Innovation in Real Estate

The Hybrid Work Experience Spectrum

MIT CENTER FOR REAL ESTATE

The Real Estate Innovation Lab

INTRODUCTION

The hybrid work experience has been evolving over the past 60 years. Throughout the decades, the debate has escalated with the arrival of each new digital or telecommunications tool. For some, this has meant an extreme option: the end of the office as we know it. For others, it has pushed them deeper into proving the productivity of the office and its unique place for where people will be able to "invent" and "innovate". This discussion continues today. However, in the face of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, it has taken on new meaning and further investigation.

To that end, the pandemic has pushed the debate to generate - and even refine - the development of a third option: the so-called hybrid work experience. In this third option, the discourse has brought up many tensions in our understanding around what work is, its role in the human experience, its function in how humans create within their community and, importantly, where they need to experience it.

Contribution

Our contribution is to understand what the hybrid work experience is. We want to deconstruct what we already know about the hybrid work experience and what questions are left to be answered. In addition, we want to understand - especially given some of the tenuous evidence on productivity - if the hybrid work experience produces so-called "productivity" outcomes. Further, we want to dig into the debate to recognize what types of technologies and innovations would help us support and understand the hybrid work experience better. Lastly, we want to reveal the secondary effects and consequences of those technology tools for the human experience so that readers can ethically consider their approach to hybrid work.

Approach

To engage in this dialogue, we looked into what the hybrid work experience is, and where we are at in formally defining and tracking this type of process. Second, we engaged with thought leaders in EY's U.S. Real Estate and Construction practice to learn about their experiences with clients, perspectives from thought leadership, and the research they're producing. Third, we gained insights by participating in an online webinar with EY's Mark Grinis, Roselyn

> "THE MORE TELLING QUESTION IS WHEN DO I NEED THE OFFICE, AND WHEN DO I NEED A CERTAIN TYPE OF SPACE OR A CERTAIN TYPE OF ACTIVITY… IN-PERSON EXPERIENCES WILL NEVER BE OFFSET BY A VIRTUAL WINE TASTING, SO THE WORK ACTIVITIES AND THE CONNECTIVITY, IN MY MIND, ARE MORE THE QUESTION THAN THE NUMBER OF DAYS IN THE OFFICE."
>
> MARK GRINIS
> ERNST & YOUNG

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Feinsod, Jeffrey Chulick, and Microsoft's John Scherer, which focused on many elements of the hybrid work experience. Lastly, our team further reflected and performed research on the debate, producing thoughts on where to learn more.

Findings

From our research, we learned that we are in the early stages of understanding the hybrid work experience. First, we have very little evidence about how the hybrid work experience coincides with official statistics, as firms only understand whether you are in an office that is a part of their own ecosystem, with little knowledge on where people work elsewhere. Second, based on national statistics, our time spent doing work has been consistent across the pandemic, but our sentiments about the outcomes are split on how productive we actually were. Third, there are more technologies and tools that are available today to help us facilitate the hybrid work experience, and future technologies will continue to elevate the experience. This will require the real estate industry to stretch their digital acumen further and further. Finally, in the process of developing these digital tools to support technology, we need to incorporate how this impacts the human experience, privacy, inclusivity and ethics. Overall, little has been concluded on productivity and its role in the hybrid work experience, and the real estate industry will require specific tools on how to navigate and support this change moving forward.

DIALOGUE FEATURING INSIGHTS FROM THE
EY HYBRID EXPERIENCE SPECTRUM WEBINAR WITH

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PRINCIPAL, PEOPLE ADVISORY SERVICES

"There's this duality of what people want, and then also a large variety in terms of why they're going to come into the office, based off team and individual needs at home."

JOHN SCHERER
MICROSOFT

KEY QUESTIONS

What is the hybrid work experience? **1**

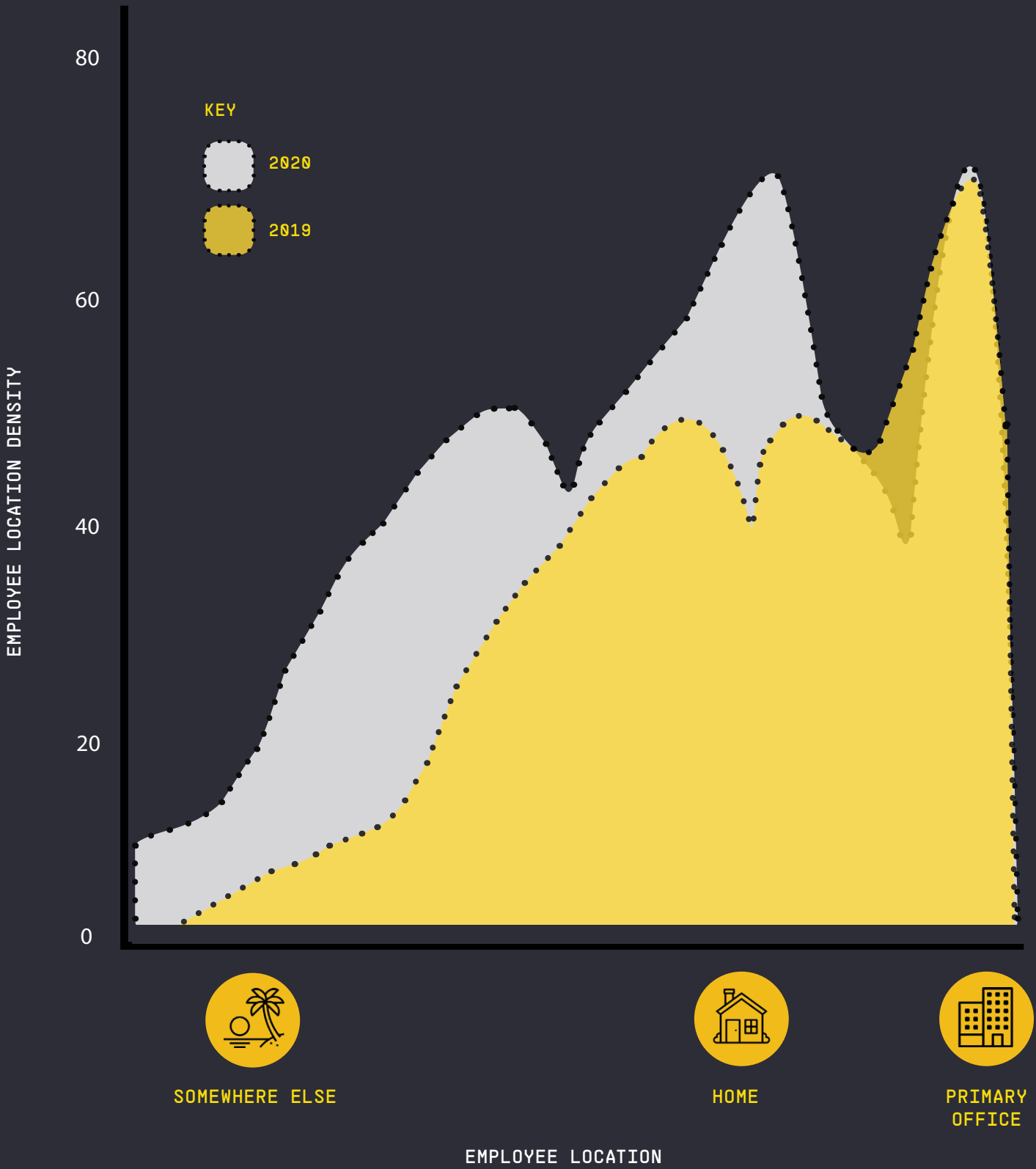How do we technologically facilitate the hybrid work experience? **2**

What can we do to support the dynamic human experience to support where people need to be productive instead of simply present? **3**

What are the upsides and downsides of using data from digital operations to support the hybrid work experience? **4**

ESTIMATED HYBRID OFFICE WORK EXPERIENCE CURVE

EMPLOYEE LOCATION DENSITY

80
60
40
20
0

KEY
2020
2019

SOMEWHERE ELSE   HOME   PRIMARY OFFICE

EMPLOYEE LOCATION

WHAT IS THE HYBRID WORK EXPERIENCE?

In order to understand the hybrid work experience, we need to understand the context of the human experience to perform work in "hybrid" environments. For the sector of the economy dominated by computing work prior to 2020, the office was understood and accepted as the primary location to perform tasks. However, the concept of where work occurs started to change both during and after the pandemic. Consequently, millions of employees shifted to working "remotely" in their homes and elsewhere. During 2021 some organizations and corporations brought employees back to the office, while others placed the notion of a primary office on hold, or simply designated the primary office as a part-time setting.

One of the challenges in navigating and analyzing the hybrid work experience within the real estate industry is the lack of digital acumen in understanding where people work. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, this question of location was asked of just a fragment of the population that did not work primarily in the office. Sole proprietors or small and medium enterprises occupied co-working or home office spaces. However, the need to know where people work has changed, as scores of employees demand the flexibility to work from "anywhere" and the "primary office" to meet their tasks.

We have little data on where people work at the national level. Using data from the PEW National Research Center's American Trends Panel of 5,000+ survey respondents, along with information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Time Use Survey, we estimated where people worked in 2019 and 2020. The estimated results graphically show that individuals that telework worked at the primary office and then at home, over the 2019 to 2020 period. However, there is a consistent cohort of employees who work "somewhere else" and "at home". To employ more rigor around these estimations, future data analysis at the organization level - as well as at the national level - should start to track where people work without penalty or intrusion of privacy. In doing so, we can understand where people work and how that work environment helps the human work experience.

"THERE IS A LOT OF MISINFORMATION AROUND HYBRID WORK. MY HOPE IS THAT WE CAN START TO IDENTIFY AND MEASURE WHAT WE DO AND DO NOT UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND WORK."
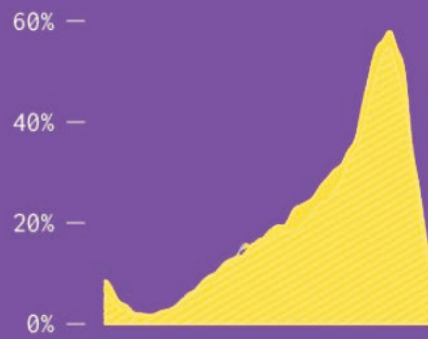
DR. ANDREA CHEGUT
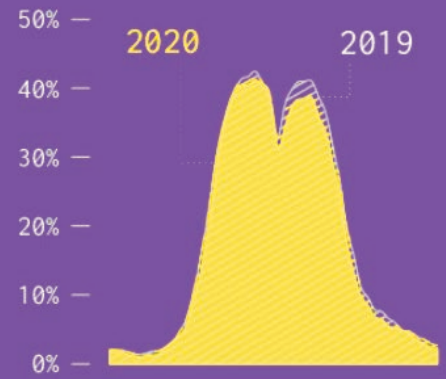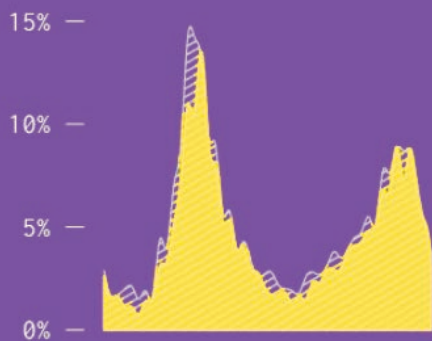MIT REAL ESTATE INNOVATION LAB

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SLEEPING

We still slept, maybe a little bit later.
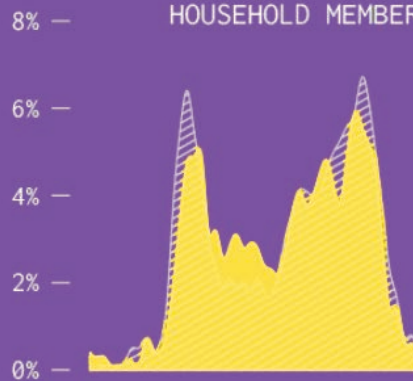
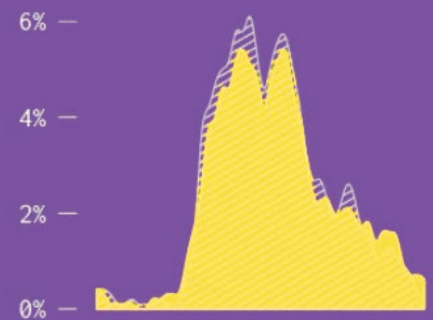## SOCIALIZING, RELAXING, AND LEISURE

WORKING

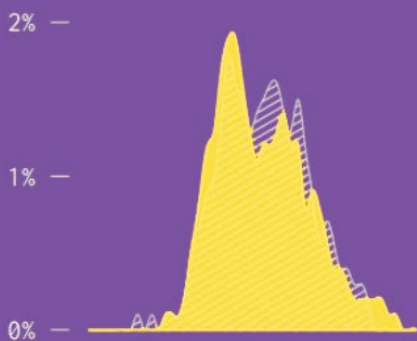2020   2019

PERSONAL CARE

CARING FOR AND HELPING HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

EDUCATION

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL CARE SERVICES

TELEPHONE CALLS
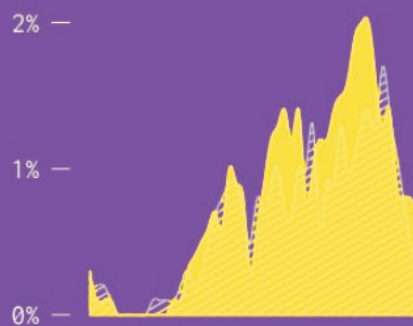
VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES
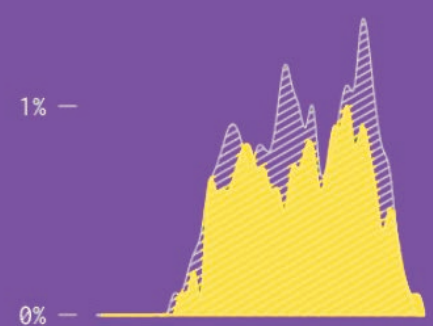
PRODUCTIVITY 101

How do we know if we have been productive?

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While employees may intrinsically be able to grasp their own productivity levels, we don't have agreed data science approaches to measure productivity. Work that does not produce widgets is difficult to quantify, and therefore our current definitions of what constitutes measurable outcomes are weak in understanding whether the hybrid

TRAVELING

Much less in 2020.

25% —
20% —
15% —
10% —
5% —
0% —

EATING AND DRINKING

25% —
20% —
15% —
10% —
5% —
0% —

HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES

25% —
20% —
15% —
10% —
5% —
0% —

CONSUMER PURCHASES

5% —
4% —
3% —
2% —
1% —
0% —

SPORTS, EXERCISE, AND RECREATION

3% —
2% —
1% —
0% —

CARING FOR AND HELPING NON-HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

2% —
1% —
0% —

SOURCE: Daily Routine, 2020 by Nathan Yau

MISCELLANEOUS

1% —
0% —

RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

1% —
0% —

GAP/CAN'T REMEMBER

Can't or don't want to?

1% —
0% —

work experience actually works. However, we have some insights about what has happened with this recent hybrid work experiment. For example, Nathan Yau's work at Flowing Data created information graphics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Annual Time Use Survey, which measures time spent on work in 2019 to 2020. Specif-ically, the graphics depict time in 2019, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and in 2020 after the pandemic had commenced in March of that year. What is striking about the images and the data is that our reported use of time is consistent across the two time periods, with a very marginal increase in the amount of work being done in 2019 during evening hours.

How do we technologically facilitate the Hybrid Work Experience?

Commercial products and technologies are actively present to support the cultivation and development of hybrid work. From our research, we found four areas where the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the roadmap of technological change: digital operations, human experience, healthy buildings and virtual worlds.

In this section, we highlight what tools we have now, what is coming soon and some highlights of technology that are coming in the future.

DIGITAL OPERATIONS

MIT SAYS

Researchers from the MIT Media Lab with Dr. Mike Bove and Harvard are working on the storytelling logistics of volumetric displays. As commercially viable volumetric displays start to gain market traction, there becomes a push towards how to use them within the market place in tandem with live data. These displays then help to synthesize stories for the future of working with the tool.

NOW   NEXT   BEYOND

VIRTUAL REALITY WALKTHROUGH

Virtual reality tours now provide a way for buyers to conduct their property search from their office or their homes.

DIGITAL TWIN

Digital Twin is a digital representation of a physical building that incorporates all of the devices and sensors within a building to showcase all of the past and present data, ultimately creating a real-time picture of what is currently happening in the building.
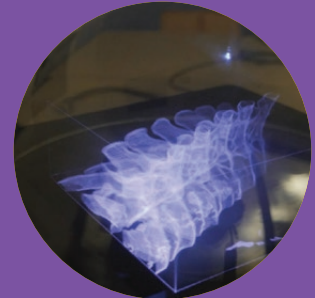
VOLUMETRIC DISPLAY

A volumetric display is a graphic display device that forms a visual representation of 3D information in real 3D space, creating a 3D projection of a building.

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

MIT SAYS

Research from the MIT Media Lab's Jinha Lee EY al. 2018 breaks down the boundaries between the physical and the virtual to truly understand how people will tangibly work in the future of virtual work and volumetric displays. Now, as the co-founder of Spatial, they work with Fortune 500 companies to help establish these boundary breaking workflows.

NOW   NEXT   BEYOND

CHATBOT

AI CONTROLLED MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

HOLOGRAM MEETINGS

A chatbot is a computer program that simulates and processes human conversation, allowing human interaction with digital devices to mimic communication with a real person.

AI Building Management Systems integrate 5G, IoT, big data, cloud computing and AI technology with advanced data analytic capabilities to create a digital platform in the next evolution of smart buildings.

With hologram meetings, distant coworkers could teleport as digital avatars, or holographic shapes that take on the form of the person's head and shoulders, into a shared virtual space.

HEALTHY BUILDINGS

MIT SAYS

Research from the MIT Real Estate Innovation Lab has identified rental value premiums for healthy buildings in major U.S. commercial real estate markets to be 4-7%. Certified healthy building adoption has been cited as diffusing three times as fast as certified green building adoption from the same market diffusion periods.

NOW   NEXT   BEYOND
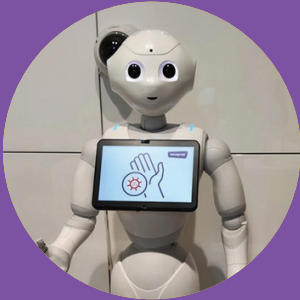
TOUCHLESS
TECHNOLOGIES

Touchless technologies, which include camera-based gestures, proximity-enabled screens, facial recognition, voice recognition, and eye-tracking tech, are simply devices that you can use or operate without needing to touch it.

WEARABLES

Wearable technologies collect useful information such as the location, body temperature, tiredness or stress levels of a wearer in their environment and then communicates this to the building information system in real-time.
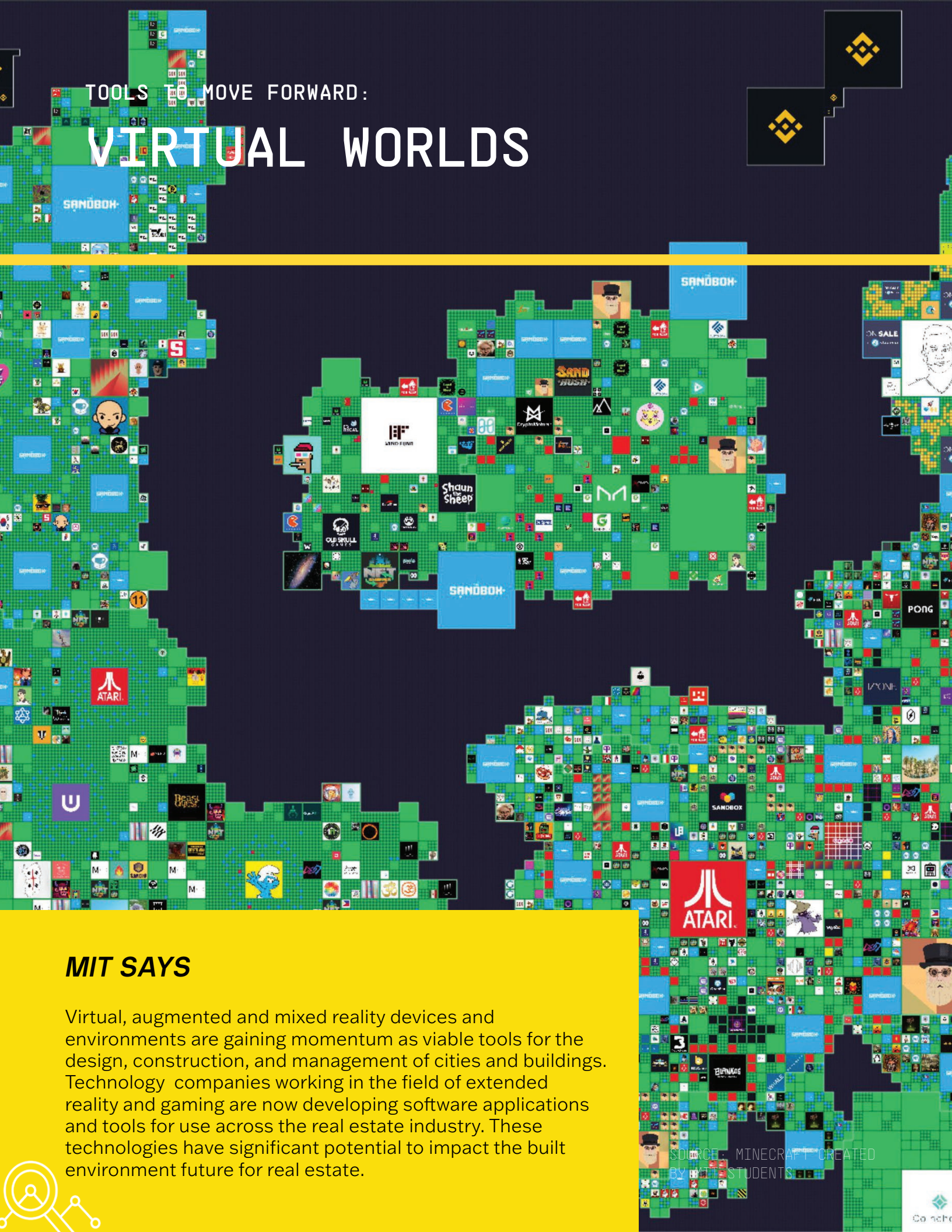

INDIVIDUAL BIOMETRIC
CONFIGURATION

Smart building technology in combination with wearables and powered by a digital twin could create a building that provides the optimal environment for each individual.

VIRTUAL WORLDS

MIT SAYS

Virtual, augmented and mixed reality devices and environments are gaining momentum as viable tools for the design, construction, and management of cities and buildings. Technology companies working in the field of extended reality and gaming are now developing software applications and tools for use across the real estate industry. These technologies have significant potential to impact the built environment future for real estate.

SOURCE: MINECRAFT CREATED BY MIT STUDENTS

NOW   NEXT   BEYOND

VIRTUAL WORLDS

Over 2.2 billion people play video games. An astounding 500 million are estimated to play, exchange and even work in virtual world games such as Minecraft, Decentraland and Second Life. These worlds have exploded in popularity since March of 2020, with online entertainment and virtual experiences being provided by firms and companies to create cultural experiences for their teams.

VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

The onset of the global pandemic excelerated a drive towards more enhanced tools for virtual engagement. The development of virtual avatars helped to create collaborative work experiences.
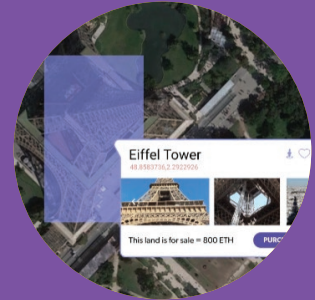
METAVERSE

Currently, the internet is mainly a 2D landscape of information storage and retrieval. However, the internet has the potential to become a 3D, virtual experience for our online spaces, online currencies and facilities for different types of work. In the future, the boundaries between what we consider a game, what we consider virtual, and what we define as work will become less clear, creating another location in the hybrid work experience.

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1

THE SHIFT IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE TOWARDS HYBRID WORK

2

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL OPERATIONS AND HYBRID WORK

3

THE ETHICS OF DATA USE TO SUPPORT HYBRID WORK

"AS WE WORK WITH CLIENTS, THEY'RE RAPIDLY DEPLOYING NEW SOLUTIONS TECHNOLOGIES THAT ENABLE THIS REMOTE COLLABORATION CONNECTIVITY, BUT THEY DON'T SEEM TO BE TAPPING INTO THE DATA THAT THESE SOLUTIONS PRODUCE. IT'S A CLEAR INDICATOR THAT ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO FOCUS ON THIS DATA TO REALLY BE ABLE TO MEASURE PRODUCTIVITY."

JEFFREY CHULICK
ERNST & YOUNG LLC

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PROPOSITION 1

TO ENGAGE IN PRODUCTIVE WORK, THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE IS CHANGING TO MATCH PEOPLE AND PLACES FOR THE TASKS THAT NEED TO GET DONE, INSTEAD OF PUTTING PEOPLE IN OFFICES FOR THE SAKE OF HEADCOUNTS AND ATTENDANCE.

PRODUCTIVITY AND HUMAN EXPERIENCE: ACCORDING TO THE EXPERTS

"The office is changing: it's no longer the place for heads-down, or the individual-focused work. It's going to be the location that draws people in for specific purposes that are needed for in-person interaction and collaboration."

JEFF CHULICK

"More than half of employees say that flexibility is important enough that they will quit if their employer does not provide the flexibility that they want or need, so it is a new expectation going forward.

ROSELYN FEINSOD

"There's this ebb and flow of when different roles and different people will want to be in the office. It's not just going to be the same throughout time."

JOHN SCHERER

"There's a strong case to say that work can be virtual. And then there might be someone who just doesn't have the right setup at home."

MARK GRINIS

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PROPOSITION 2

DATA SCIENCE AND ANALYTICS BASED ON HUMAN EXPERIENCE ARE THE FUTURE OF THE WORKPLACE AND WILL LEAD TO GREATER PRODUCTIVITY AND AN ENHANCED USE OF PHYSICAL SPACE.

ARGUMENTS FOR

ARGUMENTS AGAINST

Data could help leaders achieve diversity and inclusion in the workplace

"It could help leaders see important truths about their business."
- Ryan Wong, CEO of people analytics platform Visier

Small data sample analytics can lead to bad decision making

Having a large amount of data about one group and a small amount of data about another leads to inaccuracies and, ultimately, the propensity to make big claims based on small numbers.
- Katie Wullert, Shannon Gilmartin and Caroline Simard from the Harvard Business Review

Data allows for faster and more informed decisions at scale

"Many companies would say that 'people are their most important asset' and even the most technologically advanced companies cannot operate without people. Instead of relying on intuition, analytics can help organizations make more informed decisions faster and at scale." -Serena Huang, the Kraft Heinz Co

You can't guarantee the quality of the data

"The benefit of the approach is limited by the amount and quality of the data." - The Economist (Kate Rodriguez)

Data helps evaluate what is working and what is not

Workplace analytics can fill in some of the gaps by providing managers insight into the productivity of their team. Using this data, as well as new approaches, policies and/or team discussions, they can then review the general productivity of the team and what might be hindering or elevating it. - ITPro Today

It's not possible to get real insight, due to different jobs, tasks and environments.

"You can only apply statistical analysis when you have a large number of homogenous units." - Alec Levenson, Center for Effective Organizations, USC

"Data analytics is the future of the workplace and will lead to greater productivity."

The more data one has, the better informed one is to make decisions. Data creates a more comprehensive picture of everyday life and business, from helping us understand our daily exercise and sleep patterns, to helping us achieve targeted marketing, and ultimately better sales. Where previously intuition and gut feeling played a large role in determining patterns and behavior, it is data and analytics that help people and organizations to produce the actionable insight that leads to faster and more informed decisions at scale.

As such, it stands to reason that data is key to providing the workplace of the future that, in turn, can lead to a more productive workforce. It provides an understanding of employee and tenant efficiency, helps establish meaningful benchmarks and ultimately helps decision makers achieve greater results. In capturing details about trends and workplace performance, we improve decision-making in numerous processes, identify opportunities, increase organizational efficiency, facilitate cultural change and extend the value and productivity of employees.

It can also be argued that data is not the sole indicator or facilitator of productivity within the workplace. To begin with, the workplace is not a one-size- fits-all environment and changes dramatically, depending on the type of work people do. Consequently, the tasks involved in a person's job, the type of people doing that work, the location of the space, and how specific types of work are ultimately assessed and measured are responsible for productivity.

This complexity provides a number of challenges in assessing which data is meaningful and also in establishing benchmarks necessary to garner trends, both positive and negative. Having large amounts of data about one group and a relatively small amount of data about another can lead to inaccuracies and, ultimately, bad decision making. It is also believed that the use of analytics can lead to bias and has the potential to encode systemic racism, as has been outlined by Deborah Raji in the MIT Technology Review.

Additionally, statistical analysis can only provide real insight when large numbers of comparable units are measured against each other. With so many different types of office workspaces, job roles and tasks, variation in locations and so many different types of individuals, it would be impossible to achieve any level of comparability.

PROPOSITION 3

PRODUCTIVITY, HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND DIVERSE TEAM DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE STRONGLY CONSIDERED IN THE DEBATE ON DATA SCIENCE AND PRIVACY IN THE WORKPLACE.

DATA PRIVACY AND ETHICS: ACCORDING TO THE EXPERTS

"There are big concerns around data privacy and how that plays out, but definitely a need for more information. With data use, comes great responsibility."

JEFF CHULICK

ROSELYN FEINSOD

"Do employees have the right technology to be able to collaborate, to do project management, to feel connected from a social network perspective? In terms of both the office itself as well as investing in the home office, companies are willing to budget for it."

"From a workplace strategy perspective, we're always trying to understand how our teams work, how their work changes over time, and then translate those into standards and guidelines to help deliver spaces that meet those activity-based working needs."

JOHN SCHERER

MARK GRINIS

"The demand for flexibility is outpacing the supply, to some degree. People's needs are ahead of where companies are on digital transformation and tools to help them have productive, diverse and enhanced experiences."

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DATA PRIVACY AND ETHICS: WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

"The importance of using data in order to facilitate increased productivity should far outweigh employee's privacy."

Data can create extensive value for the global economy, as it has become the raw material of production, with immense economic and social value. The use of human analytics - which is the collection and application of talent data to improve critical talent and business outcomes - is fundamental in helping organizations improve their productivity and efficiency. This can be achieved in several ways, from setting target deadlines to the creation of productivity indices.

The use of workplace analytics data gives management teams a distinct advantage to form productivity strategies for the entire company. It allows managers to understand how teams and individuals are performing (and which members of the team are not). The use of data is therefore necessary to ensure employee optimization, whether it is personal or not.

The harvesting of large data sets and the use of analytics clearly brings with it a number of privacy concerns. Collecting intelligence on individuals' health, location, electricity use, and online activity can lead to unwarranted examination, which can raise concerns about discrimination, exclusion and profiling. Previously, organizations were able to hide individual identities through anonymization, encryption and data sharding, but computer scientists have illustrated that even anonymized data can often be linked to specific individuals within an organization. Organizations may not currently be assessing important ethical challenges and risks that are present for employees' privacy, autonomy and future work opportunities (Tursunbayeva et al., 2018).

While the use of technology and data has incredible potential to help innovate many aspects of society, it comes at the risk of individuals' privacy. Data privacy laws are not simply about the privacy of people's data, but also about protecting our rights as members of groups— as part of society as a whole (MIT Tech Review - Martin Tisne).

"THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS ABOUT THE OFFICE THAT WE LOVED. HOWEVER, WE ALSO REMEMBER THAT WE COULDN'T GET A MEETING ROOM WHEN WE WANTED IT, AND HOW MUCH TIME IT COULD TAKE UNTIL YOU FOUND THE RIGHT PLACE, AND THEN, DID YOU HAVE THE RIGHT WIRES?...THERE ARE INVESTMENTS THAT NEED TO HAPPEN IN THE OFFICE."

ROSALYN FEINSOD

Data is necessary in order to ensure employee optimization

Using workplace analytics data, managers and human resources departments can form productivity strategies for the entire company. If most of your employees spend 60% of their time attending meetings and not enough time doing creative work. Managers can come up with a strategy to reduce meeting times and focus more on productive tasks. - Techadvisory Editorial 2020

ARGUMENTS AGAINST

ARGUMENTS FOR

Employers are not paying attention to the ethical challenges and risks

Organizations are keeping up with new technologies and seeking to improve their effectiveness and resilience through better use of data, but few are meaningfully engaging with the important ethical challenges and risks these present for employees' privacy, autonomy and future work opportunities. (Tursunbayeva et al, 2018).

We can monitor the stress and anxiety of employees to provide a healthier work environment

There are many ways that companies are implementing new technology to support their employees. Wearables can now monitor stress and anxiety, if employees choose to share that data. - Harvard Business Review

Most employees are likely breaching existing laws

Under national law, employers would need to get individual consent from each employee before running their analytics systems. Our findings also highlight that employers deploying monitoring systems are likely breaching existing law, whether intentionally or not. - AlgorithmWatch

Data improves efficiency

Organizations can improve their productivity and efficiency by using people analytics. This is possible by setting target-times as goals when starting work on company activities and projects, called a productivity index. - Forbes (Rajiv Ranjan)

Personal data abuse is on the rise

Employee lawsuits are on the rise, with personal data abuse set to join gender and racial bias as top trends. (Fernandez-Campbell, 2018)

SUMMARY

From our perspective, and from what we heard from our thought leader partners at EY and Microsoft, there is a lot of work to be done in order to help us navigate the immediate and long-term hybrid work experience. We agreed that while the office is not dead, neither is a work-from-home or -anywhere setup. To help facilitate this cultural work shift, an understanding of the employee and tenants' human experience - specifically related to the jobs and tasks that they do - is critical.

Additionally, it is important to evaluate the types of spaces and experiences that they need to do this. Our panel also concluded that there are three things that are key in transitioning to a hybrid work model: respect, trust and an expansion of the definition of the workplace.

Second, we also thought we needed more data to help support "productivity" and "human experience" challenges. Productivity research is relatively recent, so work can be done to expand what productivity is, how productive we are and where productivity happens. Further, there are complex social and cultural changes at play. Inclusivity, diversity, sustainability are shared experiences that are seeking to be elevated in a hybrid work experience. We do not yet understand how these desires for the human experience interact with the hybrid work experience dynamic, and we will need to identify where there are challenges and also

stretch the culture, policy and approaches to the hybrid work experience to negotiate for more equity.

Third, we cannot change what we cannot measure. For the hybrid work experience to push forward in a way that is productive, inclusive, diverse and sustainable means we will need to collect data about this, and be able to refine it with what we learn. But with the collection of information regarding our human experience, more responsibility and thoughtfulness will be required with respect to data privacy and ethics. Further, we need to be able to accurately interpret what this data is saying and continue to have a dialogue about its findings.

In short, the hybrid work experience is not new. It has been building momentum at the margin with the ever expanding digitization of work. In this way, working at home, elsewhere OR in the office has already shifted to working at home, elsewhere AND in the office. There are technologies and tools in place to help facilitate this shift, and they are going to improve to help make the hybrid work experience more convenient and seamless over time.

However, we need to consider that these technologies and tools sit on an expanding drive towards more data and analytics about our human experience. In doing so, we must collect the data with a plan to ensure data privacy, ethics and rules around usage for the real estate sector and beyond.

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