Change your space, change your culture: exploring spatial change management strategies

Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the article is to explore use of, and challenges associated with, spatial change management strategies. This is done through a discussion on how spatial environments may be utilised to effect organisational change. The intention is to provoke new thinking on physical change initiatives and to challenge the often highly deterministic view on the effects of contemporary workspace concepts.

Design/methodology/approach: The article is structured as a case study based literature review, drawing on literature from the fields of environmental psychology, organisational branding, corporate real estate and facility management – as well as organisational change management.

Findings: The study indicates that space management strategies may fail due to lack of understanding of how organisational events and other contextually specific aspects correlate with the physical change initiative. Succeeding with the spatial strategy requires a strong focus on socio-material relationships and the employee meaning making process during the spatial change process.

Originality/value: Contrary to the traditional and rational focus on functional space management strategies, the article takes a socio-material approach suggesting that there is a need for more empirically based research into the employee meaning making process and the role of human and organisational practices in the development of new workplace concepts. Focusing on how organisational members understand and 'make use of' spatial environments may substantially improve organisations' and building consultants' abilities to strategically manage the physical change initiative and achieve the intended ends.

Keywords: Change management, Meaning making, Office environment, Workplace concepts, Symbolic space, New Ways of Working

1. Introduction

In an ever-changing, global and competitive business world, organisational and individual ability to adapt to change is tantamount in succeeding with overall business goals (Bridges, 2009). Within organisational change management studies, it has repeatedly been claimed that approximately 70 per cent of all organisational change initiatives fail. Although this actual number has been criticised for its lack of validity and reliable empirical evidence (Hughes, 2011),

it is commonly agreed that effecting organisational change in today's complex organisations is far from an easy task.

The challenge for any culture changing initiative is that organisations are highly resistant to change (Lewin, 1951; Schein, 2004). According to Lewin (1951), organisations consist of deep and highly stable structures which define a state of *equilibrium.* Transformational change may therefore only occur when the current state is *punctuated* by larger events – creating a *punctuated equilibrium*. Similar ideas are proposed in the *iceberg theory* developed by Schein (2004). According to this theory an organisational culture consists of reciprocally connected levels, some are visible, whilst others go deeper and are thus harder to perceive and define. For change to take place the driving forces must be strong enough to penetrate into the core of the organisation (Lewin, 1951; Schein, 2004).

As the workspace is a visible structure, central in defining other cultural constructs, the assumption is that the implementation of a new spatial environment may create the punctuation needed to successfully affect the other levels and organisational constructs. The implementation of a new workspace will, in theory, open up for a new socio-material reality, which then becomes the origin for a new period of stabilisation (Hernes et al., 2006). The potential within the physical space is therefore essential, as *"architecture orders and manages human activities"* (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004: 1100). Or as expressed in the often-cited quote by Winston Churchill:

> *"We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us"*
> (Winston Churchill, 1874-1965).

Over the past decades there has been a growing interest in the alignment of modern work processes and spatial environments (Myerson, 2012; Duffy, 2005). The objective is to effect organisational behaviour and the employee meaning making process, and through this influence New Ways of Working (NewWoW) (Aaltonen et al., 2012; Ruostela et al., 2014; Meel, 2011).

The particular role of the spatial environment in organisational change processes has been debated. As all organisations operate within spatial environments and most spatial environments have an organisational level, several researchers (e.g. Allen and Henn, 2007; Chilton and Baldry, 1997; Robertson, 2000) have stated that any change management strategy should incorporate the organisational as well as the physical and technological level. Building on Lefebvre (1991)'s view that social change is dependent on spatial change, Kuttner (2008) also argues that effective organisational change cannot be achieved without a parallel change in the physical workplace. Kampschroer (2008), on the other hand, presents a more moderate view, arguing that organisational change is possible without changing the physical context. However, the physical

environment may be important to accelerate or reinforce the desired change. This is further stressed by Tanis (2008: 11), who states that *"space does not necessarily lead to transformation, but it needs to support transformation"*.

In other words, changes within the spatial environment may not necessarily in and by themselves create organisational change. It may however act as a forceful catalyst for effecting change (Inalhan and Finch, 2012; Allen et al., 2004; Mosbech, 2003) and function as a spatial symbol of the wider organisational change initiative (Gustafsson, 2002). Contrary to this, if a physical relocation is not regarded as a strategically important opportunity for change, the benefits may not only be lost, but even become a risk for the organisation (Christersson and Rothe, 2012).

As the importance of the organisation's spatial environment gradually has gained momentum, a range of researchers stress that the physical space, as a means to effect organisational change, has been a highly neglected business resource – especially within the fields of organisational change and change management (Shiem-shin Then, 2012; Vischer, 2012; Clegg and Kornberger, 2006a; Horgen et al., 1999; Alexander and Price, 2012; Kampschroer and Heerwagen, 2005). Over the last years an increasing number of organisations have realised the importance of the spatial environment and implemented a wide range of spatial strategies, aimed at guiding internal and external meaning making processes (Ropo et al., 2015). Both researchers and practitioners have thus started to emphasise the importance of placing the spatial environment on the managerial agenda as a tool for effecting organisational change and development (Shiem-shin Then, 2012; Vischer, 2012; Clegg and Kornberger, 2006a; Horgen et al., 1999; Becker, 2002; Kornberger and Clegg, 2004; Pinder et al., 2012; Bell, 2006; Inalhan and Finch, 2012; Kampschroer, 2008; Arge and de Paoli, 2000; Gustafsson, 2002; Nadler et al., 1997; Baldry and Hallier, 2010; Allen et al., 2004; Bakke, 2007). Duffy and Powell (1997) even state that the most important function of the spatial environment is to facilitate change.

A Nordic study addressing 150 managers from a variety of different organisations revealed that functional and symbolic workplace strategies are commonly deployed as a strategic space management tool (Bakke, 2007). However, despite increasing awareness, Alexander and Price (2012) stress that use of space as an enabler of strategic change is still the exception rather than the norm.

The aim of the literature review is to explore contemporary use of space management strategies; including their possibilities, limitations and current challenges. The question to be answered is: *Which challenges face organisations when attempting to impact change by space management strategies?*

2. Methods

The literature discussed in this review article is mainly drawn from the fields of environmental psychology, organisational branding, corporate real estate and facility management. Bringing an organisational perspective to the study of spatial environments was additionally believed to be of high value. Findings presented from these fields of study are however limited due to a general lack of interest in organisational studies regarding the value of space in organisational processes (Inalhan and Finch, 2012; Finch, 2012; Chanlat, 2006; Clegg and Kornberger, 2006b; Pepper, 2008; Alexander and Price, 2012; Berg and Kreiner, 1990; Taylor and Spicer, 2007).

The review is furthermore based on a mix of quantitative and qualitative studies. As qualitative case studies examine effects within a particular context – also including multiple perspectives – they are useful in identifying challenges and gaps in the current literature (Flyvbjerg, 2013). With the aim of exploring the main challenges in spatial change management strategies, the discussion is mainly based on qualitative case studies with an applied research nature.

The study was conducted in two main phases. During the first phase, a broad search was conducted using the following main words and phrases: space management strategy, workplace concepts and organisational change, strategic workplace change, functional and/or symbolic space management. In the second phase the collected theory was categorised into functional and symbolic space management strategies. Theories that did not fit in either of these categories, nor included both an organisational and spatial perspective, were excluded. Due to the contemporary and applied nature of the research topic, the main bulk of literature was obtained from publications published after 2000. References to publications earlier than this have been used only when regarded as particularly relevant to the discussion.

3. Strategies and Challenges in Contemporary Space Management Strategies

Change of behaviour may be conducted either through 1) informational strategies or 2) changes within the structure where the behaviour occurs (Gifford et al., 2011). Strategies such as incentives, information, and different communication techniques are examples of informational strategies often used within organisations to affect human behaviour (Cameron and Green, 2015). Little attention has been paid to the more unconventional structural strategies including space, place and context. Rather than ‘changing minds’ by persuasion, benefits may be achieved through changing the contextual structures – including the spatial environment (Dolan and Britain, 2010).

Space enables a multitude of ways in which people and organisations may be affected. Building on Lefebvre (1991) conception of space as practiced, planned and imagined, Taylor and

Spicer (2007) argue that an adequate theoretical foundation must account for multiple interlinked and overlapping spatial levels. The authors have thus identified three main approaches by which organisational space may be understood and strategically managed. First, space may be managed as functional distance, meaning that space is a distance between two points. This approach focuses on the physicality of organisational spaces and implies that the workplace layout may be objectively represented, measured and structured to affect behaviour. The second conception treats space as materialisation of power relations, meaning that rules, hierarchies, physical presence, social norms and organisational practices are 'visible' both in the layout and in the access to spatial resources, therefore central in establishing and maintaining relations of power, structure and control. Finally space may be treated as lived social experiences produced and completed by the imagination, experience and meaning making process of the users. The spatial environment can thus be interpreted as an interactive process where different experiences create different spaces. The current state of a given spatial environment is a product of the socio-material interactions that has taken and is taking place within it.

The following chapter will provide a brief overview of the main trends commonly used by organisations to effect desired change. The discussion follows the three approaches defined by Taylor and Spicer (2007). Alongside the discussion, three selected empirical case studies will be elaborated on to highlight how the contextual situation and other circumstances may interplay with the physical change initiative.

3.1 Utilisation of Functional Distance as a Space Management Strategy

With regards to employee behaviour, the vast majority of the literature on organisational space has focused on how physical qualities and structures may be used to influence employee behaviour, movement and interaction. For example, Allen and Henn (2007) found that the probability of face-to-face communication between employees declines precipitously with distance and reaches an asymptotic level at around 50 meters. Probability of face-to-face communication is reduced by 75% when employees with no work-related relationship are located in separate wings. If located on separate floors there is only a slim chance of regular communication. Similar findings are also retrieved by others (e.g. Olguín et al., 2009; Orbach et al., 2014).

Building on this line of thinking, Stryker et al. (2012) found that face-to-face communication may be enhanced by increased visibility and easy access to spaces for collaborative opportunities. Kabo et al. (2013) further suggest that creation of common pathways, meeting points and overlapping zones increase the probability of communication, collaboration,

knowledge sharing, and innovation. Connecting different areas such as meeting rooms, coffee areas, workstations, rest rooms, copy rooms with the pathways may create a spatial layout based on interconnected functional zones, which in turn may enhance face-to-face communication (Allen and Henn, 2007; Kabo et al., 2013; Waber et al., 2014; Stryker et al., 2012). This view on functional distance is based on assumptions that physical proximity, co-presence, visibility and face-to-face interaction are some of the most important activities in the office and thus influential to social behaviour, interaction, awareness, knowledge sharing, development of social networks and ultimately productivity (Allen and Henn, 2007; Kabo et al., 2013; Waber et al., 2014; Heerwagen et al., 2004).

Orbach et al. (2014) furthermore found that employees working in flexible seating arrangements had a higher proportion of face-to-face contact compared to employees working in fixed arrangements. Ultimately, increased visibility and co-presence in open workspace environments may increase knowledge sharing, non-verbal communication and awareness (Appel-Meulenbroek, 2010; Allen and Henn, 2007; Orbach et al., 2014) as well as support and affect the organisational interaction culture (Rashid et al., 2009; Peponis et al., 2007; Heerwagen et al., 2004).

The functional perspective has become widespread and dominant in the current literature. Using patterns of distance and proximity as an overall concept for creating functional spaces does not only bring a sense of simplicity to social interaction processes, but also enable organisations to strategically use and manipulate the spatial environment in a highly controllable way. Space as functional distance may therefore be regarded as the most manageable of the three perspectives, which has lead to a strong common practice based on this thinking (Duffy, 2005; Allen and Henn, 2007; Taylor and Spicer, 2007). Notwithstanding the documented benefits, conflicting and inconsistent findings from functional space management strategies have also been identified. 'Opening up space', increasing path overlaps and implementing space sharing structures have been identified to collide with a range of organisational, cultural and social constructs, ultimately creating unintended outcomes (e.g. Lansdale et al., 2011; Stryker et al., 2012; Morrison and Macky, 2017). Well-documented drawbacks of open workplace environment, e.g. lack of privacy and increased cognitive workload due to noise and disruptions – see De Croon et al. (2005) for an extensive literature review – may lead to employee resistance and unintended outcomes of the functional space management strategies.

This is exemplified in a case study by Pepper (2008). The organisation studied intended to promote internal and cross-departmental communication, creativity and flexibility. The strategic change included use of an open floor plan with good sightlines, meeting and collaboration places, strategically placed by the main routes, as well as the creation of common pathways and zone

overlaps. Additionally, activity-based rooms, a welcoming entrance and other decorative design elements were implemented to create an enriched work environment. During the implementation of the new workspace, the company faced an economic decline, resulting in redundancies and changes in the management structure. Although the management had good intentions of providing a pleasurable work environment, the overall change initiative failed in its attempts. Employees appreciated the aesthetic appearance, but the general openness within the building seemed to be in contrast with the existing culture, norms, hierarchies and social practices – ultimately preventing employees from using the spatial layout as intended. Due to the coinciding organisational changes employees started to resent the new and 'costly workplace', stating that it was a waste of money better spent on preventing redundancies.

Being unable to separate their social experiences from the new workspaces, the facilities became a negative representation and reminder of the loss of colleagues, a 'homely' culture and a well-known management structure. The new workplace created equivocal messages, giving employees the opportunity to simultaneously blame, explain and justify (Pepper, 2008). Consequently, as spatial environments may include a wide range of symbolic meanings affecting user perception and behaviour, change only in the functional structure may have its shortcomings and may not be enough to influence the intended change. As indicated by Tsai (2002) organisational aspects such as levels of hierarchy and internal competition may mediate the effect of physical proximity. Patterns of power and employee resistance may therefore limit the effects of the spatial and functional structure. Also noted by Leaman and Bordass (2005); Leaman and Bordass (1999) perceptions of the environment's effect on productivity is mediated by the combination of spatial, technical, social and organisational aspect. As the act of opening up space may be in conflict with other organisational and socio-cultural aspects and practices, structural changes may not in and by themself be sufficient to reach the intended ends. By focusing on spatial outcomes alone, one risks to remain blind to deeper causes and structures (Taylor and Spicer, 2007).

3.2 Hierarchic Space: Materialisation of Power Relations as a Space Management Strategy

Buildings are often designed to function as social artefacts reflecting and informing the audience about the organisation, its structure and culture (Berg and Kreiner, 1990; Myerson, 2012). Muetzelfeldt (2006: 121) calls this the 'architectural power', i.e. the cues embodied in space that arrange hierarchies and affects human perception and behaviour. Changes within allocation of different spaces or resources may lead to changes within the political culture and the power

relations within the organisation (Markus, 2006). Elsbach and Pratt (2007) also argue that display of symbols and social artefacts in the workplace may reinforce identity by affirming status or distinctiveness, which may be reinforced through instrumental, aesthetic and symbolic aspects (Vilnai-Yavetz et al., 2005).

Ever since the early 20th century and the introduction of the scientific management principle to office architecture, the traditional Anglo-American office tradition has mainly been focused on impressing clients and expressing an image related to hierarchies and managerial control. Physical cues in the form of glass, steel, high-rise office buildings with shiny facades, status regulated office sizes and locations, type and quality of furnishings as well as different labels have commonly been used to indicate status and reinforce organisational power relations (van Meel and Vos, 2001; Khanna et al., 2013; Duffy and Powell, 1997; Becker and Kelley, 2004). The corporate image, displayed through architectural qualities, is also essential within this tradition as it creates symbols of economic strength and prosperity (Duffy, 2008; Duffy and Powell, 1997).

Recently, this view has changed, leading to an increased emphasis on space branding as a means of motivating and creating excitement about the workplace (Allen et al., 2004). By introducing an enriched work environment, with variation and diversity in the environmental conditions and social cues, organisations may create beneficial working conditions as well as sending messages of care and attention (Vischer, 2005; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2014), thus creating feelings of belonging and organisational identity (Zelinsky, 2002).

Focus on symbolic power within organisational space, together with evolving management theories, emphasising organisational values such as creativity, autonomy and fun – rather than hierarchies and managerial control – has resulted in development of a range of 'fun' and corporate identity rich workspaces. The goal is to change traditional, often hierarchical workplace structures and cultures, instead reflecting new ideas expressing a network based culture that is youthful, daring and avant-garde – a product of the spirit of the age (van Meel and Vos, 2001; Baldry and Hallier, 2010; Warren and Fineman, 2007; Zelinsky, 2002). The aim is to create new social structures in opposition to the former image of the workplace as controlled, hierarchical and limiting in what employees may do (Dale and Burrell, 2008).

Warren and Fineman (2007) present an illustrative example from an organisation attempting to emphasise such a 'modern' low hierarchical workplace. The strategy was executed by the creation of a playful work environment including; large Lego bricks, playful furniture, games, creative rooms with flexible module furniture, human sized 'Russian doll sculptures' and the like. The study, however, revealed that most employees reacted negatively to the new workspace. Employees regarded the attempts to be highly superficial and did not understand why

the ‘fun’, and as rumoured costly elements, could enhance creativity nor create a fun place to work.

As the new spatial strategy was implemented in a top-down manner, without regard for employees’ perspectives, a mismatch was created between employee perception and management ideas. The stated promise of freedom and creativity offered by the new workspace was, from an employee perspective, perceived to be in contrast with other management actions, company rules and regulations. The implementation of the ‘fun’ workspace also coincided with other budget cuts and staff layoffs. Employees were thus, due to cost arguments, denied more favoured aspects within the workplace such as a micro kitchen. Consequently, employees felt that the new spaces were ‘forced down their throats’ and that the message sent by the organisation was insulting, which further created resentment and resulted in inappropriate employee behaviour (Warren and Fineman, 2007; Warren, 2002).

Changing social structures related to power relations poses a clear danger if one disregards the connections between the organisational structure and culture with the spatial expressions. If implemented in a forceful top-down manner the attempt may backfire, strengthening hierarchies rather than diminishing them. This perspective overlooks the complex ways that inhabitants of spatial environments attach meaning to, and understands the process of which different spaces are created.

3.3 Space as Lived Social Experience, the Creation of Meanings and Mental Images as a Space Management Strategies

As the physical environment is the most visible manifestation of an organisation’s culture, symbolic space may be utilised as a powerful spatial tool (Cooper et al., 2001; Gagliardi, 1990; Knittel-Ammerschuber, 2006; Allen et al., 2004; Strati, 1999). This widely recognised fact has received considerable attention in recent years – ultimately influencing a range of symbolic space management strategies (Muetzelfeldt, 2006; Markus, 2006; Harrison and Dourish, 1996; Clegg and Kornberger, 2006b; Chanlat, 2006).

This symbolic power comes from the well established fact that the physical and social environment affords human actions and behaviours (Gibson, 1979) and through different ‘cues’ sends environmental messages (Becker and Kelley, 2004; Steele, 1973). Empirically based research has found that symbolic aspects within organisational space may provide a powerful possibility of differentiation (Danko, 2000; Khanna et al., 2013), affect employee identification with the organisation, influence employee engagement, empowerment and a positive work attitude (Marrewijk, 2010; Cairns, 2002; Duffy and Powell, 1997; Raymond and Cunliffe, 1997).

Organisational space has furthermore been found to create a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2004), affect worker satisfaction, creativity, mood and motivation (Bjerke et al., 2007), symbolise corporate values and mission, affect employee perception of leadership and organisational structures as well as influence recruitment and retaining employees (Danko, 2000). New trends in organisational branding therefore have an increased focus on the workspace as a means of symbolising the organisations' values of social responsibility, reliability and sustainable image (Khanna et al., 2013), which further may be positively connected to employee identity (Leaman and Bordass, 2007). Enriched workspaces, compared to workspaces stripped of extraneous decorations, have also been found to positively affect employee concentration, engagement, satisfaction and perception of own productivity (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2014).

Also in a wider context, the location, area of the city or 'address' of the workplace have, through its context related associations and affordances, been suggested to influence how externals and employees view the organisation's capacity, position, values, image and identity (Danielsson, 2014; Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2010). However, in a world of rapid change, out-dated office buildings may, by acting as an symbolic anchor to the past also constrain organisations (Pinder et al., 2012).

Arguably, organisational metaphors may be framed and enforced through space (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004; Gagliardi, 1990) and function as 'narrative space' (Myerson, 2012) Using narrative and storytelling techniques expressed through artefacts or internal branding has also been found to act as an effective support mechanism for change processes. The narrative may guide employees in their everyday decision making processes, help them understand the rationale for change, and communicate a message to an external audience (Stegmeier, 2008; Danielsson, 2014). This is especially important as employees often relate and behave according to narratives they have adopted about space (Airo and Nenonen, 2014). The overall intention is to apply cues into the organisational space to affect a form of appropriate and expected behaviour (Baldry and Hallier, 2010). Supporting such conclusions, Duffy (2008) argues that the management should regard the office environment as a powerful medium of communication.

In practice, organisational artefacts, symbols and aesthetics are increasingly being used as a legitimate way for management to pursue particular agendas, change actions and meaning (Hancock, 2005). If managed the right way, symbolic use of space may increase the company's value and be a powerful tool for strategic management (Bjerke et al., 2007; Khanna et al., 2013).

An emerging field of research addressing and emphasizing use of cues and mental images to positively affect human decision-making is the field of *choice architecture,* or more commonly referred to as 'nudging'. Research on use of 'nudging' in the workplace is yet sparse. A

pioneering example, is a Danish master thesis (Øvsthus, 2014), examining how nudges may be used to change a negative organisational meeting culture.

A more commonly used strategy is to apply mental images of 'pleasant' places related to the outside community, and by this emphasise issues related to social bonds, responsibility and commitment. Such mental images, are often created by the use of names, 'labels' and design elements traditionally connected to social places such as squares, plazas, lounges, malls, neighbourhoods, parks etc. (Dale and Burrell, 2008; Baldry and Hallier, 2010; Khanna et al., 2013). By bringing spaces traditionally associated with the outside world into the office, this activates feelings and associated emotions, purposely blurring boundaries between the outside and the inside, work and private time, as well as between old and new ways of working (Taylor and Spicer, 2007).

An illustrative example of this may be taken from the company Airbnb, which has made a conference room bookable through the Airbnb website – free of charge for anyone to use. This way, the organisation deliberately uses space to send an internal and external message, emphasising their open and sharing philosophy and culture (Waber et al., 2014). Also when introducing new forms of flexible, ad-hoc and non-territorial workplace concepts, these 'different', and for many, radical ways of organising activities in spaces are used as a form of storytelling. Ultimately, the organisation's aim is to send a symbolic message of being a contemporary and professional organisation – responding to changing conditions and stimulating to NewWoW (Van der Voordt, 2004; Bakke, 2007). Through the creation of spatial narratives, spatial assets are used for branding purposes (Myerson, 2012).

The symbolic qualities are, however, in a mediating process between the different objective artefacts and the subjective domains of organisational members, leaders, designers, customers, and the like (Hancock, 2005). Changes within organisational space may therefore be perceived differently by different actors and organisational members (Stegmeier, 2008). Kjølle and Blakstad (2014) found that building professionals' experience and expert knowledge might result in a lack of interest in the end user needs and functional requirements. This may further result in a mismatch between the user and professional perception of the purpose and value of the workplace. As various users, creators and owners – are different, with different relations to the same space, it is likely that a multitude of perspectives of the physical work environment coexist (Allen et al., 2004).

This is illustrated by Rylander (2009) who found that corporate project managers, designers and users, through the meanings they applied to space, perceived the same workplace design in profoundly different ways. The consultancy organisation under study had created a workplace concept based on activity-based design principles. A main metaphor for the workplace

was developed based on the concept of an airport, resembling a place for 'landing and taking off', arguing that this fitted well with the way the consultants worked. An extended user participation process was arranged to develop the concept, and the final concept was created so that all services and functionalities needed where easily available when working in the office. Informal meeting places had been strategically placed along main pathways to increase internal communication, networking and serendipitous meetings.

After transitioning to the new work space, both designers and corporate project managers regarded the new workplace and the airport metaphor as a success. Employees, on the other hand, stated that the new workplace concept lacked feelings of 'cosiness', that it was impersonal and sterile, and communicated values such as rationality and efficiency. Employees interpreted the new workspaces based on 'hidden messages' – assuming that certain design features had explicit intentions behind them. For example, the sterile, cold and impersonal appearances of the physical space was for them associated with an impersonal professional character, or what was believed to be management expectations of 'the correct way to behave as a consultant'. As these values of efficiency and professionalism where interpreted based on the spatial features, this affected employees' attitudes towards the job as well as their behaviour. Some commented that it was important in the new office to look 'busy' and that people had stopped greeting each other in the hallways. Employees further stated that they felt guilty if they used the informal places for a coffee break – as this might be interpreted as not being efficient and productive.

Although the airport metaphor correctly reflected the way work was carried out, the employee meaning-making process was hampered. The concept and strategy thus failed in reflecting the intended value of the workplace. Elsbach and Pratt (2007) stress that management understanding of what employees value is important for the organisational space to fully enact the correct and intended values. As the consultants in this case travelled more than they cared for, often spending time at airport lounges, the author states that the airport metaphor might have created negative affordances directed towards the workplace.

4. Discussion: Need for an Integrated Perspective on Organisational Space Management Strategies

As illustrated by the theory, strategic space management is a diverse and highly complex field. The presented literature as well as textbooks, articles, blogs and case studies, targeting practise, often provide examples of how intended change has been achieved by use of functional and/or symbolic space management strategies. Such 'how-to do' texts together with the strong emphasis on functional space management strategies have, however, resulted in a simplified and often

highly deterministic view on space as a change management tool. This has influenced a rational, cause-effect thinking, suggesting that all, or at least the majority of, people read and react to spaces in same or similar ways.

Using spatial strategies to modernise and change corporate cultures have been found to be more challenging that originally thought (Myerson, 2012). As also pointed out by Heerwagen et al. (2004) a lack of understanding of the social and cognitive work processes, in combination with a poor understanding of research findings, often leads to simplified strategies and poorly designed copy paste solutions. While practice often sets the pace and drives the development of new spatial strategies, these need to be carefully assessed and built on knowledge from current theory. This implies bridging the gap between practice and theory, with a mutual focus on socio-material constructions in design and implementation of spatial strategies.

The three conceptualisations of spatial environments by Taylor and Spicer (2007) may in this perspective all be useful and effective as strategic tools. However, they also have undeniable limitations. Used incorrectly they may pose challenges and risks for the organisation, as also suggested by Christersson and Rothe (2012). However, as indicated by Taylor and Spicer (2007), the faults of one strategy may possibly be compensated for by another strategy. Treating the perspectives independently, disregarding the others, is thus limited and limiting. Applying an integrated perspective may therefore strengthen the strategic change initiative and better set the conditions for successful implementation.

The theoretical foundation further underscores that social and material aspects are largely inseparable; stressing the fact that a number of specific factors and concerns may affect the success of the strategic change initiative. Examples derived form the presented cases include the following aspects:

- Lack of understanding of employee values and current image of the organisation
- Lack of understanding of the employee meaning-making process, i.e. how the physical change initiative is interpreted alongside other organisational events
- Differences in employee, management and external actors' perception of the workspaces
- Conflicts between the new and existing images of what activities and work processes the organisation values
- Equivocal messages sent by 1) activities during the design and implementation of the workplace, 2) the new workspace design itself, and/or 3) other organisational events and practices in the workplace

Ignoring the organisational context and complexity is therefore a key determinant to strategy failure (Kampschroer and Heerwagen, 2005). In accordance with the change theory of Lewin (1951) and Schein (2004), for the strategy to be successful it needs to penetrate into the different organisational constructions and levels. If this does not happen or the spatial strategy is 'misinterpreted' or hampered by the employee meaning making process the change attempt is likely to backfire.

The relationship between the organisational environment and human behaviour is not always a cause-effect relationship, rather a complex interaction between space, organisational events and human perception (Vischer, 2005). As the process of understanding organisational change initiatives is often affected by internal rumours, stories and gossip (Balogun, 2006), understanding of what narratives and rumours are circulating on different organisational levels may be tantamount in achieving the desired change initiative. Using the different strategies wisely, paying attention to how other organisational aspects correlate with the change, and correcting possible misunderstandings is therefore of high value.

Consequently, for the strategy to be successful, it must be developed, evaluated and possibly changed in a real-life context. In this process, Hancock (2005) stresses that one needs to understand the 'meaning-making action' of corporate artefacts not only by focusing on 'what' organisational artefacts mean, but more importantly 'how' and 'why' they create meaning in that particular context.

As also noted by Kampschroer and Heerwagen (2005), the very act of evaluating and processing the link between space an organisational aspects may lead to new insights and the discovery of contradictions and inconsistencies between espoused and actual beliefs and behaviour. Applying an iterative approach may result in improved understanding of the socio-material implications, thus enhance the likelihood of success. Not only design, but also management of the implementation process needs to be strategically handled. Such an approach may allow organisations to create a common spatial narrative, not only shared by architects, designer and managers, but by the whole organisation (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007; Hancock, 2005). Regardless of the use of strategy, or combination of different strategies, the key to success lies in understanding and managing the process of which different spaces are created.

5. Concluding Remarks and Need for further Research

Berg and Kreiner (1990: 65) argued that: *"the mechanisms by means of which employees and the general public assign meanings to the physical setting created by organizations are vaguely*

understood". Thus their question of: *"How do we, for example, know that a certain design will evoke a certain, emotional, aesthetic or intellectual collective response, and through which processes is the dead material of buildings … turned into living symbolic assets?" (: 43)* is still valid when attempting to create change by space management strategies. The review of the current theory indicates that a one-sided instrumental perspective disregarding the socio-material understanding may negatively affect the outcome of the change initiative.

The functional and instrumental perspectives on spatial environments have created a profound theoretical basis for claiming that spatial environments may contribute to organisational change. There is however a need for more knowledge on space as lived social experience, including symbolic and socio-material perspectives. Adopting a broader angle to space as a strategic tool both in research and practice may provide organisations and building consultants with more knowledge and a broader scope to better implement and succeed with the change initiative. Such understanding may significantly add to organisations and building consultants' ability to 'steer' the interpretation of space, and during the process implement actions and measures to correct possible misalignments and misinterpretations.

6. References

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