



ARE WE THERE YET? HAVE WE REACHED
THE NEW NORMAL? NOT REALLY

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Take-Aways

- The “New Normal,” as a concept, has been around for a while and does not properly describe the post-COVID-19 reality.
- Five characteristics – the “5Cs” – will define the post-pandemic “New Context”: “Chaos, Crisis, Complexity, Confusion and Change.”
- The New Context offers the opportunity to reset the current system that has failed to serve the majority of the world’s population.

Recommendation

The “New Normal” has turned into the buzzword *du jour* – but what does it mean? Is the world really going to settle into a new routine following the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic? Author and executive coach Paolo Gallo believes this to be unlikely. In a thought-piece that is both visionary and unsettling, he makes the case for referring to the post-pandemic world as the “New Context,” dominated by five forces the world will need to reckon with. Learn what they are – and how they may open up the door for creating a better world.

Summary

The “New Normal,” as a concept, has been around for a while and does not properly describe the post-COVID-19 reality.

Many like to refer to the post-COVID-19 era as the “New Normal.” But people have already applied the same term to the period following the 2007/2008 financial crisis and the global recession that followed. The term is psychologically powerful as it reflects people’s desire to resume life as they are used to following a major disruption. A good definition of “normal” is “what people expect.” Yet what will come after COVID-19 won’t please the people who long for their old routines. Hence, referring to the post-COVID-19 era as the “New Context” better captures the forces that the pandemic has unleashed, and which will continue to shape the world going forward.

Five characteristics – the “5Cs” – will define the post-pandemic New Context: “Chaos, Crisis, Complexity, Confusion and Change.”

Five themes will dominate the New Context from here on forward:

1. **Chaos** – The term refers to the combination of speed and uncertainty. Today, the speed of developments is exponential, not linear – especially with regard to technological change. Geopolitical volatility and social unrest add to the chaotic nature of the New Context.
2. **Crisis** – By its very definition, a crisis requires swift action to remedy a dangerous or difficult situation. Talented and decisive leadership is indispensable for a country or an organization to navigate crises successfully.
3. **Complexity** – The term “complicated” fails to capture the nature of today’s problems, as “technical expertise” alone won’t suffice to solve them. Tackling these problems successfully requires interdisciplinary teams working closely together and keeping up with the constantly shifting context through continuous learning.
4. **Confusion** – These days, nothing is black and white any more – at least so it seems. People of different convictions, backgrounds and origins have different interpretations of concepts and events. Open, inclusive dialogue is the only way to establish greater clarity.
5. **Change** – The most reliable ingredient of the New Context is constant change. People were able to adapt very quickly to restrictions imposed during the Pandemic – and they should expect to keep adapting to new developments from here on onwards.

The New Context offers the opportunity to reset the current system that has failed to serve the majority of the world's population.

Looking at the world through the lens of the 5Cs highlights the severe deficiencies of the current system by failing to deliver equality, justice and prosperity for all: 1.3 billion people still live on less than two dollars a day; discrimination based on gender, race and religion continues to be widespread; climate change and environmental degradation are posing an existential threat to the planet; and 70.8 million displaced people are in urgent need of protection and support.

“If we think about the New Context, it allows us to reset the system – the true opportunity of a lifetime – to create shared prosperity for all by reflecting on a simple question. What do we stand for?”

The New Context offers a unique window of opportunity to address the world's most pressing issues head-on and “reset” the system to become more inclusive and humane.

About the Author

Paolo Gallo is an author, executive coach and adjunct professor at Bocconi University in Milan. Formerly, he served as senior adviser to the executive chairman at the World Economic Forum and as Chief Learning Officer at the World Bank.



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