P11: Okay, all.

Mattia Rainoldi: Right Okay, then let's get cracking with this interview before we get into into details, I would like to ask you a couple of warm up questions, so I've read your diaries and I'm going to ask a different question about them, but before we get there, I'd like to ask you to tell me what is your job title first?

P11: I am working as a professor.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay, which kind of professor?

P11: Of design.

Mattia Rainoldi: Then, university?

P11: At a University of Applied Sciences.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay. So, and how would you describe your employment type?

P11: I'm employed full-time, meaning by our contract is 40 hours and it's, yes, it's five days a week in a traditional format of eight eight hours a day, so Monday to Friday. Yes.

Mattia Rainoldi: Alrigth. And in a typically day, how do you organize your work and your free time?

P11: Well, that makes a difference if we were speaking before the pandemic or during the pandemic so, for example, um, a usual a typical day before corona you looked like that I went to the office around 7.30 or 8 or sometimes 9 in the morning, then spent my whole day somewhere in the office with a mix of teaching mostly, then a few things relating to research, when I have the time, and then some administrative tasks, plus some onsite meetings with my colleagues, or other things that just keep, um, popping up during the day, and then I will leave anytime between around 5, 6, 7, so depending on the workload of the day how I'm feeling and yeah and how many yeah how tired I am, I am essentially.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay that was your pre-pandemic kind of work situation and how it is now?

P11: At the moment, I'm working from home, so the contract has not changed, but my work modality has changed, meaning that since March, um, 2020, I've been working from my house, from my home office and I've been doing the same activities only not going back to university so everything has shifted to virtual teaching, virtual meetings, virtual working.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay, and can you tell me a little bit more about how you schedule your worktime and non-worktime?

P11: Now or before? Now, in this time?

Mattia Rainoldi: Yes

P11: Okay. In the Home Office, I kind of have the same let's say structure of a usual work day so, not much has changed to to working IN the office than working at home so I still get up punctually in the morning. I might not need this whole traveling time to get to the workplace, because the distances within a house are much shorter. So I can get up even at 9 or like 10 minutes before 9 to attend my first meeting, then I kind of spent the whole day structured as I would with my activities, and I also found that from the Home Office I can do many more activities in shorter time periods, because this whole traveling in between places or meetings even or changing rooms to meetings or one teaching room to the next teaching room doesn't require so much mobility so I'm much faster with the activities, and so I put more activities into my schedule and the schedule is still around working in the morning until lunchtime, then I take usually a one hour break for lunch, and then I continue with more activities in the afternoon and finish around 5 to, yeah, 6pm.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay, so that is your typical structure, you say. What I've seen in your diary is something a little bit different, though. Um, can you maybe give me more information about that, and why the structure that you're mentioning now is not totally represented in your diary?

P11: Well, because um, the 40 hours of of my main employment contract are only one part of my so called work life. I'm also self employed on top of that, meaning that I do a lot of consulting work, which also somehow is integrated in my in my holistic work. They're not for my employer, but, for me, so if I look at my work I'm probably not working only the first contract, which is the 40 hours but on top of that I'm working probably another 10 to 20 hours for my own company, so what I wrote in the diaries is really combination of that so I have let's say 60 hours of work, a week to do and I need to see when those fit in so they're not conflicting you know, like appointments and I can also make sure that I can do the work when whenever needed, so I don't have to have this fixed structure of eight hours for my for my first employment at the university and then in the evening work on my consulting. It can also mix it plus I'm also working sometimes on the weekends to accommodate all those hours. So whenever I see fit, or, for example, I wrote in a diary about a train journey that it did, then those down times of me traveling somewhere passively, I can use this active work time, although they're they're not considered pure work environments, this was a leisure trip, but I still use it for work so there's some flexibility, but both my employer and also the way I handle my own self-employed work that I can essentially work whenever I want in theory.

Mattia Rainoldi: So this structure you were talking about it's rather flexible. Would you say so?

P11: MY structure my personal structure is flexible, the employment structure is not flexible. So, for example, at the university I have to record hours of my work activities and they can only be recorded in an efficient system from 7am to 10pm, so 7am to 10pm. Monday to Saturday, so this is the official law that determines the work contract. I, however, find myself often working outside those hours, so I like sometimes working on a Sunday, or sometimes I work beyond 10 pm just because I'm in the flow of it so work till midnight so officially cannot record those hours, and it can also not work more than I think 10 hours a day, so, somehow I cannot officially record them, so there is a structure in place, but I work around that structure and I work more with my personal flow and I don't mind working for example on a Sunday, but work employment wouldn't allow that in my contract, so I simply lock those hours on an alternative day or not record them at all. So there is structure but there's also some own interpretation of my work and as I'm a knowledge worker and there's a lot of activities that I need to do when I feel like it, and when I say I feel like it is when I'm productive in in a creative flow that can actually do the work for example writing emails is easy, I can squeeze this in anytime but sometimes they're really to focus on writing or doing deep research or deep reading or reviewing or grading which I need let's say three hours or five hours of uninterrupted time to get the task done. I cannot be disturbed and those tasks so sometimes you know block a day or two or even a week for those tasks and then I'm not doing something else, but then I don't mind if it stretches over the weekend, so I rather need to look out for my productivity to see when I feel productive and it might be that on a Monday morning, I'm officially scheduled to work, but it might decide I don't feel like it to do some errands for my personal life, but then I maybe work until midnight later the same day.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay, um, couple of questions on that. The first one is you said 'I need to block time or to safeguard my time', how do that?

P11: How do I safeguard my time, first, I try not to open my email inbox.

Mattia Rainoldi: You try, can be more specific about that?

P11: Yeah I mean I sometimes I close my email inbox yes, on the computer so I'm not looking at it and I'm not receiving any notifications. So for me it's important when I have this productive deep work time that I'm not distracted. That means no notifications on my email inbox. No notifications on my phone and that also means to sometimes I turn the phone around or even more strictly put it on airplane mode if it's really necessary and I don't want to be bothered by any incoming messages or or any destruction, so this is how I safeguard and somehow protect this real deep work time.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay, interesting. It takes me also to the next question that I have, you said you have also working blocks that extend over your weekend, so, if I understood it right, you are off work on the weekend isn't it?

P11: It depends, for my university contract I'm off work but I'm also self-employed and to be self-employed means you're always working, because that's that's your own business so in order to be able to accommodate both working contracts or types of work in my week, I definitely have a choice either work longer in the evenings or I open up my weekends for work and I mostly choose to somehow open my weekend for work.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay, so when you schedule some free time, some leisure time in your the daily routines or weekends?

P11: It depends, I think, very much on the busyness of my year, so, as an academic, I have certain high peak times and downtime for work. So, for example, if it's very busy in the semester from let's say September until Christmas, then I realistically expect not to have a lot of leisure time but then there is times, for example, over the Christmas holidays over the Semester break, Easter, summer holidays, where I have less work to do, so they're automatically I don't have to work 40 hours, but my contract for me it's me to glide or balance the work, meaning if I have worked over hours and accumulated those throughout the year, then I can balance them out so, for example, now in 2021, I have, I think, around 80 plus hours that I'm now in this week, in the next couple of weeks, which I'm balancing out so I'm essentially reducing my work days at the university. I'm not working full eight hours, it might just be working everyday six hours of three hours or five hours as as I feel, so, I can reduse those 80 hours or take full days off so, this means automatically, coming back to your question, leisure time in those periods have more priority in other less.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay, so what are you trying to say is that your work choices have an influence on your free time choices?

P11: My work choices have -

Mattia Rainoldi: Influences your free time choices?

P11: Yes, yes. Because I, realistically speaking, my work determines my life, somehow, and if there is, for example a week of exams or, I need to deliver a consulting report that is on a deadline or have to write and submit a paper for a conference on a deadline that is on a Sunday evening, then I have the choice to make the paper happened earlier on, which often in the middle of semester doesn't work so suddenly there is so much accumulated workload that doesn't fit within a normal work week that I end up even yeah again going into the weekend, but I know that that those peaks are coming up, it's not news to me it's not that I'm suddenly surprised, but my year as an academic works in seasonal cycles. And I know that, for example, now into summer period, I have more and different work deep work to do and also much more free time that I have during this academic semesters.

Mattia Rainoldi: So basically, now you allow more time for for leisure for for free time rather than in other times of the year?

P11: Mhmm. I would say so.

Mattia Rainoldi: Do you have any system in place to, um, safeguard the time?

P11: Yes, as I wrote in my diary for example I put in an out of office email responder from mid July until mid September, which gives me two months for my colleagues at the university, as well as any person externally contacting me, knowing that I'm not in the office and at their disposal for any incoming requests. I'm not definitely on holiday, but just do as I said deep work and work less hours every day. So if there is a lot of NEW incoming requests, in addition to old the old ones that are still need to catch up on from the from the year, then it's too much so decided in order to process the pipeline and the queue of emails and requests and projects, I NEED to get like a break where I can just finish those off, deal with them before the new year in September starts, so I need breathing time and also need to work actually less time, I need more leisure time, I need to recover energy, I need to you know, enjoy summer, enjoy free time, because it's the only time of year that I can actually do that so I'm not looking into working 8 to 10 hours a day, but I just maybe want to work 3 hours or 4 hours a day or half a day. And for that one of the safeguards that I've discovered and try it out, for the first time this year is this very long out of office, email responder. I'm still monitoring my emails though, so it's it's not that I'm not looking at my emails and still monitoring them and I'm still working on the urgent ones, but any random requests of would you like to collaborate, would you like to start something, they know they do not get a response from me until, um, September and that helps a lot with the pressure of not having to constantly every day respond to my emails, so it gives me so much breathing time that it can focus again on deep work, on writing because I'm not bothered by any administrative communications tasks, social engagements, talking to people, doing any meetings, and this is a huge burden for me in my daily life, at work, and this is somehow very much now protected and safeguarded by this mechanism.

Mattia Rainoldi: Basically this mechanism helps you to to safeguard you from additional work, but basically safeguards your work, not exactly you're free, so is a - (sees that P11 wants to response) please.

P11: It's a, it safeguards my work, the high quality work. But it also safeguards my free time because last week, for example, I WAS in fact on a holiday, and there I didn't respond to, I think, very little emails if any, meaning, it also really safeguards my leisure time, so if a day I'm not working, I'm actually doing something different, then, if it's, this is the mechanism for it.

Mattia Rainoldi: So you're saying you were on holiday you still did some kind of work?

P11: For my own employment, yes.

Mattia Rainoldi: Why is the reason for doing so?

P11: But this was more like reading, for example, I read a book, which is kind of a private life topic, but it's also relating to my work in the broader sense, it was just like it's lifelong learning, I'm reading literature that relates to my work, not the textbook book, for example, a good public and a public popular science book so yeah and I checked my emails just to make sure there's nothing urgent coming up but it didn't respond so, for example, if my administrative, my administrators wrote me about some teaching schedules, I'm not sitting in front of the computer and getting into this, because it would take me an hour or two to get into this and would get me completely out of my leisure, um, you know, relaxing mode, but I don't mind, for example, to check emails for to screen emails for urgency on the beach, because it gives me somehow a peace of mind that I know that nothing is is happening and all my email accounts are on my phone, my phone is always with me, so it automatically kind of sometimes I do check, but it doesn't disturb me too too much.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay. Um, you said 'okay, I don't engage with not important task', and what was important or if it was urgent?

P11: Then it depends, then I have still the choice, that's a difference. With the out of office email responder it's not that I must respond, but I always have like a choice and it's always a positive if I respond to somebody and if it's, for example, urgent, then the choice is mine. Do I respond during my holiday, do I feel it's urgent enough for me that I really need to act right now, or can it wait a week. But the alternative of me NOT checking my emails for seven days and going on a let's say a digital complete detox, either you do it fully like you're disconnected, for example on a mountain or you or you're in a in a still in a digitally reachable zone and then for me it's honestly very difficult to for seven days in a row, not even once open my email. It's too tempting with having this phone all the time and having WiFi, I'm not I'm not doing that I have done many holidays in my life, I have done a digital detox for three weeks, I have done a mountaineering for three weeks, and there was actually almost completely offline, why? Because there was no no WiFi, for example, or no phone reception. But if I now take a work off in the middle of my life in the summer whilst I have my self employment activities running, then somehow I I yeah I keep checking at least checking the emails.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay. So what is the reason for that exactly?

P11: First it's probably a habit and second again to I don't know (laugh) like to be, to be sure that nothing urgent is happening, there is no emergency somewhere.

Mattia Rainoldi: Right, but that could have happened also when you are on the mountains?

P11: Yes, but on the mountains on the mountains, it was different because there, for example, it was a place where there was actually no mobile phone reception, so I had to use an extra card that I had to pay for to get them the short of 10 minute window of in of a WiFi and I had like 5 to 10 minutes Internet every couple of days, so those were only reserved for let's say writing a text to family that I'm alive and well, and that's it. And there I wouldn't even have time and I didn't want to be bothered actually mentally to engage in any in any work activities and I couldn't download any emails because there was no no possibility and I was too far away to manage anything so if I looked at it something urgent came up, I couldn't even be managing it. But if you say let's say in in somewhere in Europe in a vacation in a hotel where there's constant WiFi then for me at least, personally speaking, it's it's difficult to switch the switch off completely.

Mattia Rainoldi: Yeah I understand it. Very good. We have talked about out of about scheduling time of work and leisure, I'd like also to briefly talk about the place where you work from. Um, so, you said you work now from home and previously from the office, um, um, and from the train and you also mentioned on your diaries some terrace and garden. Um, can you tell me why you work in different places and?

P11: Yeah. So, somehow I I work yeah, so first I work in multiple places, also in the Home Office so I've got a house where I've got a dedicated office space. But I choose to vary those workspaces so sometimes to work from my living room, sometimes to work from the outdoor terrace, sometimes to work on my couch, so I vary kind of the places, why? Because for me depends a bit on the activity that I need to do so, for example, if I have a very let's call it formal activity where I need a lot of papers or books or multiple papers open, then I prefer working at the desk where it can keep the materials open, in my view, and all the administrative paperwork, which now is less than before, but but still, then I work or have a meeting on Zoom like now, then usually I work, um, in my home office, where do all the formal calls and meetings, because there I have got the door locked or the door closed and then then that's the space and I'm very much in work mode, formally, but sometimes I get tired of just sitting in front of the desk right because, especially with Home Office and I'm now not so much moving anywhere, like at the university I used to be in the office and go for a coffee with my colleagues, then maybe go to the classroom to teach, so there is more variation, so two measures I implemented is first about a height, um, mobile table. I don't know what the word, for that is like those movable tables, to stand up, while having very long meetings so during the pandemic, I discovered sometimes I hit eight hours of meeting and teaching in a row, where at the end of the day, you literally cannot sit anymore it's it's impossible, so I bought this this table to give me some you know, um, support for my body as well and have at least some standing up activity and then second is that I want to vary the places where work from to also get a change of scenery. And this is why I sometimes work for more leisure activities, let's say I work on my website, or I just like prepare a social media post. I can do that from my couch and by the time of 6pm or sometimes 8pm or sometimes I work also you know late in the evening 10pm to midnight, then I'm quite comfy working from, um, sitting on my couch or sitting outside on the terrace, if the weather's nice, then there is no point for me sitting indoors. So the terrace argument that I mentioned, is also due to the fact that now it's summertime and I value being outside and if I sit inside the whole day then I'm missing the whole sunshine outside. And because I'm flexible in in in working from home so and it's only a few meters to walk it's easy for me to work outside. I couldn't do that in my in my at the university, there is no tables outside to really work. No, no, Internet connection, no, no plug. I can't. Yes, I could take my laptop maybe for an hour to read a book, but it looks like I'm not working, if I'm sitting on the terrace or in the caferteria to read a whole day, it's a not accepted practice. I would say, at least, it has not been an accepted practice, imagine I'm sitting all day in the restaurant with my laptop at the university and people would say 'what is she doing, she's just drinking coffee'. Maybe. I don't know, this is maybe my judgment of what other people think of me or my perception. But at home it's super easy because I've got the infrastructure setup, I've got my table without the WiFi so based on the weather I can work wherever if it's raining, I go to the office at the house, if it's sunny I sit outside and work, so I'm combining the best depending on the weather situation.

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm. It is interesting because you mentioned that these environments you feel them or you described them as leisurely.

P11: Mhmm.

Mattia Rainoldi: So, um, can you tell me something about it?

P11: Because they are, they are relaxing, they're comforting, so in even my Home Office is it's like a cubicle, it's a room that is designed with a desk and a chair and a plant but that's it, so I don't have a couch there it's not that I just go there to to lay down or something, it's still a formal environment, it's like the office at the workplace, where you have kind of this very clean setting just a table a few materials and and that's it but this doesn't always flow with the with the work activity so leisurely setting means for me I'm sitting in my on my terrace or in my hammock which relaxes my body more, relaxes is my mind more because sun is shining on my face. And I can still sit with my laptop on my lap or on my knees here and work, but if somebody externally would watch me sitting the whole day in the in the hammock, then they would say what again like what what would people think it looks like it looks like she she wouldn't be working you know, imagine a person sitting on the beach all day, yes, of course, if you have a mobile phone and if your social media influencer this could be a main work but let's say for my, um, quite traditional work, I'm not a you know, a generation said hipster social media influencer, I'm a professor, who teaches at the university and does research so the the idea, also, that my colleagues have my workplace culture is you sit in an office, you have maybe your 50 books and you come to the work every day. And so, when I'm saying it's leisurely, it's when I'm not sitting with all those books and I have just now all materials on my laptop and I can sit in the sun, in the sun chair outside with just my phone to check my emails and respond or just my laptop.

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm. Interesting yeah and another thing that you mentioned is that you use different species according to your mood or your flow?

P11: Yes, because, sometimes you know when we like go on holidays, we also are in need of a change of setting, a change of environment, we need to be refreshed, to be immersed in a new place and, if you think about the pandemic, at least for me, it has really tied me to just being at home, most of my my my year, last year, and still to this day I'm mostly at home, so at least, there are some small freedom and changing the scenery is within the house, so I feel like there's some movement, it gives me energy so I'm very much atuned and aligned with my moods and with my energy flow and because I'm having a design background, and expertise on how spaces affect people, I'm designing the experience of the ideal workplace for myself as well, so kind of practice what you preach. So I was prototyping over the last year to attune even more and become more conscious about my own working and energy flows and how the workspaces can affect my my flow and my productivity, so, for example when I'm sitting in the office and I'm just staring at the screen and they realize that, that now I'm not sitting and just watching some newspaper or some social media and scroll and like just you know, do not productive work, but then I say 'okay now I get up, I'm not productive, let's change scenery, let's go somewhere else', and then I move, I get up and through the mobility, through maybe going outside, getting fresh air, getting a new cup of coffee, having some sun and maybe a change of activity from sitting in front of the screen to just reading a book, an analog book outside makes the whole difference. And, and this is a an approach or practice that I have started much more, and I feel this is, this is the future, at least for me, and this is why I cannot be mentioned at this point in my life to go back at any point in the future, pandemic or not, to working five days a week from an office where I'm sitting there when I'm productive or not, but I have to be forced to to sit there, so I'm pretty much no longer envisioning me going back to that traditional working format.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay interesting that you're mentioning some future perspectives, and we are going to come back to that aspect, maybe know for sure later. Now, um, what I would like to ask you is a little bit to give me some some information about, um, how they you, you mentioned, um, several times, um, during the course of the interview, so far, how you use digital technologies and how technologies enable you the management of your time and your workplaces and, um, leisure places and so on, um, yeah, so I would like to ask you a few questions about it. What I've seen from, um, from your diary is that you have a mobile phone that you use for both for work and for leisure time and, um, then you mainly work on a computer. Can you tell me a little bit about how these technologies help you to, well, to achieve the goals that you were mentioning before?

P11: Mhmm, yeah. The, the answer is easy these digital technologies and platforms are essentially nowadays from me, for doing my my whole work, like I cannot imagine doing my work with without those devices so they're enabling me first of all to do my work in in different places. I, it's not a problem if I'm sitting on a train, it's not a waste of time, I have my laptop with me, I have my mobile phone and that's really all all I need. So any place, I can essentially work as long as I have WiFi connection, so on the train a WiFi connection, a good one, is a must have, at home this the same, so indoors and outdoors and, um, or on the beach as well I needed WiFi last week, when I was on holiday. So there is no question around around technology not not being important and yeah and I manage everything from those devices so teaching, for example, is not all virtual, so I I do all my my daily activities from from my laptop, from my computer, so in theory doesn't matter where where I teach from, where I have those meetings from because everything is now online and yeah, it doesn't matter where you are.

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm. And how you differentiate between what is used for leisure and what is used for, um, work?

P11: I personally don't, because I I use my mobile phone, which is a private mobile phone. I use that for my self-employed work but also my employed work so, for example, my employer does not give me a paid mobile phone, so I don't have a company phone, so I'm using my private device for work purposes, and while it is mostly used let's say for private use let's say 80%, I still use the functionality, so now looking at my phone so I'm communicating, um, with colleagues on WhatsApp, I'm taking phone calls, I'm managing social media accounts, Instagram and Facebook, Twitter, Dropbox from my phone for work purposes and my email accounts are all synchronized all the time, um, to my to my phone, so I would say it is a private device but it's used for for work as well, and the laptop that I'm using is a device that I got from my former employer. No, this was the one before now, I have a private laptop that I bought myself that yes, that I bought myself because it's a MAC and my current employer wouldn't buy me that specific device from Apple because of internal company policies, so I have again a private device that I'm using for work, but I yeah I also use it to watch Netflix, but this is made, maybe a device that is primarily used for work, but I still anywhere I go almost take it whether it's a holiday, it's a short trip, I always take that because they might watch Netflix in the evening, so I always have those two devices with me and then, I have my Home Office which is much more technologically equipped, so there I have a proper setup of an additional camera, of an additional speaker, keyboard like multiple things to have a professional filming setup for for meetings or presentations or teaching, yeah.

Mattia Rainoldi: So the reason for you for using these devices for work and other purposes is only that your employer is not providing you those?

P11: No, I would not not change anything on the setup. So I'm still using those two devices. I wouldn't, actually wouldn't like to have any any duplication of those devices.

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm.

P11: So I would personally not like the idea to have multiple phones. I know a lot of my friends, they have to phone, sometimes even three phones, so they have a work phone and then a self-employed work phone, then a private phone and I feel like they're constantly on the phones or someone of those phones are ringing and for me, there is no point in that or there wouldn't be a point to have a MAC book just to watch Netflix and maybe check social media on that device and then having the work computer or work MAC by my employer for just work because for me it's integrated all the time, so I might be doing a research paper and then check social media for five minutes that would that is private. I would never change the device for that because it's my it's my natural workflow and then, if I feel like five minutes briefing time because people can only focus like 20 minutes in a row, then after 20 minutes I might open the newspaper just to give me a cognitive downtime. And then I'm continuing five minutes later with work again, so there is no point for me to switching any devices, so all I need is a laptop and a phone and all purposes of my life, private, work from all the employers I have, are on that and I'm receiving with one click four different email accounts and that's the most seamless experience, because with one glance with one time I click on that and managing for different employments, or four different activities and I wouldn't want to separate that because it would take me much more more time.

Mattia Rainoldi: And how does it make you feel to have basically all your life, private, leisure, work at the same time at the same place?

P11: It doesn't bother me, it's it's it's my life, it doesn't, I don't need it to be separated it. If I feel like it's getting too much or really I don't want to have work intrude in a in a really offline day then I'm simply not looking at my phone. But 99% of the cases, I like it to be integrated, but, for example, there is sometimes to take those offline weekend yeah, where on Friday to Monday I'm not looking at my phone or I'm not looking at my emails, Whatsapp messages there, they are piling up but I'm not responding, I'm not looking, I'm not checking anything, um, because sometimes if I need offline times but it's only during those times and then I'm, then the simplest mechanism is NOT looking at it. But during all the other days, it's a comfort for me and actually a benefit to have everything integrated, because this is who I am. This is my work is somehow my my main my main life activity, um, because it's like a purpose work as well, it's not like I'm doing my 40 hours and then I'm done and not thinking about it, I am a knowledge worker I I have, you know, scientific discoveries and thoughts in when I'm showering or when I'm in the supermarket and then I think maybe about work and then simply quickly type it into my notes or on the beach last week, when I was in holiday, I was reading this this popular science leisure book, but it was having a ton of thoughts about my event that I'm organizing next year, and my teaching that I'm starting now, so I was actually using my phone and my notes application to already like record all the ideas that were flowing because it was in this leisurely setting and I recorded them to what to do when I'm actually back to work, to have those ideas set and ready because they're not coming back, they only come when you feel creative and in that moment I was super in this creative flow and it would be super pity to say 'this is work and I'm not engaging with it' and and letting the thought slide because -

Mattia Rainoldi: What was exactly the role of technology in this case?

P11: Because I had on the beach my phone with me and I have my notes and I have the practice to record with notes all my life activities, so I have multiple notes and I've a shopping list, I have a to do next, I have a teaching list, I have an event list, and a meeting list and I'm just popping those ideas and thoughts that have come up at random times into my notes, but I'm not acting on them or I'm not processing the work so I'm not going let's say the book gave me the idea that I need to add something to my website. Then I'm not at the beach going into the room and doing it, but I'm just saying um 'add to website this information', and then, in my in my mind, um, is free, because it's recorded, it's set and done.

Mattia Rainoldi: I understand, okay, interesting yeah. Um, does it, just a second (pause), so do you think that sometimes you in this case, you are in a boundary-less environment. Okay?

P11: Yes.

Mattia Rainoldi: So, and, um, how do you feel in this environment without boundaries?

P11: Generally?

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm.

P11: I'm boundary-less, um, no I wouldn't say so.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay.

P11: I mean, on the beach example, do you call this boundary-less? I don't know like this, actually, I don't know if, um, I feel I have boundaries it might now seem to you like I don't have boundaries from my examples, but I feel I have very strict boundaries, so coming back again to, um, can I give an example of a boundary?

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm.

P11: Okay, so coming back to my emails. I, my job is to do science and research and not being an administrator of my inbox. And I make my life contribution probably not writing email so, but they're necessary evil in my work day, so what I'm doing is only checking emails but not responding or how should say like a buffering and collecting a time slot where just respond fast to emails at the end of the day, or in the morning, so I have a very strict boundary, then I'm not responding to emails on certain times of the day, or even four full days in a row or, for example, um, um, what did I want to say there's another example where strict boundaries yeah on weekends most of the time I'm completely offline. I'm not socially engaging on weekends. So even if emails are coming in, or people are contacting me on weekends and I'm, I'm not responding so those are very private and very reserved so even, for example, to friends if they're contacting me on my phone. I take a lot of weekend social times office where I'm not looking at mine my phone for any, I need to get rid of social engagement, sounds weird I might be very introverted on weekends, but I NEED this time, where I have no meetings with people and no kind of chats and context, so I have very strict personal boundaries in place with that or when I'm having a dinner at home with family or friends, I'm not the person who sits there with the phone while talking to their friends. I'm very strict to protect those zones and sometimes also make people around me aware, say, are you checking your phone or are you having dinner because, for me, this is like a time when I'm focusing mindfully on eating, we're have very clear boundaries that there is no place for my phone and a lot of times during dinner or lunch, I actually put in airplane mode because I really cannot be, um, bothered by any incoming, um, messages and they always come in, why? Because I gave my personal phone number to a lot of work colleagues and to my assistants, and of course they use WhatsApp like a conversation so there is no boundaries for them and it's okay, but for me not to be sometimes bothered I'm creating those own protection boundaries that are reinforced, for example, with an airplane mode.

Mattia Rainoldi: Sounds interesting, um, though complicated because you are writing here that if you put your phone on airplane mode, you cannot check social media. And it's something that happens very often from what I read in your diary?

P11: Maybe the airplane mode is really when it's it's super strict so, for example when when I'm having a dinner party or having dinner.

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm.

P11: And I know, for example, it's it's Wednesday 6pm but I'm having a special dinner and I'm expecting maybe messages also coming in, because my assistants are working on some projects where they constantly need help or or something, then then maybe I say 'okay, and now I just need an hour offline' but also from social media, then it makes sense to put the airplane mode in.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay interesting. What I'm going to do now is, um, reading you some bits of your diary and if you could give me some more information about what you what you wrote here yeah.

P11: Need some water quickly.

Mattia Rainoldi: Yes.

P11: Okay ready.

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm. Um, let me see what I found here, so this day was a Saturday and you say 'it means in theory weekend day off, for me, from my full-time work, I don't write, I didn't write any emails, WhatsApp or messages today. I generally don't do it on the weekend, so if I don't write other don't write me'. Is that a strategy of yours?

P11: Yes, it's my philosophy, I don't know, I can't remember which book I read it, some maybe deep workbook or some something else, there was a book, where they are Tim Ferriss or somebody suggested that if you don't write emails you proportionately get less email responses (laugh), meaning less less emails to process, so I have started a few years ago that the practice of writing as few emails as possible. And that automatically reduces the amount of emails I have to process, plus sometimes NOT responding to emails is very effective because there's a certain percentage of emails that are automatically resolved by itself or by other people for you, while you're not responding, so this is definitely a strategy for me.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay. Let me see, I have a few other things here that I found very interesting 'I'm semi-offline for a week'.

P11: Say that again?

Mattia Rainoldi: 'I am semi-offline for a week'. So, what does it mean for you being semi-offline? (laugh)

P11: That's an interesting statement yeah, yeah it's semi-offline, it's exactly it's exactly what it says, um, because full-offline would be digital detox, offline, I'm not reachable, like I'm off the grid, disconnected, no human being can actually reach me offline but semi-offline is that people in my surrounding are notified yes, that's the thing, by my out of office, if they don't know me or by personal notification, such as my parents or my assistants, or my close colleagues that said 'okay guys I'm going on holiday for a week, so I intend to be on a holiday so don't bother me with any work unless it's super urgent' and didn't which is great but I was still checking, as I mentioned, my my emails and I was on my social media, meaning for ME I wasn't, the holiday was not offline, but it was selectively offline, meaning I was work offline or pretending to be work offline completely, but I was privately online with my social media which still is a bit of a hypocrisy, because my social media accounts are essentially anyways 50% work because I follow all the universities and other people, but this is coming back to my statement from before, I'm a knowledge work and have an integrated life so, even if I engage them in social media there is probably 80% of the people in my social network are somehow colleagues (laugh). It, there is no more work or life separation, this is this is like full stop. It's always all the time integrated and this is why the semi-offline describes it, yes, for me, I'm selectively offline.

Mattia Rainoldi: Selectively offline.

P11: Yeah, I choose and have the power to choose to be offline and I definitely have the free pass from work to be offline because I was officially on annual leave, meaning I officially took holidays at work that are confirmed by my boss, so I was, I was offline and people could never say I, 'you have to be reachable' so it was officially on, um, on leave, I had an out of office responder. So if I chose to respond to any emails it would be by my own choosing, because I would feel like it because I wanted, but not because I had to and having this AUTONOMY to decide, this is the main difference because when I'm at work and then I'm on the beach, then I still feel like yes, I should kind of be doing eight hours and there I have to be reachable because, if my boss decides to call me for a Microsoft Teams meeting at 2pm and I'm on the beach, then I kind of have to be available, and this, then, is not a semi offline state, it is an online state for me in a leisurely setting.

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm.

P11: Where I enjoy the surroundings and I have a very leisurely, relaxing mode that is probably beneficial for my well being, but I have to be on call and I'm not offline. I have to be on on call somehow.

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm. Yeah, it's -

P11: (overlap) Because (end of overlap) people expect me, you know, people if they know that I'm working, they might have a question and this question might come around, so I'd take my laptop with me on Microsoft Teams to be available and online or not, but this is, this is about expectations as well, and about communication, so they know if I'm reachable or not.

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm. Mhmm. Okay. So, and in this case having technologies around, how makes makes you feel?

P11: In the online setting or the semi-offline?

Mattia Rainoldi: The, the both of them, um.

P11: For me technology is never an issue. I don't, my phone is always with me, my phone is literally, unless I'm sleeping, it's on me, so I don't see this invading, my laptop I don't take always with me everywhere, because it's it's heavier and I don't and I want to avoid screen time. Plus in the pandemic, I realized also that there is this, you know, famous Zoom fatigue that a lot of people talk about so I try to reduce on screen time. So now, sometimes I developed a new practice which is to not scheduled zoom meetings anymore, where I have to sit with the screen in a, um, stationary place but I'm actually doing a Whatsapp calls, just calls, no video, that I can take outside or on the terrace or while cooking and it eases my eyes so again the design of my own workspace because there's too much screen time and if you're teaching eight hours and sitting in front of the screen for meetings for eight hours, it's it's too much, so I'm very conscious about my own well-being of my my body, health, movement, of my eyesight and redesigning workspaces for me has become very, very much an important activity so I would say my phone is always with me, but the computer is yeah, it depends on the situation.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay. Yeah, let's move to another interesting statement that you wrote here, you were talking about being in a workshop, and you said 'in the workshop I had to focus, so I could not multitask on emails and other small task as I often do during Zoom meeting calls'.

P11: Yes, because, yes, so, for example, I was moderating a workshop, a physical workshop where I have to be kind of on the stage, in a room with people there, so I had to record what they were saying on the flip chart I was doing activities with them and had to moderate and listen all the time. So for those two days of workshop, I was almost offline because I didn't get a chance to actually look much at my phone because, even while they were doing their activities, I had to prepare, um, for the next activity or in the breaks, I had to do networking or or prepare for the next activity, so this is a work situation that is SO intense it's like teaching, it sometimes so intense if you teach for eight hours in a row that you do not get to check your emails, this happened many times, this is why academics sometimes get a very bad reputation that they don't respond to their emails for two months but, as a matter of fact, this happens, because if you're so busy teaching every day for eight hours, then you might not get a chance so, um, -

Mattia Rainoldi: (overlap) What (end of overlap) I'm more interested, um is the statement here 'not multitask'.

P11: Because I was focused.

Mattia Rainoldi: (overlap) - during, no but what you're basically saying that other times you have Zoom meetings and you multitask on emails and others small tasks?

P11: Yes, because, for example here technology is a game changer, so I've found, and probably a lot of our people discovered that too, if you're in a Zoom meeting then and you're not the one who speaks then actually it's very easy to do multitasking on other tasks, while you're attending a meeting. So when I'm doing Zoom meetings where I'm not the one moderating or speaking and I'm more of a passive participant, just to be there for my information, then of course I'm writing and responding to emails, I'm checking my social media, I maybe look at the newspaper or get other administrative tasks done that the kind of don't require too much cognitive, you know, processing and I can still listen with one hear to a meeting, but at the same time do like a not, um, intense activity while on the screen and because it's all it's all on the screen, I can multitask much better and I'm actually fast, but embedding my productivity, so there is an advantage of those Zoom virtual environments of work.

Mattia Rainoldi: So basically here you're you are doing multiple work tasks, at the same time?

P11: Yes.

Mattia Rainoldi: And and this working work, basically, but what I found also in in your diary here is something different, that you do work and leisure time at the same time, yeah, you were mentioning doing some kind of work on your mobile phone or something and being engaged on Netflix on another device?

P11: Yes, so I think what you stated, trying to say I'm just realizing is yes I'm multitasking and I'm now speaking not about the comparison like before, but now those virtual work environments and multitasking where I'm coupling work with more work, so I'm squeezing multiple work tasks into the same time window, like being on a Zoom call while writing my emails for the same work, but also sometimes I'm on a Zoom call and I'm actually checking my private social media or I'm checking the newspaper which again is a private activity, I would say, because if I'm bored in a meeting then usually in a physical setting, I was never able to because you have to you know, sometimes we all have set through those two hour meetings where nothing happens 20,30 people in a room and everyone just had to sit it out, but this was so much lost time before and now in a virtual setting you can actually or at least I decided, I need to use this time if I even have to attend the meeting, and I can do either work on top to use the downtime better or to private things like checking other virtual activity so I cannot do baking maybe I could do if you switch off the camera, I can do bake, sometimes I attended once a conference where yeah it was a Zoom call, but there was hundreds of people, so I did switch off the video, and I was baking a cake. So it's also mixture, and because I've got very good WiFi in my kitchen I could simply put the laptop on the kitchen counter and I was preparing the stuff, I was cooking and watching the conference, there is no need in the world that says, while you're watching a conference, you have to sit in an office or while doing a meeting have to sit in an office, for that matter, so again designing workspace, combining activities it always depends on the nature of the activity of what I can couple it with. If I'm teaching and I'm the teacher then yeah I CANNOT cook usually, next to it.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay. Let me see where is it, yeah that is the example I was talking about also 'I was' oh sorry 'I, it was a real evening off today, as it did not work late, which I often do next watching TV', so I'm very interested in in this being here that you work late and you often do next to watching TV. Is that something that happens, well, comment first on that please?

P11: Yes. So sometimes, I'm watching a series on Netflix. Sometimes a whole day if it's a Saturday and it's raining outside and then I'm on my phone and on my phone, for example, I'm responding to emails. So that would be watching Netflix but maybe it's not so interesting in a certain sequence, so, then I find myself let me take me out my phone and I'm checking my social media or even respond emails while while watching or sometimes like yesterday, I was watching Netflix and there was still in our productive workflow, I was working on my website, so was with one year listening to the series, and on the other, I was still yeah working on doing tasks and finishing them on Netflix so are on my website so yeah I don't know, it goes well together (laugh).

Mattia Rainoldi: Why is the reason for you to doing that?

P11: Because I might I might start with Netflix and then I feel if it's boring then I start something else so (laugh).

Mattia Rainoldi: If it's boring, then you go on and do work?

P11: Sometimes.

(both laugh)

P11: If Netflix is suddenly boring but I have the intention to keep watching, but if there is some sequence, some scene that is long and boring, then I take out my phone and and actually do work so, for example, my assistant if they write me on Whatsapp and they often do, then, of course, and what keep watching Netflix because that's the intention maybe of the, a certain evening when it's 8pm and 9pm but they still they text me and then I said 'okay, rather than waiting for the morning, I can, um, respond right now, so they can continue working' so, for example, I've got one assistant, who is based in Asia so she's in a different time zone, which means anything that I can give her a task in the evening, will be done when I wake up, because of the time difference which is great, so I need to process sometimes, delegation tasks late in the evening so she can work on them and by the time I'm up in eight hours it's done.

Mattia Rainoldi: So, then, the reason for you to do that is not because Netflix is boring, but because you want to accomplish something?

P11: Both, but also Netflix sometimes is boring (laugh) and, and I don't mind to get many work tasks done.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay.

P11: And it's good because it like I don't understand like what I said before, autonomy, I don't HAVE to, but it makes me feel better like mini progress if I get something done, it's like you're I'm on holiday and then I'm responding like two three emails and I feel like wow, it's like extra some extra productivity thing that I did because I accomplished not accomplished I just process something which no one told me to do so anything I do in my holiday time or leisure downtime for work, it makes me feel like 'yeah I made some progress, some extra' and I'm only doing it, again, if I'm in the mood. If I'm not in the mood, I'm not seeing the world for even three days in a row, and then I'm really just with Netflix for three days, but if a feel like it and, again, the key word here is if it's not a burden to me emotionally at that point to engage with WhatsApp or my emails and I if I feel as socially open to do so then I'm acting on it and then it's a an activity that makes me feel well, it suits and it flows, there's other days, where I don't want to see a human person in my life, when I'm completely tired or drained or had um a stressful work week, then NO ONE can contact me on WhatsApp, I'm not even responding to to my friends and my parents, then I'm offline and I'm not offline really but I'm not responding to anything, or I might actually put in a flight mode, but it depends on how socially, how should I say, open I am, energy open again, if I'm close to burn out and I don't want to talk with anyone.

Mattia Rainoldi: I guess. Right, this is an example of kind of a micro task from a different area of your life, this case you're in the leisure area of your life and you do a micro work tasks, um, related to work and, as I um, felt here in your diary, you do also some kind of other micro leisure activities also on your work. And I would like to ask you why you do that, and how that makes you feel? So I understood how how why you do the micro work task in your leisure time, and how that makes you feel, and they would like to understand the other, um, option as well?

P11: So how I, if I, what is the question, so if how the micro tasking of leisure in my work -

Mattia Rainoldi: Micro-leisure task or micro-leisure within work.

P11: Okay. Some micro leisure tasks in my workplace, yes, um they are somehow important to me because I have a high cognitively intense work setting and work activity, and I can only focus and concentrate so many minutes in one go, so let's say usual worked task in my in my profession is writing a research paper that might take a whole week, sometimes even two weeks, where I block let's say one week that is reserved for writing a research paper and I'm not scheduling any meetings in that week, I'm just focusing on getting the paper done, but of course I cannot work 40 or 60 hours or hundred hours in a row so every let's say 20 minutes or so I I need a quick refresher. I need to get up maybe, go to the toilet, I need to get a fresh cup of coffee or I engage with social media quickly, which again gives me this like just two minute downtime of scrolling through which my mind somehow is yeah getting a bit of a space to to relax and then coming back to the work or, for example, when I finish a chapter or a section within the paper then it's like the small feeling of accomplishment that I tick the box of another section. And then I yeah and then I watch, go on social media like yes, now I have like accomplished and deserve a bit of a relaxed time so it's like almost a little incentive, that sometimes I tell myself, I have to focus on finishing the tasks and when it's done, then I can again get up and do something else or, then I can go on social media but keeping that out when I'm when I'm focused.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay, very interesting, let me see, I have more notes made here, we've talked about that, yeah that was what we were discussing 'little free time in between' that here then about your out of office email, we also discuss about that using that as a protection shield that is interesting, if you think about it, what exactly means for you being a being, having a protection shield.

P11: Um, protection shield for me means a shield between myself and my social environment, because if, um, not, I need to somehow communicate to other people that I'm not available, so I feel like very vulnerable if I don't have this out of office (laugh) in there, because people, for example in my workplace they write me emails all the time, 'P11 do this and get that and look at this and do that', right. So if I were just receiving those emails and not responding for the whole week or even the whole month, then would probably think like I bad or something or write me an angry email why I didn't come back to them already and sometimes people write me those emails and then, with the out of office, I have a very clear communication line in place that says to them 'look P11 is out of office and she's definitely not responding' and again if she's responding, this would be a plus because then they have the awareness 'wow she's responding in her leisure time' so either she's stupid or she is fantastic because she got back to to me, so it makes them feel good but I don't HAVE the obligation to do that, so if my boss knows I'm out of office and respond to her, it makes her feels special or she feels like I should not look at my emails I don't know what she she feels like but it definitely helps to clarify expectations mutually and I think now in this digital era, we need to be even clearer so, for example, I saw a lot of colleagues nowadays have those small additions in their emails that says like along the lines of I work flexible work hours, but do not expect a response from you outside YOUR own work hours, which is great again like just as a disclaimer like look, I might work on a Sunday 11pm and I might be your boss but I don't expect you to respond to me until eight in the morning, or I write my assistants a lot of times also during the weekend because it just have a note to process or have a thought and I need to get this cleared out of MY task list, and as soon as the send it to them it's cleared for my table but, of course, I do not expect my assistants to work on a Sunday evening but it it helps for communication to set up those disclaimers when do people expect you to respond or actually work and the more we're using like those private channels like Facebook messenger or a Whatsapp all the time, I think, the more we need to not only do the work, but we need to have a conversation about the boundaries of each other's work and expectations around that.

Mattia Rainoldi: Yes, this is something that I wanted to ask you right now, because you have this protection shield, as you call it that basically protect you from the emails but then you have mentioned multiple times you have multiple social media for work and leisure purposes and use WhatsApp for private and for and for work, are these channels also protected by some kind of shield?

P11: No, that's a good point, so only the emails, but this is my main I would say, still my main communication channel that has the out of office, but WhatsApp does not have an out of office, yes, I could probably change my status, I have never done that but that's a very good point because that leads me to another example I experienced recently, where I was, um, ill for a couple of days, and I was just for me offline so I didn't respond to an email, but it was weekend, yes, so I was ill from Friday afternoon till Monday morning and I was not responding to any emails and I did not respond to any WhatsaAp messages, but one of my assistants was processing some important tasks in relation to an event that I was organizing. So on Monday, she wrote kind of a, um, how to say this diplomatically, she wrote like a very stressed message like saying, along the lines of 'where the hell, are you and why you're not responding'. And, as her boss somehow I found it quite interesting that my assistant somehow expected me to respond over the weekend to her 25 WhatsApp messages and the emails because somehow she felt that we are working, of course, seven days a week which is true, because I gave her the pressure on Thursday and Friday to finish some task that was very important was actually very urgent, important and urgent, and I had to check it to give the final approval, but then I was out by being ill so suddenly she got very confused or anxious and stressed that it wasn't responding so there, I felt in retrospect, there was no clear communication in line because there's no out of office, so I should have said on Friday evening to her 'look, I'm ill, communicating officially, do not expect a response until I'm back until Monday' but this was an interesting example because, of course, a colleague would never write me an angry message in the morning, why didn't you respond to your emails on a Sunday but in that case because she's my close assistant, she has access to my phone, my WhatsApp, so she sees even when I'm online or not in a might have responded to my mom on WhatsApp because she was texting me because she was concerned, so was in fact on WhatsApp but it didn't respond to her, so this is yet another challenge because there it's not only the people know that you're not responding but even see that you are using the channel and your online so it's actually very private I'm just realizing but of course my close collaborators and assistants have access to my phone. So yes, I'm also using this and I couldn't imagine my life not using this to work, but it creates on the opposite side a lot of expectations that EVEN need, in my opinion, a clear communications of expectations of when to respond or not respond and I also have the liberty to write a text to my family but not writing a text to my assistants, although they texted me and they might just get a response by Monday, but probably this again requires this disclaimer to say 'Look, we can write on WhatsApp all week long but on a weekend, for example, P11 is usually offline', this probably I need to introduce and it would probably help because I'm usually not responding on weekends, yeah.

Mattia Rainoldi: So in this case is the technology made you feel uncomfortable?

P11: I was simply disregarding it, I was ignoring digital technology, because it was ill, but yes, it made me uncomfortable or it makes me yeah, because it's so blurry, the line is so blurring because yes WhatsApp is not as clear cut as email because email is more professionally used, people don't see if you read the email necessarily but messenger you see delivered and read it, WhatsApp is delivered and read, so this as an additional pressure so imagine, even if I read a message and didn't respond, so suddenly people then let's say the response expectation has changed because on WhatsApp it's such a quick purpose to text so people expect even if you seen it and you have not responded they're writing 10 minutes later, um, sometimes I get from from people question marks back in in an hour like you read the message, gets to respond it and sometimes I have to justify myself and this has happened, multiple times throughout the year not just with my assistants, but with colleagues, and sometimes even with friends where I will say Äyes I've read your message, but I'm in a workshop on teaching eight hours in a row in a classroom where I'm the teacher and the moderator, I don't have the capacity in the bandwidth to respond, I have seen it, but I need some maybe more information, I need to ask colleagues and I need to have another meeting in order to formulate the respond and when I have the response, then and responding to you' but there maybe might be intermediary steps and sometimes now the new practices almost like people say 'yes I've read it, and I will get back to you' so don't get nervous for a day and sometimes in my line of work, I might need approval from some colleagues or my boss or for a project to process things that takes five days, so now people write me sometimes emails and say um 'have you not received my email from four days ago' and and then I feel like guilty and very pressured and said yes, I have received it but I'm I'm working on it and now I'm still like this is an open question from a work practice, I feel somehow pressured into responding to emails saying to people, 'yes I've seen it I've received it, thank you so much I'm will work on it, and I will get back to you by Friday', rather than just saving this step and getting the work done because if I'm writing a response that I'm processing something to every one of those 50 emails, then I wrote 50 emails to keep makes me from getting the work done but this is almost like a new coming expectations.

Mattia Rainoldi: Mhmm.

P11: And this is like a big challenge to, to be honest and I don't have the secret recipe, and I don't have the solution, and I would like to have the solution, because this is this is somehow really yeah this is really bothering me and really disturbing because it takes away again valuable productive creation time and and and work, deep work time because I'm doubling the work and spending of an administrative communication email tasks with no productivity output, rather than putting them at ease so that they are not nervous.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay yeah, that takes me to a statement that you wrote here, 'I feel I cannot go completely offline anytime and they do expect a response'.

P11: Yes, because a lot of people expect responses, so in my line of work employed and self-employed, there is almost never a week in a year, maybe Christmas holidays, yes, from 24 and 1st and maybe one week in August, where there is no major things coming in but also I'm working internationally and this is now an interesting thing that I just realized, what does this mean working internationally? My collaborators are all around the world, in companies, universities, this means they are in all different time zones, meaning I don't even have people working on the same operational hours from 8 to 6pm but emails are flooding in 24/7 because they are in different time zones from Australia to the US and my friends and collaborators collaborators, they are all have different ethnicities and different religions, which means they're not even observing the same religious holidays. So my Asian friends are not friends, yes, my colleagues, I'm talking about, they're also friends sometimes, they are not observing Christmas holidays or some other colleagues are offline not for Easter, but they continue working, which are my main holidays and then also things are coming in to process, so if you are involved in a research project or any other paper collaboration, then work is endless and it never stops in this international context and, for that matter, I find it actually very difficult to go fully offline yeah.

Mattia Rainoldi: And what you also mentioned earlier, is that your protection shield last only one and a half months.

P11: Yeah that's a problem.

Mattia Rainoldi: What about -

P11: (overlap) But that's the (end of overlap), yeah so, I'm figuring this out and I'm becoming bolder in my choices, as we are moving more towards digital work so now I have put the one and a half months, which is already very radical I must say because I was offline only for one week last week, when I was officially on holiday, so there was only one week but I decided usually if you asked myself from two years ago, I would have only put up an out of the office for one week this I've done the last nine years of my academic work, but this year I decided inspired by another colleague of mine to put the whole summer out of office, which is great, because actually it doesn't just relate to my me during my leisure holiday, but it also relates to I NEED a different type of work to happen over the summer and I cannot be bothered or disturbed of distracted by other incoming requests of new projects, and this is why this shield extends to one and a half months to at least air focus on activities that have piled up throughout the whole year to process. During the rest of the year, I sometimes put in out of office responders when I'm taking off extended weekends, or for Christmas holidays and I am thinking about putting more out of office responses in when I'm not taking a leisure holiday but I'm actually very busy, so some colleagues put in 'due to heavy workload' or 'due to involvement in our project or a deadline, email responses are slow', so again a disclaimer of some kind to to get the message across to people to not check after a day, why haven't you responded yet, but simply know that you are not responding fast, because you are doing some other work, so I think this out of office is not even the right communication tool because there is no nuance, there is different types of work that sometimes means email is not a priority. I read this fantastic book 'deep work'. I'm talking here about deep work, you cannot do deep work or write it write a book and being on the emails all the time. Most scientific breakthroughs came from people not responding to the emails otherwise they wouldn't famous the famous by now, so there's sometimes a choice, so I need to establish establish an own practice for ME that I can put in a new communication to say, 'look people, I'm only responding to my emails on Tuesdays', for example.

Mattia Rainoldi: Yeah that's very interesting yeah, it takes me to the last question related to your diary what you were saying earlier, you talked about in several places about structure, clear blocks dedicated to each area of life and I'd like you to comment a little bit on it and to tell me also, um, yeah if if there technology helps you to create those blocks and structure?

P11: Mhmm. The clear blocks of life are always activity related, so my work day nowadays is very structured that I found out again when is my highest productivity and when is my lowest productivity, so I bundle responding to my emails in one slot, maybe just in the morning and I'm bundling meetings, just before lunchtime, or just before dinner time, when I'm already a bit tired, or when I'm not so, um, productive, so there is clear activity blocks that I enforce myself, there is also days that are free of meetings, so I might with, for example, with my students, there I only offer the Monday and Tuesday as a meeting day. There is no more meetings from from Wednesday to Friday happening, not even on Microsoft Teams, not on Zoom not on WhatsApp unless it's super urgent, which is usually not. Why, because then I can bundle other activities there, and if it's all over the place, a tried this for many years, then I work a whole year and then at the end of the year, I realized I didn't get any productive work done. So my choice (laugh), after years of trial and error is to have clear blocks, and the same is true for leisure time. If there is a lunch hour then there's a lunch hour. Now, working in Home Office I have very clear boundaries, I've around lunch because there's always again from international collaborators in the UK or in Finland time some plus minus one hour to GMT Vienna time there's always a request for 12 o'clock. So if I accept it for the last year, every meeting that they asked me at 12 o'clock, I would have never had lunch with my husband. Ever because they always want that one hour because, but then it's 11, 11am or it's just 1pm which is great for them, but not good for me, so, I have to be very protective of those blocks of work time and leisure time, especially when working in this virtual, um, the the deregionalized work setting. My my colleagues at the university, they would never asked me for a meeting at 12 o'clock because we all work in the same place and we go to lunch together sometimes, this, they know that this is the lunch hour but suddenly when you in the Home Office and working with collaborative from all around the world, then it's natural. I mean I'm having meetings with a lot of Australians who are you know, they're 11pm barely awake in meetings and the the US colleagues just just getting up at 6am just to make the call so it is a different thing of being protected but also much more flexible, because sometimes I also have to attend meetings you know at 8pm, 10pm because they're happening on US time and that's that's also case though it's it's a constant a negotiating of, um, yeah of times, and sometimes one self has to decide what is sacred or not what is my my non-negotiable sacred leisure hours, what is my family time, what is a not, a no go, and what is what is what is not a creating a burden on me and my family.

Mattia Rainoldi: All right, that's interesting. So to summarize, can you please tell me what you feel what you perceive as an advantage, or a disadvantage of using technologies in work and leisure in mediating in helping you organizing, structuring your life and so?

P11: Well, the advantage is that it integrates life, it makes it more flexible, it makes it much more even condensed. I can get much more done in this virtual work environment, at the SAME time, multiple tasks, at the same in the same time slot or very shortly after each other, because the jump from one meeting in Australia to the US in two seconds, so it is more productive, it's much more fluid and many more things can happen and yeah and everything can be managed from those devices, without going physically somewhere, without preparing, without those down times like when I'm in a physical workplace, there's much more time wasted in preparations, in walking, in traveling and now the world is somehow all online on on in virtual settings, so it's normal that everyone kind of can be reached through through that and it's it makes it much more productive and people are more reachable like now the world, you know, I'm having meetings with people from all around the world every day, before it was more ah we have to fly in order to have a meeting and this requires six months of preparation or a conference yeah, usually have to do it months in advance prepare, now it's like as a conference on tomorrow in the US, let me just join it, so easier, flexible flexible. A disadvantage is that it's um, yeah maybe intrusive for personal leisure time. And we currently have too little established rules in place and how we all deal with this collectively, there is no no code of practice, there is no regulations, but not like policy regulations there's no SOCIAL code in place because every person handles it differently, every person has their own boundaries, we mentioned before, so for one person it's no problem to contact them at night, and another person might be offended you know so, and a person who doesn't get the email response in five days might be offended and I might just be super busy in vice versa, so there is no no kind of common understanding in place and a common language or common communication that we have 'okay, this is out of office, this is semi-offline thing', maybe this semi-offline becomes a thing or we need also on WhatsApp multiple options saying 'hey I'm out of office and not responding and doing a digital detox' to get more varieties of people being offline and online, because now we're just left, I think, with our own devices, not that I'm saying that the firm should manage this for us, because if you're self-employed, you are you're the firm, you're the policymaker, but I think there is a lack of somehow templates or role modeling or or or a way forward, because we just making it up as we go along, it's prototyping for everyone, and we will only see that time goes by, and then we will figure out, um, what we did back in 2020 wasn't working or this was working because our health might be damaged later on or or something else, well, we all realize, we would have needed out of office responders on on WhatsApp because people you know invade all personal boundaries and then at one point, people are are you know tired of this, so I think collectively, yeah, we need we need some some guideline.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay. Um, before we move on to the final outlook into the future, is there anything that you feel it is important and we didn't discuss about related to the relationship between work and leisure and the role of technology in i,. that that you can think of, and that we didn't think about?

P11: I don't think so (pause). I think, no, I think I managed to name all the main examples.

Mattia Rainoldi: Okay, then, thank you for that, and my last question and then I promise that I'll let you go this is already already getting late. So how do you see basically the digital worker on the future?

P11: I personally see the digital worker as some yeah as an integrated person who has their their devices their, they're managing all their tasks through those devices, they're flexible in terms of timings when they work, there, they are free to choose their locations, from where they work, meaning they might get an office provided if they like to have it or requested it but it's no longer a must-have that you for some types of work, you have to sit in an office, whether you like it or not, because I think we need to come back to somehow human autonomy that well, as employees we're still humans and forcing humans to sit in a cubicle or to sit in an office space with other humans that you might like or not like, is not very humane. And if people become more conscious and I would also probably envision somehow they become more conscious of their own energy and their own workspaces what benefits them and what doesn't benefit them because if you have a look at the work spaces and places in the past years, then we have seen that some companies have done 180 degree turn back so all those big Silicon Valley companies that introduced open plan offices and a lot of universities introduced open plan office just take whatever table is available, no more personal cubicle or office space, not even your own desk but just desk hopping and now they they are coming back and say okay social experiment failed, it didn't work, why? Well because they realized again that people cannot do those kinds of work, especially not if you're not academic in a lot of universities currently realizing the hop desking was a mistake because yes, as an academic you need your own books, you need your own environment where you let things from thesis marketing to to your own stuff around, and this is a private space and you need to focus and what a lot of those open plan offices have destroyed is deep work because you, you cannot be listening to the conversation to the person next to you, while it writing a research paper or a consulting report. So there's a lot of create creative work lost why, for example, the most software programmers lock themselves kind of in an office for weeks alone, they're the best programmers because they can focus, they can work alone, they don't need an open desk and they don't need any social interaction and the same is, for me, like in order to get that work done, I need to be able to be autonomously choosing where I work and, sometimes, that means I'm not in a place where I want to meet any people for a week because any meeting a people person is a distraction and I read it in the book, I read last week from Serendipity Mindset and that the author also said the same or similar approach that he's also an academic, Christian Busch, and he also wrote that when he's writing something important and he just takes like a toilet break he doesn't even want to meet a person while going from the office to the toilet he said so he kind of avoided meeting any one or bumping into anyone because he's so much in a workflow of writing that that would harm the process or the productivity of the deep work. So I think the worker of the future is one that is very self-conscious of what works for them and not and the dictation doesn't come from an employer, that you HAVE to do something, but people need to become aware, when they're at the best, what they need, and they need the employer to support them with their needs and for some people, it might be super social, having lots of friends around because the talkative and need this, you know co-creation, social inspiration ping pong of ideas and other people just need to be alone and some people need to be outside, some people like to work in a dark room, in a TV studio, like we have at our, my university so it depends, but there is no one size fits all solution for the digital work, people need to become more aware and employee employers need to start not dictating but really supporting people.

Mattia Rainoldi: Thank you for sharing, um, your view, um, it take us to the end of this interview and before we conclude I would like to ask if you have any question that you like to ask me about this interview or research project?

P11: Can I see the findings? (laugh)

Mattia Rainoldi: (laugh) Of course, this is a question that many people, um, ask and of course, findings will be published, I hope, in around the year. It's going to take a little bit of time, but they will get eventually out there, and as soon as I get them, then I will be happy to share them with you.

P11: Perfect, look forward to that.

Mattia Rainoldi: So if it's okay for you now I'm going to click clicking on the STOP recording button here on Zoom and from then we will be off record.