofstraße 14
4. **CMS** - Neue Mainzer Str. 2-4
5. **Dentons** - Nextower, Thurn-und-Taxis-Platz 6, Thurn-und-Taxis-Platz 6
6. **DLA Piper** - Neue Mainzer Str. 6 - 10
7. **Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer** - Bockenheimer Anlage 44
8. **Gleiss Lutz** - Taunusanlage 11
9. **Goodwin Procter** - Taunustor 1
10. **Hengeler Mueller** - Bockenheimer Landstraße 24
11. **Hogan Lovells International** - Große Gallusstraße 18
12. **Latham & Watkins** - Reuterweg 20
13. **Linklaters** - Taunusanlage 8
14. **Noerr** - Börsenstraße 1
15. **Rödl & Partners**, Taurus Tower, Mergenthalerallee 73-75
16. **Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom** - Taunustor 1
17. **Sullivan & Cromwell** - Neue Mainzer Str. 52
18. **Weil Gotshal & Manges** - Taunusanlage 1 (Skyper)
19. **White & Case** - Bockenheimer Landstraße 20

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## FINANCIAL ADVISORS

1. **Bain & Company** - Neue Mainzer Str. 80
2. **Bank of America** - Taunusanlage 9-10
3. **Berenberg Bank** - Bockenheimer Landstraße 25
4. **BNP Paribas** - Senckenberganlage 19
5. **Citi** - Reuterweg 16
6. **Commerzbank** - Kaiserstraße 16
7. **Credit Agricole Corporate Investment Banking** - Brüsseler Str. 1-3
8. **Deloitte** - Europa-Allee 91
9. **Deutsche Bank** - Taunusanlage 12
10. **EY** - Mergenthalerallee 3-5
11. **Goetzpartners** - Taunustor 1
12. **Goldman Sachs & Co** - Taunusanlage 9-10
13. **Houlihan Lokey** - Marienurm Taunusanlage 9-10
14. **HSBC** - Taunusanlage 1
15. **Jefferies** - Bockenheimer Landstraße 24
16. **JP Morgan** - Taunustor 1
17. **KPMG** - The Squire Am Flughafen
18. **Lazard & CO** - Neue Mainzer Str. 69
19. **Lincoln International** - Ulmenstraße 37-39
20. **Macquarie Group** - Bockenheimer Landstraße 2-4
21. **Morgan Stanley** - Grosse Gallusstrasse 18
22. **Nomura Financial Products Europe** - Rathenauplatz 1
23. **PwC** - Friedrich-Ebert-Anlage 35-37
24. **Rothschild & Co** - Börsenstraße 2-4
25. **Societe Generale** - Neue Mainzer Str. 46-50
26. **UBS Investment Bank** - Bockenheimer Landstraße 2-4

# MADRID



## LEGAL ADVISORS

1. Allen & Overy - serrano 73
2. Baker McKenzie - C. de José Ortega y Gasset, 29
3. Clifford Chance - Paseo de la Castellana 110
4. CMS Recoletos 7-9
5. Cuatrecasas - Almagro 9
6. Davis Polk & Wardwell- Paseo de la Castellana 41
7. Deloitte Legal - Plaza de Pablo Ruiz Picasso 1 Torre Picasso
8. DLA Piper - Paseo de la Castellana 39
9. DWF - Serrano, 116
10. Eversheds - P.º de la Castellana, 66
11. EY - Calle de Raimundo Fernández Villaverde 65 Torre Azca
12. Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer - paseo de la castellana 95
13. Garrigues - Hermosilla 3
14. Gomez-Acebo & Pombo Abogados - Castellana 216
15. Herbert Smith Freehills - Velazquez 63
16. KPMG Abogados - Castellana 259
17. Latham & Watkins - Pl. de la Independencia, 6
18. Linklaters - Almagro 40
19. Osborne Clarke - Castellana 52
20. Perez-Llorca - Castellana 50
21. PwC - Torre PwC, Paseo de la Castellana, 259B
22. Uria Menendez - P. Vergara 187
23. Watson Farley - C/ María de Molina, 4
24. White & Case - Calle Velázquez 86D

# MADRID



## FINANCIAL ADVISORS

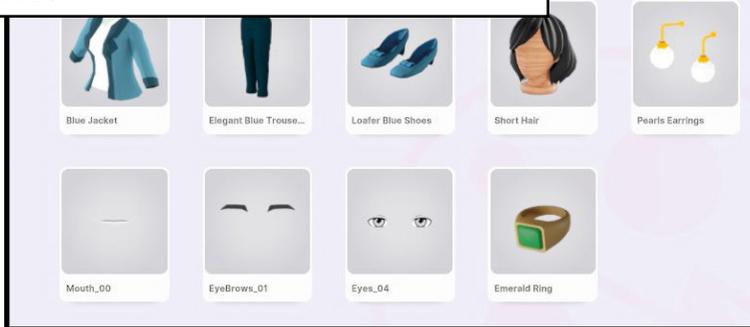
1. **Alantra** - Calle de José Ortega y Gasset 29
2. **Arcano Partners** - C. de José Ortega y Gasset 29
3. **AZ Capital** - Fortuny 6
4. **Banco Bilbao** - Vizcaya Argenteria Castellana 169
5. **Bank of America** - Marques de Villamagna 3
6. **Barclays** - Jose Abascal 51
7. **BNP Paribas** - hermanos bequer 3
8. **Citi** - Edificio Beatriz
9. **Deloitte** - Pl. Pablo Ruiz Picasso 1
10. **Deutsche Bank** - Castellana 18
11. **EY** - Calle de Raimundo Fernández Villaverde
12. **Goldman Sachs & Co** - Maria de Molina 6
13. **HSBC** - plaza ruiz Picasso 1
14. **JP Morgan** - P.º de la Castellana 31
15. **KPMG** - Torre de Cristal
16. **Lazard** - Rafael Calvo 39
17. **Lincoln International** - General Castaños 4, 28004 Madrid
18. **Morgan Stanley** - Serrano 55
19. **Nomura Holdings** - nomura Plaza Lealtad 4
20. **Norgestion** - Velazquez 55
21. **PwC** - Castellana 259
22. **Rothschild & Co** - Castellana 35
23. **Santander Corporate Investment Banking** - Serrano 92
24. **UBS Investment Banking** - Calle María de Molina 4

# INTERVIEW IN THE METAVERSE

IN THE HEART OF DECENTRALAND, THE SPANISH LAW FIRM VICOX HAS HAD A BRANCH SINCE SEPTEMBER 2021. ILARIA IAQUINTA WENT TO CHECK IT OUT. AND THIS IS THE REPORTAGE

A THREE-DIMENSIONAL PORTAL CATAPULTS ME INTO A SPACE WHERE THE LAWS OF PHYSICS SEEM SUSPENDED. I HAVE TO CREATE MY AVATAR, THEN I'LL BE READY TO ENTER THE DIGITAL SPACE...

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR? I'M GOING TO THE METAVERSE, BUT I STILL HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE MANAGING PARTNER OF A LAW FIRM. A JACKET IS NECESSARY.



Decentraland



THE VICOX HEADQUARTERS STANDS IMPOSINGLY, WITH FUTURISTIC LINES AND A DESIGN THAT BLENDS CLASSIC ELEMENTS WITH DIGITAL AESTHETICS.



Beautiful Buildings

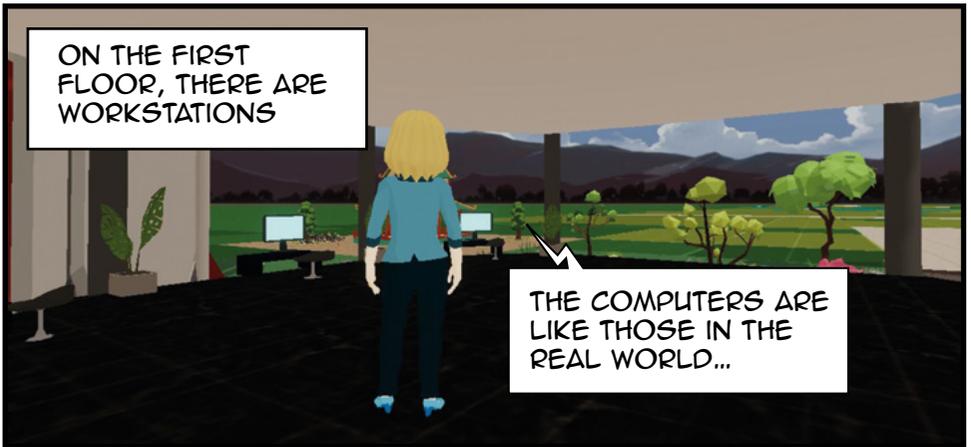


ONCE INSIDE, THERE IS A DIGITAL WAITING ROOM, WITH ELEGANT FURNISHINGS AND "NATURAL" LIGHTING. THE VIRTUAL WALLS ARE TRANSPARENT AND ALLOW GLIMPSES OF THE OUTSIDE.

I COULD SIT HERE AND WAIT FOR VICENTE ORTIZ ALONSO, BUT IN THE MEANTIME, I'LL TAKE A LOOK AROUND...



THE BUILDING HAS 4 FLOORS AND A TERRACE...



ON THE FIRST FLOOR, THERE ARE WORKSTATIONS

THE COMPUTERS ARE LIKE THOSE IN THE REAL WORLD...



THE SPACE IS OPEN. HERE, THE LAWYERS OF THE FIRM MEET WITH CLIENTS AND PROJECT PRESENTATIONS.

UPSTAIRS, THERE IS THE MEETING ROOM

...AND FINALLY, THE TERRACE. HERE IS UNAI, WHO IS ALSO THE MODELLER



I WONDER IF THEY SERVE COFFEE HERE...



GOOD MORNING!

WELCOME. VICENTE SHOULD BE ARRIVING SOON...

EVEN THOUGH HE'S JUST AN AVATAR, UNAI IS RECOGNIZABLY THE VIRTUAL REPRESENTATION OF A LAWYER. EVERY DETAIL OF HIS APPEARANCE IS CAREFULLY CRAFTED. EVEN THE PHRASE HE USES TO DESCRIBE HIMSELF FITS PERFECTLY WITH THE PROFESSION HE'S IN... "IF YOU'RE GOOD AT SOMETHING, NEVER DO IT FOR FREE."



ANOTHER LAWYER FROM THE FIRM ARRIVES: MUJER MARAVILLA. SHE IS ALSO VERY CASUAL

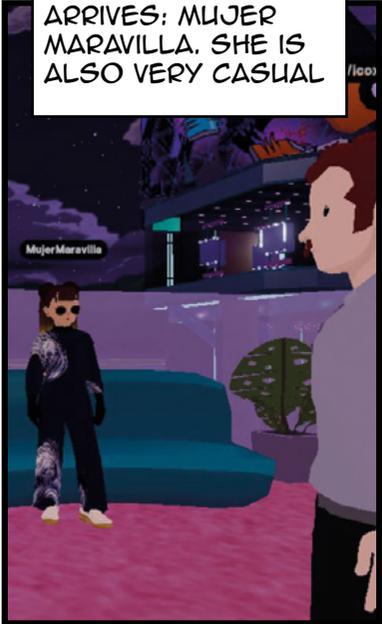
WELCOME!



HERE HE IS... VICENTE ORTIZ ALONSO, MANAGING PARTNER OF VICOX LEGAL



VICENTE HAS A CASUAL AVATAR

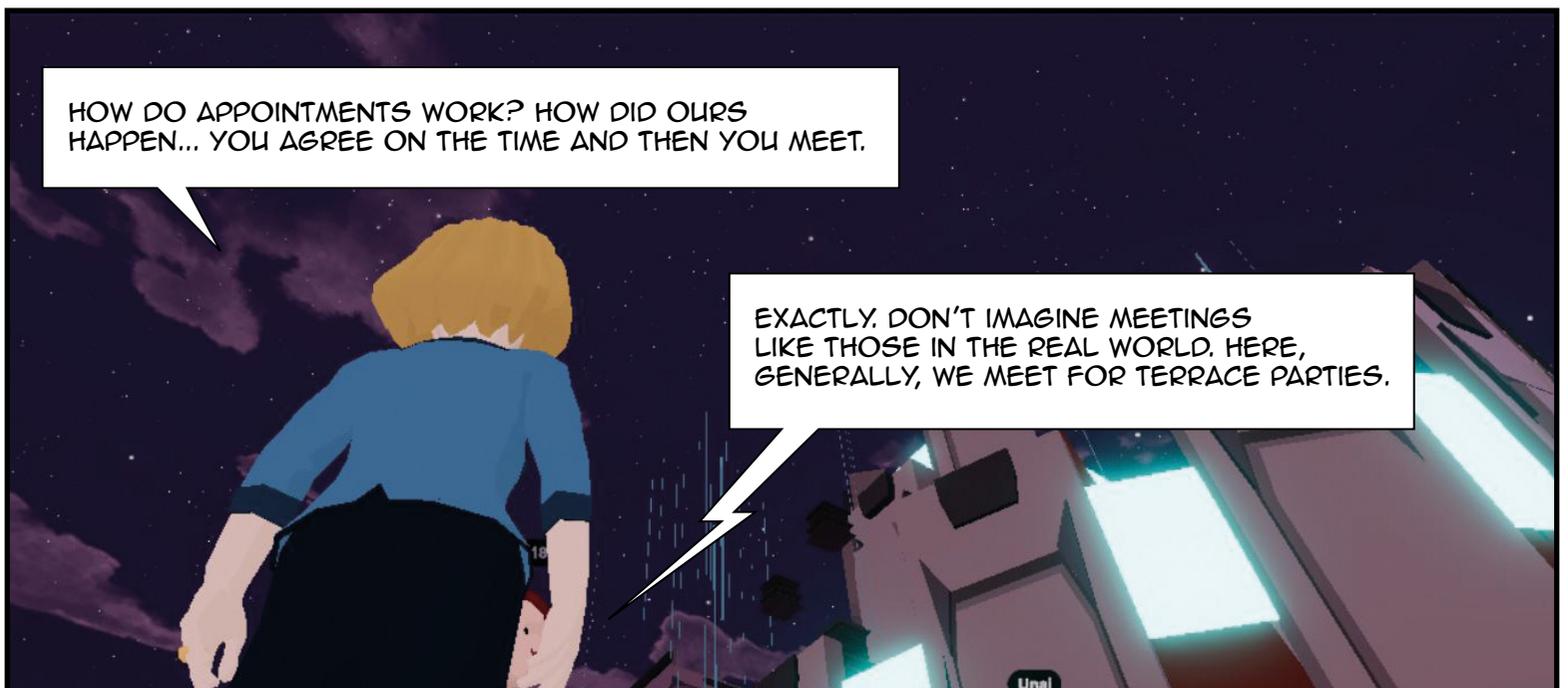
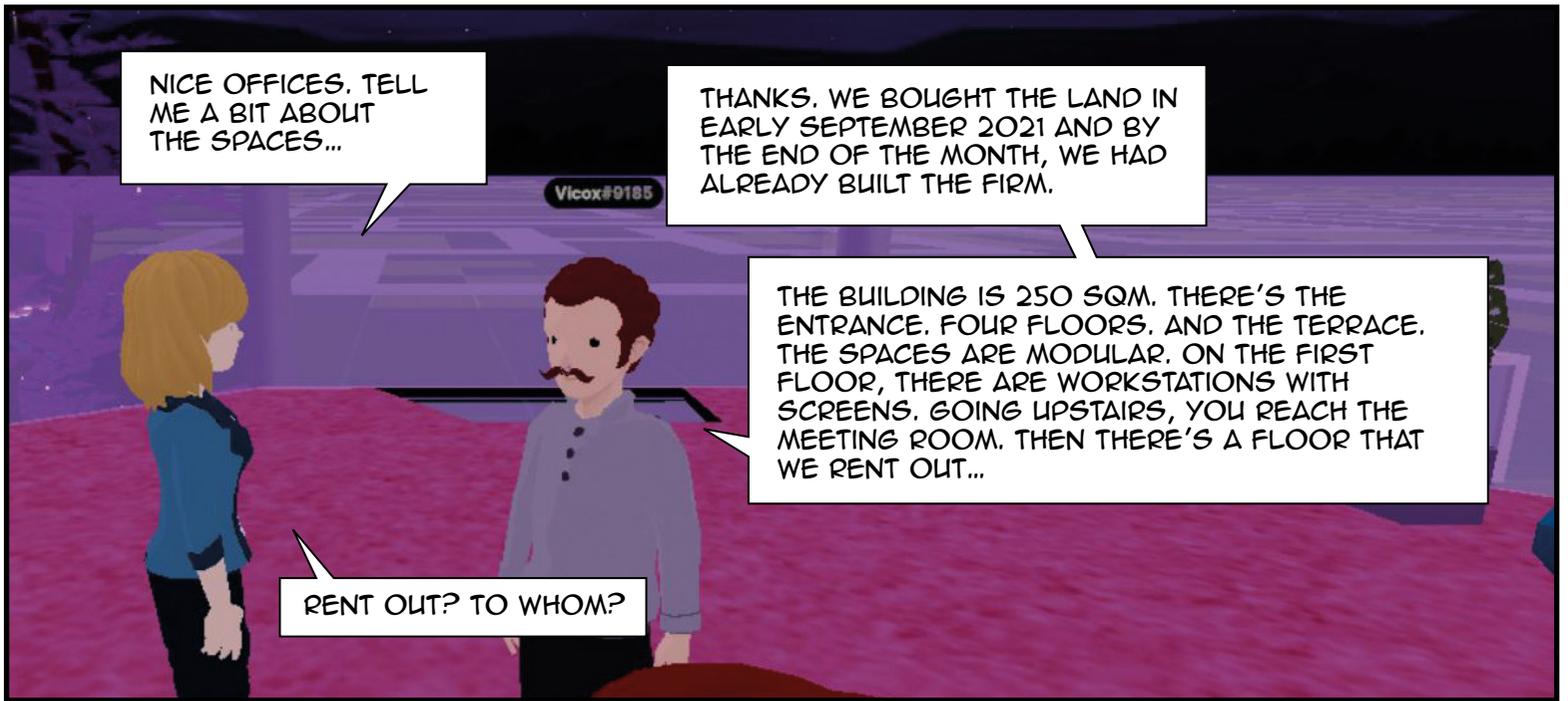


APPARENTLY, THERE'S NO PREJUDICE IN THE METAVERSE. AND EVERYONE CAN FREELY CHOOSE HOW TO BE

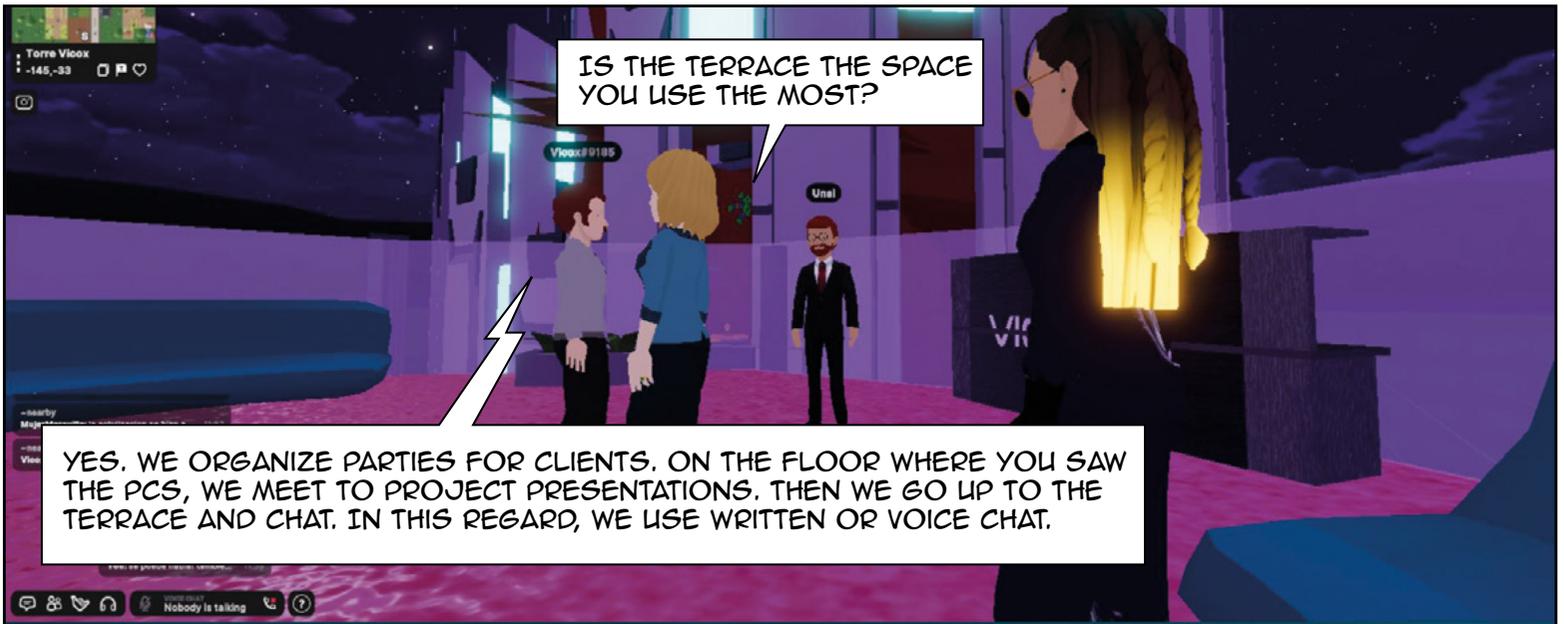


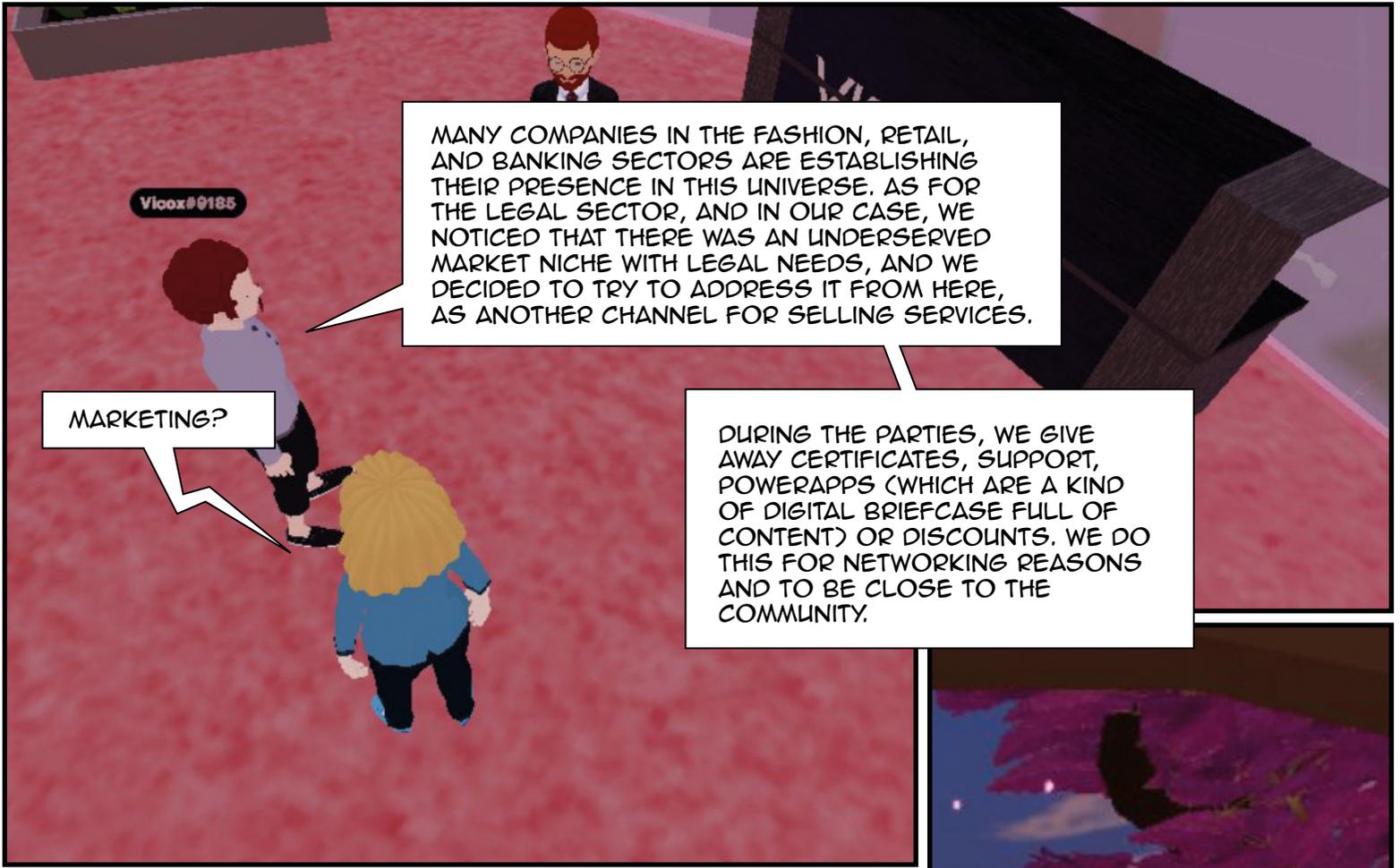
WELCOME!

THANK YOU!



## Beautiful Buildings





Vloox#9185

MARKETING?

MANY COMPANIES IN THE FASHION, RETAIL, AND BANKING SECTORS ARE ESTABLISHING THEIR PRESENCE IN THIS UNIVERSE. AS FOR THE LEGAL SECTOR, AND IN OUR CASE, WE NOTICED THAT THERE WAS AN UNDERSERVED MARKET NICHE WITH LEGAL NEEDS, AND WE DECIDED TO TRY TO ADDRESS IT FROM HERE, AS ANOTHER CHANNEL FOR SELLING SERVICES.

DURING THE PARTIES, WE GIVE AWAY CERTIFICATES, SUPPORT, POWERAPPS (WHICH ARE A KIND OF DIGITAL BRIEFCASE FULL OF CONTENT) OR DISCOUNTS. WE DO THIS FOR NETWORKING REASONS AND TO BE CLOSE TO THE COMMUNITY.



AND THE FURNITURE I SEE AROUND US? DID YOU BUY IT?

WE BUILT IT OURSELVES. WE CAN ALSO REGISTER THEM AS NFTS. WE HAVEN'T DONE IT SO FAR, BUT IF WE WANTED TO SELL THEM, WE COULD.

HOW DOES THE CONCEPT OF WORK TIME CHANGE IN THE METAVERSE?

IF WE LOOK TO THE FUTURE, SPECIFICALLY WHEN THIS TECHNOLOGY REACHES A HIGH LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION, THERE WILL BE A TIME SAVING.

WILL THERE BE GREATER EFFICIENCY?

YES. THE TIME WE SPEND IN TRAFFIC, OR GETTING READY FOR APPOINTMENTS, FOR EXAMPLE, WILL DISAPPEAR. THERE WILL BE A GREAT SAVING OF TIME AND, CONSEQUENTLY, OF MONEY.



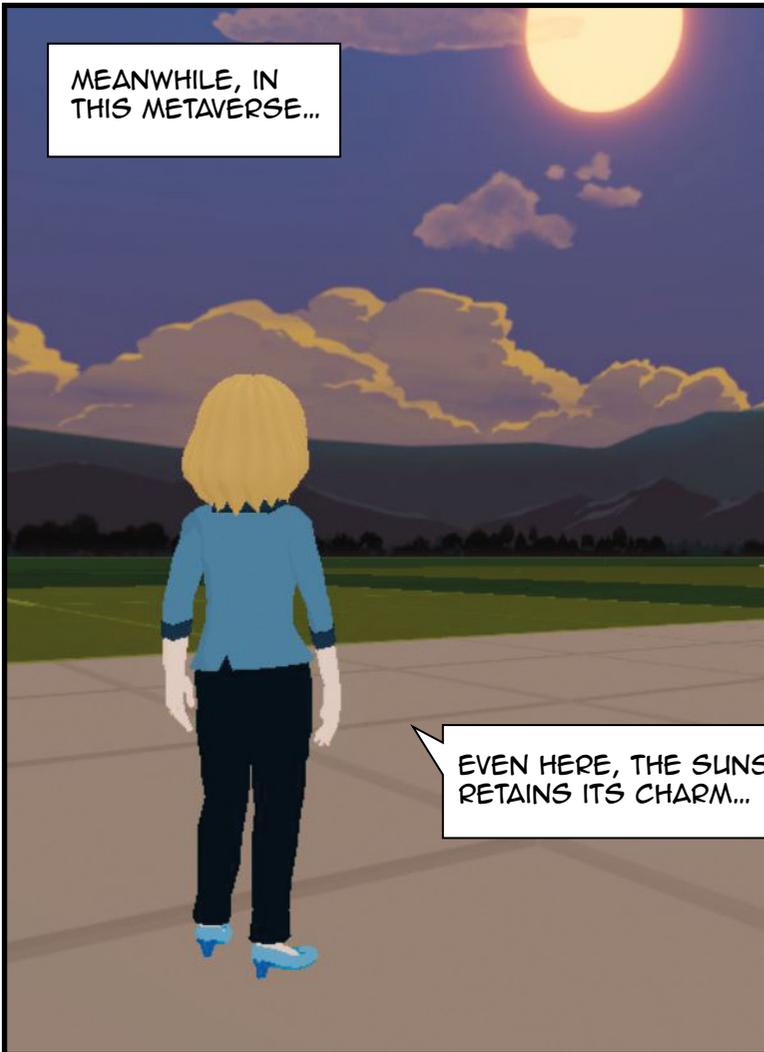
UNTIL NEXT TIME!

SPEAKING OF TIME. THANK YOU FOR THE TIME YOU'VE DEDICATED TO US... UNTIL NEXT TIME...



LEAVING THE LAW FIRM...

LIKE AFTER EVERY INTERVIEW IN THE REAL WORLD, IT'S NICE TO TAKE A WALK. THINK ABOUT THE CONVERSATION. LET IT SETTLE. BEFORE IT MATERIALIZES INTO A TEXT...



MEANWHILE, IN THIS METAVERSE...

EVEN HERE, THE SUNSET RETAINS ITS CHARM...

END

# Desks

---

by Letizia Ceriani

New ways of working are making inroads, interpenetrating collective and individual spaces, desks and workstations, and the hierarchy of elements around which professional firms unfold and offices. New concepts are gradually undermining the classic image with which we are used to portray professionals at work. But even these new forms follow the principles of order, flexibility, multifunctionality, integration of public and private, existence outside and inside the office, faithfully following those who inhabit them.

What follows are photographs of the desks on which 11 professionals, leading figures in the worlds of finance and advocacy, work, and, accompanying them, what they told us about their way of understanding the space.

## CATHARSIS (ΚΑΘΑΡΣΙΣ)



**Eliana Catalano**, Managing Partner of BonelliErede

**"My desk is a place I experience as organized chaos, a bit like the backstage of a play theater: swamped with papers, files, codes, and books during the most intense moments of a deal (before it goes on stage!), and neat and tidy (or nearly so) when the deal closes. All always with some object that reminds me reminds me of home, like my daughter's drawing or birthday message, and my passions. Every now and then, especially in the most intense moments, looking at these objects helps me deal with the pressure"**

## (IL)LOGICAL CHEERFULLNESS



**Bruno Gattai**, Managing Partner of GattaiMinoliPartners

“The space where I work is bright, comfortable and filled with memories and family photos that help me be happier even in the darkest moments. I experience order as a mess ... which has its own logic, however. It is a mess in which I can find my way around”

## ESSENTIAL



**Roberto Nicastro**, President of Banca Aidexa

**"A computer, a bottle of water, a glass and a cup of coffee. I like to have the essentials for work at hand. My desk I would not call neat: in front of me piles of paper documents, all filed and accessible. On the desk is so much of my life: my work interests, a calendar prepared by my daughter with a few family photos, a cigarette lighter and jumper cables to charge various electronic deviltry. Behind me, a watercolor of the mountains (the Ortles) and the window facing the Castello Sforzesco"**

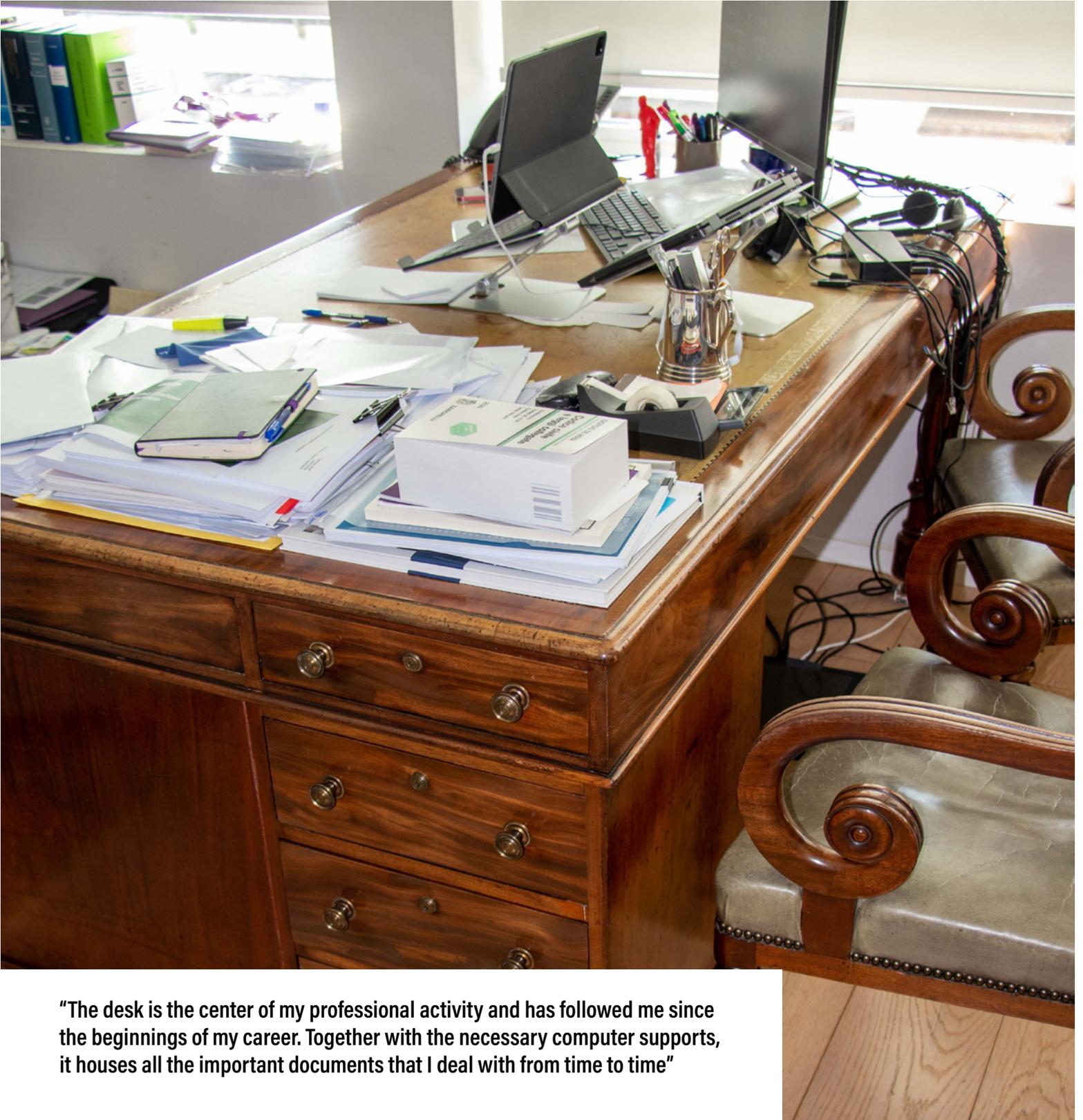
## LESS IS MORE



**Stefania Radoccia**, Managing Partner of EY Slt

**“My desk is minimalist. Everything I need occupies the space a bag: smartphones, headsets, and PCs allow me to work effectively and with endless variations in terms of space and time. I am convinced that great inspirations come from freedom, which is why I do not have a fixed desk, drawers or particular objects. I have an essential and agile approach, in line with the New Ways of Working and the approach EY took well before the pandemic”**

## LIKE A CIRCLE



**"The desk is the center of my professional activity and has followed me since the beginnings of my career. Together with the necessary computer supports, it houses all the important documents that I deal with from time to time"**

**Federico Sutti**, Managing Partner of Dentons

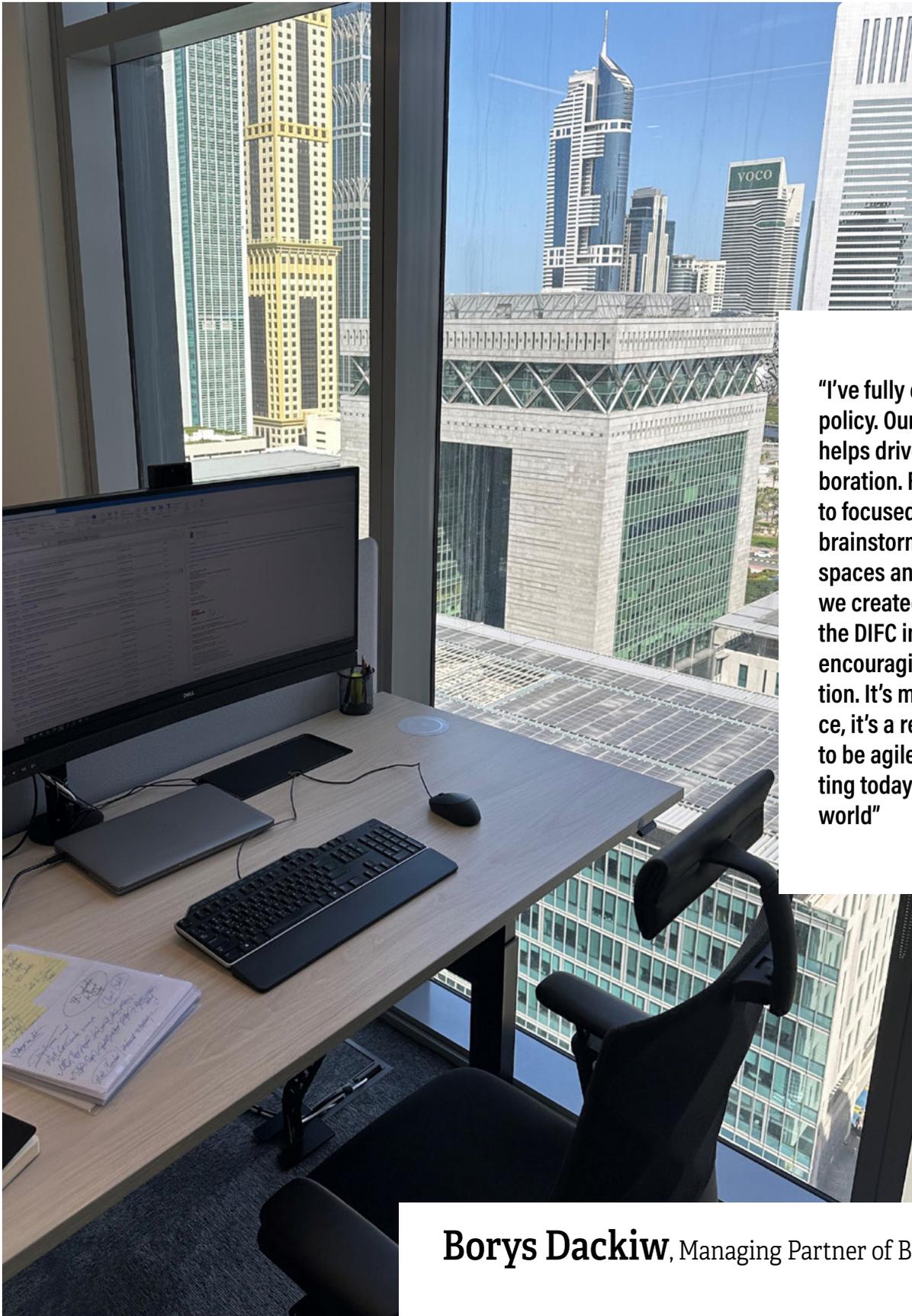
## TRAVELLER



**Filippo Troisi**, Senior Partner of Legance

**“I think the picture of my desk is eloquent: I do not like clutter and I am rather minimalist in my use of space. Moving often between Rome and Milan, I need to always have the necessities with me, keeping my office lived in and hospitable. The space in which I work accommodates everything that is essential to me. In addition to the tools of work I am surrounded by objects, cards and photos of my family that make the environment more welcoming”**

## POSITIVE ENERGY



"I've fully embraced our hot desking policy. Our versatile office space helps drive productivity and collaboration. From strategic meetings to focused tasks and personal brainstorming sessions, the open spaces and dynamic environment we created at Baker McKenzie in the DIFC infuses positive energy, encouraging creativity and innovation. It's more than just a workspace, it's a reflection of our dedication to be agile and efficient in navigating today's fast-paced business world"

**Borys Dackiw**, Managing Partner of Baker McKenzie UAE

SO IT IS, IF YOU THINK SO



**Francesco Gatti**, Equity Partner of GattiPavesiBianchiLudovici

**"Order is only apparent"**

## POP LAWYER



**Laura Orlando**, Managing Partner of Herbert Smith Freehills

**“The lawyer’s job is not considered among the most creative jobs in the world, but I feel lucky because I have managed to do it in my own way-I believe that IP cares about the innovative, creative or artistic value of the world and my space reflects that. In order to think, I need a white, free and uncluttered space. There are also some colors, which give the work time a bit of vibrancy. Markers, highlighters, colored blocks, the green plants and some pop art.... like the kiss between Batman and Wonder Woman by Marco Lodola”**

## SAFE SPACE



**Tony Khoury**, Partner OF KN Law

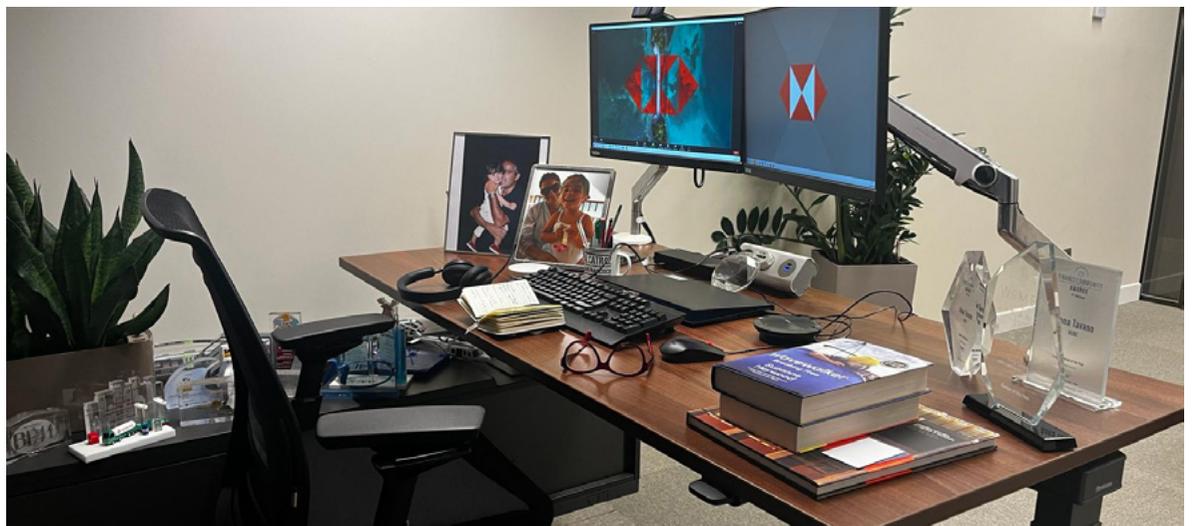
**"I define the space I work in as "practically versatile." As a partner at a law firm with offices in the U.S. and the Middle East, and with offices opening soon in Europe and Korea, there's never a lull in the action. I need a practical workspace that accommodates everything I and my clients have going on, and which can double as a workstation when I work with the teams that help me manage the firm and that advise our clients regarding their legal and business matters"**

# LIGHTS ON!



**Anna Tavano**, Co-head of Global Banking Continental Europe and Head of Wholesale Banking Italy of HSBC

**"Light, space and a sense of belonging: that's what I want to find when I sit at my desk. I divide my time between Milan and Paris, and I am lucky enough to enjoy great brightness and a view that opens onto the Duomo or on the Eiffel Tower. This opens my mind to new ideas, scenarios and opportunities. Unmissable are the photos of my daughter and my husband; they remind me of my roots, who I am outside the corporate walls, bring me back to reality in the daily whirlwind and contribute to my resilience in facing professional challenges"**



# In the homes of tomorrow's partners

Milan can be a bit of a world apart from the rest of Italy; even when it comes to young lawyers starting their careers. We went to visit four budding professionals to hear about their lives, divided between work, personal life, future goals and expectations; without forgetting about the housing crisis and the eternal issue of the Italian bar exam

by Giuseppe Salemmè



A wardrobe full of high-heeled shoes, neatly arranged on top of each other. A large terrace with terracotta flooring overlooking Milan's central station. A bedside table with Yanniss Varoufakis' book *Technofeudalism* placed on top. A Playstation 5. Roommates who are colleagues; roommates who were, but then won a public competition. At least a couple of portable air conditioners. The flag of football ultras group hanging on the wall like a tapestry.

These are some of the things I noticed in the homes of four young men and women who, in recent years, have started their careers as

lawyers in Milan. A small sample of the future legal class, linked by the fact that they began their careers during a period of profound changes in the economy and job market: a time marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, but also by the housing crisis affecting all major urban centers, and Milan in particular.

The city is the backdrop for all their stories: starting your career here is indeed different. Mostly because the field Italians call "business lawyering" happens more here than elsewhere: fifteen years ago, about 40% of trainee lawyers registered with the Milan Bar were

also qualified for "substitute representation," meaning they could perform many of the judicial activities typical of qualified lawyers; today, only 6.5% are. This data can be explained by the increasing prevalence of extrajudicial activities and consultancy, typical activities of law firms, as well as the widespread adoption of the organizational methods typical of large structures.

Milan is also bucking the trend in terms of active trainees in its territory. While in other major cities like Rome and Naples, only in 2022 was the first decrease in registrations recor-

## Beautiful Buildings



ded after about fifteen years of steady growth, in Milan, that number has been steadily declining since 2015 (for a total -17.5% of registrants in the trainees' register over nine years). Milanese trainee lawyers are today 4,007; 2,522 of which are women (62%); nearly one in four is over thirty years old. Among the approximately 20,000 already qualified lawyers, 4,462 are 35 or younger; here too, women now constitute a clear majority, accounting for 57.3% of the total.

Marzia falls into this latter category. She is 31 years old, she's from Campania, and she's a lawyer; she currently specializes in anti-trust and consumer protection at a consulting firm's law office. I meet her one January morning in the southern area of Milan, just a stone's throw from the Sant'Agostino metro station. "If you're taking photos, let me tidy up first!" she says as she leads me into her home. Which isn't messy at all: it's an old-style Milanese apartment, with a central corridor leading to a kitchen, a bathroom, and three bedrooms. "One of my roommates is an architect; the other used to be a lawyer, but not anymore because she won a public competition," she explains. We settle into the living room at the end of the hallway, the only true common space in the house. She tells me she's been in Milan since the summer of 2022, after a not-too-positive internship experience at another firm in Rome: "They said they could only offer me an extension of the internship; I refused because the salary wasn't enough for me to live in another city," she recounts. "As soon as I left the building, they called me back, saying they would give me what I asked for. At the time, I agreed to stay, but the fact that they had shown themselves to be dishonest made it difficult for me to continue working normally. So, shortly after, I left, initially considering the idea of looking for work near home. Until this opportunity in Milan presented itself."

Although all young lawyers are generally very busy, often working more than 12 hours per day, Marzia is particularly so. In addition to being a lawyer, she is a municipal councilor in her hometown, in the province of Naples: "I continue to commute back and forth every week. This house is, in a way, just a base." But

it still took her a long time to find accommodation that met her needs: "Four months, more or less. My roommates were looking for a third person themselves; I've never seen the landlord, although they say he lives in the same building." For these reasons, Marzia still considers herself a commuter. But she also realizes that her current life would not have been possible before the spread of remote working: "In many firms, even post-Covid, the idea of not being in the office every day is frowned upon. I was lucky: where I work, teams are generally quite 'distributed' across the territory; and

my reference partner has always been understanding of my needs." All good in theory; but isn't it also quite stressful? "Yes. I know I'm living in a transitional condition, and at some point, I'll have to try to define my life, for example by giving up politics and focusing entirely on the job. For a long time, I didn't have a clear idea of the future; only recently have I become aware that being a lawyer is what I want to do."

Yet Marzia's political vein immediately emerges when we touch on the housing crisis topic. A few months ago, in September 2023, dozens of students camped in front of the Polytechnic University and the Municipality of Milan to protest the lack of affordable housing for students: "Only those who have experienced it can understand the feeling of not having a space for themselves," she says. "I believe that as long as the accumulation of property in the hands of a few individuals is allowed, the situation will not be resolved. More and more young people from the South migrate to the North, the demand for housing has doubled in the last fifteen years: I don't see how the emergency can end without national intervention."

Davide is also a lawyer. Thirty years old, originally from Lecco, he moved to Milan in 2019: "I've always lived in shared houses, mainly found through friendships: first in via Savona, then in the Porta Venezia area." However, a few months ago, he decided to move in a two-room apartment in the Dateo area, where he lives by himself: "Prices have increased a lot, but in line with my salary: currently, I spend about 35% of my monthly income on rent, which is quite in line with what is usually re-

commended.” I trust what he says, given that his area of specialization is precisely real estate law. Yet, he has no intention of buying a house in the near future: “If I stay in Milan, I’ll try to stay close to the offices locations, and they’re pretty much always in the city center.”

Currently, Davide works in a firm that can be classified as a “superboutique”: structures that aggregate one hundred professionals or more. He is quite critical about the condition of young lawyers: “There’s a bottleneck effect: all medium management, 40 years old and younger, is more stressed than other age groups. Young people work a lot, yet they aren’t highly regarded. And usually, the prospects for partnership are limited, so it’s a path that isn’t recommended beyond a certain age.” For this reason, he says he would consider applying for in-house legal positions in the future.

Davide has a peculiarity: he seems to be one of the very few among his peers to have a positive memory of the bar exam. “I passed it in the 2019 session, which ended in 2020; the last one with the traditional pre-Covid methods. I must say it wasn’t so traumatic: I really liked the written part, and I found being in a space with thousands of others quite exhilarating. Almost a community experience.”

Most candidates’ tales about the exam are very different. Marzia, who tried it for the first time in the same session, says she still hasn’t understood why she failed: even after reviewing the tests, there was no trace of errors. “And on top of that, I received the news of my failure during the pandemic, when there was still no information on the following sessions,” she says.

The infamous bar exam, although transformed by the Covid period, has not resolved many of its historical issues: the main one being that it is a skill test tailored on the figure of a generalist, courtroom lawyer, who works freelance; which is today overtaken in practice by that of increasingly specialized professionals, who work in medium-large organizations, and have consultancy as their core business. For this reason, many young people believe it to be a kind of “meat grinder” whose only goal is to reduce the number of professionals entering the market each year: a sentiment corroborated by frequent news of irregularities or disorganization in the conduct of the exams.

“For my area of specialization, the exam is use-



## Beautiful Buildings

less. Many of my bosses are qualified to practice in other countries and not in Italy, or they are not lawyers at all,” explains Vittoria, a trainee in the international arbitration team of a large Italian firm. Clelia, also a trainee in a small boutique studio in Milan, did not find the exam relevant to her path: “Since I’m not a litigator, I rarely had to deal with such assignments. I know learning new things is never a bad thing, and at least the range of subjects has been narrowed down compared to the pre-Covid years; but it remains an exam which is not designed for the work I do.”

Both Vittoria and Clelia are not lawyers yet. They are both awaiting the results of the written exam, which they took in the December 2023 session: Vittoria is on her second attempt, Clelia’s on her first. They are both 27 years old and have been living in Milan since university. Both are passionate about the gym and fitness: Vittoria sets her alarm early every morning and exercises at home; Clelia always tries to go to the gym, even when she leaves work very late. Despite living not too far from each other, within a ten-minute walk from Piazzale Loreto, they do not know each other.

Vittoria is originally from Rome. She leads me to her home on one of the bikes that her law firm let its lawyers share. “My current boss no-

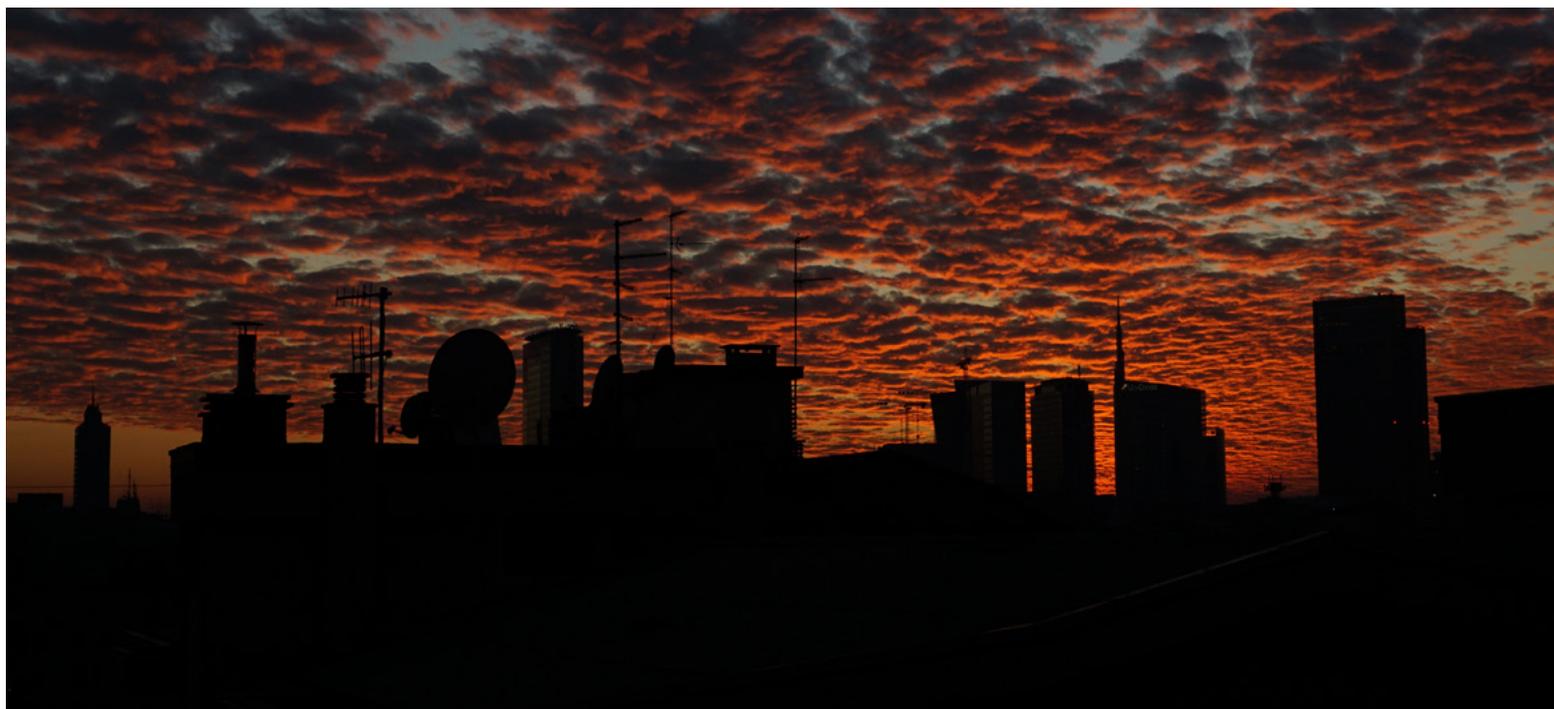
ticed me in an arbitration moot I participated in while I was studying,” she tells me. Almost four years have passed since then: “I like the job, I get along with my superiors, so at the moment I’m fine. I’m just waiting to pass the exam to maybe have the opportunity to gain some experience abroad, which I would really like.” She currently lives alone in a rather large studio apartment, where the living-study area is separated from the bedroom by a semi-transparent movable wall. I find out that she has only been living there for a few weeks: “A colleague moved out and left it to me: a stroke of luck. Also because the rent is less expensive than I was used to.” She tells me that it amounts to about a quarter of her monthly salary.

One of the pros of working in a large firm is the remuneration, which is generally higher even for trainees. All this while the average Italian lawyer exceeds €20,000 in annual income only after the age of 35, and trainees often do not even get reimbursement of their expenses.

“I believe our path involves a longer stagnation phase compared to other professions,” Clelia affirms. Although she works in a studio, she is currently seconded to a client company’s headquarters, where she deals with corporate law: contracts, compliance, m&a. She comes from a small town in the province of Avellino and lives in a slightly worn but very spacious penthouse,

which she shares with three other girls. A very large living room with two sofas, a table, and a TV serves as a common area; and in turn opens onto an equally large terrace, with a table covered by an awning and several plants; you can also see some tomatoes not yet ripe. Cooking is one of her passions, she tells me.

For Clelia, the impact with the profession was not easy: “I was thrown into activities that were completely new to me. It was difficult, and I would have liked a more present guide, at least at the beginning. But I rolled up my sleeves, and now I can say it was a super-formative experience.” In general, she believes that the “role of the dominus who teaches you the job has been lost a bit. The trainee is seen from the start as a resource.” But, on the other hand, “the firm’s environment is very familiar and open to discussion, without limits or reverential fears.” And now she’s thriving in the company where she’s seconded: “External consultants are usually treated with detachment, but I’m satisfied with how well I’ve integrated. And I appreciate the better work-life balance of the corporate environment.” She says that in the future, she would like to become an in-house counsel: “I want to have a family at one point. And although the top company managers work just as much as a law firm’s partner, they have more protections on the workplace.”



# Mario Cucinella

The architect and designer explains that sustainability, when it comes to workspaces, isn't just about principles and technical standards but above all about quality of life and humanization of work: "The office of the future is the new place where exchanges take place"

by Eleonora Fraschini

Architect and designer, Mario Cucinella has always placed environmental sustainability of buildings at the centre of his research. Born in 1960 in Palermo, he graduated in Genoa with Giancarlo De Carlo and later worked with Renzo Piano in his Building Workshop. He founded the Mario Cucinella Architects (MCA - Mario Cucinella Architects) studio in 1992 in Paris and later in 1999 in Bologna. MCA gathers a team of about 100 professionals with multiple skills in architecture, engineering, urban and territorial planning, industrial design. The projects realized embrace a wide range of buildings: schools, functional centres, hospitals and exhibition spaces, scattered all over the world, from Europe to China, from Africa to the Middle East to South America. The common thread is the attempt to reconcile construction with the surrounding environment, human needs with the impact on the territory. This integration is also visible in projects related to offices: in Milan, the headquarters of Unipol Group, Coima directional headquarters, and the one of the company 3M, the GreenHouse-Deloitte space, and the headquarters in Brazil of Nice are some examples that we surely know. No one better than him could therefore tell us about the past, present, and future of the workspace.

## How has the relationship between space and work changed over time?

This relationship has long been conditioned by the idea of efficiency. In offices, the tendency was to optimize the costs of built surfaces, so a certain space was assigned to each employee. A kind of high density was built, but this space optimization did not take into account the quality of life of the people. I believe that Covid has made it clear that the issue of work does not concern only the exploitation of a surface, but also the way in which people work. In fact, the idea that working is not very different from being at home has slowly been built, relaxation spaces are



also necessary.

## What impact has the introduction of smart working had in recent years?

After Covid, obviously all this has transformed into a fairly radical change in the space-work relationship. The evolution also entailed a change in the organization of architecture, spaces, offices. In the end, as sociologist Domenico De Masi said, we discovered that if so many people didn't want to return to the workplace, it was because they weren't happy enough in the office. At this moment, as often happens in our country, it seems that remote and in-person work must necessarily be in opposition. I believe that there is a space for mediation because the workspace is also the space of the community of people who meet, it does not have only a negative connotation.

## So in Italy have we found a compromise between these two modalities or are we still looking for it?

I think we are still in an adjustment phase, but I see that many banks are already making part of the contracts only remotely. It is clear that there is no perfect office layout, you have to adapt the work mode to the type of reality. There are companies where everything can be done

**Esg principles are guidelines that are then adapted to local realities: sustainability is a declination rather than a definition**



remotely, others that need to have people in their office because they do creative or exchange work, and still others that need to find a formula based on their characteristics. This sector has an extra opportunity than before, and therefore I think it's time to make a mature reflection on the relationship between life and work. From the point of view of urban reorganization, the idea of the headquarters, of the central building where everyone gathers to work, is also being overcome. Instead, proximity centres are spreading, which are closer to the world of everyday life.

**In space organization, are more areas for interaction planned than in the past, which are not simply meeting rooms?**

Yes, it depends on the type of organization. I see that we have moved away from the idea of the office as a "battery farm", of a system too rational because we have understood that many exchange activities also take place in informal places. So the perfectionist model of space planning of the 1990s did not actually lead to greater happiness in the workplace, and now more importance is given to cafes, lounges, open terraces for discussing, and the presence of places for intermediate interactions. In short, all this everyday world has entered the mechanism of work and has certainly created more attractive conditions. Many have understood this, and I think they have overcome the idea that the office is a productive zone, like an assembly line. Therefore, the goal is no longer efficiency for its own sake but the result, which can be achieved both sitting on the couch and in your office in front of the PC. The parameters have changed, and I believe this has made the world of work more humanized.

**What are the most important physical characteristics in the design of workspaces?**

Light, air quality, and temperature are the most felt physiological and psychological components by workers. The idea is that the workspace should not have a perfect temperature and humidity, but the air should be healthy. Regarding lighting, arti-





## If we want to improve a city's traffic conditions, we must accept that the world of work can change

ficial lighting is certainly a great invention, but it is proven that the monotony of light reduces stimuli. Therefore, the relationship with natural light inside an office has a psychological reflection on a person's daily life. Changing these two parameters qualitatively has also changed the perception of work that takes place in a healthy and pleasant place. At home, we don't always keep the lights on and the windows closed, so it's not clear why the office should be like that.

### **Moving on to the topic of sustainability, which is the guiding thread of your research, how can esg values be translated today into the realization of workspaces?**

ESG principles are guidelines that are then adapted to local realities because sustainability is a declination rather than a definition. The application of some gender equality norms, for example, will be very different between Europe, where there are acquired rights, and countries where some rights are still denied to women. If sustainability were understood as a definition, the risk would be that of not being able to adapt it to any place.

### **What are the most important characteristics considered?**

The most important characteristics, in my opinion, concern the type of organization, namely attention to gender issues, environmental quality, and stimulation of personal growth. ESG values actually outline a hypothetical society where things are a bit more balanced. So in a building, the main themes revolve around the possibility of leading a better life. There are also certainly more technical issues, ranging from waste management to energy saving. Technology allows us today to build buildings that are very attentive to consumption, air, and all those elements that characterize the quality of life. But an important part of ESG concerns precisely the person, the humanization of work, inclusiveness, and accessibility.

### **Is it important to integrate the building and the workspace into the environmental context in which they are built?**

Certainly. For example, one of the implications of smart working that I think has not been fully understood is traffic. If people do not all move at the same time to go to work, our cities can breathe a little more. The only way to reduce this type of pollution is to change the "home-work, work-home" mechanism born in the 19th century. So smart working in this perspective represents a great opportunity. If a city's pollution is reduced, instead of having sealed buildings because there is smog outside, the windows can be opened. And this changes everything because, on the one hand, the perception of air and natural temperatures makes the environment more domestic, and on the other hand, with reduced use of air conditioning, energy consumption would also decrease. Sometimes there is a lack of a complex vision of the environmental issue, but the city is an ecosystem,

and ecosystems work in this way, any choice has a consequence. If we want to improve a city's traffic conditions, we must accept that the world of work can change.

**Is this the perspective in which the expression creative empathy should be understood?**

I used this expression to define the concept of sustainability because it is a very vague concept and risks becoming an overused word. Empathy is an attitude towards someone or a place, to be empathetic one must enter into a sort of relationship with the other. Creativity, alone, risks being an exercise in extravagance. Instead, if empathy guides it, if it helps to control this "wild horse," the result is different. These two words are very important and have a strong symbiosis because creativity helps you understand; empathy helps you make a meaningful gesture. This, for me, is sustainability, it is something local, which has to do with a specific place and a particular condition in which creativity responds to a specific question. Otherwise, if we generalize everything, in the end, it is no longer understood what the formula of sustainability is. It is not just a problem of kilowatts and efficiency; it is a problem of adaptation and response to the needs of a place also from a social point of view.

**In recent years, the concept of inclusivity is being considered more and more. Are there aspects that may be interesting to note as a paradigm shift from the past?**

Yes, the theme of universal sensitivity seems to me to be quite mature. I believe that there is much more attention to not creating discriminatory working conditions from the point of view of people's difficulties. A bit like in school, where for people who do not have the same abilities, it is considered a theme of inclusion. I see much more responsibility than there was before. It is an operation that is always part of that framework in which work is important, but the way work is done is also important. It is





**Creativity helps you understand. empathy helps you make a meaningful gesture**

not only a question of working hours. Thanks to the many battles that have been fought on these issues, the world of work is now much more balanced.

**Marc Augé in *Non-places*, described the existence of transit spaces where social relationships cannot be established. At a time when workplaces are depopulating due to smart working, or taking on more impersonal forms (for example, there are offices where desks are reserved and occupied by different people), do they risk becoming non-places?**

The office is no longer that system of batteries, of square meters divided by the number of desks. I believe that the office of tomorrow will be the place of exchange rather than desk work. In fact, what we suffered most from remote work was the inability to see and communicate with others. So it is likely that in the future there will be a more technical part of work that will take place from home, and offices instead will increasingly be places of exchange, where people meet to discuss. So rather than a non-place, I believe the office will become a new place.

# Tommaso Ghidini

The head of the Mechanical Engineering Department at the European Space Agency discusses the future of humanity and professions on the Moon. "Lawyers and bankers will don polyethylene suits containing water and hydrogen against radiation." The future of work lies in Space. And it's all set.

by Michela Cannovale

Transformations experienced so far, both inside and outside offices, have one merit above all: they offer us the certainty that countless more changes are still possible. Certainly, predicting the form and direction these changes will take isn't easy, but the world of science has tried: it has extended the spatial limits within which the contemporary worker operates to consider the new frontiers in which they will operate in the future. Frontiers no longer terrestrial, but cosmic.

Indeed, the technologies currently revolutionising the job market are the same ones that will soon allow us not only to travel in Space but to live in it. To settle permanently on the Moon first, and then on Mars. Tommaso Ghidini, head of the Mechanical Engineering Department at the European Space Agency (ESA) and author of the book *Homo Caelestis*, is convinced that everything is already prepared. Astronaut explorations have already revealed that our satellite is rich in mineral resources, precious metals, titanium, platinum, and helium for nuclear fusion and electricity production. It's rich in water, and water means life. And, for these reasons, it represents the ideal testing ground to prepare for the far more complex journey to Mars. In this new space within Space, legal and financial professionals will play a fundamental role, albeit no longer dressed in suits and ties as we are accustomed to seeing them.

## Why should we want to move to another planet?

There would be many good reasons. In short, because it's possible. But also because humans are explorers. Because they thirst for truth. Because for too long they have wondered if there is another form of life.



## Do you believe there is?

I answer with a question: how presumptuous is it to think that we are the only ones inhabiting the vastness of the Universe? That we are the only form of life, as well as the only form of existing soul?

## How much space is there in Space?

First of all, it must be said that the Space we can see is only 5% of what exists in the Universe. That alone is staggering: all the reality we see is tiny, we are tiny! As for the dimension, consider that if we could travel at the speed of light, it would take two hundred thousand years to exit our galaxy and two and a half million years to reach Andromeda, the galaxy immediately after ours. It's difficult to truly talk about measurements...

## Let's just consider Mars then. How much inhabitable space is there, and

### what are the characteristics of the Red Planet?

The diameter size of Mars is just over half that of Earth. The planet lacks a magnetic field, air is not breathable, and radiation is strong. Plus, the sun arrives very weakly. It is, in essence, a vast icy desert with strong sandstorms, an out-of-control greenhouse effect, and an atmosphere consisting mainly of carbon dioxide. That said, in 2015, the European satellite Mars Express revealed to the entire world the presence of liquid, salty water in the Martian subsurface: a lake at a depth of 1,5 kilometres with mineral salts, hence nutrients for many forms of life.

### And the Moon?

The Moon is also a hostile environment: there are strong radiations, reduced gravity, and a total absence of Nature. Nonetheless, unlike Mars, the Moon is much closer to Earth (only twenty hours of travel compared to the two and a half years it takes to reach the Red Planet!) and serves as a perfect testing ground for humans.

**If all goes according to plan, the Lunar Gateway will be ready for moon landing by 2028. It will be our gateway to the Universe, through which ships on their way to Mars will also pass, and we can feasibly begin to settle from 2040 onwards**

**A perfect testing ground for what?**

For establishing a permanent settlement, of course!

**What shape will this settlement take?**

Initially, it will be a sort of “campsite”, but we will progressively become more stable with infrastructures, rovers, habitation modules, tools, and food. Elon Musk and NASA have estimated that a Martian settlement will be completely independent from Earth when it reaches a population of one million inhabitants.

**How soon could all this happen?**

If all goes according to plan, the Lunar Gateway – the new space station orbiting around the Moon – will be ready for moon landing by 2028. It will be our gateway to the Universe, a sort of toll booth from which the construction of the first base for residence on the Moon will begin, and through which ships on their way to Mars will pass. And we can feasibly land on Mars and begin to settle from 2040 onwards.

**But to live on another planet, we will still need a house to sleep in, an office to work in... How will we build them?**

Well, let’s start from the basics: we need a completely new engineering approach, based on the use of in-situ resources and systematic recycling because it’s impossible (logistically and economically) to think we can provide everything needed once we reach our destination. Buildings will be constructed using regolith (the Martian and Lunar sand): 3D printers (brought from Earth) will layer by layer print the regolith structure, presumably resembling igloos, which will serve as the external walls of housing and offices. Recycling, on the other hand, will be crucial for the construction of tools and equipment, as well as for water and energy.

**What will we recycle?**

The most immediate sources of plastic and metal will be the modules used for landing on the new planet, which will become “planetary gar-



## MOON

- Diameter: 3,474 km
- Expected year of landing: 2028
- First exploratory mission: 1969 (by astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin)
- Average temperature: -23° C
- Gravity: 1.62 m/s<sup>2</sup> (16.5% of Earth's gravity)



## MARS

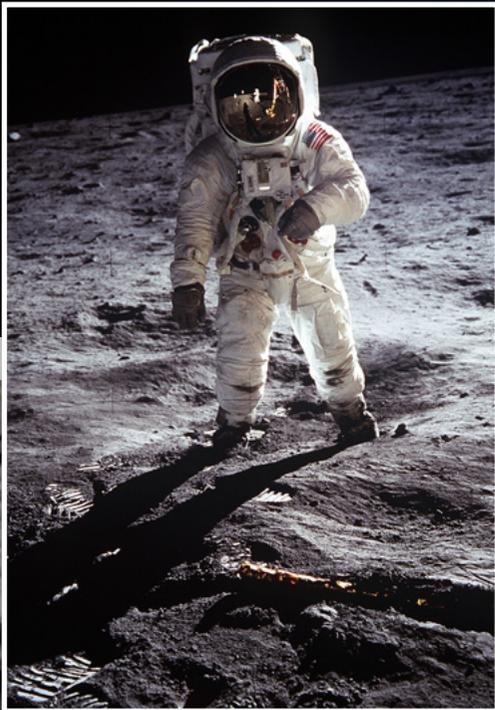
- Diameter: 6,779 km
- Expected year of landing: 2040
- First exploratory mission: 1969 (by Mariner 4)
- Average temperature: -63° C
- Gravity: 3.71 m/s<sup>2</sup> (38% of Earth's gravity)



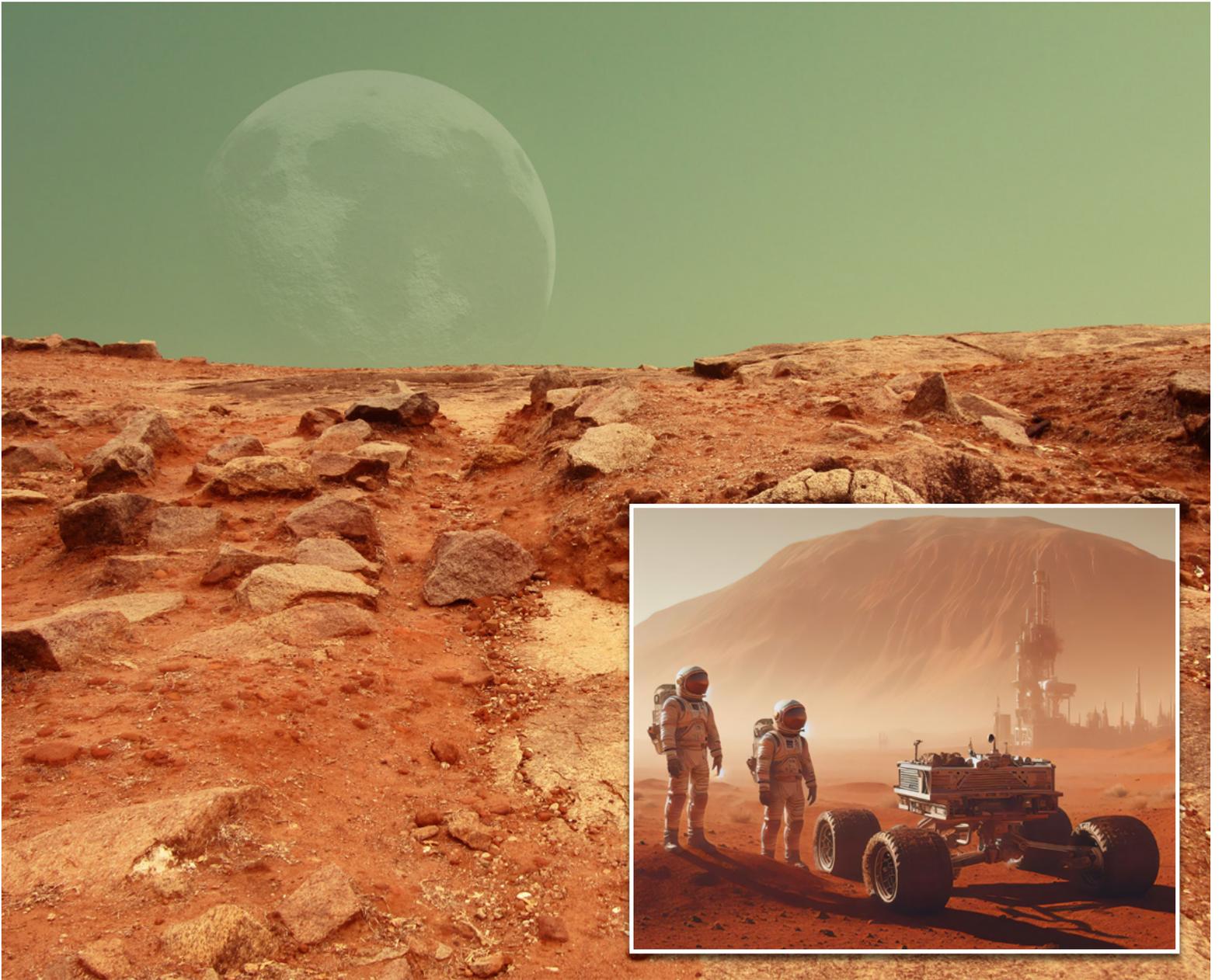
## EARTH

- Diameter size: 12,742 km
- Average temperature: 14° C
- Gravity: 9.8 m/s<sup>2</sup>

Beautiful Buildings



Beautiful Buildings



## **Artificial intelligence will be crucial for providing psychological support: for the first residents of Space, we are already working on the development of holograms capable of reproducing the voice and image of relatives and friends left on Earth, as well as recreating Nature where it does not exist**

bage” at the end of the journey. But that won’t be enough: even urine and sweat will be reused and transformed into drinking water, while solid waste will be used to produce methane.

### **How do we know this will be enough to rebuild our lives?**

Just because we’ve already done it. We’ve created a faithful reproduction of the Lunar base on the Zermatt glacier, which is the most representative environment of a challenging context such as the Lunar or Martian one, where eleven universities are developing and testing many of the key technologies for settlement on the Moon and Mars.

### **Okay, we’ve built a house. We’ve also built an office. At this point, how will we move from one place to another?**

Since there’s no atmosphere, we’ll have to move while always breathing in a kind of spacesuit. Actual movement will occur in two ways: within exoskeletons and body supports capable of enhancing physical abilities in a zero-gravity environment, or through off-road vehicles similar to the rovers used by the first astronauts who explored the lunar surface in 1971.

### **There will be roads, then!**

Yes, but rudimentary ones. We are also considering the possibility of utilizing natural underground tunnels on the Moon, which will be explored by robots to ascertain their navigability.

### **Why did you mention exoskeletons? What effects will our bodies undergo on a planet different from Earth?**

Physically, the impact of such a move will be devastating. Strong Lunar and Martian radiations will increase the risk of neoplastic diseases and have side effects on the central nervous system, sight, blood. Reduced or absent gravity will lead to loss of bone and muscle mass and reduce cardiovascular activity and wound healing capacity. Not to mention the psychological effects related to long-term isolation in a hostile environment devoid of Nature...

### **Explain that further...**

The risk of psychological damage is certainly the most insidious. We’ll find ourselves far from Mother Earth, and therefore from our loved ones, in a new, adverse environment. Add to that the deterioration of physical performance, which will cause a significant morale decline. However, artificial intelligence will be crucial for creating psychological support: for the first Space residents, we’re already working on developing holograms capable of reproducing the voice and image of relatives and friends left on Earth, as well as recreating Nature where – I insist on this! – it does not exist.

### **And how will we solve physical problems?**

First and foremost, by developing drugs to treat osteoporosis in Space, as we already do for astronauts who spend months inside our spacecraft. Muscle loss can be addressed through physical exercise. As for radiation, we’ve designed space suits with water pouches to protect organs that produce blood, which are more sensitive to nuclear damage.

### **Are you saying that lawyers and bankers won’t be able to dress elegantly for their appointments anymore?**

Let’s say they won’t dress in suits and ties as we’re used to seeing them. They will still have a kind of outfit, more likely a polyethylene suit, containing water and hydrogen against radiation. These same suits will integrate technologies for health and stress monitoring and will be extremely customisable, changing shape and colour to respond to environmental needs.

### **What else will characterise law and finance in Space?**

They’ll be the same disciplines as today, but at the tenth, because they’ll have the power of artificial intelligence for constant support in all standard affairs. So, lawyers and bankers can focus on the true essence of their work.

### **And their offices?**

Envisioning a long-term perspective and playing a bit with the vision, most likely all offices will be situated within buildings powered by nuclear power (when we eventually achieve nuclear fusion, the helium-3, abundant on the Moon, could be utilized as propellant). The connectivity capacity among workers will undoubtedly be remarkable, and information will be stored in a multiplanetary database.

### **Multiplanetary?**

Yes, because we’ll deal with legal and financial disciplines specific to each planet, but all interconnected; therefore, the ability to learn will be extreme.

### **Interesting. What more?**

There will be a predominant presence of artificial intelligence and virtual reality that will reproduce familiar, terrestrial scenes, with highly interactive graphics and images.

### **Not bad...**

It seems the least we can do. Since the external environment will not be

**We'll need to create an entire regulatory system from scratch. There will be criminals, and thus courts, as well as data – financial data included – to manage and protect. At some point, we'll also have the first child born on the Moon or Mars, so we'll need not only lawyers and finance professionals, but also doctors and teachers**

welcoming on either the Moon or Mars due to the absence of Nature (at least until both planets can be terraformed!), the internal environment must be comfortable.

**And how about lunch breaks? What will we eat?**

Food produced over there. On one hand, we'll have vegetable crops grown entirely in Space, powered by artificial light and hydroponic and aeroponic systems; on the other hand, we'll have lab-grown meat. We've already tried: we've 3D-printed a steak in our Lunar station!

**Using what?**

Animal stem cells. In this regard, we'll also make extensive use of human stem cells. Not for lunch, of course, but medically, to repair tissues and bones if necessary. And we've already done that too: a consortium led by ESA has 3D-printed the first human skin patch and piece of bone for space applications. On the other hand, we must get used to the idea that the umbilical cord with the Earth will be completely cut and that regenerative medicine will become necessary

**What do you think the first lawyers and bankers on the Moon will work on?**

We'll need to create an entire regulatory system from scratch, so there will be work. Let's project ourselves, a bit for fun and a bit seriously, and imagine a settlement composed of at least one million people: it's conceivable that there will be criminals, and therefore courts. At the same time, there will be data – including financial data – to manage and protect. And then, do you expect no relationships to form in a settlement? At some point, we will have the first child born on the Moon or on Mars, and therefore we will need not only lawyers and finance professionals but also doctors and teachers.

**The first child born on Mars... It's a seductive thought, but I can't quite imagine it. What will they look like?**

Completely different from us, I believe. Due to the lack of gravity, especially if born on Mars, they might have a very fragile bone, muscle, and cardiovascular structure. They will be an extremely slender figure, likely developed in height, perhaps even folded in on themselves.

**It's unlikely they'll resemble their parents then...**

That's the point. Most likely, we'll experience a phase of history in which the homo sapiens, parent, will be accompanied by the homo martianus, child. A child who won't even be able to live on Earth because gravity would crush them. In short, we'll reach a point where we'll coexist with another form of ourselves, just as neanderthals briefly coexisted with sapiens. Which brings us to another reflection...

**Tell me about it.**

On Earth, we are constantly confronted with discrimination based on skin colour, religion, political or sexual orientation. Discrimination that breeds hostility, conflicts, discord, and wars, which is tragic and aberrant. Here, instead, we will witness the wonder of life that differs to offer us new hopes and explore new worlds, in peace. Outside of Earth, we will live a moment where we ourselves will be the aliens. This will actually happen even before the birth of the first homo martianus, as soon as we cross the thin border of our atmosphere and set foot in the infinite universe of possibilities. What will we do at that point? Will we be ready to go beyond?



# Torre Velasca

The Evolution of a symbol

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by Eleonora Fraschini

It's 1951: under the leadership of Alcide De Gasperi, Italy faces the post-war era and reconstruction. In Milan, the construction site of the Torre Velasca opens, which will be completed in 292 days in 1958, a building that will represent the characteristics of the post-war economic and cultural rebirth of the capital, balancing between local tradition and cosmopolitan ambitions.

About 70 years later, in October 2021, the conservative restoration and redevelopment works of the building began under the direction of Hines, which, during 2024, will return to the community a new area enriched with new spaces open to the public, such as business areas, restaurants, and wellness facilities. The intervention involved the actual purchase of the Tower for a price of 160 million euros and an investment for subsequent works of about 70 million euros.

## THE PROJECT

The tower takes its name from the homonymous square, named after the Spaniard Juan Fernández de Velasco, who led the Duchy of Milan in the seventeenth century.

During the war, the entire area was destroyed by bombings, and in 1949 the company Ricostruzione Comparti Edilizi obtained from the Municipality of Milan the license to build. The BBPER studio (acronym of the founders Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti, and Rogers) was entrusted with the project, and initially, they thought of building a steel and glass skyscraper. However, the idea was abandoned due to the costs of the material, and they opted for a reinforced concrete solution with a stone cladding. Even the hypothesis of a simplified parallelepiped changes into the "mushroom" shape, which has a functional justification: the stem houses



the offices and the upper part the apartments, which require greater depth. In the architects' intent, the structure must adapt to ancient and medieval Milan, and in particular to the Torre del Filarete of the Castello Sforzesco. The building represents one of the few Italian examples of post-rationalist brutalist architecture.

### THE SKYSCRAPER WITH BRACES

The tower, due to its unique characteristics, has always elicited divergent opinions. Shortly after its inauguration, the British critic Reyner Banham, in the *Architectural Review*, accuses Italy of deliberately withdrawing from the Modern Movement. Rogers responds with an article published in *Casabella*, the magazine he led. He explains that the idea of "escaping from conformity" is at the basis of his research, and that the building wants to represent the atmosphere of Milan, "ineffable yet perceptible". The architect was not mistaken: the Torre Velasca soon became an iconic element of the city and indeed appears in several films of those years. We see it in the movie *Il vedovo* by Dino Risi in 1959, with Alberto Sordi and Franca Valeri; in *Milano calibro 9* by Fernando Di Leo, a 1972 crime film with Barbara Bouchet, and in *Durante l'estate*, a 1971 drama film by Ermanno Olmi. It is also found in 1992, a series from 2015 about Tangentopoli. The reference to the tower is also present in the music world: in 2022, the *Milanosport*, a post-punk band born in the Lombard capital, chose to represent the building on the cover of the album *Ain't big enough*.

Its unique profile has earned it several nicknames; it is often called "skyscraper with suspenders" by Milanese people, while Luciano Bianciardi, in the novel *La vita agra* in 1962, defines it as a "glass and concrete tower". More recently, Beppe Severgnini, in his article *If Torre Velasca were in Manhattan*, describes the building as an original and bizarre "head of cement with improbable braces, the fruit of that optimistic and chaotic Italy of the economic miracle".



#### IDENTIKIT DELLA TORRE VELASCA

ARCHITECTS

**ORIGINAL PROJECT:**

**BBPR**

**RESTORATION PROJECT:**

**ASTI ARCHITETTI**

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

**1950-1958**

RESTORATION

**2021-2024**

HEIGHT

**106 METERS**

OFFICE SPACE

**11MILA SQM**

RETAIL SPACE

**3700 SQM**

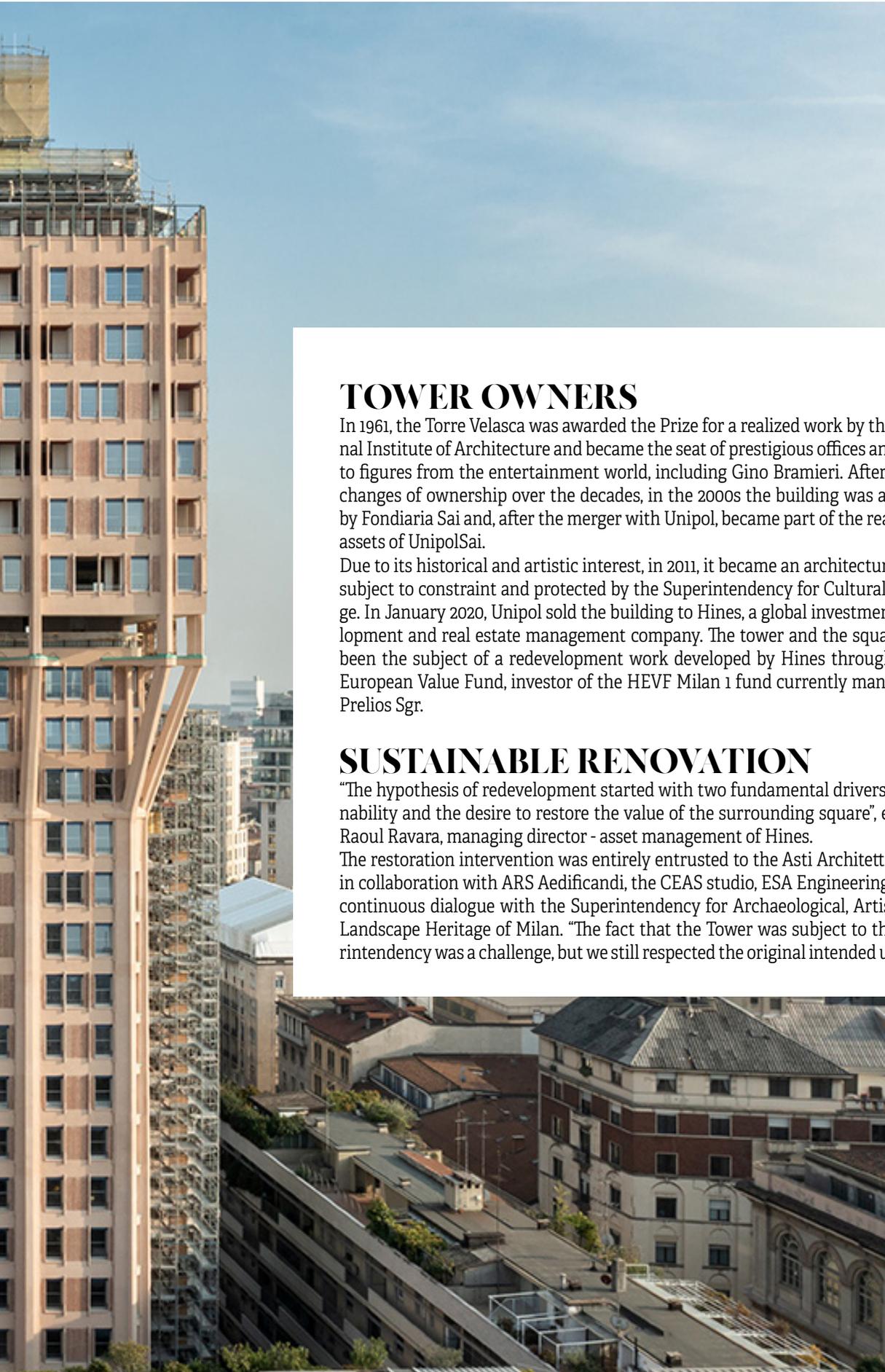
APARTMENT SPACES

**8000 SQM**

TIMELINE OF THE RENOVATION

- 2020** **16 January**  
Finalised the preliminary for the acquisition of Torre Velasca in Milan
- 2021** **6 October**  
Completed the covering of the Tower with the new architectural sheets
- 2022** **25 July**  
Torre Velasca shows new face with upgraded facades
- 2023** **30 January**  
First tenant revealed: SUSHI-SAMBA will debut in Italy
- 23 March**  
Agreement with Sircle Collection for flat management concluded
- 2 February**  
Approval received for the new Piazza Velasca project
- 27 June**  
Jakala is the first tenant of the office space
- 14 December**  
Excellera Advisory Group second tenant of office space
- 2024** **April**  
Start of delivery of spaces to tenants
- 2024** **May**  
End of Hines construction site
- 2024** **September**  
End of Piazza Velasca works





## TOWER OWNERS

In 1961, the Torre Velasca was awarded the Prize for a realized work by the National Institute of Architecture and became the seat of prestigious offices and home to figures from the entertainment world, including Gino Bramieri. After several changes of ownership over the decades, in the 2000s the building was acquired by Fondiaria Sai and, after the merger with Unipol, became part of the real estate assets of UnipolSai.

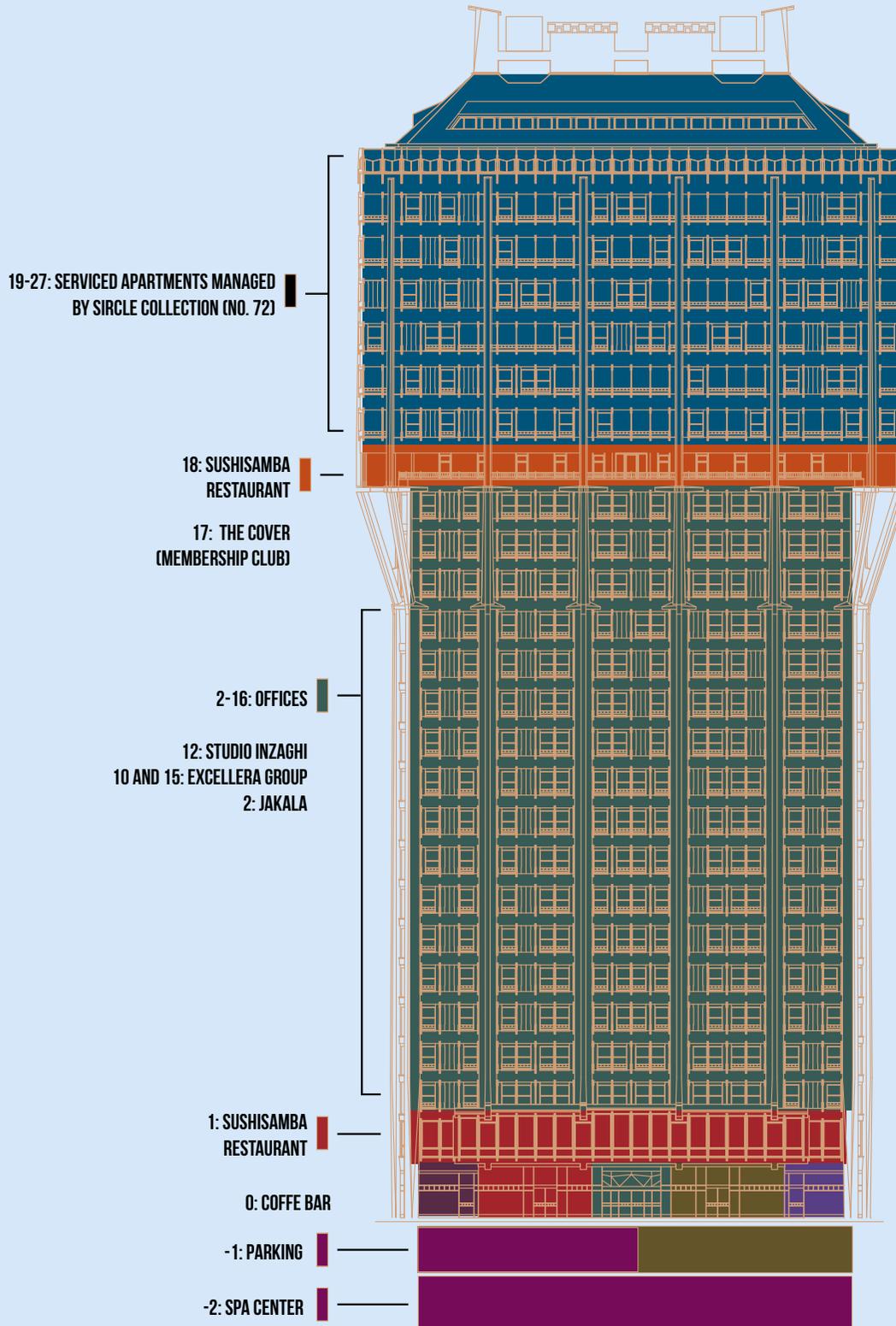
Due to its historical and artistic interest, in 2011, it became an architectural asset subject to constraint and protected by the Superintendency for Cultural Heritage. In January 2020, Unipol sold the building to Hines, a global investment, development and real estate management company. The tower and the square have been the subject of a redevelopment work developed by Hines through Hines European Value Fund, investor of the HEVF Milan 1 fund currently managed by Prelios Sgr.

## SUSTAINABLE RENOVATION

“The hypothesis of redevelopment started with two fundamental drivers: sustainability and the desire to restore the value of the surrounding square”, explains Raoul Ravara, managing director - asset management of Hines.

The restoration intervention was entirely entrusted to the Asti Architetti studio, in collaboration with ARS Aedificandi, the CEAS studio, ESA Engineering, and in continuous dialogue with the Superintendency for Archaeological, Artistic and Landscape Heritage of Milan. “The fact that the Tower was subject to the Superintendency was a challenge, but we still respected the original intended uses and

THE NEW TENANTS OF TORRE VELASCA



## Beautiful Buildings

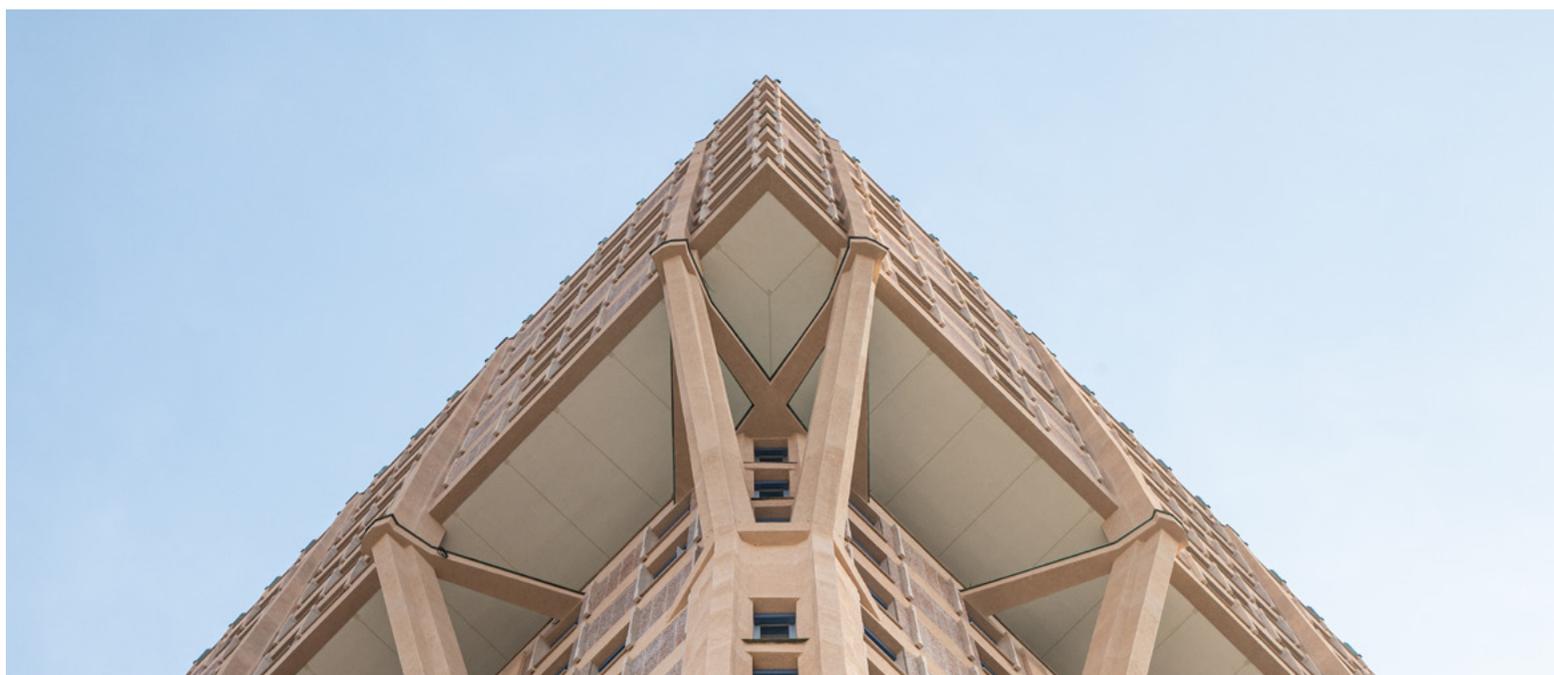
the highest esg criteria. We are awaiting international Leed Gold certification, and thanks to the careful design of the technological infrastructure, the office section has already obtained Wiredscore Silver certification, which recognizes high levels of digital connection and smart technology”.

“In July 2022, we unveiled the renovated facades, which required particularly careful work with the involvement of an average of 100 workers per day”, continues Ravara. To restore the authentic changing color according to the light at different times of the day, Mapei’s Research office created the Velasca Binding plaster and a mix of aggregates of various grain sizes and colours specifically.

Regarding the interiors, the language of the 1950s has been recovered with a conservative restoration effort, using both the same techniques and original materials: terrazzo, artisanal ceramic materials in various formats and colours, woods, synthetic flooring. In addition, some elements have been recovered or faithfully reproduced, in line with the indications of the Superintendency, such as the Velasca handles produced by Olivari.

### **PIAZZA VELASCA**

“The second driver of our project is based on the idea of reconnecting the Tower to the city, so the redevelopment should be reflected both on the building and on the homonymous square. - continues Ravara - It was indeed quite anomalous that such a central square in Milan lacked an identity and was mainly used as a parking lot. In a few months, the square will become pedestrian with a paving of large trachyte slabs and red porphyry cubes, as an ideal extension of the ribbed pillars of the tower, and will be enriched with green areas, new aggregation spaces, and urban furniture. With the new Velasca square, the articulated project aimed at bringing light back to a symbol of Milan is completed and transforming it into a place of meeting and social aggregation”.



# Rosanna Ghetti

She stands as the first and only lady at the helm of a gentlemen's club: the esteemed Bononia. With her, we step into the exclusive chambers of Palazzo Bolognetti to delve into one of those historical "anomalies" from which, as often happens, revolutions take flight

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by Michela Cannovale

"Dear Madam, once you are in Via Castiglione, at number 1 you will find the doorbell for Circolo Bononia: ringing it will open the gate for you. Proceed straight. At the end to the left, you will find the glass door leading to the grand staircase. As you ascend, at the top, the butler will be there to welcome you and introduce you to the club, where you will meet our president, Dr. Rosanna Ghetti. Best regards, the Secretariat."

The email prepares my arrival at Circolo Bononia, a club for gentlemen founded in Bologna in 1898, where the political, legal, and financial elite keeps meeting today to discuss business, art, and literature, nurturing their professional and friendly network.

I ring the bell, as instructed. And, as instructed, the gate of Palazzo Bolognetti, the headquarters of the club and originally owned by the Bolognetti counts, opens for me. It was the family of jurists and professors who moved to Bologna in 1200 and acquired senatorial dignity in 1556. Perfectly shaded by the two towers, the Renaissance architecture of the building is adorned with sculptures and friezes in sandstone that stand out through the facades, the vestibule, the loggia, and the courtyard. At the entrance, two cherubs support an inscription reminding onlookers of the palace's origins: CAMILLVS BOLOGNETTVS A FVNDAMENTIS / F (built) CVRAVIT / ANNO MDLI. Adorning the walls, a garland of flowers and fruits, where angelic sculptures and Herculean cycles alternate with hunting scenes and monstrous heads, accompanies the ascent along the staircase. Hercules is the most recurrent image even in the interior spaces, all covered by a wooden ceiling carved in gold of a "sumptuous" appearance, as emphasized by the butler who receives me with a formality that one is hardly accustomed to. The focal point of the club is the dining hall, sprinkled with perfectly set tables. On the sides, leather walls are



interrupted by numerous fireplaces that soar long towards the upper floor.

As often happens in exclusive clubs, many of the protagonists of Italian and non-Italian high society have passed through these halls: statesmen, ministers, cardinals, Nobel laureates, men of science, art, and culture. However, unlike other clubs, Bononia has something unique: since 1994, it has been open to female membership, making it the first and only, in the history of gentlemen's clubs, to have a lady as president.

Rosanna Ghetti is a university lecturer in archaeology and history of Greek and Roman art and a well-known cultural event organizer in the Bolognese environment. She greets me dressed to the nines. Well-groomed curls, a patent leather clutch under her arm. Fine calves protrude from her coat, ending in a pair

of high heels that, contrary to expectations, do not affect her brisk and confident stride.

When she was elected, in September 2020, immediately after the lockdown, *Il Resto del Carlino* said: "Circolo Bononia has reopened, and with a surprise." Indeed, it is quite surprising that a woman is at the helm of an institution that, already from its name – *gentlemen's club* –, is so rigorously male.

"The members - she tells me - asked me to run, relying on my professional affiliation with the world of culture and sociality, as well as on my personal history marked by networking. I had been a member for three years before being elected. Joining seemed like a natural choice: my father and husband were already members of a predominantly male club, and Bononia seemed like the perfect place for dinners and conversations beyond the living room at home."

This is how Bononia became an extraordinary exception in the rigid ecosystem of gentlemen's clubs, one of those anomalies of history that necessarily leads to a revolution, which in this case should first be lexical. After all, if there is one issue that feminist debate has focused on since ancient times, it is certainly the separation between the public and private spheres and the gender differentiation associated with it: public/private, political/non-political, inside/outside, visible/invisible. The man has the former, the woman the latter. Political and commercial relationships on one side, palace and family relationships on the other.

Just like Domino and La Caccia, the other two historic clubs in Bologna, Bononia also developed along the lines of the so-called "English-style" clubs, which became trendy in London as early as the 1700s. Born as spaces separate from the domestic context, dominated by wives and daughters, they allowed gentlemen to enjoy a place where they could consolidate friendships and professional relationships characterized by similar interests.

However, calling them "English-style," despite widespread habit, is only partly correct. "Actually – explains the president – the oldest club in the world is the Circolo degli Uniti, founded in Siena by twenty-one Sienese gentlemen on November

13, 1657, initially called Casin de' Nobili. It was the very first, established with the aim of gathering members of the nobility under one social roof." Strictly forbidden to those considered of bad character, to brawling players, and to 'blasphemers.' Provided these requirements were respected, the Casin de' Nobili was frequented by both gentlemen and ladies. The exclusion of women as members from clubs solidified during the 1700s in England. "In 1693 – she continues – the Veronese Francesco Bianco moved to London where he opened the famous White, a historic exclusive club initially conceived as a hot chocolate emporium to later become a gambling house. And that's precisely the point: the quest for an exclusively male space with pastimes reserved for gentlemen such as conversations on politics and business, reading, gambling, cigar smoking. For this reason, clubs like the White were so successful that they spread throughout London and from there to the great international metropolises during the 19th century, accessible only to men."

If England was the most iconic country to solidify the exclusion of women as members, it was also the first to open up to their entry into social circles, as did, for example, the National Liberal Club (NLC) in London in 1979. "Probably, the NLC board felt the need for a breath of fresh air and the necessity to widen the social pyramid to in-

clude aristocratic ladies, pioneering this choice, which Bononia pursued in 1994. However, this did not change the internal routine of the club, where daily activities remained the same as always: private conversations, more or less worldly events, grand dinners, and bridge games."

## THE PRESTIGE OF MEMBERSHIP

It's not hard to imagine that discussing business within these parlours after a card game has always been the norm. Clubs like Bononia have always been testing grounds, places of education and conversation among like-minded individuals, spaces for the consecration of social influence acquired outside, but also, it must be admitted, spaces in which to consolidate one's social ascent.

The correlation between club membership and professional success has been well documented in the American context. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the results of a survey sponsored by the American Jewish Committee as early as 1969 regarding the professional benefits derived from club membership: for 61.5% of respondents, "the club is a place where you get information directly or indirectly relevant to the company"; for 50.5% "it provides useful contacts for doing business"; for 87.2% "it offers a prestigious space



Beautiful Buildings





Beautiful Buildings



Beautiful Buildings



## Beautiful Buildings

to host guests and clients for lunches and informal meetings”; for 67.9% “membership in the club increases one’s status in the company and/or in the community”; for 64.2% “the club provides an environment for the development of personal friendships that can directly or indirectly help an individual get a promotion at work”.

Today, according to Michael Burns, associate director for science at Harvard University, the economic and political importance of clubs is not lost on the hundreds of companies, professional firms, and banks that sponsor membership for their executives and key collaborators worldwide.

I discuss this with President Ghetti, whose vision is less instrumental than that proposed by Burns: “In aristocratic Bologna, from its inception to the present day, our club has always represented a prestigious achievement for those who are influential and supportive in the community. But those who come here, the elite, must then serve as an example for the masses rather than confine themselves to an enclave. The same name, Bononia, was chosen by the founding members because it epitomized their intentions to preserve and perpetuate the ancient spirit of the city: a beacon of culture, of living well, of art, of haute cuisine. And these are still the foundations of the club. As our motto says, *virtute malitia superatur.*”

## MEMBERS AND THE ETIQUETTE

It’s no coincidence, given the premises, that the members of Bononia are prominent figures considered to be excellence in their respective fields. From the plaque of name tags displayed at the entrance of the club, I read names of industrialists, entrepreneurs, and managers known worldwide

such as Maurizio Marinella, Luca Cordero di Montezemolo, Stephan Winkelmann, Arrigo Sacchi, virologist Massimo Galli, sports team presidents like Joey Saputo, and executives like Claudio Fenucci, as well as institutions like the President of the Emilia-Romagna region Stefano Bonaccini and the Mayor of Bologna Matteo Lepore. And then the commander of the Carabinieri of the region, that of the Guardia di Finanza, that of the army, the superintendent of the municipal theater, the prefect, the police chief, and prominent journalists. Rosanna Ghetti doesn’t reveal too much: “I can’t disclose the names of the members, but prominent lawyers, bankers, entrepreneurs, and industrialists represent 90% of our members. Once admitted into the social body, all members can enjoy the club’s spaces completely free of charge: they organize meetings and board meetings, invite guests, set up reserved appointments, play chess or cards. Consumption at our restaurant is excluded from the annual fee, for which I strongly wanted Chef Massimiliano Poggi, emblem of the lo-

### WHAT ABOUT LONDON, SIR?

As mentioned, the Circolo Bononia is the first and only, in the history of exclusive clubs, to have a woman as president. Even in London, which served as the cradle for gentlemen’s clubs in the 19th century, so much so that the central neighborhood of St. James was at one point dubbed Clubland, it is difficult to accept such a reform. The same opening of the historic Pratt’s to female membership was seen as a scandal in 2023. Undoubtedly masculine since its foundation in 1857, the club decided to abandon its traditional rigor at the end of May with an email sent to all members and signed by the club’s owner, the Earl of Burlington William Cavendish, which explained that things would change “with immediate effect” given the “decision, considered necessary to revitalize the club, to change the traditional customs and welcome women as members.” Some of the members just wrinkled their noses. Others immediately tried to oppose the novelty. The news was reported in an article in the Telegraph, which for the occasion interviewed Seth Alexander Thévoz, author of *Behind Closed Doors: The Secret Life of London Private Members’ Clubs* and a member of the National Liberal Club. “Resistance is always there, wherever you go. In London – Thévoz explained – there are still about 40 clubs that like to define themselves as ‘for gentlemen’, but only about ten of them are really so (one, for example, is the White, which does not admit anyone who is not male). Whenever it is decided to open up to ladies, the tune is always the same: there’s some retired colonel who complains that ‘this is the end of civilization as we know it’, that ‘the other members vote with their feet’. In my opinion, these are mostly men who would like to continue feeling free to tell their ‘male’ jokes and fear they can no longer do so if, listening to them, there are also ‘female’ ears. But is that really the purpose of a club? Don’t you find it embarrassing, these days, to admit to belonging to a club of only gentlemen? Inviting colleagues, but not colleagues?”



cal cuisine and president of CheftoChefEmiliaRomagna, an association that brings together the most important chefs in the region.”

All members are required to adhere to the club's etiquette. Upon entry, one must adhere to a precise dress code: jacket and tie or tuxedo for gentlemen, cocktail or evening dress for ladies. The etiquette also governs the various steps to become members: 1) prospective candidates must be introduced to the presidency by two members; 2) if the presidency – which by statute must deem the candidate suitable – believes that all the ideals belonging to the club are present (“What do you mean?” “I mean, how shall I put it... a recognized moral and social ethic, let's say”), the request for admission is presented to the entire council, which, convened in private, decides on membership and appoints new members. The president smiles: “I know, it may seem odd in 2024. But you see, we still represent a particular world.”

## THE WISHLIST

Rosanna Ghetti is a woman tied to tradition as much as modernity. “I accept becoming president by promoting the ideals that I propose today, which I hope are shared by all of you,” she said on the day of her election. And so it was. The desiderata of her program were illustrated and realized one by one: first and foremost, the creation of a strong bond with the territory and its institutions (“The club is called Bononia, in Palazzo Bolognetti, in front of the two towers symbol of the capital, could we have done otherwise?”) through the organization of cultural events, benefits, and current events so that the club could be as anchored as possible to social life, as well as an example for the community.

“In these halls - she tells me, bidding me farewell - I strive daily to faithfully preserve tradition, updating it with elements linked to culture and

civic engagement. Bononia remains an institution, a place that belongs to the category of the spirit, a space that is truly existing but not necessarily physical, although it is, in fact, with its very masculine characteristics, now open to the female world as well. Sometimes, you know, these places go beyond, people decide to evolve. It's a place that in some ways resembles me, devoted to the past but enriched with content that allows us to move into the future.”

## GENTLEMEN'S CLUBS IN SPAIN AND SWITZERLAND

by Mercedes Galan

If we were to select two of the most prestigious exclusive clubs in Spain, we couldn't fail to mention the *Círculo Ecuestre* in Barcelona and the *Nuevo Club de Madrid*. These two places not only serve as social meeting spaces but also share a commitment to the promotion of culture, networking, and the preservation of traditions. Both have become crucial forums for the most influential professionals. The *Círculo Ecuestre*, founded on November 26, 1856, by horse riding enthusiasts, is one of Europe's most important private clubs. Its walls, in the heart of Barcelona, have been the refuge of illustrious cultural and social personalities for over a century and a half. Its board of directors, chaired by Joaquín Güell, director of Sacyr, still meets twice a month with the aim of strengthening ties between entrepreneurs and professionals in Catalonia and the Spanish capital. Speaking of the capital, here the exclusive club par excellence is certainly the *Nuevo Club de Madrid*. Reserved exclusively for male membership, it admits women only as guests of its members. The acceptance of new members is so elitist that it occurs by secret ballot.

If the relevance of the *Círculo Ecuestre* and the *Nuevo Club* demonstrates that the need for human interaction and the promotion of traditions are still fundamental elements in Spanish society, it is self-evident that the ability to adapt to the changing expectations of members will allow them to continue to play a key role within the country.

In Switzerland, on the other hand, private clubs, while maintaining their exclusivity, have shown themselves capable of reaching a broader class, building inclusive support networks for the exchange of contacts and ideas. One of the most famous clubs is the *Zurich International Women's Association (ZIWA)*, a dynamic center that brings together women from different backgrounds and focuses on creating friendships, organizing cultural and social events that celebrate diversity. Also noteworthy are the *Haus zum Ruden - Zunft zur Meisen*, which brings together professionals and academics; the *Gstaad Yacht Club*, for sailing enthusiasts despite Switzerland's lack of direct access to the sea; the *St. Moritz Tobogganing Club*, for winter sports, and the *Economic Club of Geneva*, for business leaders and prominent figures in the Swiss economic and political sectors.



# Josef K.'s courthouse and the labyrinth of the law

Some buildings make a novel. In Kafka's *Trial*, amidst low ceilings, labyrinthine corridors and rooms packed with grotesque characters, the judicial nightmare takes shape... While life tells us that it is not just fantasy

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by Nicola Di Molfetta



Numbers say a lot but they don't say everything. You know those statistics? The ones about the state of justice and its efficiency? It gets better. It gets worse. There are thermometers, barometers, indicators and they all eventually translate into figures. Compared to 337,740 court cases in arrears in the year 2019, only 271,137 remain in the first half of 2023. This, for example, is what we read in the Report on the Statistical Monitoring of PNRR Indicators in the First Half of 2023 published by the Italian Ministry of Justice at the end of last year.

Numbers say a lot, but they do not say everything. Because if we stop for a moment, if we think about it, behind every single unit that goes to make up the most up-to-date figure, the one that perhaps attests to an 'improvement in the situation' there are people who are still entangled in the situation, often, without knowing for how much.

It is a condition one does not wish on anyone, waiting for judgement. And it is a condition that is not easy to recount. Not so much from the point of view of the chronologically punctuated chronicle of the facts, but rather from the emotional and psychological point of view of the imprisonment in the mechanism of the machine that moves its gears according to rules that, from theory to practice, change, acquiring the enigmatic traits of 'case by case', sometimes leading to the dimension of the absurd.

**In the history of literature, human justice has never had a more distressing representation than that of the novel published in 1926**

This dimension of the justice of men has never in the history of literature had a more exact and distressing representation than that given to it by Franz Kafka in the scenes of *The Trial*, a work written between 1914 and 1915 and published posthumously (and, it seems, incompletely) in 1926.

The story should be well known. But, for the benefit of the few who may not be familiar with it, we may recall that it is the story of Josef K., a bank prosecutor, who is arrested one morning on charges that will never be revealed to him. The opening of the novel is legendary: 'Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without his having done anything wrong, he was arrested'.



But what renders the dimension of the nightmare into which, little by little, Josef K. will find himself sinking are the places where everything takes place and in particular the courthouse, which is beautiful, in the sense that we want it to be, only in its ability to convey to the reader that sense of growing anguish that will envelop the protagonist of the story until its epilogue, where liberation from the judicial treacle will come with death. At first, for Josef K., what is happening can only be a joke, perhaps of his colleagues, after all, the day he is arrested coincides with his 30th birthday. Not only has he not been made aware of the accusations against him, but he himself cannot find any fault with his recent or past actions: he feels his conscience is clear and therefore, even with a certain haughtiness, flaunts his conviction that it must be a mistake.

Things change when the protagonist of the story receives a summons to appear for his first court hearing. He knows the day: Sunday (because, by the way, the defendant has been released, and he works during the week). He knows the address: Juliusstrasse (a remote street in the suburbs). But what he does not know, or rather, does not imagine before he is confronted with it, is what that building may look like. It is, in fact, a house. A kind of enormous beehive. A 'singularly extended' structure accessed through a tall, wide doorway, 'evidently made for carts'. Such an entrance leads into a courtyard from which one accesses the different floors and blocks into which the building is divided, which look like the cubicles of a tenement block. A woman, who is washing clothes, points with her hand dripping with soapy water, to the door of the room Josef K. is looking for.

The 'room', the courtroom we should say, appears full of people huddled together in a dishevelled slump. The room has two windows 'of medium size, and is surrounded by a gallery crushed by the ceiling' always full

**The protagonist is not so much frightened to discover that court secretariats are in all the attics as he is to realise his ignorance of legal matters**

of people forced to bend over because their heads bump against the wall. There is even someone who has brought a pillow to protect himself from the banging. The smell of that environment is clearly called 'stench'. While the defendant's station is located at the end of a narrow passage where a platform is set up with a small table placed across it. The environment is semi-dark and dusty. The only one who is perhaps comfortable, or at least has some space available, is the judge who sits in an armchair. With him, Josef K. has a bitter verbal clash. "What happened to me ... is indicative of a way of proceeding that is being adopted to the detriment of many others. I am defending them here, not myself".

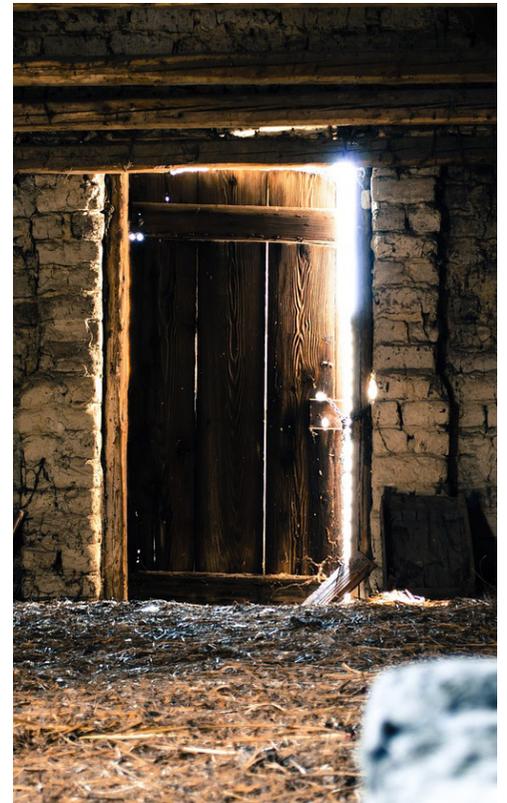
Josef K. is sure that he has nothing to fear, he believes in the rule of law, in the laws that govern and order civilised living, and he is certain that he can publicly blame the court and its officials for the bad way they work without it having any consequences. Little does poor Josef K. know that this, besides being the first, will also be the last time he will have direct contact with his judges.

The second time the banker returns to the place, unhesitatingly threading his way up the stairs and corridors to the room where the courtroom is located, he discovers a different place, an empty room with a platform and table on which lies a shredded codex. He then proceeds to explore the place accompanied by the usher who leads him to the secretarial offices. He passes a wooden staircase that seems to lead to an attic. The court secretariats are in an attic inside a house? 'It was not a housing that inspired much respect... such a degradation of the court was humiliating'. Communication between one office and another is shouted by clerks through the cracks in the doors. The entrance to the secretariats is behind a door that hides a step that is easy to trip over ('The public really doesn't care about these people'). Josef K. finds himself in front of a long corridor, with 'roughly squared' doors leading to individual rooms in the attic. There are no skylights but the darkness is not total: some light penetrates through the wooden ceiling. That turn begins to make Josef K. lose his bearings. He wants to get out, to leave. But alone he cannot.

**JUSTICE TIMES IN EUROPE**

Every year, Cepej (European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice) publishes an analysis of trial times in all EU countries. In the January 2023 edition, it was found that the average time for a civil trial at first instance is 237 days. If it is criminal, it drops to 149 days. In civil, we are talking about 177 days in appeal. While 149 days are needed in Cassation. In criminal law, again looking at the European average, the days needed to complete an appeal process are 121, which drop to 120 in cassation.

Italy, in this scenario, is quite badly placed. Here an average of 675 days are needed for a civil first instance and 498 for a criminal first instance. On appeal, on the other hand, it takes 1,026 days in civil and 1,167 in criminal. The third instance, in civil law, takes 1,526 days, which is reduced to 237 in criminal law.



## Beautiful Buildings

Days pass and the thought of the trial before that non-ordinary court nags at him. It is an obsession. He sees a lawyer. And then he discovers that among the people who could help him is a painter, a certain Titorelli. The third time Josef K. returns to court, although he is not immediately aware of it, is when he goes to see the artist who, needless to say, stays in a filthy attic, at the top of a wooden staircase in an apartment building similar to the one on Juliusstrasse, but if possible even more miserable and dark. On the outside, the building has a smashed wall from which a 'foul, yellow, steaming liquid, before which rats flee' to take refuge in the nearby sewer. The painter's studio-room "measures little more than two long strides, either lengthwise or across. Everything, floor, walls and ceiling, is made of wood, and cracks can be seen between the boards. Leaning against the wall is the bed. And in the middle of the room, on an easel, is a covered painting. There is only one window that cannot be opened and from which nothing can be seen because of the fog. The hidden canvas is the painting of a judge. Titorelli is a judicial painter. The figure also represents

Justice and Victory reunited. Josef K. notices an inconsistency: the blindfold, the scales and the wings on his feet: 'Is he running? This is not a happy union. Justice must stand still or else the scales will wobble and you cannot give a just verdict'. But the painter justifies himself by saying that he obeys the instructions of his patron. Here too, after a while, the poor protagonist begins to run out of air. He asks to go. He takes the wall door behind the bed and emerges onto the courthouse secretariats: there are some in every attic. "K. is not so much afraid of finding secretariats there too, as of himself, of his ignorance of legal matters".

Even the last time Josef K. enters the citadel of justice represented by his author, he does so without realising it. He has gone to visit the city's cathedral, which presents itself to him as totally empty. He meets a man who later reveals himself to be the prison chaplain who tells him: "I belong to the court". With him, the protagonist has one last long discussion. The surroundings become darker and darker. Once again K no longer understands where he

is. The parable the prelate tells him seems an allegory of his own story. What the administrators of the Law say and do 'one is not obliged to hold it all to be true, one is only obliged to hold it to be necessary'. K. takes that explanation and concludes that in the end it is only a lie what the universe orders. He therefore asks the prison chaplain what the court wants from him. "The court wants nothing from you. It accepts you when you come and lets you go when you go."

I finish writing this piece about the places of the Trial on a Saturday morning at the end of January. There is fog outside. And due to those strange alliterations of the case, while I find myself reading the newspaper, my attention is captured by a headline. "Thirty-three years of nightmare" Acquitted after being sentenced to life imprisonment by mistake. It is not an invented story, but the story that concerned Mr. B.Z. who, after yet another trial, returns to life... after having remained in prison, as an innocent, for three decades.

Numbers say a lot but they don't say everything.

### A PLACE A NOVEL: WHERE STORIES LIVE

There are not a few novels in which the stories told are fundamentally intertwined with the places in which they take place and, in particular, the buildings. Here we have come up with a little Top 3, to recall the novels that owe much of their fortune to the places in which they were set, namely three beautiful buildings that have become the symbol of the events narrated in as many masterpieces of world fiction.



Perhaps the most famous of these is Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, since the entire story that takes place within it is set in an abbey complex (which many have seen again in the Sacra di San Michele on Mount Pirchiriano, not far from Turin) that has fascinated readers all over the world and that has often been the subject of meticulous reconstructions, including the one that stands out on the cover of the latest edition of the masterpiece, published by La Nave di Teseo. Another place that 'made the novel' is undoubtedly the Overlook Hotel in which Stephen King carries out the entire plot of *The Shining*. The author, in this case, reconstructed the building from the Stanley Hotel in the mountains of Colorado, which is apparently considered to be a place where there were several (alleged) paranormal manifestations and where, of course, he actually stayed, not to mention in the infamous room 217.

The third building on this short list is also a figment of its author's imagination, but it has a correspondent in reality that has become, over the years, a place of pilgrimage for all fans of the saga. We are talking about Hogwarts Castle and Harry Potter. In this case, however, in order to find in reality the architecture that inspired J.K. Rowling's fantasy (but even more so that of the film directors who have supervised the various film transpositions) we must refer to two distinct places. The first is Alnwick Castle, the second is Durham Cathedral.



# The foosball loneliness

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a novel by Nicola Di Molfetta

That morning, Orazio Sinibaldi had arrived at the law firm in a good mood. His career was finally taking off, and what's more, Luciana, his partner, also a lawyer, had taken to it with that aloe vera shampoo that made his hair stronger and more fragrant. His stress alopecia was finally going away. The transplant and his trip to Istanbul could wait. Orazio Sinibaldi had left home that morning thinking that he loved his job, his partner and the aloe vera shampoo. He had repeated that mantra to himself six or seven times, always in that order. Descending the stairs, crossing the street, removing the bolt on the scooter. "Be grateful," he had whispered to his image, reflected in the rearview mirror, from which the dark circles under the eyes, the result of lack of sleep and a diet still too low in vegetable protein, had even disappeared. While riding his scooter through the city, bouncing on the cobblestones and listening to a new episode of Corrado de Vincentiis' podcast, *Improving and Performing – The importance of being a Professional*, Orazio Sinibaldi felt refreshed at the idea he was to close the Severgnini file, the last hurdle separating him from reaching his budget for the year, three months in advance. The tax due diligence report was ready. The analysis of the clauses proposed by the counterparty was finished. And the mark ups only needed the review by mister Martelli who would be all about him for at least an hour that day. He had promised. It was for this reason that Orazio Sinibaldi, as soon as he passed the badge at the entrance turnstiles, was not too surprised when the receptionist, sitting in his black suit under the Martelli & Schwarz International Law Firm sign, stopped him to recommend that he join the professor on the sixth floor as soon as possible. Bruno Martelli, an adjunct lecturer in the corporate and business law course at the Ubi Maior telematic university, was one of Martelli & Schwarz's name partners. The other, Sigismondo Schwarz, had been the late founder of the association and father-in-law of the professor partner. Martelli's list of positions also included managing partner and head of the corporate finance department of the law firm. He was the very boss of the up-and-coming Sinibaldi who, from his first day at the firm, had taken to account all the times he was summoned before the superlative partner. In his first seven years at Martelli & Schwarz, and up to that day, there had been thirty-six. It was a good balance, especially for its progressive trend that had now become a habit. Luciana, his partner, had confirmed to him that this incremental trend was indicative of the improvement in

his status and the growth prospects that were emerging in his future. She knew Martelli & Schwarz well. She had worked there for twelve years before changing. The problem had been her liaison with the young Sinibaldi. When the affair with Orazio had started to become something serious, she had to report it to the association's ethics committee. The internal regulations discouraged relationships between colleagues. Sporadic sex affairs (which periodic retreats had turned into a tradition) could be tolerated, but not established and long-lasting relationships. Worse, then, if these arose between colleagues of different rank. Luciana Marini, when she decided to move in with Orazio, was already a salary partner, while the man had just become a senior associate at Martelli & Schwarz. Luciana's departure, therefore, had contributed to the intensification of relations between Sinibaldi and his prestigious mentor. Thus was born a collaboration that was punctuated by the shower of files in the name of the senior partner on the desk of his young colleague, who took care of them with punctuality, technical skill, and no particular hassle. The quid pro quo for this productive gallop took the form of end-of-year bonuses, promotions, and assignments of responsibility for special projects and strategic initiatives of the firm. In particular, about six months earlier, lawyer Sinibaldi had been appointed team leader of the firm's wellbeing programme. Code name: Epicuro.

For this initiative, which could have been worth the maximum points in the quality certification process of the firm's organisational model, Sinibaldi was tasked with coordinating a team of two colleagues and managing a small budget, which he promptly used to set up the recreation room on the sixth floor, located next to the terrace where, during the summer, exclusive client cocktails were organised. Sinibaldi had personally taken charge of setting up that space which, after a quick internal survey, had been named The Social House.

The room, slightly smaller than the one-bedroom apartment he had lived in when he was still practising, was furnished with a bookcase dedicated to contemporary fiction, four orange armchairs (the same colour as the Martelli & Schwarz brand) and a hi-fi system with Bluetooth connection and record player for listening to the vinyl collection that mister Martelli had generously made available to his guys. The only other, minor, interference by the managing partner in the furnishing of the Social House, had concerned the choice of the table and chairs to be placed near the cafeteria corner. There, the lawyer had asked for the iridescent crystal table that he and the late Schwarz, good soul, had shared for years with their former partners in the Duplica Law Firm office and that, after their spin-off, they had managed to take with them as a trophy: tangible testimony to the fact that they were the only true heirs of Gian Augusto Duplica. The table therefore had a fundamental symbolic significance. However, Martelli had always thought that it was an ugly object. So, he was more than happy to have perceived in time the possibility of moving it from the Cicerone meeting room to the recreation room of his subordinates, accompanied by a plaque bearing an evergreen Sun Tzu: 'Conflict is an integral component of human life, it is found within us and around us'. Finally, completing the set-up of Martelli & Schwarz's social house, on the sixth terraced floor of the Art Nouveau building, was a table football with retractable rods and digital scoreboard, placed next to the cafeteria corner, near the French window overlooking the back of the panoramic terrace. This was the piece of furniture Sinibaldi was most proud of. The one

on which he had been authorised to spend the largest part of his budget, an undisputed symbol of the firm's openness to the concept of quality of life in the workplace. The Burlando-branded object had been proudly displayed in the room since 1 May of that year, the day The Social House was inaugurated in the presence of all the staff and professor Martelli, who after the photo shoot for the press release to be sent to the trade press the following day, joined his family at the country house in Alta Langa, not before congratulating Sinibaldi on the excellent work he had done and advising the rest of the group to enjoy the party, and to take care of those two or three little things for the day so that the next would not be clogged with backlogs to clear. It was right there, leaning against the table football with the orange and white teams lined up facing each other on the blue glass turf, that Martelli was found by his protégé when the latter caught up with him immediately after the reception.

"Orazio, at last!"

"Good morning professor. I have everything ready for the Severgnini file. You'll see that I won't waste your time. I just need your go-ahead on a couple of small matters."

"We'll talk later about the Severgnini file, Orazio. Right now we have another urgent matter."

"Oh, tell me." His voice was barely able to hide his concern at the possible overrun of the dead line he had imposed on himself.

"Look around and tell me what you notice, Orazio." The senior partner's voice was calm, the kind of calm that did not bode well. Sinibaldi quickly scanned the room for leaks, cracks, dirt, clutter, and any other inconsistencies that might have contaminated the immaculate place, which, however, did not seem to have anything wrong with it.

"Everything seems to be in order, professor."

"And that is precisely the problem, Orazio." Sinibaldi still did not understand.

"This space is not used enough, Orazio. In fact, I would say it is not used at all. But how is that possible?"

"It is a time of deadlines. We are all very busy. I guess you can explain it that way..."

"Yes, but yesterday the inspectors from the company that is following our certification wrote to me. They came here three times. And all three times, in this room, which we rightly described in our file as the flagship of our people policy, they found no one. No one! No one who would take a coffee, or stay for five minutes for a relaxation break. No one to read in the armchair or listen to some good music, which there are some crazy goodies here. But, I say: this foosball table? No one ever comes to play a game, with this foosball table, which we paid as much as an associate's month!"

Something had to be done to encourage people of the firm to use the social house. Something had to be done so that at the next inspection, the certification engineers would be able to see that the recreation room was actually being used and give the firm the score it deserved for its policies to protect the well-being of its employees. "Do you have any ideas, Orazio?" Sinibaldi hated not having answers. So he threw out the first thing that crossed his mind: "We could organise a table football tournament." Martelli looked at him with two eyes that seemed to say: that's why I trust you, dear Sinibaldi; that's why I fought to keep you in our team, and not your partner, when you had the nice idea of declaring your de facto

## Beautiful Buildings

union to the world; that's why last month I gave you the new laptop with advanced functions even for remote work; that's why this year the bonus I will propose for you in the remuneration committee will be the highest of all. Then he finally spoke: "That sounds like a brilliant idea to me. The Schwarz Cup, or the Trophy, in memory of the late Sigismondo who, if I'm not mistaken, was someone who spent entire afternoons at foosball in Forte dei Marmi as a boy. Or was it Duplica? Whatever, but it doesn't matter now. We had a crazy idea."

"But how do we convince people to sign up?" asked Sinibaldi, who, knowing his peers and the pressure that the burden of end-of-year evaluations placed on their agendas, was pretty sure that many would ignore the initiative, giving priority to budgets to be met and the time running out. Martelli understood the seriousness of the point and after a few moments of silence asked Sinibaldi to listen. "The time that will be spent at the foosball table for the tournament will be counted in the billable hours that each person has to reach and will therefore contribute to the achievement of the budgets. But there is more. In each game, the winning player not only gains his time, but also that of his defeated opponent. He wins it, you see? Let's say a match lasts 20 minutes: if you win, you billiate 40 minutes."

"And who loses?" asked Sinibaldi, aware that nobody ever gives anything away.

"Whoever loses has to deduct the 20 minutes he took in the match from his accumulated hours."

"I mean, one if he loses, he loses at most the time needed for a game," Sinibaldi tried to clarify to verify that the 'risk' for the participants could be considered little.

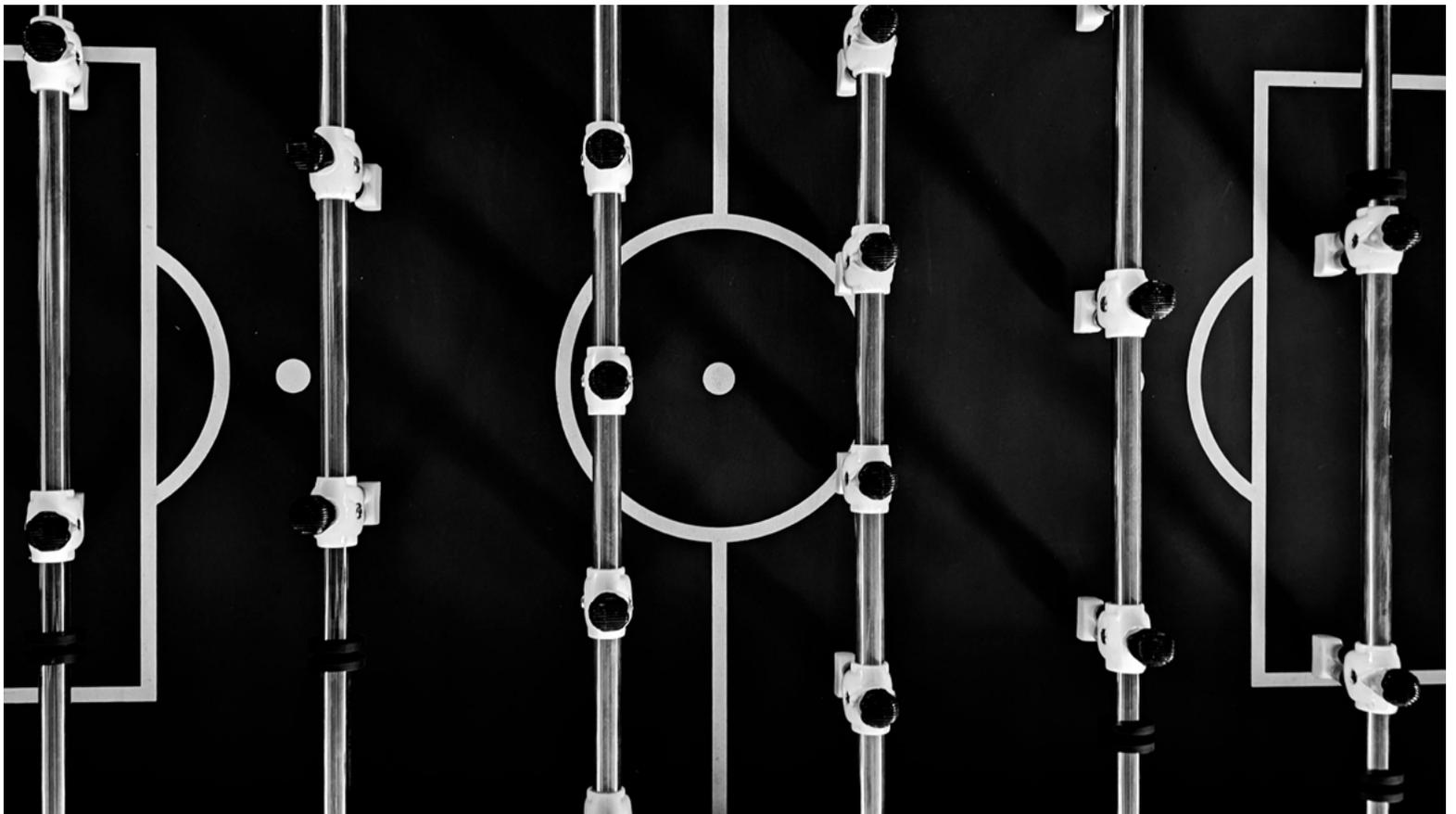
"If he loses immediately, yes. If he loses later, I don't know, after four games, he loses all the minutes won up to that point in addition to the minutes of the defeat. Funny that way, isn't it?"

"Yes. But..."

"But, hear the best part. If we organise it like a Champions League, we can provide for single-match (not round-trip) and elimination rounds. Then, we make the best ones play eighths, quarters, semi-finals and pre-finals. Always knockout."

"What do you mean by pre-finals?" asked Sinibaldi worried about the outcome of the creative impetus that seemed to have taken possession of the managing partner.

"The two winners of the semi-finals will play a 'pre-final' - he did so with his fingers -. The winner, let's say, one who theoretically took home a budget of one hundred and forty if not one hundred and sixty billable minutes, will have to play a super-final against me in order to actually win it." Sinibaldi was speechless. It all seemed like a diabolical artifice to him. Who among his colleagues would have had the courage to beat Martelli in the super-final? That was a serious issue because Martelli did not tolerate insubordination in any context that was suitable to reaffirm the hierarchical order on which the firm and the society within it was based. It was a classic. It happened in five-a-side football tournaments and ten-



nis tournaments. It was an unwritten law. An afterword written in body eight and hidden in the sea of ink of the specifications in the notes, of a contract that no one read but which everyone signed the moment they joined the big Martelli & Schwarz family. Whoever happened upon the firm's name/managing/founding/senior partner should not underestimate the side effects of a victory in the field (whatever that might be) that escaped prudence and a sense of humility. Occasionally, someone had fallen for it. After all, how could it be? In a firm founded on merit, there was no way that professionals of all ranks could really believe that their fortunes could suddenly run out just because they had given a paddle lesson to the supreme partner. But those were not legends. Had he still been there, Lindo Canicola, winner of the darts tournament organised by the firm during the 2015 mountain retreat, could have testified to that. Instead, his was now just a name that was taught along with the rudiments of the profession to every trainee from the first day they set foot at 27 Via Verdi and on which the firm's partners used to educate their already grown-up colleagues at the first partner's meeting.

"Orazio! Are you listening to me?" asked Martelli at that point, exalted by what he no longer hesitated to call his project. "I'm counting on you! Let's set up a tournament with at least, I say, at least forty-eight participants. It will be played in singles, not pairs, you agree. Have the graphic designers prepare a scoreboard where we will mark the names of each entrant. Then, after the pre-final, have a mythological figure drawn with the words: SUPERFINAL vs THE LEVIATAN underneath. Let's not reveal the surprise right away. In the meantime, I will have to prepare myself to be up to the task ahead of me."

"But, mister Martelli. Forty-eight is really a lot... Frankly I don't know..."

"Sorry Orazio," he interrupted him. "Do you think you will participate?"

"Yes, I think so. I'm also pretty good at foosball, if I may say..."

"So! What are you worrying about, my dear. You've only got forty-seven to find!". Then, he took the door and went back to his room, downstairs, to meet mister Settimino to whom he had given an appointment at 11.45 and whom he didn't want to keep waiting. And the Severgnini file? They would talk about it the following day. Everything was practically in order anyway, wasn't it? Now the priority was the table-football tournament. He had to leave before those inspectors came back for a tour of the studio. And no one could know when that would happen.

That evening, Orazio Sinibaldi went home feeling on the brink of depression. This threatened to be the first major failure in his career as an executive director. There was no time. And above all, there were not enough people to get involved. The firm had, excluding staff, one hundred and twenty-five professionals. Given that there was an unapproachable group of senior partners, professors and of counsel that he didn't even know, Orazio Sinibaldi had to find his forty-seven participants in the first Schwarz Trophy, among a scant hundred people. He basically had to get half the firm to say yes. And objectively, to think that 50 per cent of the people in there would be ready to support the cause of certification, corporate wellbeing and his increased end-of-year bonus, seemed to him an absolute illusion. "But you don't have to put it forward as a commitment to studio certification," Luciana tried to help him, pouring herself a glass of Veuve Clicquot. "To the forty-seven you need, you will have to talk only about the billable hours up for grabs. If you put it down well, it can work. And from Saturday you start with the tournament at lunchtime and at

the aperitif." It was indeed true that behind every great man there had to be a great woman, Sinibaldi told himself. Although he still wasn't entirely convinced. So he asked: "What about the details on the risk of defeat? About the minutes, if not hours, that can be lost?" "Consider them one more paragraph of the Canicola clause," she replied without hesitation, while chewing on a salted almond. And indeed that approach worked. There was even one more subscriber than there should have been. Ernesto Cherubini, a junior associate, had seen the tournament as an opportunity to regain some billable hours and consideration within the firm, where despite having arrived a year earlier, from Ercolano and the family firm, he had not yet managed to integrate like the others. Orazio Sinibaldi was aware of his case and had offered to give him the position, also because he did not want to play badly on purpose, he who had also won the first national Open of university table football when he was in his final year of Law, triumphing, in the singles, at the finals in Mantua. But Professor Martelli prevented him: "You can't not be there. You must give, indeed, you must be the example." So, the lawyer not only did not back down, but match after match, he won the eighth, fourth, semi-finals and pre-finals where he defeated his colleague, already a salary partner in the firm, Chiara Solari, also known as the mantis, bringing home a haul in terms of time billed that more than compensated for the suspended Severgnini file, on which his mentor continued to procrastinate. But now there was the final. And he knew how it was going to go. It was unwise to get caught up in the excitement, to tell lies and to believe for a few moments that, perhaps, this time, Martelli would not mind losing as he would be facing his dauphin, deserving if nothing else of a result prize, as the *deus ex machina* of the neutralisation of the certification inspectors. Just as they had imagined, those gentlemen had returned on one of the days when the number of scheduled matches had kept the Social House busy for most of the afternoon, and they were really impressed by the enthusiasm on the faces of the people who were entertaining themselves in the recreation room. How could they know that this was not genuine enthusiasm, but a lust for victory, an appetite for billable time and an eagerness to overpower the hated competitor in the race for the year-end performance. They didn't know. And they never should have. "Well done Orazio. So, we finally got them off our backs. Remind me at the beginning of the week to come to you to complete the Severgnini file, so we get that out of the way too. Meanwhile, get ready: I won't make life easy for you on Sunday." No, Martelli would not tolerate a defeat. But neither would he tolerate an easy victory. The final of the first Sigismondo Schwarz Trophy was to be a memorable event. So, Martelli asked his communications team to even organise a live streaming to be broadcast on the studio's Facebook page so that those who were unable to attend in person would have the chance to follow the match and, above all, to find out who was that legendary Leviathan that the prefinalist would have to face in order to bring home the treasure of hours, won match after match. In fact, it had only taken a few days for the rumour concerning the identity of the mystery person to spread around the studio. Someone claimed that it was Sinibaldi himself who had blown the secret to prevent some reckless, or unaware of the studio's history, from arriving at the final convinced they could really win and then reacting badly when faced with the surprise opponent's *de facto* unbeatability. For this reason too, the Sinibaldi vs Solari match was the shortest of the entire championship. The salaried

partner, who had evidently known who would be waiting for her in the decisive round, needed only ten minutes to be defeated without even scoring a goal. "Have fun with the big boss," whispered the lady in Orazio's ear from the height of her seven-centimetre décolleté at the end of the match, making it clear that he, under normal conditions, could only dream of that result.

Meanwhile, on that Sunday, Martelli & Schwarz's social hall soon filled with people who had flocked, on the precise instructions of the managing partner's secretary, to attend the meeting. An ohh of surprise greeted the supreme partner when, entering the room in jeans and shirt, he made a vacuum around him, declaring loudly and with his gaze turned to the streaming Facebook lens: "The Leviathan has arrived!" Sinibaldi also played the part by putting his hands in his hair to accentuate his expression of astonishment. Then, he said he could never have imagined it. The first goal was by Professor Martelli who, to celebrate, brought his hand to his ear to call for applause from the crowd. A few minutes, and Sinibaldi made it one to one, without fuss. They went on like this until seven to six by Martelli, who came within a step of match point. Common sense would have suggested Sinibaldi to give up. That was the moment to interrupt the sequence of back-and-forths that had punctuated the progress of the goals up to that point and declare the end of the show. Orazio, after all, knew well that a draw would have taken the match to the advantages and that the studio's name partner might have begun to get annoyed, especially as he had been doing nothing but looking at his wrist for a few minutes to check the time, as if he had something else to do and wanted his sparring to understand. However, Sinibaldi decided to ignore those signals and once again chased the gaze of Angelina Sellitti, the associate of the arbitration department who had given him an illusion-filled smile at each of his nets. "Are we going all the way?" He asked, almost shouting, the Leviathan partner, receiving in response an ovation from those present who looked like the Coliseum audience during the gladiators' fight against the lions. "I'm in no hurry," Sinibaldi caught a certain annoyance in the gaze of his mentor who in response, perhaps in doubt that his well being manager had missed it, repeated the clock gesture for the umpteenth time, calling for an end to the pantomime. "Yay!" he shouted shortly afterwards, when his goalkeeper gave him, with a relay shot from the back of the net, the goal of eight to seven, bringing him once again within a point of victory. But Sinibaldi still chose not to give up and still sought out Angelina and her Japanese manga eyes. Nine to eight for Martelli. Nine even. Ten to nine for the leader. Ten to even. Eleven to ten. "I call time out," said the senior partner at that point, inviting his opponent to follow him to the buvette.

"Orazio, It's enough. Shall we close this game?"

"Excuse me, Professor, the even ten came to me by mistake..."

"Alright, alright. But let's finish now, I'm busy. I should have been out ten minutes ago."

"You can always leave..."

"Like your wife? Never."

"But what does that have to do with Luciana?"

"It does. I'd say she always has something to do with it..."

"Think about not taking another goal, rather..."

"Uh sorry, I didn't mean to say something inappropriate..."

"Actually you said something in... I don't really understand what you me-

ant..."

"Nothing, Orazio. Nothing. Let's think about foosball. And let's finish this clowning around. People are starting to leave and you have some work to do."

"Well, if I win, I'm OK with the budget."

"True. But I'm the one who's one point away from winning."

"Not if I draw again."

"Have it your way. But let's finish it."

"You wouldn't mind?"

"What?"

"Losing."

"Are you kidding? Who cares about the foosball tournament. Let's go that even on Facebook people are disconnecting."

Orazio thought that maybe all those stories about the Canicola clause were an exaggeration, mounted because of a series of unfortunate coincidences that one time after another had contributed creating that strange legend. He looked again at Angelina, who seemed to be trepidatious about her feat as she twisted a lock of her long brown hair with her hands. Eleven even. Someone said "nooo". It was a hushed chorus to which Martelli joined in, chanting: "What an arse!". Then, for the third time, he threw the ball directly into his opponent's half-court to accelerate his umpteenth lead. Surprisingly, but in accordance with the rules, Sinibaldi called a foul. Martelli could not believe it was happening. Under Angelina's fairy-like gaze, Orazio set the ball to beat his penalty. Twelve to eleven. He was now one step away from victory and he knew well that, if he had wanted to, he could have gone for it, the victory and maybe even the beautiful Angelina who, perhaps, after that performance would have been happy to go out for an aperitif, as Luciana was skiing and he, with the spoils of billable hours won at foosball could afford a Sunday evening without work. He watched as Martelli picked up the ball and once again threw it into his own half of the court, this time managing to cancel his match point. Twelve-all. Thirteen-twelve, Sinibaldi. Fourteen-thirteen, Martelli. Sixteen-all. Advantage Sinibaldi. Angelina was no longer in her seat. She had moved. She had gone to retrieve her jacket. She was about to leave. Orazio wanted to shout "wait!" at her, but it's not like they had that much confidence and then he would make a fool of himself. Martelli violently threw the ball onto the blue glass surface, but it landed on the base of the white defender of Sinibaldi's team who, without even looking, unleashed a sabre that went straight at the orange goalkeeper's shoulders, decreeing the end of the match and the triumph of the young lawyer in the first edition of the Schwarz Trophy. But Orazio, this did not matter. And after hastily shaking the hand of the defeated professor, heedless of what might have been the consequences of that result contrary to all predictions and professional survival instincts, he tried to disentangle himself from the remaining colleagues in the Social House in order to reach beautiful Sellitti. It was not easy. He could not evade the selfie-takers and communication managers who had to prepare the press release on the event (without mentioning Martelli's defeat) to be circulated the next day among the trade press. In short, it took Orazio Sinibaldi a good ten minutes to extricate himself from the whole situation before running downstairs and trying to see if by chance Angelina was still around. He took the stairs. He descended the steps three at a time, praying that his knee would not fail him as it had two years before. And when, at last,

## Beautiful Buildings

he reached the reception hall, he saw, just outside the automatic sliding door, the silhouette of the girl, standing, waiting, perhaps, for a taxi. He reached for her. But at that very moment Martelli's car stopped in front of it and she stepped down to open the door and sit beside him. Sinibaldi felt his legs go leaden as an invisible monkey began beating his temples like the drum of a rock band. The window lowered electrically and from the opposite side the managing partner professor leaned over to say hello. "Good game Orazio, congratulations again. See you tomorrow and let's close that Severgnini file."

"Thank you sir, have a good evening. And sorry again!"

"Not at all! We had a good time..." The window hissed shut and the car drove off into the darkness of the evening on which, with a certain carelessness, a few snowflakes had also begun to fall.

That morning, the sun rose early and the air soon began to be warm.

Orazio Sinibaldi left the house after a quick breakfast and reading the newspapers on his new tablet. He thought he loved Luciana, the aloe vera shampoo and his new job as senior counsel at Lex-Prime-Partners. He repeated it to himself six or seven times. Like a mantra. Always in this order.

*\*What you have read is a tale of pure fiction. Any reference to facts, things, people, is to be considered purely coincidental and a figment of the author's imagination.*



Beautiful Buildings



# Hot Buildings

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by Nicola Di Molfetta

At the end of February, in Milan, it happens again that you come across people wearing masks. Covering one's nose and mouth, for some, will still be useful in protecting themselves (and others) from viral contagions. For others, for many, in these winter days, the application of that filter serves, instead, to reduce the inhalation of fine dust as much as possible. Because, at the end of February, Milan discovered (or rather, remembered, once again) that it is one of the most polluted cities in the world. Yes, but not the most polluted! Sure, sure. Not the most polluted. But this consolation does not make the air any healthier than it is. And the air in this excellent city is, in fact, bad even if it does not earn it the title.

Now, in itself, this is one of those very difficult problems to deal with because the air cannot be seen. But, dear all, in these late February days, as we remind ourselves for consolation that we are certainly not Beijing or New Dehli, the air can be seen. It can be seen! That's not haze, and those atomic sunsets that have depopulated the social pages of our best friends and an avalanche of strangers that the algorithm has slammed into our feeds without a reason, are actually the result of a high-impact special effect, the filter that costs thousands of deaths every year and that large economic organisations, including the legal and financial institutions that populate the inner city, have long since decided to fight by enlisting (more or less) volunteers in the army of the ESG.

"Although we, for the E (which stands for environment, ed), it is not that we can do much. Of course, we are not talking about steel mills or other industries, but I can assure you that something, even the smallest of law firms or the most exclusive of merchant banks, can do a lot. Like what? Turn down the heating.

These posh offices, with water in glass bottles and plastic banned from meeting rooms, have temperatures like a tropical country. In the corridors, people walk around in shirt sleeves. And when the poor reporter waits in the meeting room for an interview or a refreshment coffee, he starts to feel a sense of warming oppression. The mayor has recommended 19 degrees. Now let's not pretend such austerity, but saunas let's leave them to the spas, in the sense of wellness centres. In the office, or studio if you prefer, let's cover up a little more and pump out a little less heat. The cold (in a manner of speaking) keeps you young anyway and helps keep your ideas flowing and your hands going. Let's do it for productivity, if we don't care so much about the environment, this slightly freaky thing. And let's do it because, really, turning down the thermostats can help change things. Kind of like being as consistent as possible with your self-narrative in general....

