DIGITAL INNOVATION

in conversation with
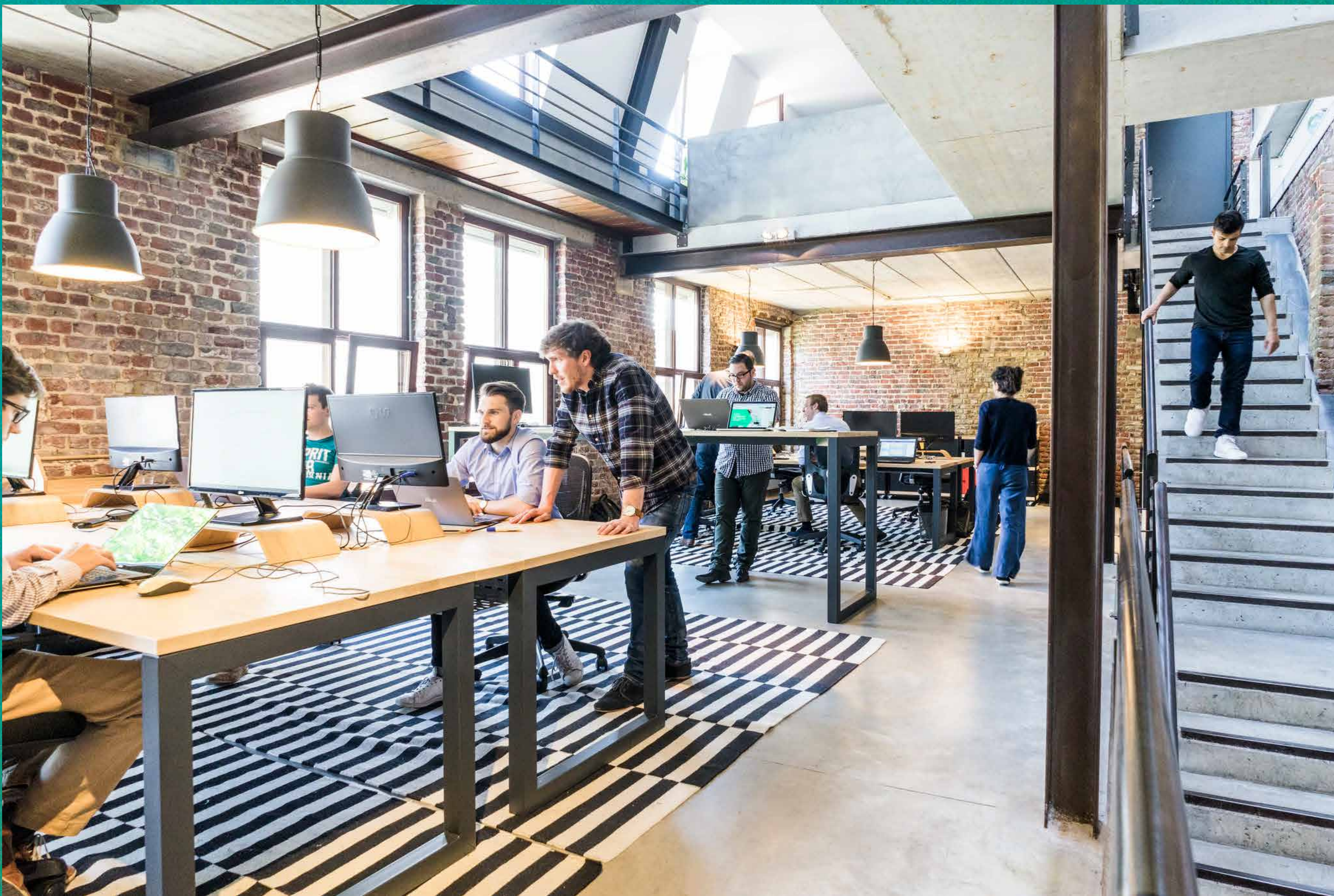
PROF. MARK PHILLIPS

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In a nutshell, how do you see the **future of work**?

"There is no 'future of work' – there is a 'work of the future' which will not be centred around the question of work but around employees, who decide about work and about where and when to do work best. This is why it will be a very interesting future centred around trust, commitment and results instead of working hours and a workplace."

What are current *challenges* and *opportunities* for companies when it comes to **New Work?**

"*As an Architecture researcher I would say that companies will have to involve their employees as stakeholders in everything they do in connection with New Work. Any new workplace idea, office space concept or multi workplace experience should be developed, planned, realised and constantly evaluated with the people who work for the company. The really hard part is going to be the realisation that this is an ever-ongoing process, and secondly, where to find the right consultant to support this process.*"

How do you feel about the *progress* of companies in **creating modern workspaces?**

"Most companies are still firmly stuck in the discussion of home office versus office. The modern workspace is about a flexible design centred around varying employee needs and based on three workplaces: the home office, the office and a variety of third places. These third places are the key to social interaction, random meetings and an interdisciplinary, intercultural and trans-company exchange. This means, employees will have the possibility of exchanging their ideas and thoughts across all existing borders or boundaries – even the current security boundaries of their company. Support of third places will be the key to a modern workplace concept."

Is there any potential for **experimental spaces** or the *combination of different spaces* in the future?

"This question is the answer to what a modern workplace will look like. We will have to take into account that people will be working from department stores (retail), hotels (hospitality) or trains (transportation) and many other places. These multi-use places are inspiring, but not all of them are very well designed for work purposes.

There are two ways of integrating these experimental spaces into a working concept. One way is to just use, develop and improve the existing ones already out there, like having your employees work from a retail place, a café or a hotel lobby and constantly mix their worktime with their free time. The second one is to integrate them into the office layout and to have a section of the office as part of the surrounding city – to create a complete mix of traditional office and non-office space without a fence to keep non-employees out."

It seems like **working from everywhere** is appreciated by many employees, why do you think are some companies trying to bring back the *workforce* to the office?

"This is a simple question of time. All current studies and surveys lead in one direction. Gen-Z will want to live a work-from-anywhere lifestyle. A company that is trying to force their employees to work in the office will start losing the best part of their workforce. Not to speak about how attractive such companies are on the HR market."

Can *modern, functional workspaces* go **hand-in-hand** with a *flexible workforce* working from nearly everywhere, and what would be your *recommendation* to companies?

"Yes, of course they can and there are examples where this functions already. Part of any flexible workforce will always be people that prefer working from the office. And another part will be employees, that come to the office for social interaction, meetings or just because they want. The strength of a functional workspace concept will be that it is functional for many different individuals with very different personalities. My recommendation is to design workplaces together with people first - ask your employees and get the best consultant available to moderate this process. Namely, a consultant with a profound knowledge in the field of architectural space as well as the correlation between the design of spaces and the well-being of those who regularly use them."