English Corner

Traduzioni in inglese
a cura di Beatrice Niero



My skills

Are We Ready for the Future? Skills for Working in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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Entering the job market as artificial intelligence learns to perform tasks until recently entrusted to humans can create understandable disorientation. The same applies to those with many years of experience who are still far from retirement. How much of one's work can be automated? Which skills will continue to be in demand? To answer this, we need to observe how professions are changing, without confusing the possibility of automating certain tasks with the inevitable disappearance of an entire profession.
The *QS World Future Skills Index 2027* report offers a useful perspective: it examines 89 economies and links the ability of university systems to train prepared students with that of productive systems to employ their skills. It considers four dimensions: the alignment between graduate preparation and corporate expectations, the robustness of university education, the labor market's readiness for technological and environmental transformations, and the ability to translate skills into economic outcomes. University education is thus evaluated alongside the job opportunities a country is able to create.
For Italy, a picture emerges that deserves attention. Our country ranks 22nd overall, with an academic capacity that exceeds its economic transformation capacity: the two indicators score 94.6 and 78.4 points out of 100, respectively. According to QS, among the top 25 economies, Italy shows the largest imbalance in favor of skill supply over demand, due to a scarcity of high-value-added professional positions.
It would be a mistake to interpret this result as proof that studying is less useful or that we are educating too many graduates. The comparison concerns the balance between educational capacity and the demand for skills. The core issue is how much space individual preparation actually finds within organizations. QS highlights the consequences of this imbalance: brain drain, underemployment relative to qualifications, and weaker productivity growth. Educational investment can thus generate benefits elsewhere or remain partially underutilized.
The report therefore places Italy, along with the United Kingdom and Greece, among the economies that capitalize on their academic capacity less than they could. Others, such as China and Singapore, achieve economic results superior to those expected from their university preparation alone. What matters here are connections: shared laboratories between universities and businesses, technology transfer, capital to develop new activities, and consistent industrial policies. For Italian companies, this means questioning not only the skills they struggle to find, but also the types of jobs they offer and the degree of autonomy they grant to qualified professionals.
The value of education also emerges in the analysis of exposure to AI. Data reported by QS for the United States indicates that about 27% of roles held by individuals with a high school diploma show high exposure to substitution by automation, compared to 15% of roles held by university graduates. Regarding the opportunity for augmentation – meaning enhancement of performance rather than replacement – 62% of graduate roles demonstrate high potential, compared to 16% of high school graduate roles.
These results suggest that university education can facilitate access to jobs where technology expands human capabilities. However, a degree alone does not guarantee this outcome. What is needed is the ability to recognize errors in AI tools and to decide when to rely on their results. This is the essence of an AI-augmented workforce: professionals capable of exercising their judgment while employing increasingly sophisticated technologies.
Furthermore, the report invites us to look beyond the risk of substitution. A job with low exposure to automation may also offer few opportunities to benefit from the productivity gains introduced by AI.
Here, transversal skills come into play. Employer surveys cited in the report highlight persistent deficits in critical thinking and leadership skills, even in the most advanced economies. QS specifically highlights problem-solving, analytical capacity, and communication, alongside sector-specific knowledge, as crucial capabilities to develop for working with AI. Technical preparation must therefore go hand in hand with the ability to understand complex situations and engage with people holding different perspectives.
Consider, for example, a young marketing professional using AI to analyze customer feedback. She must determine whether the collected data truly represents the target audience and whether the proposed interpretations are plausible. She will then need to discuss her conclusions with colleagues and listen to potential objections. Critical thinking serves to evaluate the analysis; communication and active listening allow it to be translated into a shared decision. Learning how to prompt a software tool for an answer is only part of the job.
A similar rationale applies to digital and green transition skills, both addressed in the report. Their application often requires modifying behaviors and working methods: a project to reduce energy consumption may require data analysis, but also cross-departmental collaboration between production and procurement, managing conflicting interests, and engaging those who will need to adapt their habits. Transversal skills help execute these transformations and evaluate their impact on people, as well as on business outcomes.
What lesson can we draw, then, from this scenario? For students and young professionals, the primary invitation is to allow themselves to be 'augmented' by AI, not 'replaced'. In other words, experiment with AI as a support system while maintaining control over decisions. The process must start with human intervention to clarify the objective and establish the criteria for evaluating the output. Afterwards, human judgment must verify the reliability of the results and their contextual appropriateness. Transversal skills are what make this process effective: critical thinking helps test the outputs, self-awareness allows one to recognize when deeper analysis is required, and active listening enables comparing conclusions with stakeholders who view the problem from other angles.
Finally, when choosing a career path or employment, it becomes increasingly critical to select professional fields where AI can enhance the quality and effectiveness of individual contributions – evaluating which tasks technology can support and which skills will allow professionals to leverage it to tackle more complex challenges.
Before any generated output, there is a problem that it is up to us to understand; after it, there is a decision for which we must take responsibility.

Wo|manitY
Women's Commitment to Humanity

Mattia Berto
Actor, director and founder of Teatro di Cittadinanza

in conversation with
Anna Poma
Psychologist, psychotherapist and creator of the *Festival dei Matti*

Anna Poma is a psychologist, psychotherapist, and the founder of the *Festival dei Matti*, a cultural project established in Venice in 2009 that has grown over the years into one of the most significant forums for reflection on the relationship between mental health, society, and culture. Her work operates continuously on the threshold between clinical practice, research, and civic engagement, through a lens that intertwines psychology, philosophy, anthropology, and feminist thought. Through the *Festival dei Matti* and the *Libera Scuola del Festival*, she has long promoted an approach to care that moves beyond the walls of the therapeutic consulting room and opens out into the public, cultural, and political arena – restoring central importance to human bonds, community, and the dialogue between different languages of expression. In this conversation, Anna shares her perspective on mental health, what it means to be a woman and a psychotherapist today, the origins of the *Festival dei Matti*, and the personal and professional experiences that have shaped her journey.

What does it mean to be a woman working in mental health?
You are asking a question that I find difficult to answer directly. It forces me to take a step back. For me, working in mental health means managing to create a dialogue between perspectives that are usually kept separate: the clinical and the anthropological, the historical and the political. It means constantly questioning what we mean by psychological suffering and what constitutes the categories we call normality and madness, mental health and mental suffering, whose boundaries are at once so fluid and so rigid. These are territories that point to how we organize the world, to the mechanisms that govern it, and to the social and cultural contexts of which we are an expression; contexts that inhabit our bodies, our lived experiences, and our ways of perceiving and thinking.



I ask myself, for instance, what forces shape the lives of women in our current socio-cultural context today: what should a 'normal' woman be like? How much does conforming to or deviating from this model contribute to distress? How much pressure continues to accompany the various stages of our existence? How many frameworks, stereotypes, and identity narratives run through us? For me, care consists first and foremost in recognizing the 'conditioned reflexes' that trap us and in inventing, together, possible antidotes: internal and external, individual and collective. It means putting needs, desires, and choices back into motion, refusing to resign ourselves to predetermined paths. This is why I consider my work deeply political. It has to do with emancipation, with the possibility of resisting normalization, and with reclaiming one's own vitality.
Being a woman and a psychotherapist means constantly navigating – both within and outside oneself – battles that we have too often forgotten, or that today are taken up in superficial and depoliticized ways. The writings of Franca Ongaro Basaglia on the condition of women institutionalized in psychiatric hospitals serve as an invaluable compass for me, along with the thoughts of many other feminist writers. This orientation also engages in a deep dialogue with my Gestalt training.

What are the human and relational skills required for this job?
First of all, I would say the ability to remain in touch with what one feels in the relationship with oneself and with the other. It is essential to recognize that no therapist is neutral, and that psychological disciplines themselves have limits, languages, and categories that must be constantly questioned. Critical thinking and intellectual honesty are necessary to avoid the temptation of exercising power over people's lives. Our task is not to normalize, but to accompany each individual while they reclaim their capacity to live, avoiding becoming disciplined agents of normalization.

How, when, and why was the *Festival dei Matti* created?
The *Festival dei Matti* was born in 2009 with the idea of bringing the relationship between normality and madness, health and mental suffering, back into public debate, outside the restricted circles of specialists. We believe that only by re-examining these categories and returning them to collective reflection it becomes possible to loosen the material and symbolic barriers that too often confine and trap those going through psychological pain. We envisioned a cultural laboratory where diverse languages – from philosophy to literature, theatre to music, clinical practice to art – could intersect, meaningfully involving those who directly experience mental distress.
Each edition attempts to question the potential proximity between pain and creativity, disorientation and dissidence, difference and belonging. The Festival stems from a simple premise: madness concerns us all. As a possibility, a crisis, a turning point, a calling. For this reason, we believe the final word on this experience cannot be delegated exclusively to experts. Today, on the eve of its seventeenth edition, the Festival has become a small research community, attended by many young people. From this experience, the *Libera Scuola del Festival dei Matti – 'Quel che non ha giudizio'* (That Which Holds No Judgment) – was also born: an open space for anyone wishing to delve into these themes through reading, studying, discussion, and shared experience. This year, the School will offer a curriculum dedicated to suffering and care, educational systems, migratory experiences, poetry, and the so-called 'crisis of presence': that contemporary condition that alienates us from ourselves, from relationships, and from the possibility of fully inhabiting the present moment. A dissociation also produced by a social system that, to sustain itself, needs to separate us from what we feel.

Could you share some of the most significant moments of the Festival?
I could honestly think of so many. We have been fortunate enough to host extraordinary figures such as Letizia Battaglia, Ken Loach, Umberto Galimberti, Miguel Benasayag, Dacia Maraini, Vitaliano Trevisan, Sergio Staino, Milo De Angelis, Cristina Donà, Giulio Casale, and Don Luigi Ciotti. Yet the most precious memories are often linked to the events dedicated to great women writers, whom Anna Toscano introduced to us every year. Through authors like Goliarda Sapienza, Janet Frame, Ágota Kristóf, Mariella Mehr, Brianna Carafa, Amelia Rosselli, Magda Szabó, Camille Claudel, Susan Sontag, and Lisetta Carmi, we opened extraordinary pathways into our understanding of normality and madness. Among the most moving moments, I also remember the performance that you and Anna staged in 2019 based on Susan Sontag's text *Baby*. This year, we restaged it as a tribute to Anna; it was one of the most intense moments of the latest edition of the Festival.

Who are your role models, both professionally and as a woman?
I find it hard to speak in terms of role models. The idea of emulation doesn't really belong to me. Rather, there are women who changed me, who opened my mind and heart. I have already mentioned many of them. I am fascinated by unconventional stories, desertions, acts of sabotage, and forms of dissent: women who, through their thought, practice, or suffering, were able to unmask the established order of things. They were, and continue to be, true masters of suspicion.

What advice would you give to a young woman who wants to become a psychologist and psychotherapist and create spaces for reflection and listening meant for the community, as you do?
I would tell her, quite simply, to come to the *Festival dei Matti*. It is a place where one can concretely experience an approach to care born of human connection, shared thought, and the opportunity to question the time we live in together. I believe it is one of the best ways to understand what it truly means to take care of people and, together, of the community.

Wannabe Her

Beatrice Niero
Student at Ca' Foscari University of Venice

In conversation with
Erica Vaccari
Founder and Technical Director of Viaggi Floreali

Introduction
Passions and the sum of lived experiences are not just personal baggage, but they can turn into the true compass of a unique professional path. Building a business from scratch, overcoming hardships and reinventing oneself through self-reflection requires courage, intuition and a deep adherence to one's values: qualities that allow a spontaneous idea to be transformed into a successful project oriented towards beauty and authenticity. This is how Erica Vaccari founded Viaggi Floreali, a business that combines niche cultural tourism and a passion for nature with the creation of authentic spaces for encounters. Through an entrepreneurial approach based on personal sustainability and the enhancement of human resources, she advances a vision of work based on empathy, respect for one's own limits and the conviction that every experience – even the most unexpected – can become an opportunity for rebirth and discovery.

Hard and soft skills
In order to work in a complex sector like hospitality and niche cultural tourism, rigid or predefined academic paths are not strictly necessary; rather, a dynamic combination of practical skills and personal resources is what's required. Essential hard skills include a solid understanding of business administration and money management principles, as well as a mastery of the communication tools needed to convey the authentic value of what the business is meant to offer. Regarding soft skills and personal attitudes, crucial aspects include the ability to organize and manage time productively, clarity of one's values, the ability to set healthy boundaries in order to protect one's well-being, stubbornness understood as resilience and consistency over time and, last but not least, solidarity among women, understood as constructive exchange. Completing the profile are self-preservation and a strong attunement to one's instinct, indispensable aspects for managing this type of business without losing one's identity.

What inspired you to create your artisanal workshop of slow travel through flowers and gardens, Viaggi Floreali? Did you face any hardships during the launch of this business?
Actually, it happened by pure chance. I had gone to listen to a conference in Pordenone, at the Compagnia delle Rose: it was a conference about English gardens, which I have always been very passionate about. Right there, a lady sitting in front of me asked if anyone from the association could organize a trip for her to go see those gardens. At that point, since I was already planning to visit them with a friend shortly, I told her that I could give her all the information she needed. The lady then asked if she could join us, and I replied that it was a trip with friends, but that if she could find seven other people willing to come, I would take care of renting a minibus and organizing everything; the very next day, the group was already full. And that is how I decided to open my business, driven by a strong faith in my abilities and my passion for gardening, which I have cultivated over the years. However, it was no bed of roses: Viaggi Floreali grew very quickly, and so I went from having to manage three trips a year to managing thirty, all by myself. I took care of everything: marketing, photography, business promotion, I acted as the tour guide and even drove the minibuses myself! Until, in 2016, I ended up spending the night in the emergency room due to food poisoning and yet, despite that, I still had to leave the next day for a scheduled trip to Kent, having no one who could replace me. It was at that moment I realized that how I was handling things was not sustainable, and that I needed coworkers that could help me. That is how the amazing team I work with today was formed, consisting of myself, Claudia – who has worked with me since 2017 – and Monica, the latest addition.

What do you mean by 'slow travel'? What is the philosophy behind your project, and consequently, what kind of experience do you aim to offer your clients?
The main idea is to linger in each place we visit. For this reason, my trips always focus on a small number of places: the goal is not to see as many as possible in the shortest time possible, but to *fully* experience them. For me, taking a 'slow' trip means walking through a village or in nature without being in a rush, or spending hours in a single garden contemplating floral arrangements and the architectural style. My main goal is to give my clients *time*, allowing them to sit on a bench and simply chat with a new traveling buddy. For me, 'slowness' means allowing people to rediscover a slightly more relaxed pace of life, more in tune with nature; to grant themselves time outside of the schedule dictated by the duties of everyday life. This is also why the selection of the inns we stay at is so important: I always try to choose places run by a family, where the general energy is positive and welcoming and where my clients can feel 'pampered'.

What kind of people usually take part in your trips? Do you think this is an experience suitable for everyone, including people who prefer whirlwind trips or the so-called 'hit-and-run' itineraries?
As a matter of fact, there are people of all kinds: from those who want to listen to all the explanations of the places we visit and therefore always stay close to the group, to those who simply want to live the experience and wander off to admire what surrounds them. For me, it is essential that every client is given the opportunity to experience the trip in their own way, whether that is by taking a greater interest in the 'human' part of it and making new friendships, or simply admiring the beauty of the surrounding nature. For this reason, I think my trips are suitable for anyone who's willing to 'slow down', to experience something different from the classic hectic journey, something that's centered around tranquility and nature. I believe this is also why most of my clients are women, especially those who love reading, cooking, in other words, the 'slow' pleasures of life. I always try to establish a personal relationship with them so that they feel welcomed, and I am always very happy when I see the same person decide to take multiple trips with me. The overall serenity of the group is a fundamental component to ensure the trip goes smoothly.

You have had an unconventional professional path. You went from studying Intellectual History and English Language Teaching to becoming a travel organizer. How do you think your education helped you in founding and managing Viaggi Floreali?
I think one can find their path in various ways and not necessarily through university, but in my case, it was a truly fundamental educational experience, even though my studies ultimately do not align very much with my current job. In particular, the master's program I attended was based on the premise that *you*, as a teacher, should not fill the student's 'vase' with your notions; you should simply provide them with the linguistic tools that allow them to express themselves and their own culture. And this is strongly reflected in the way I approach travel: I provide elements to my clients so they can better understand the places we visit, but I want *them* to live the travel experience in their own personal way. For this reason, I would not call myself a 'classic' tour guide: I prefer that those who are interested come and ask me questions personally or even direct them to the garden owner himself. If any problems with English arise, then I step in, but fundamentally I like allowing my clients to experiment and perhaps discover versions of themselves they didn't know were there.

At a time when there's a lot of talk about work-life balance and unsustainable paces, how do you manage to integrate slowness and the care of nature with the daily challenges that managing a business brings about?
I must admit that the 'slowness' I offer on my trips is not necessarily what I find in my own life. Since I started Viaggi Floreali, my life has become much busier, and therefore sometimes I feel the need to just get away from it all: so I take the first flight to visit some city with my partner or my friends – sisterhood is essential to me – or I leave for Slovenia, where I have a house, and stay there for two or three weeks to take care of my garden and also myself. When I am in England for work, however, and I have to spend many hours in front of the computer, I try to dedicate time every day to some health exercises, especially so I can manage my diabetes. Sometimes I feel a strong need to do something manual, like working on my garden, picking flowers to make decorations out of them or doing some watercolor painting. When it comes to work, the important thing for me is to figure out how much is enough for *you*, so that *you* can feel satisfied: it's all about finding the right balance, something I am still working on to this day. I believe not everything has to produce money: some things can simply produce joy.

What is the message you would like to leave to a young woman entering the working world today, with many dreams and a few uncertainties?
The advice I feel like giving her is to take the plunge, to take a leap of faith: if she has ideas, to talk about them with others and then listen and take their reactions into account, but ultimately to trust always and only herself. This is because no one can understand your vision better than you do, and in fact, it's likely that few will understand it at all. In my opinion, it's also extremely important to stay informed, take inspiration from what others do, try to understand where and why they go wrong, and then create something completely original and that works for you. In the working world, sometimes the *how* matters just as much as the *what*, if not more: it happens that you get chosen for *how* you do things, not for *what* you do. And finally, I advise young women to pursue what interests them and above all to listen to yourself and to trust your gut feeling, especially if something doesn't sit right with you for whatever reason.