



Webinar

Alessio Kolioulis

Webinars are internet-based conferences, meetings or discussions that enable the participation of people located in different places. While seminars are as ancient as the need for people to come together to discuss and learn from each other, it is the mass diffusion of the World Wide Web that made webinars a reality. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, took the technology to a different level. Various webinar apps were in use well before March 2020. But the occasions utilizing these software programs were confined to either organizing informal events among friends, or to connecting audiences with invited speakers who couldn't travel. Audio and video quality were also often an issue. Today, video conferencing is a key aspect of everyday life in lockdown. Thanks to ever-improving webinar technologies, communication, work and even 'travel' becomes possible. The rise of a start-up like Zoom, now valued at over \$130bn, demonstrates that innovation means not only creativity but also diffusion into new markets. Some technologies exist but are not adopted. Others evolve while they get diffused rapidly. So, what is the future of webinars? Governments may be anticipating that with vaccines being rolled out people will become less reliant on online-based solutions, but webinars are proving that they offer opportunities not fully tested before. Across Higher Education, for example, disability groups have long advocated for the regular implementation of online conferencing. Accessibility is a key feature of webinars and their inclusive nature can boost collaborations, learning and sharing. In my personal experience, webinars offer a new practice, a move towards what I call 'everyday transnationalism'. To give an example of what I mean, I will take my experience teaching and doing research at UCL. With universities now allowing students to attend lectures and other activities

online and from abroad, the norm is for classes to connect several time zones, day and night, into a single window. This temporal compression provides, in turn, the feeling of bringing people and cities together. The multiplication of daily initiatives where people across nations are in dialogue is a fascinating aspect of this new normal. However, it also brings challenges. For instance, central time zones reinforce East/West divides. For those new to the digital economy, finding new audiences can also be daunting. This is, for example, key in the creative industries, where physical spaces of production and performance were fundamental for the sector. Despite existing challenges, the shift towards this type of 'everyday transnationalism' can be seen as a positive outcome of the development of webinars. It may also be how seminars will continue to survive. After the 12th century, the rise of universities meant the decline of traditional ecclesiastic institutions. New typologies of seminars emerged, with innovative schools and teachers. And this, ultimately, produced new forms of knowledge.

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