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BOCCONI UNIVERSITY, KNOWLEDGE THAT MATTERS

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Demography, artificial intelligence, rising inequality, geopolitical crisis, the revolution in rights, all point to a demise of the world we have inherited. Bocconi researchers, alumnae and alumni look at these trends to manage

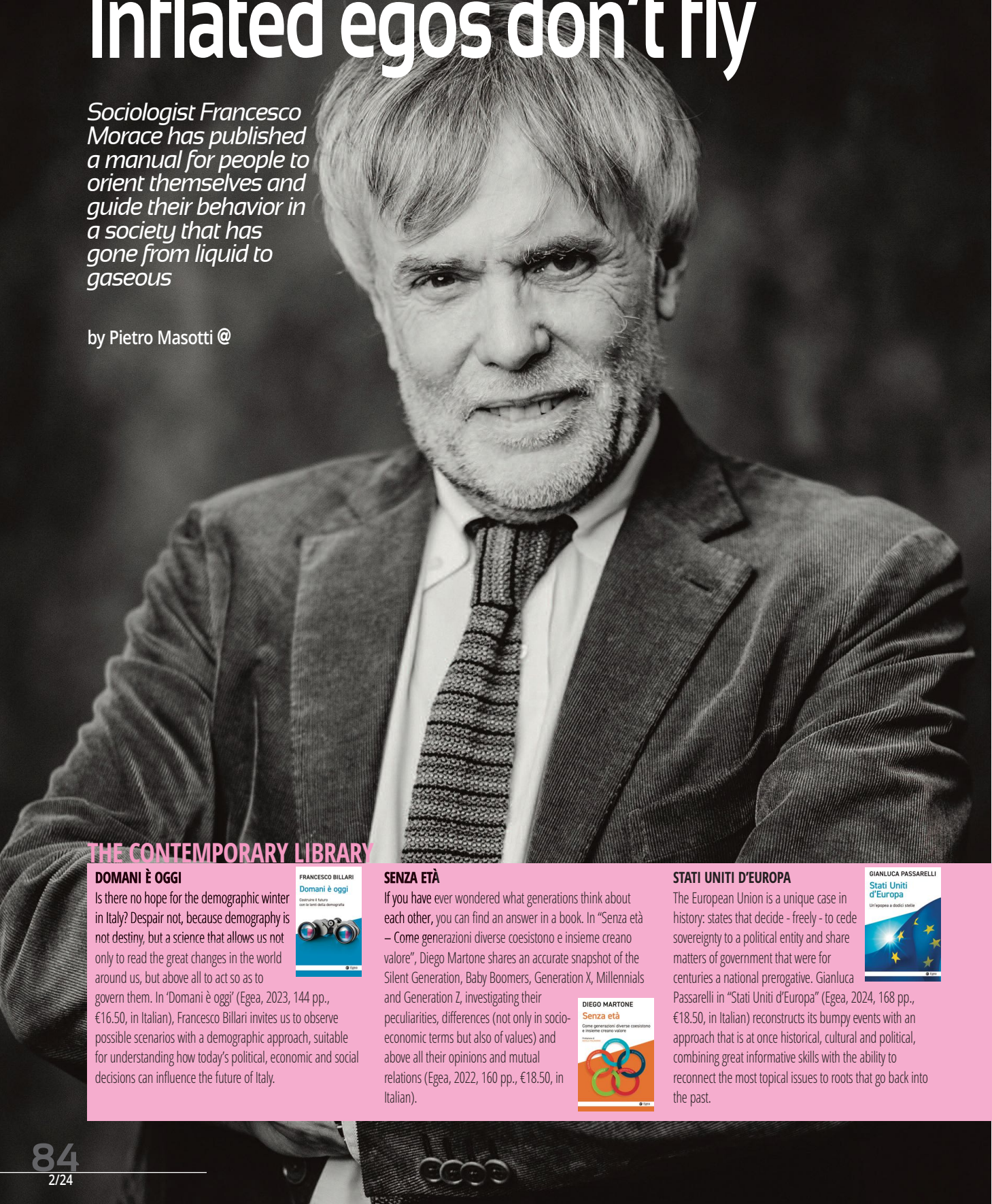
## THE SOCIETY OF THE FUTURE



# Inflated egos don't fly

*Sociologist Francesco Morace has published a manual for people to orient themselves and guide their behavior in a society that has gone from liquid to gaseous*

by Pietro Masotti @



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### DOMANI È OGGI

Is there no hope for the demographic winter in Italy? Despair not, because demography is not destiny, but a science that allows us not only to read the great changes in the world around us, but above all to act so as to govern them. In 'Domani è oggi' (Egea, 2023, 144 pp., €16.50, in Italian), Francesco Billari invites us to observe possible scenarios with a demographic approach, suitable for understanding how today's political, economic and social decisions can influence the future of Italy.



### SENZA ETÀ

If you have ever wondered what generations think about each other, you can find an answer in a book. In "Senza età – Come generazioni diverse coesistono e insieme creano valore", Diego Martone shares an accurate snapshot of the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z, investigating their peculiarities, differences (not only in socio-economic terms but also of values) and above all their opinions and mutual relations (Egea, 2022, 160 pp., €18.50, in Italian).



### STATI UNITI D'EUROPA

The European Union is a unique case in history: states that decide - freely - to cede sovereignty to a political entity and share matters of government that were for centuries a national prerogative. Gianluca Passarelli in "Stati Uniti d'Europa" (Egea, 2024, 168 pp., €18.50, in Italian) reconstructs its bumpy events with an approach that is at once historical, cultural and political, combining great informative skills with the ability to reconnect the most topical issues to roots that go back into the past.







It was 1999 when Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman captured the reality of the end of the millennium with the successful definition of “liquid society”. Not a long time has passed since then, however the changes that have occurred are so many and of such magnitude, from the advent of digital to the pandemic, that that definition needs to be updated. **Francesco Morace**, sociologist and founder of the Future Concept Lab, has done so in his book *Modernità Gassosa* (Gaseous Modernity, Egea, 2023, 130 pages, €16.50), where he documents and describes the change in physical state that society has undergone by evaporating, due to social media which have made society take the traits of volatility and elusiveness. “Every aspect of our existence, from work to relationships, presents the traits of a progressive pulverization,” explains Morace. “Progress and above all digital technology have dramatically increased the range of choices available to us and this makes us feel free like never before. But at the same time being under the gaze of others subjects us to a social pressure hitherto unseen and everything has become more random and uncertain. To this scenario must be added the effects of the pandemic, which contributed to an increase in the feeling of risk, as well as wars and climate change. Enough, in short, to throw newer generations (and not only them) into panic, who are in fact much more focused on the present than on the future.”

→ **Therefore, if to survive in the liquid society you needed to learn to swim, or at least you needed to float, in this aerial dimension humans are asked to fly. Isn't this a feat beyond our capabilities?**

Not if we understand that we cannot do it alone and have to rely on the tools that technology and community are capable of providing us. The paradox of this era is what I represented with the image of the inflated balloon: in this new gaseous reality, the simplest way to get off the ground may seem to be to inflate yourself, feeding your ego and trying to guide the own destiny. It doesn't work because, to continue the metaphor, a hot air balloon doesn't really fly, it uses the air mass passively. Instead we really have to learn how to govern and direct our flight.

→ **Your book aims to be a pilot's manual for learning to maneuver in some specific contexts by**

FRANCESCO MORACE  
Sociologist and  
founder of the Future  
Concept Lab

**appropriating techniques and metaphors from nature or aerospace engineering. Can you clarify with an example?**

One of the traits of gaseous modernity is evaporation. Work is evaporating: many are losing control of their business, of creativity, even of job hierarchies if we think of the riders being controlled by an algorithm. Information, democracy and relationships also are evaporating. Addressing this problem seriously means recovering the value of lightness not as irresponsibility but as the ability to rise up to see things from above, tracing maps of the terrain where one moves and charting new paths. The flight technique I suggest is that of the glider, which develops a flight plan with clarity and responsibility without confusing freedom with the absence of constraints and obstacles.

→ **The charm of flying is being able to see farther, beyond the boundaries visible from the ground. Is this the promise that lies at the end of the learning journey?**

There is nothing freer than flying. While navigation still has limits and constraints, in the air there is such a vast open space that it is more difficult to orient yourself and you risk getting lost. It is the problem of new generations, who have technologies, intelligence and possibilities at their disposal like no other generation in history, and who yet feel the ground falling under their feet. It is the state that I describe in the book as “suspension” and to deal with it I suggest taking the example of hang gliding. In fact, to fly with a hang glider you need muscle training, technical preparation and careful observation of the surrounding context, from the terrain to the winds. We deluded ourselves that modernity meant we could do everything with minimal effort. On the contrary, we must study more and train with dedication because the existing context does not naturally favor us.

→ **In a more random dimension, it is more difficult to build businesses and careers..**

It's easier to have good ideas, but harder to implement them. Especially in Italy, the part that hampers us as an economic system is not so much linked to a dearth of creativity and brilliant startups, but to inefficient execution, which is instead effectively done north of the

**SOTTO ASSEDIO**

Looking at the images of refugee landings or listening to political statements, Italy would appear to be under siege. However, the perspective changes if we look at the phenomenon through the lens of data: considering the ratio of refugees to inhabitants, Italy is below the EU average.

Which in turn does not even come close to the number of asylum seekers received by countries in the south of the world. To shed light on the subject, Maurizio Ambrosini has published “Sotto assedio” (Egea, 2023, 160 pp., €16.50, in Italian).



**SORVEGLIATI E CONTENTI**

With digital transformation, everything becomes a digital ecosystem and an international security challenge. Everything slips into the Internet of Things, composed of algorithms and devious mechanisms. Emerging technologies, information technology and artificial intelligence extend the scope of threats to people and entire societies. How much more must intelligence and intelligence services do to better understand these technologies? And how much do people have to do to defend themselves against them? Marco Santarelli discusses this in ‘Sorvegliati e contenti’ (Egea, 2023, 128 pp., €16, in Italian).



**INSPIRED BY DATA**

This book by Giuseppe Mayer (BUP, 2024, 264 pp. €34,90) is an exploration of the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence, and in particular generative AI, across the corporate communications landscape. It provides practical guidance on how to use these technologies as tools while emphasizing the irreplaceable value of human creativity, empathy, and responsibility. Unlike past technological shifts that focused on efficiency, AI is opening new creative frontiers.



Alps or even better across the Ocean. An idea is not a project. To become a project it must be studied in depth, tested and possibly fail, something which is still difficult to accept in a country like ours.

→ *Every individual needs to learn how to fly, you say. Reality, although evaporating, nevertheless mandates that the destiny of one is linked to the destiny of all. How should the same flight techniques be transferred to institutions, families, and society at large?*

Organizations are made of individuals, and today individuals count more than ever. For a long time in history, social classes counted more than individual subjectivities, but today the uniqueness of each person has greater relevance and recognition. It is no coincidence that many of the new movements for rights and freedoms, from MeToo to Black Lives Matter, arise from the negative experiences suffered by an individual. It is equally true, however, that the individual alone doesn't go anywhere. The image that came to mind to represent this bond is that of the flock of birds, where there is no individual who guides and commands, but there is a collective intelligence, a shared leadership, which passes from one individual to another and allows the community to move in the sky by creating unpredictable trajectories that disorientate and ward off predators. Here, today the relationship between individuality, subjectivity and community is regulated by the extent to which we know how to empathize with others without resorting to classical hierarchies.

→ *Does technology, and in particular Artificial Intelligence, offer a common language or is it a common enemy?*

The risk I see is that, in the gaseous dimension, new technologies can creep in in a subtle way, without those who assimilate them being aware of it. This is a problem because, as things currently stand, new technologies are in the hands of very few people or companies that govern the algorithms. It is almost like a sect of followers which however now involves all the inhabitants of the planet. We



## THE BOOK

With the onset of social media and the dominance of digital technology, the liquid society has become gaseous. So is argued in the essay *Modernità gassosa* (Egea, 2023, 130 pages, €16.50, in Italian) by sociologist Francesco Morace and founder of the Future Concept Lab, who suggests we should look at the flying techniques of gliders, but also of butterflies and of hummingbirds, to dominate volatility, recover balance and reclaim the future, while maintaining the human creativity that distinguishes us from machines and other living beings.



cannot think that everyone is equipped to understand and dominate technologies, we must therefore govern them with another strategy, that of the hummingbird, which flies while remaining still and, unique among birds, also in reverse, extracting nectar and pollinating flowers with speed, dexterity and creativity, thus generating re-creative, non-programmable, inspirational innovation.

→ *Creativity and aesthetics, which in the volume are represented by the butterfly, emerge as the values that will once again enable human beings to maintain “the responsibility of imagining the future”*

The technocratic, algorithmic world almost seems to have expelled beauty from its horizon. Aesthetics, on the other hand, comes from the Greek word *estesis* which indicates a shared feeling, which perhaps does not solve problems, but it is a virtue that can be recognized by everyone, and generates harmony and produces new beauty. I do not believe, like Dostoevsky wrote, that beauty will save the world, but that the world must save beauty because it stimulates the emotions and helps our brain, which is first of all emotional, to learn and materialize concepts ■

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### SMETTO QUANDO VOGLIO

The dynamics of the labour market changed before and after Covid. From not engaging more than strictly necessary, to the acquisition of know-how without new hires, from stubborn silence in the face of critical situations to avoid any form of healthy conflict, through to quiet firing. In 'Smetto quando voglio' (Egea, 2024, 154 pp., €18, in Italian), Paolo Iacchi summarises the main changes taking place in a simple and easily readable way.



### ALLA RICERCA DEL BUON MANAGEMENT

How must a company organise and structure itself in order to compete today? What must those responsible for leading an organisation, whatever its nature and size, know? How can the day-to-day and long-term management of a company or a public administration be optimised by accompanying them in the right way? This is explained by Alfonso Fuggetta in 'Alla ricerca del buon management' (Egea, 2024, 228 pp., €24.90) through the description of methods, dynamics and experiences of real company life.



### UN BEL LAVORO

What does a 'good job' mean today? How do we create quality jobs that generate value and make room for the ambitions and dreams of each individual? How do we concretely construct the idea of 'beautiful' jobs? Will technological innovation be an enemy or an ally? Alfonso Fuggetta tries to answer these and many other questions in 'Un bel lavoro - Ridare significato e valore a ciò che facciamo' (Egea, 2023, pp. 136, €16, in Italian).

