Workspace, place and the spatial turn

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Worth a listen...?! 

natural scientist | social scientist | sociologist 
accidental FM for ≈ 10 years | in house/outsourced 
researcher | facilitator | change leader
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research & wisdom
http://stoddartreview.com
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“What matters to people about workspace?”
1. Context
2. Approach
3. Findings
4. Implications?
1. Context
“We shape our dwellings, and thereafter they shape us”
(Churchill, 1941)
Space matters!
KEEP OUT!

Do not come in!
Workspace matters

- Industry, organisations, academics, media
- Oliver Burkeman
- Satan
- Jeremy Paxman
- Nigel Oseland
- Everyone...
But space is not place...
(work)space + culture = (work)place

After Beard & Price (2013) etc
The **duality** of space and place

“The physical environment is not purely physical ... physical and social environments contain one another, frame one another, influence ... one another – but they are **not as one**" (Cairns, 2002, p.818)

...socially producing...

...socially produced...
Reflection or catalyst?
What are we designing to achieve?

- Control → Visibility
- Commodity → Resource, brand
- Change → Flexibility, empowerment
- Community → Serendipity, participation
“I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing, and that is that I know nothing....”
Open scope
Widely informed
...Leap into the unknown?
2. Research approach
“What matters to people about workspace?”
What matters...?

• Helps, hinders...
• Delights, disgusts...
• Within workspace...
• Beyond workspace...
• Tangible, functional...
• Symbolic, meaningful...
What I need you to do...

1. Ponder
2. Capture
3. Discuss
4. Confirm
# Narratives about...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>both</th>
<th>User</th>
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| **Sole-occupancy** | brand affinity  
team & client socialising  
hierarchy spatial arrangement  
change consultation  
agile working pros, cons & protocols | responses to achieve collective & individual identities |
| location, entrance sequence & brand for user experience tensions and trade-offs with workspace in-use  
spatial generosity and permissiveness | location choice & autonomy  
social affordances of food & drink  
health, nature & wellbeing  
work-life boundary  
social responsibility | (mis)perceived workspace intentions & alternatives  
storage solution use & symbolism |
| **Co-working** | achieving & belonging to a community  
selfless versus selfish behaviour | opportunity & inspiration through connectivity  
visual tools  
knowledge facilities |
| holistic socio-spatial design tolerance, experimentation & learning  
behavioural nudges | | |

Ellison (2017, in prep)
3. Three key findings for today
1(a) How we *conceive* space (as providers)
1(b) ...isn’t quite how we \textit{(all) live} it

“trying to almost capture a day in the life ... one that caught, effectively the facets of work and life ... it’s life exaggerated”

“this immersive experience that we try and create ... actually touches my life, and most people’s lives, for moments”

Ellison (2017, in prep)
2. Different ways to ‘do workspace’

- ‘Space-making’ versus ‘Place-making’

- See Work&Place issue #7 for more about this...
Could a comparatively obscure French Marxist philosopher prove to be the key that unlocks the great puzzle of workplace design and management

The missing piece of the workplace conundrum?
What are we designing to achieve?

• Control → Visibility
• Commodity → Resource, brand
• Change → Flexibility, empowerment
• Community → Serendipity, participation
“What matters to people about workspace?”
‘Space-making’: managing facilities or ‘Place-making’: enabling communities
3. What does everyone talk about...?

**Provider**
- conventional workspace wisdom & its challenges

**both**
- brand affinity
- team & client socialising
- hierarchy spatial arrangement
- change consultation
- agile working pros, cons & protocols

**User**
- responses to achieve collective & individual identities

**Sole-occupancy**
- location, entrance sequence & brand for user experience
- tensions and trade-offs with workspace in-use
- spatial generosity and permissiveness

**location choice & autonomy**
- social affordances of food & drink
- health, nature & wellbeing
- work-life boundary
- social responsibility

**Co-working**
- holistic socio-spatial design
- tolerance, experimentation & learning
- behavioural nudges

- achieving & belonging to a community
- selfless versus selfish behaviour

**Opportunity & inspiration through connectivity**
- visual tools
- knowledge facilities

Ellison (2017, in prep)
Comfortable, healthy, happy?

> Choice of location + autonomy to choose
> The social affordances of food and drink
>> The importance of health and nature for individual and collective well-being
>>>> Negotiating the work-life boundary
>>>> Engaging in socially responsible activity
4. Implications?
Within workspace: essential
“For me, it’s about making sure that when we go into a workplace we don’t become drones. That we still retain our thinking, feeling sides as human beings, and we’re connected to the external community”
Beyond workspace: aspirational
“Workspace is just not the office at all ... I don’t do any of my genuine work here ... I guess I consider real work when I am solving problems or using my brain, and here I’m not, I am probably writing up what I have already thought”
‘Workscapes’ (Felstead et al, 2005)

- Working in ‘collective’ offices
- Working from home
- Working on the move
- ...and various others
- Unique, bespoke, **meaningful** networks
- more than ‘mobility’

Image from Coplin (2013) RSA Animate
We need to do far better...
“The power is with us, the proles”
One last thought

“The first revolution is when you change your mind about how you look at things, and see there might be another way to look at it that you have not been shown. What you see later on is the results of that…”

Gil Scott-Heron (1982) from The Revolution Will Not Be Televised (live)
#powerofplace

#WorkplaceMatters

Workplace matters

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Thank you :)