“Covid-working” tra un lockdown e l’altro: impatti sulle modalità e gli spazi di lavoro

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“Covid-working” tra un lockdown e l'altro: impatti sulle modalità e gli spazi di lavoro
AIM OF THE RESEARCH

This research explores the future of academics' workspaces, by studying the case of Italian academics during Covid-19.

We expect that ‘Covid-Working’ will influence future space design and management of the university setting.
**INTRODUCTION**

What is “Covid-working”?

*bc (before coronavirus) ad (after domestication)*
OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

We looked at academics’ research work, focusing on location patterns and their determinants.

WHY ACADEMICS?

WORK TYPE

- Knowledge workers par excellence [1]

WORK SPACE & LOCATIONS

- Research work is “placeless” [2]
- Debate revolved mainly on spaces for teaching rather than on research spaces
- Research spaces shape researchers’ identity [5]
- Research spaces enhance faculty productivity & influence the research community [3]

METHODOLOGY

Population: **52,630** Italian tenured academics (from MIUR lists)

**SAMPLE**
Responses from 7,865 academics, who have completed data for the variables of our interest
RESP. RATE: **15%**

**SURVEY DESIGN**
The survey counts **29 questions** on **three main aspects** before Covid-19 and during Covid-Working:

1. Research time spent individually or in teams of academics
2. Work locations for both individual and teamwork
3. Spaces for doing research within university campuses and at home

**ADMINISTRATION**
Via Email.
No PhD students, post-docs, research grant holders, PTA.

**PERIOD**
From July 24th to September 24th

**POLIMI**
Population **1,459**
Responses from **324 academics**
RESP. RATE: **22%**

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SAMPLE: CHARACTERISTICS

RESPONDENTS

N=7,865
RESPONSE RATE: 15.29%

Demographics

3,853 women (48.99%)
4,012 men (51.01%)

Average age: 51 years old

Geographical distribution

Scientific Sectors

Life Sciences (LS)
Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE)
Social Sciences and Humanities (SH)
New Balance of individual and collaborative research

Before Covid-19
- 42.15% Individual research
- 57.85% Collaborative research

During Covid-working
- 31.10% Individual research
- 68.90% Collaborative research

4 profiles of academics based on the time they devote to collaborative research before Covid-19:

- Not collaborative researcher: 14.06%
- Slightly collaborative researcher: 34.66%
- Collaborative researcher: 52.67%
- Highly collaborative researcher: 76.01%

Average % of collaborative research activity

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The use of university and other spaces for research decreased, significantly, during Covid-Working, both for individual and collaborative research, while homes became the primary location for doing research, showing a strong increase of the mean frequency of use.
RESULTS: LOCATION CHOICE DURING COVID-WORKING

CLUSTER 1
Home-centric
- POLIMI: 58.03%
- Other: 22.5%
- University: 25.26%

CLUSTER 2
Between home & university
- POLIMI: 4.68%
- Other: 75.26%

CLUSTER 3
Multi-located
- Home, university, other spaces
- POLIMI: 12.03%
- Other: 87.97%

CLUSTER 4
University-centric
- POLIMI: 7.4%
- Other: 92.6%
RESULTS: DETERMINANTS OF LOCATION CHOICE

**CLUSTER 1**

Home-centric

- Researcher life
- Discipline (Hard sciences)
- Institutional roles
- Familiarity w/ digital tools
- Collaboration

**CLUSTER 2**

Between home & university

- Researcher life
- Discipline (Hard sciences)
- Institutional roles
- Familiarity with digital tools
- Collaboration

**CLUSTER 3**

Multi-located

- Researcher life
- Discipline (Hard sciences)
- Institutional roles
- Familiarity with digital tools
- Collaboration

**CLUSTER 4**

University-centric

- Researcher life
- Discipline (Hard sciences)
- Institutional roles
- Familiarity with digital tools
- Collaboration

METHOD

Econometric estimations
multinomial probit
RESULTS: DETERMINANTS OF LOCATION CHOICE

CLUSTER 1
Home-centric

- Researcher life
  - Discipline (Hard sciences)
  - Institutional roles
  - Familiarity with digital tools
  - Collaboration

- University space
  - Laboratory
  - Campus space satisfaction

Home life

CLUSTER 2
Between home & university

- Researcher life
  - Discipline (Hard sciences)
  - Institutional roles
  - Familiarity with digital tools
  - Collaboration

- University space
  - Laboratory
  - Campus space satisfaction

CLUSTER 3
Multi-located

- Researcher life
  - Discipline (Hard sciences)
  - Institutional roles
  - Familiarity with digital tools
  - Collaboration

- University space
  - Laboratory
  - Campus space satisfaction

CLUSTER 4
University-centric

- Researcher life
  - Discipline (Hard sciences)
  - Institutional roles
  - Familiarity with digital tools

- University space
  - Laboratory
  - Campus space satisfaction

Gender
Commuting time
### RESULTS: DETERMINANTS OF LOCATION CHOICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLUSTER 1: Home-centric</th>
<th>CLUSTER 2: Between home &amp; university</th>
<th>CLUSTER 3: Multi-located</th>
<th>CLUSTER 4: University-centric</th>
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<td>Discipline (Hard sciences) +</td>
<td>Institution roles +</td>
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<td>Familiarity with digital tools +</td>
<td>Collaboration -</td>
<td>Familiarity with digital tools -</td>
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<td>Laboratory -</td>
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<td>Campus space satisfaction -</td>
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<td>School children +</td>
<td>School children -</td>
<td>Living alone +</td>
<td>School children -</td>
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<td>Living alone -</td>
<td>Household help +</td>
<td>Household help -</td>
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**METHOD**

Econometric estimations
multinomial probit

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POLIMI

Living out of Milan (58%) +
KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. It is important to acknowledge the so-called «hut syndrome». Future organization of the space in university campuses will need to consider that an increasing number of academics will work from home for at least part of the time they dedicate to research. Therefore, in order to attract scholars to campus – as a privileged space for sharing knowledge and socializing – it will be fundamental to leverage the attractiveness of spaces and services.

2. Work is likely to become increasingly multi-local. Places other than homes and universities might concur to create a more sustainable geography of work, by offering shorter commutes and opening up to external collaborations. A distributed network of spaces across cities and peripheries will enable a new balance for our territories.

3. Covid-working reduced the possibility, especially for women, to choose freely where to work. Future welfare policies should not overlook this disparity with men, aiming at creating more equal opportunities and making research work more inclusive.
To know more about our research:


«Il gender gap della pandemia nelle università» (T. De Giorgio), La Repubblica - Ed. Milano 13/01/2021
https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2021/01/13/news/coronavirus_donne_gender_gap_smart_working_politecnico_milano-282369491/


Real Estate Center – REC http://www.rec.polimi.it/
Entrepreneurship Finance and Innovation research group – EFI http://www.efi.polimi.it/

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