Lifting the Curtain on Contemporary Office
Expected versus Actual Practices of Virtual Multispace Office

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Abstract

Objective of the study

The production process of the 21st century in Western countries is increasingly concentrated on creating and sharing knowledge, while the production of physical goods is outsourced to lower-cost economies. This so-called knowledge work often takes place outside the traditional temporal and spatial employment spheres as work can often be conducted anytime and anywhere with a laptop and an interned connection. To support these new flexible ways of working, there has been a recent trend in office design towards virtual multispace office design. The purpose of this study is to understand the expectations of managers and designers versus the actual practices of employees as to the use of virtual multispace office space and how the office design has consequence on the everyday work practices of the organizational members.

Research method:

Earlier research on office spaces in organizational studies has mainly taken the perspective of seeing them as abstract macro-level organizational systems, making assumptions on how organizations adapt to their changing environments through office design. In order to broaden our understanding of organizational life and its consequences of office design, this thesis will adopt a practice perspective in studying organizations - one that sees social and material as mutually entangled or imbricated. The research method utilized in data collection follows the principles of practice theory with fieldwork comprised of direct observations and interviews and informal discussion.

Findings:

The empirical data revealed how the office space is not a stable box that could be imposed with expected ways of using the space, assuming that the employees would act according to the intentions but that both space and materiality emerge as dynamic and generative forces shaping the individuals appropriating the office space in an on-going manner. This finding became evident through the interplay of identified accommodating practices that were aligned as well as through the resisting practices that were misaligned to the intended ways of using the virtual multispace office. Furthermore, a paradox between the managerial and design discourse on ways of using the virtual multispace office and the realized materiality of the office space was identified.

Keywords office design, virtual multispace office, practice theory, sociomateriality, knowledge work, contemporary organization

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1.   INTRODUCTION

Our ways of working and the space for work have changed radically from Taylor's dehumanized factories or Fordist mass production. With digital revolution, most of the repetitive process work, once common in offices within developed countries, is today being handled by computers or outsourced to lower-cost economies (Bradley, 2006). Furthermore, with the shift towards the so-called "knowledge economy", the new production process is increasingly more concentrated on sharing and creating knowledge, rather than the production and distribution of physical goods (Marazzi, 2007). Therefore, in contemporary organizations more time and effort is devoted to what is known as "knowledge work", which relies upon employee collaboration skills, discretion, initiative, and creativity (Myerson et al. 2010). In line with this new way of thinking, "work" – understood as a value producing activity – has become more and more concerned with communication and social reproduction, and now often takes place outside the formally designated temporal and spatial employment spheres, suggesting the idea that we live and work in a "social factory". (Witheford, 1999; Hardt and Negri, 1994; Poulter and Land, 2008). The nomadic knowledge workers are no longer tied to the physical boundaries of an office, as people often do not need more than a laptop and an internet connection to be able to work. Knowledge work is described as highly autonomous, which means that the individuals must negotiate their own time/space segmentation of when and from where to work, and when to disengage from "work mode" (Mazmanian, Yates, & Orlikowski, 2006).

Despite contemporary work being increasingly conducted in virtual space, physical office design still holds its legitimacy within managerial and architectural discourse.

Only the objectives for their design have changed with contemporary offices now being designed to match the practices of knowledge work. As a result, two new co-existing office typologies have emerged: the *virtual office* (Bradley, 2006) and the *multispace office* (Nenonen et al., 2012). New digital tools are redefining the boundaries between physical and virtual spaces in the organizational context, while the work within the physical office space now takes place in an open plan environment with shared workstations, instead of cubicles with closed office spaces. Traditionally, the majority of research has focused on the expectations that managers and designers have as to the use of these spaces (see for example Clegg, Stewart & Kronenberger, 2004; Dale, 2005), only offering limited insight into the complexities of the world of a contemporary organization. On the other hand, in this work I aim at offering a more nuanced reading of contemporary office work and space design. To this end, I adopt a practice theory perspective, which considers organizations both as sites and as results of work activities. This has the potential to depict everyday life in organizations as something that is produced and reproduced in practice by using tools, discourse, and bodies (Nicolini, 2012).

1.1.   Motivation for the Research

The motivation for examining this particular topic is based on my reading on critical organizational studies (see for example Brannan, Parsons, & Priola, 2011; Fleming, 2009), and on my personal experience in working in companies that are slowly reshaping their office spaces towards virtual and multispace office designs. I wanted to not just understand what are the reasons and motivations for an increasing number of companies turning towards virtual and multispace offices, but also to understand the

employee perspective in everyday organizing within such spaces. I was soon introduced to practice theory as a more interpretive and inclusive method for research than the traditional research approaches in the organizational research stream, which guided me to studies focusing on spatial matters of organizations. Researchers stemming from social sciences, whose thinking has been influenced by philosophers such as Wittgenstein and Heidegger (Reckwitz, 2002), argue that we should blur the conceptual boundary between organizational theory and other disciplines, and start to systematically investigate the concrete activities that constitute the routines of organizing (Barley & Kunda, 2001).

After reading studies from the organizational and managerial discipline, I understood that there seems to be a clear theoretical gap in the current understanding of the office space that would focus on the actual practices of the employees working in these office spaces and on the complexities they may pose with regards to the managerial expectations. Furthermore, a stream of researchers have criticized that the field has traditionally neglected the ways in which organizing is bound to the materiality and spaces in which humans act and interact (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Pickering, 2013). Much of the existing literature have focused on the design of organizational spaces rather than how the space "comes into being" in the everyday practices of employees (Häkkinen & Kivinen, 2013, p. 140). Thus, a dynamic perspective, one that focuses on organizational space as an ongoing construction and transformation can bring novel insight on to the consequences the office space may have on employees appropriating them.

In order to broaden our understanding of organizational life and its consequences of office design, materiality should be given the emphasis it adamantly requires.

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Therefore, this thesis will adopt a practice perspective in studying organizations, as it offers an alternative approach - one that sees social and material as mutually entangled or imbricated. Contemporary organizing is increasingly understood to be complex, dynamic, distributed, mobile, transient, and unprecedented, and as such a practice lens can offer a much needed extension for scholars of organization studies as an approach that will help to theorize these kinds of novel, indeterminate, and emergent phenomena. This study will contribute to the existing practice theoretical research by bringing novel and valuable insight from the gathered empirical research as well as from the application of practice theory.

1.2.   *Research Questions and Objectives*

The purpose of this study is to understand the expectations of managers and designers versus the actual practices of employees as to the use of virtual multispace office space and how the office design has consequence on the everyday work practices of the organizational members.

It is especially important to recognize what kind of negotiations are taking place by the individuals within the organization and how their everyday mundane interactions in the workplace actually make the space come into being. Thus, this study aims to fill in the theoretical gap by brining novel insight through empirical research, in which the managerial expectations are contrasted with the actual practices of employees of virtual multispace office, and to depict how the office design has consequence to the individuals appropriating these spaces. The research has potential significance for future

understanding of organizations and can highlight certain managerial challenges especially since office design consequences show themselves only in practice.

Thus, my research questions are:

RQ1: What are the expectations of managers and designers for the use of the virtual multispace office?

RQ2: How do these intended ways of using the space realize in actual practices of the employees in the virtual multispace office?

These questions aim to reveal the often taken-for-granted, invisible dynamics of the role materiality plays in everyday organizing and thus aim to generate deep insights into contemporary organizing. Combining the previous academic literature and providing an empirical contribution, the study aims to produce new understanding on spatial matters in contemporary organizations.

1.3. *Structure of the Study*

In this section, I have introduced changes within our ways of working and the workspaces, and one of the most recent office design trends, virtual multispace office. In addition, I have outlined the gap in current organizational research and organizational spaces, with regards to the contrast between the managerial discourse and the actual practices of the employees appropriating workspaces. The remainder of this study is articulated as follows: Theoretical Background, Research Design, Empirical Case Study, and Discussion and Conclusions.

Theoretical Background: In this section the history of office design is presented, as well as the key theoretical discussions on practice approach within the context of

organizational spaces. By looking at the history of office design we can see how office design has changed throughout the history and how it has affected the ways of working. Previous research on practice approach, on the other hand, helps further to illustrate the research gap on studying organizational spaces and how further research should be placed to the actual practices of the employees in the office space. In addition, the context of the study is defined.

Research Design: This section introduces the chosen methodological foundations of interpretative practice approach, and the empirical data collection methods of direct observation, interviews and informal discussions, and company documents and videos.

Empirical Case Study: The empirical part of the study answers the two research questions. First the two companies are presented. Secondly, the expectations the managers and designers have as to the use of virtual, multispace office design is described. Thirdly, the observed actual practices of the employees of virtual multispace office are presented. Fourthly, the findings from the fieldwork are discussed as accommodating and resisting practices to the expected ways of using the virtual multispace office.

Discussion and conclusions: In this section, the findings of the managerial and design discourse versus actual practices of employees in virtual multispace office are evaluated and discussed further. In addition, the identified paradox between the discourse and the realized materiality are discussed. Furthermore, theoretical contribution and empirical

contribution to practice theory and studies on organizational spaces are discussed and evaluated, as well as the implications for further research and for managers is presented.

2.   CHANGING DIMENSIONS OF THE OFFICE

Taking a look at the history of organizational theory, ways of working seem to be under constant transformation. The recent changes in our working life have been referred to as, for example moving from industrial to post-industrial and informative, from regulated to deregulated, from Fordism to post-Fordism, from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic, from bodily to cognitive-affective. Technological revolution and the subjectification and individualization of micro-level changes of work have appeared in tandem, and are creating new requirements for business offices. Managers, on the other hand, impose new organizational structures in order to adapt to the changing nature of work, in order to maintain efficiency with the activities they organize.

The evolution of office design and functional typologies are well documented in a great body of literature depicting the progression of office design and principle (e.g. Abalos & Herreros, 2003; Bradley, 2006; Duffy, 1991, 1997). Organizations vary greatly in size and activities, making it difficult to draw clear lines on the phases of the development. Bradley (2006) argues that there are, however, three distinct stages within the history of office design: the factory-like early office 1859–1950, the cubicle office of 1950–2000, and the emerging networked office of 2000 and onward. This thesis will adopt Bradley's (2006) three staged categorization as it enables me to create a holistic understanding of the various changes that have happened during the modern history of work and office design. Furthermore, I will broaden Bradley's ideas of contemporary office design by discussing the process of subjectification (Julkunen, 2008).

2.1.   *Factory-like Offices as an Information Processing Machine*

The early decades of modern office design, as we know it today, can be traced back to the industrial revolution of the late 19th century in North America (e.g. Van Meel 2000; Bradley 2006). The industrial revolution introduced us to mass production, expanded distribution, a growing service sector, and the emergence of a consumer society (e.g. Beniger, 1986; Duffy, 1997). These fundamental changes in the economy caused a crisis of control due to the explosive growth in information related problems, such as expanded scales of production, distribution, and consumption (Bradley, 2006). Work started to shift from agricultural craftwork to factories and office work. The nature of work in societies began to lead to the emergence and diffusion of new organizational forms and institutions. Beniger (1986) describes this as the beginning of a "control revolution", wherein information related practices were gradually brought under control by both technological and social innovations – in other words, bureaucracy, the cornerstone of the industrial organization, was born (Barley & Kunda, 2001).

It can be argued, that the two greatest influencers for organizing work at the time were Henry Ford (1863–1947) and Fredrick Taylor (1856–1915). Ford has been considered as the father of standardized mass production, whereas Taylor is best known for generating the basic principles of the capitalist work process (Julkunen, 2008).

Ford became the first one to commission assembly lines at his factories in 1913–1914. The assembly lines were the embodiment of engineers' extensive work of rationalization of the production process. The main principles of mass production were, and are, great production batches, division of labour, specialized machines, security of production and continuous flow. The division of labour enabled the employment of semi-skilled labour, which on the other hand, made it possible for the production to

grow exponentially. This modern economic and social system based on an industrialized and standardized form of mass production became known as Fordism. After World War II the largest Ford and Fiat factories relying on the Fordist work principles, employed 50 000 to 60 000 employees working on car manufacturing (Julkunen, 2008)

Almost 33 years before Ford's automobile plants were working full steam, Taylor had began his time and motion studies, which later became known as scientific management. At the core of Taylor's ideology was the commodification of living work. Taylor emphasized the importance of standardization of work tools and conditions for productivity (Jeremy Myerson et al., 2010) and parsed the responsibilities of information handling into smaller, more clearly defined tasks for which employees were trained.

Taylorism and the inventions created at Henry Ford's factories can be coupled together to depict a movement, which can be referred to as rationalism or scientific management. Both approaches manifest the beginning of the century's drive to reinforce the managers' control over work processes. In factories, skill and craftsmanship were replaced by discipline and anonymity. Taylorism introduced the education of both human and factory bodies, a living bodily whole. These bodies were objects of rationalization and the goal was to get them to act as accurately, fast and effectively as a machine (Julkunen, 2008). The merging of science, engineering, and capitalist production through scientific and systematic management depicts the organization itself in the manner of a machine: "In modern management, these engineers who had been trained in science and weaned upon large-scale corporate enterprise fused the imperatives of corporate capitalism and scientific technology into a

formal system… Not alone the actual machinery of production but the entire bureaucratic operation of corporate enterprise took on the guise of an efficient, well-oiled mechanism—the very embodiment of technical reason - against which individual opposition could not but appear 'irrational'." (Noble, 1977, p. 27).

Taylor's ideology had been applied to traditional industries, but was soon realized to be usable also in office work, especially when innovations of information technology, such as typewriters, telephones and calculators, invaded the office environment. The dominant Taylorist organizational methodology and its principles formed a new architectural typology, the rise of the office tower, which can be seen as the architectural manifestation of global capital, and of technological might and mass production (Kuo, 2012). Space had become the key concept in modern design. Office spaces served as information-processing machines concretized in the form of a built environment. The machinic nature of the modern office building in the late 19th century and early 20th century is suggested to be "the spatial manifestation of the principles of design and practice linked to then emergent managerial goals of efficiency and workflow" (Bradley 2006, p. 69).

One of the most influential designers of the time was Frank Lloyd Wright, with his Larkin building in Buffalo (1906) and Johnson Administration building in Wisconsin (1939) (Duffy, 1991). Managers, prior to scientific management, tended to be quite independent with regard to the gathering, storage and analysis, and dissemination of information, and were rarely located in the same workspace with their employees. Furthermore, the principles of scientific management were at the time typically implemented to pre-existing buildings and facilities (Bradley, 2006). Wright was one of the very first architects to create an open plan office design with a harmonious

combination of both the interior and exterior (Bradley, 2006; Duffy, 1991). He referred to the building as a machine embracing its mechanic principles as a means to improve life, which comes apparent in "The Art and Craft of the Muscle" (Wright, 1902, p. 72–73), "ten thousand acres of flesh-like tissue […] knit and interknit with a nervous system marvellously complete;" "Its nerve ganglia! […] The governor gear controlling these modern Goliaths seems a visible brain in intelligent action."

Key features of the Taylorist school of thought – order, hierarchy, supervision, depersonalization – were an essential part of the architecture of those initial, pioneering, turn-of-the-century buildings. Wright translated these dominant management principles of Taylorism into office design by having all of the workers located into a large open floor spaces comprised of orthogonally arranged desks all facing the same direction – towards the supervisor. The openness of the space aimed to facilitate the flow of work from one desk to another and to maximise the control through visual supervision of clerical staff. In Wright's offices, managers were provided with cellular offices, typically with windows to help the supervision. (Duffy, 1997). Figures 1 and 2 show a picture and a plan of Wright's most iconic open plan office, the Larkin building, which was a conscious architectural application of the control and communication strategies.

Consumer goods companies, such as Larkin and Johnson, set the design drivers for these buildings with their dynamic informational demands of market research, advertising, and consumer information (Bradley, 2006). However, Wright argued that the greatest threat to social meaning was scale, which is why his underlying design driver was to keep things small enough and thus prevent any abuse from occurring. This became evident in both the Johnson and the Larkin buildings, as both the sites and the

buildings are finite; the need for expansion was neither proposed or foreseen by Wright (Duffy, 1991).

Figure 1 Interior design of the Larkin building. Source: www.carusostjohn.com
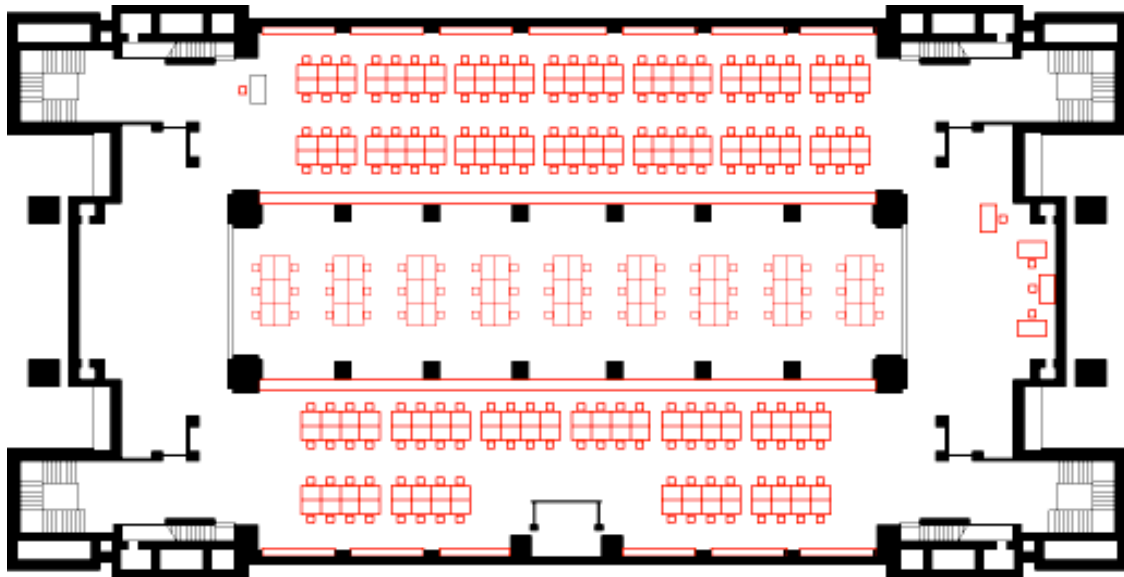
Figure 2 The Taylorist Open Plan of the Larkin Building. Source:
www.carusostjohn.com

The architect's innovations presented in the Larkin building were numerous, yet they became influential only much later (Bradley, 2006; Duffy, 1991). Wright revolutionized the concept of an administrative, data-processing office through the building's internal form (Pawley, 1970). In addition, his aim was to create, in some measure, a comfortable environment for the workers within by installing an integrated air-conditioning system and an atrium to increase natural lighting, which were rare at the time (Duffy, 1991).

The fundamental shift in the locus of control from individual behaviour and aptitude to the material flow of information throughout the organization marked the emergence of the first modern office design. In summary, the pioneering decades of office design were grounded on opportunities for command and control enabled by communications technologies, such as typewriters, calculators and telephones, which were then capitalized on by the development and implementation of scientific management. Bradley (2006) suggest that the modern office formed around three key features:

- Standardization, centralization, and hierarchical division of information processing and labour

- The facilitation and prioritization of communication and information flows over the individual aptitude and ability of workers,

- The entrenchment of worker surveillance and discipline as a fundamental infrastructural component of gathering, storage, recording, and dissemination of information.

Furthermore, the basic components for the contemporary workspace were somewhat well established through the adoption of these principles by the end of the 19th century (Bradley, 2006).

2.2. Cubicle Office – New Dimensions of Freedom and Flexibility

Up until the 1960's, Fordism had embodied the multiple intertwined societal structures and mechanisms that maintained the stabilization and growth of the post World War II era. A decade later, an economic downturn followed - led by the oil crisis, and the breakdown of Bretton Woods system of monetary management in 1973 - leading into restlessness in societies (Julkunen, 2008; Van Meel, 2000). Protests had already started to rise before the OPEC crisis including the anti-Vietnam War movement in the United States, and the massive general strikes of 1968 in France, and political violence of 1969 in Italy. The peak of radicalism was interpreted through generational dynamics; a generation that was raised in times of prosperity and peace would not settle for monotonous or unilateral work (Julkunen, 2008). The common explanations to Fordism drifting towards crisis are suggested to be the opposition to repetitive work, the market

saturation of mass consumption products, technological developments, student radicalism, and instability of international systems.

The crisis of Fordism in 1968–1973 had affected the ways of working along with office design principles for good. The 21st century's protests and the quests towards alternative lifestyles in those days, cannot simply be seen as individual protests but instead as a formation of a new kind of proletarian subject, who could no longer be submitted to Taylorist work (Julkunen, 2008). Following this line of thought, managers started to deconstruct organizational hierarchies, implement group working practices and quality circles, empower employees for initiatives, and replace routines with more varied ways of working. The cure for the crisis at the time was considered to be flexibility and deregulation; a shift towards flexible production, flexible technology, flexible organizing of work and workforce - in other words a shift to flexible capitalism (Julkunen, 2008).

The decline of the Taylorist working class led the way to a new production method by Taliichi Ohno, the Japanese incarnation of Taylor. Ohno created the Toyota Production System, also known as lean production, a systematic method for the elimination of waste within a manufacturing process between 1948 and 1975. (Marazzi, 2007). The basic principle of lean is making the value adding components obvious by reducing everything else.

Lean production is a combination of craft and mass production, aiming for both low costs and flexibility. Work was organized around multiskilled workers from all levels of the organization and by using highly flexible, increasingly automated machines to produce volumes of products in vast variety (Womack, Jones, Roos, & Sammons, 1990). According to Marazzi (2007, p. 26): "what needed to be created was a working

class strongly implied in the entrepreneurial spirit, faithful to the firm's objectives, capable of adapting to its imperatives and ready to identify with its destiny."

In parallel, the prevalent office design begun to lose its popularity. Wright's finite design principles were based on his thought that the operations of companies were established and unchanging. Both Larkin and Johnson buildings had unprecedented design and construction ruling out the possibility for any extensions to the space completely. (Pawley, 1970) Thus, when business operations began to grow in size and scope, scalability problems started to occur with spatial forms such as assembly lines. The design was too rigid and too fixed, preventing ad hoc spatial arrangements. (Pawley 1970; Bradley 2006). Scale, mobility, flexibility, modularity, connectedness, and technologization had become the new modes of production of late capitalism since World War II.

The "cubicle era" in office design was seen as an answer to the higher demands of communication and information handling, also to be able to group and regroup facilities, management, and workers depending on the number and nature of jobs that had been contracted. Furthermore, the American high-rise buildings started to develop in the 1950s as they gained new impetus from improved construction techniques and new architectural typology, with the most visually striking feature of the buildings being a glass façade. These developments made it possible to design high-rise buildings with deep and open floors, creating, in addition of the aesthetic value, economic benefits. (Van Meel, 2000).

In Europe, two independent teams introduced their ideas for the modern office cubicle that was seen to be the solution to the newly risen demands for flexibility. One of the teams was German Quickborner group in 1963 (Van Meel 2000; Bradley 2006;

Kleeman 1991) that created the office landscape of Bürolandschaft, illustrated in figure 3.

Figure 3 Osram Offices, Munich, Walter Henn, 1963: Bürolandschaft layout. Source: pilgrimakimbo.wordpress.com

The leaders of the group, Wolfgang and Eberhard Schnelle, argued that the conventional office buildings no longer met the requirements of modern office work (Van Meel, 2000). The office landscape emerged from various sources, from scientific management principles, as well as from "human relations" thinking, which "promoted a relaxed and status-free form of layout and emphasized noninstrumental aspects of work such as addressing staff by first name" (Kleeman, 1991, p. 8). Architects who adopted this way of thinking claimed that: "Although the primary object is to make the office work as efficiently as possible, it is important to remember that staff must be made feel

at ease: if they don't, productivity will suffer" (Duffy, 1992, p. 12). Thus, designers of office landscapes were to have a new type of a worker in mind, one who, instead of solely focusing on accomplishing work tasks in a routinized manner sees him/herself as a competitive asset contributing to a company's success. Another influencer was cybernetics, a concept of an office as a kind of communications device or control system (Duffy, 1997). Furthermore, teamwork, a new type of work organization, was introduced. This type of organizing emphasized the group over the individual and thus required a different design of the workspace. Cellular offices were seen to set limits to the new demands of cooperation, whereas open offices, with loosely arranged desks, provided the means for information to move fast and helped employees to strive towards common goals (Hofbauer, 2000). As the aim was to allow communication to flow freely, the office landscape had no private offices or rooms since walls and doors were considered to hinder the flow. The Quickborner team designed the office space by utilizing existing furnishings, which seemed to have been placed in a random order, but which was "an attempt to achieve an organic freedom both in organizational and building form" (Kleeman, 1991, p. 7). The design drivers were fluid transitions, smoothed edges, things melting in with each other and rounded forms. (Hofbauer, 2000).

Meanwhile in the U.S., Robert Probst, working for Herman Miller Inc., created the "Action Office" in 1964, which was rapidly updated in 1968 to a more refined version (Bradley, 2006). Figure 4 is a picture of the interior design of the Action Office depicting the cubicle arrangements. The modern office cubicle was created, which proved to be the solution for the new demands for spatial freedom and flexibility (Duffy, 1991).

Figure 4 Action Office II, 1978. Source: www.wired.com

From an employee perspective the office landscape seemed to be a welcomed concept (Van Meel, 2000), although, the open layout led some employees to feel anxious due to the lack of privacy and defined personal territory (Duffy, 1991). Probst, on the other hand, focused primarily on redesigning the furnishing (Bradley, 2006). Both, the Action Office and the office landscape model, aimed at transforming the austere factory-like work environment of previous decade to a more efficient, comfortable, creative, as well as more equal and democratic work experience. Yet, the cubicle offices we know today are a "bastardization" of the Probst and Quickborner principles, since today's cubicle-based modular offices are only a little more than open spaces comprised of boxes. According to Bradley (2006) the reductive adaptations of

the Quickborner and Probst models were office designers' efforts to reduce the costs of these original and rather expensive office designs.

There was a seminal shift throughout the 1970s and beginning of 1980s from the office building's façade to its interior. According to Abalos and Herreros (2003, p. 201) "the building became dematerialized and was gradually reduced to serving as a provider for air-conditioning and energy services" whereas work had previously been centred on paper-based filing making the office space necessary in order to facilitate information, communication, and workflows (Bradley, 2006). Furthermore, computers had previously been bulky machines, placed in the cellar of a building, but with the technological developments in the 1980s, they started to appear onto employees' desktops.
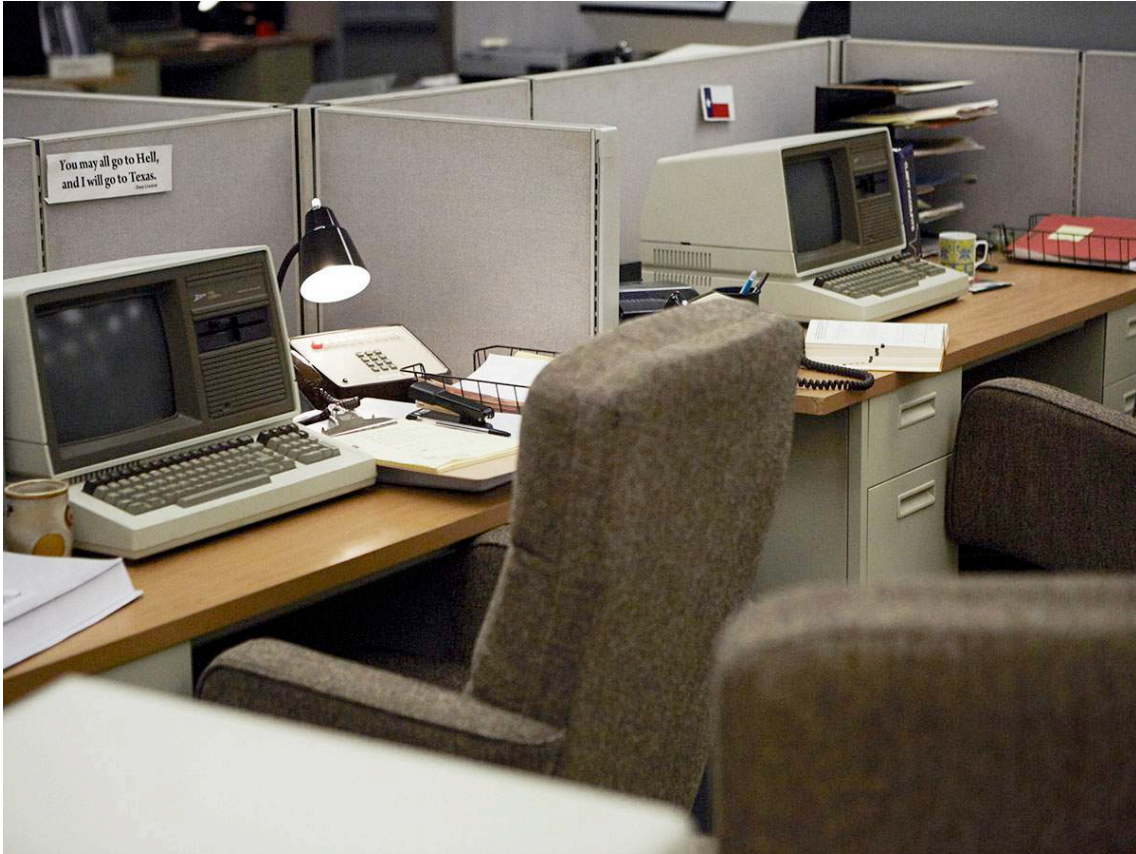
Figure 5 Early portable computer models. Source: www.wired.com

The introduction of personal computers in the late 1970s liberated the electronic tools from their accommodator, the office building. The first portable computers, illustrated in figure 5, enabled the modularity and flexibility of work practices without architectural means. These were the first signs of a rapidly approaching office design model in which office buildings would start becoming obsolete (Duffy, 1983). The dematerialization of a contemporary office design is a key factor in the emergence of a nomadic typology, in which employees are liberated from their office desks through digital infrastructures. Computer mediated communication enables the abstraction of social space into a spatial network of local offices with differentiated and specialized activities combined into a cohesive entity. In addition, the space is an object of consumption and thus the costs of occupying physical space are suggested to be the

main motivations to abandon the paper office and create virtual offices. (Bradley, 2006).

The emergence of the virtual office from the year 2000 onwards orgininates from on technological developments towards the internet, intranets and email, combined with the introduction of portable technologies such as mobile phones and laptops (Van Meel, 2000). In addition to the abstraction of social space, work processes started to change towards a self-imposed discipline which meant that managers would be freed from the supervision of each employee thus putting each employee in charge of themselves (Julkunen, 2008). The drastic shifts in technology embodied the changes in the practices of work as individuals could now achieve spatial and temporal freedom.

2.3. *Contemporary Office – Networked Bodies*

The cubicle era is by no means the latest version in office design but the locations, functions, and dimensions of the office space have continued to change as the competition in the 21st century's world of work in market driven societies is becoming tougher by the day and companies are reshaping their production methods and organizational structures in order to stay ahead in the game. The new economy has transformed from Fordism to post-fordism, and from mass production and consumption to the flexible production and distribution systems, commonly called just in time (Marazzi, 2007). David Harvey (1989) refers to the post-Fordist regime of flexible accumulation as the process of restructuring of organized full time labour. This change has occurred over the last three decades and is now moving towards new organizational flexibility where labour is temporary and typically non-unionized, and where both manufacturing and clerical work is outsourced to regions and nations with lower labour

costs. The current growth drivers left in the Western working world are the service sector, knowledge work, emotional, aesthetic, and identity work, as well as networking, flexibility, and globalization (Brannan et al., 2011; Kairinen, Koskinen, Laitinen, Niemelä, & Uhmavaara, 2003).

In the new world of work bureaucracy with its stable rules and high degree of hierarchy are seen as barriers in a dynamic environment (see e.g. Peters/Waterman 1982). Contemporary management discourse argues that organizations need to "thrive on chaos" (Peters, 1987), to "ride the waves of the change" (Peters, 1987) and to "learn to dance" (Kanter, 1989). According to these principles, the organizations that are able to learn and adapt to the demands of rapidly changing business environment are the ones who will survive.

Contemporary work is now organized around projects in multidisciplinary teams with communication and production overlapping in the ways of working, so much so that in fact they are now one and the same. In Fordism communication excluded production and the assembly line was silent, mechanically executing the directions established by the white-collar managers. Now, however, knowledge has become the new capital and we have a "speaking", "communicating production process, and the technologies used in this system can be considered true 'linguistic machines', whose main focus is to facilitate and accelerate the circulation of data" (Marazzi, 2007, p.23). The new labour becomes visible as a dynamic, communicative, and affective body, whose strength does not emerge from obedient discipline but instead from the ability to co-produce through communication (Julkunen, 2008). Therefore "the configurations of capital able to thrive in the new world will be those that adapt to and govern the new

immaterial, cooperative, communicative, and affective composition of labor power" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, 276).

This broader move towards post-Fordism has required the introduction of new practices and making them work together, which indeed have been established in tandem with new office designs. Virtual office (Bradley, 2006) and multispace office design (Nenonen et al., 2012) are the material manifestations of the new world of work. Companies are now investing on new communication technology, with increasingly pervasive wireless networks, mobile computing, and information appliances that are changing the practices of everyday organizing and the spaces where work is performed in (Bradley, 2006). Virtual offices are the result of this digital revolution, enabling a less spatially bound alternative to purpose-built architectural and/or geographical spaces emancipating the employee with practices of telework, as observed by Mitchell (1995, p. 3): "… I no longer had to go to work. Not that I suddenly became idle; it's just that the work now came to me. I did not have to set out every morning for the mine (as generations of my forebears had done), the fields, the factory, or the office; I simply carried a lightweight laptop computer that gave me access to the materials on which I was working, the tools I required, and the necessary processing power".

This type of an office aims to a significant degree to remove the physical burden of providing a space of control, as the electronically networked, communicative, and informational infrastructure of an organization enables connection rather than construction as the primary means of control (Bradley, 2006). Whereas Taylorist management practices saw it as necessary to control employees by having them in one building, the new management discourse encourages to liberate the body from the office

and in fact making the body itself to become the office and to be as connected as possible (ibid).

Virtual offices could at the extreme make office design redundant; however consultancies, designers and architects still see the physical office setting combined with virtual, as an important factor in contemporary organizing. While traditional organizing of work was formed around status and hierarchy associated with spaces that are separate and bounded, contemporary design drivers for workplaces are openness, transparency and a greater homogeneity of space (Becker, 2004).

The new trend for interior spatial arrangement is having a variety of spaces (from open-plan office spaces to the almost domesticated kitchens, lounges and break-out zones) which are generally accessible to a range of employees (Dale & Burell, 2010). Consultancies refer to this arrangement as a "multispace office", by which they mean a new flexible and changeable spatial concept born from the culmination of knowledge work that should offer a platform both for action in an increasingly diverse cooperative work environment, as well as for solo work when concentration is needed. Multispace office should enable the selection of space according to the work task at hand: calm workspaces for work requiring concentration and group work spaces and meeting points

for   different   size   and   type   of   meetings   and   co-working.
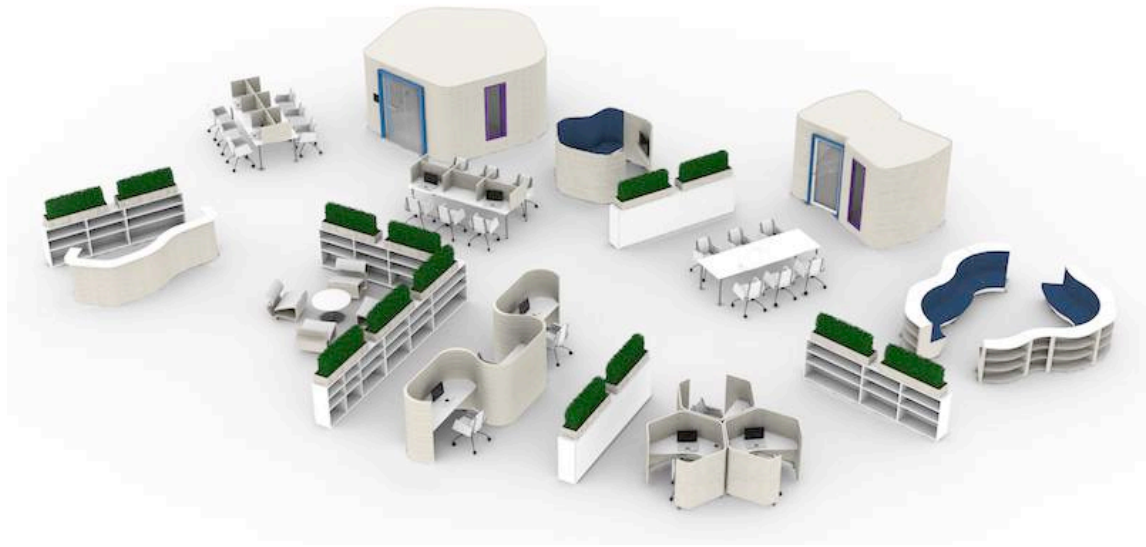
Figure 6 Example of a multispace office layout by design agency Havuu Source:
www.havuu.fi

Figure 6 shows an example 3D model of a multispace office design, with different

spaces for both private and group work. Portable devices no longer tie the employee to a

single fixed workstation, and instead of having named workstations, the office consists

of multiple shared spaces for different purposes. However, named workstations can be

pointed to those who require one due to the nature of their work. The purpose is to

create a work environment with different solutions for different user profiles (Nenonen

et al., 2012). In this sort of an office work and space become disconnected resulting in

flexible "workscapes" – i.e., complete network of workplaces and workstations in

which people work (Felstead et al. 2005). Where workplace refers to the building that

contains and supports one or more workstations, workscapes is a relational concept that

focuses around the aesthetics of change.

The above described contemporary office design (i.e. virtual, multispace, workscape concept) is well illustrated in Harun Farocki's film Ein Neues Produkt (A New Product). The film follows a design team introducing their scale model for the Vodafone new headquarters, illustrated in figure 7. In the film they explain how an employee should use the space: "A typical day for an employee starts at his desk, his organizational unit. When I take a break or a meeting, I can go into this meeting point or meeting room. My desk can be used by someone else, since I'm working here in the afternoon. Or I have a conference at the meeting point with three people, here an elegant space. Later I can retreat here to an acoustically isolated area for an hour. I don't have to occupy a traditional work desk. That's one of the ideas of the concept, you see it in the entire campus. 80 000 square meters! Plus variable space, that is the working world of a Vodafone employee, and theoretically also the place where he lives or drinks his coffee."

Figure 7 Screen shot of the film A New Product by Harun Farocki (2012)

The Vodafone example presented in the film is a working replication of a virtual, multispace office, which allows flexible modification of the space according to fluctuating work demands. Today, large corporations are like living organisms, buying and selling companies, modifying projects and project teams. To reorganize a large corporation to meet the essence of a living organism requires a complete change within the corporate culture, supported by new spaces. In many cases a refurbishment project of existing premises is not enough but the corporation may have to build a complete new building, in order to create a space that will be as easily realigned as the people working within the space. Another example of this kind of a corporation, also presented in Farocki's film, is a new building for Unilever's Hamburg headquarters. Figure 8 shows a sketch of the Unilever building's interior. According to a company

representative, the previous building with its closed office spaces, required the company to renovate their office space over thousand times per year, whereas in the new building the employees move but the walls and the furniture remain as they are: "Everyone has the same chair, the same desk, the same shelve, only the employee changes. Maybe a few floors up or somewhere else. I think this flexibility that we created is very impressive." This sort of an office design is also conceptualized as a generative building (Clegg, Stewart & Kronenberger, 2004). In a generative building change is part of the concept. Instead of static conditions, the building reflects movements in five respects: disorder, flexibility, problem generation, movement and design.

Figure 8 Screen shot of Unilever's Hamburg headquarters from the film A New Product by Harun Farocki (2012)

As space symbolically represent the organization, office design also serves the purpose to the identification of groups and individuals within the organization and its goals (Van Marrewijk & Yanow, 2010). These are communicated to the organization's members through corporate mission statements and verbal accounts but can also be manifested through spatial arrangements (de Vaujany & Vaast, 2014). Companies are also encouraged to think about their offices in a narrative form; the office should tell a story of the company and its brand, through which the employees can live and experience the space in a holistic and dynamic manner (Jeffery Myerson & Ross, 2003). Now, the employees are expected to 'live through' the space – or at least to 'work through them' thus constructing the whole workspace as the embodiment of the wanted organizational culture (Dale & Burrell 2010, p. 20). The workspace is decorated with brand artefacts thus creating an exhibition site where everyone becomes exposed to the brand (Russell, 2011). Common themes concerning the contemporary workplace can be found from companies' and consultancies' corporate publications and websites for example concepts such as play or fun at work, the employee as a consumer, the workplace as home, and the workplace as community (Dale & Burell, 2010). These themes are manifested through aestheticization of the workplace, which aims to embellish attributes of working life in order to make the space more sensually appealing to organizational members (Warren, 2008). Examples of these are building of game rooms, 'domesticated' spaces for kitchens, and breakout rooms, which aim at producing pleasurable effects, making the space resemble of labour and employment as little as possible. The premise behind the aestheticization of the workplace is that it creates happier workers due to assumingly lower stress levels, better team spirit, enhanced communication and creativity; with happier workers equaling better productivity. Even

though some researchers see these assumptions as highly problematic and poorly evidenced, they nonetheless seems to have a high degree of cultural resonance in developed Western countries (Warren & Fineman, 2006).

These sorts of office designs are supported by contemporary principles of human resource management, stemming directly from the critique towards the practices of Taylorism (Bradley, 2006). Some suggest that the flexibility made possible by the new office design supports the employees' work-life balance as they have the freedom to choose from where and when they work, and is even seen as a competitive advantage for companies in the labour market (Kelliher and Anderson 2009). While it may be valid to state that providing employees with more freedom, creativity, and comfort is a potential benefit of the virtual and multispace office design, it can be seen that the overriding goal is to produce images and identities of the "ideal worker" or employee (Weiskopf & Loacker, 2006), and create spaces of work and workflows that enable organizational requirements (Bradley, 2006).

The demand for flexibility and initiative makes it impossible to perform work under a structure, in which tasks would be pre-set and routine-like. Thus, for the spatial dispersion to be able to occur, work needs to be subjectificated. The subjectification of work means that work is inherently depended on the subjectivity of the employee. The employee is required to use her skills, talents, feelings and motivations, to participate into decision making and to share responsibility by communicating with others (Julkunen, 2008). Therefore, the homogeneity of the contemporary office is argued to be illusory as these new practices of work are linked with other forms of control, and are designed to render a certain sort of common subject and subjectivity which the practices themselves have a hand in producing. However, in a world made up of

networks and flexible organizations there is no single model of the ideal worker which would serve as a standard model, providing a relatively stable identity; "rather the worker or working subject is confronted with multiple images which are constructed by different clients or contracting bodies from various and often conflicting discourses" (Weiskopf & Loacker, 2006, p 406).

Adaptability and openness are becoming norms in the new world of work and even though specialist qualifications are still relevant, the willingness and ability to adjust to changing requirements represents a sort of a meta-qualification (Weiskopf & Loacker, 2006). The subjectification and individualization of work also means that the individuals are responsible for their own success and failure, as well as their wellbeing and the setting boundaries to their work. The employee cannot just simply perform a task mechanically and in doing so forget him/herself; rather he/she is expected to implement all of his/her senses, feelings – whole life - into the work. Knowledge and skills no longer become materialized into objects, machines and assets; instead the employee carries them with him/her all the time until they emerge as a part of his/her persona (Julkunen, 2008).

The subjectified ideal worker brings more of herself into the workplace and identifies herself through the organization's brand (Fleming, 2009). In so doing, he/she will be more inclined to externalize the organization's brand through his/her everyday work behaviour, and thereby increasing his/her commitment and loyalty to the organization (Russell, 2011). This process is referred to as employee branding, as can be defined as "the process by which employees internalize the desired brand image and are motivated to project the image to customers and other organizational constituents" (Miles & Mangold, 2008, p. 68). Google is one of the companies well known for their success in

employee branding. The company has verbalized the process of fitting into the corporate culture by calling it "Googliness", which refers to characteristics such as "having strong academic track record, an entrepreneurial bent, and curiosity; not being satisfied with the status quo; being energetic and forward-moving; not being political; humble, a team player, a self-starter, and passionate about the Internet; having propensity for change; being respectful and friendly. An employee filling these criteria is said to be Googley by his or her colleagues." (Steiber, 2014 p. 47).

This chapter on the history of office design focuses on the architectural discourse in office design, which often takes a consultancy point of view. Building on Gramsci (1971) Carter, Clegg and Kronenberger (2008, p. 92) note that "in a consulting scenario, organizational members often face an attempt by consultants to impose a new social hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). These strategies are marked by the use of binary categorization devices targeted at disestablishing dominant power and bureaucracies. Such process of articulation of discursive categories is subject to renegotiation and a contestation of meaning". Thus, when critically examining the organizational spaces we should not assume that the architectural and managerial objectives opposed on organizational members denote some essential activity, always being the same, everywhere. Rather, we should understand what people actually do in the office space, in comparison with what designers and managers prescribe.

3.   PRACTICE PERSPECTIVE ON OFFICE SPACE

In this section I will introduce the theoretical background to practice theory and how this approach understands social and material as *imbricated* in practice. Practice perspective offers an analytical lens to understand the dynamic life within an organizational space. Furthermore, it focuses on the everyday doings of organizations and argues that materiality plays an intrinsic role in the production and reproduction of organizational life. I will also discuss how spatial matters in organization have been studied previously and how these studies lack of focus on actual practices of the employees appropriating the office spaces.

3.1.   *Defining the Practice Perspective*

The practice perspective in social theory commonly draws from the work of sociologists such as Bourdieu and Giddens, who on the other hand haven been influenced by philosophers such as Wittgenstein and Heidegger (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Schatzki, 2001). The theory has been broadly applied in areas such as work and technology studies (Orlikowski 1992: Barley 1996), knowledge studies (Cook & Brown 1999), gender and equality studies (Butler 1990) and strategy literature (Rasche & Chia, 2009; Whittington, 2006). Given the multidisciplinary impulses, issues and oppositions, a unified concept of the practice approach yet ceases to exist (Schatzki, 2001).

The practice approach considers practices as the primary building blocks of social reality and draws from a distinct social ontology, in which "the social is a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings." (Schatzki 2001, p. 3). Instead of seeing the social world as external to

human agents or as socially constructed by them, such an ontology argues that the social world is brought into being through everyday activity (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011).

Practice theory challenges the conventional ways of thinking about human life and sociality, which either focuses on individual minds and actions, or social structures, systems and discourse. Instead of being trapped in the ritual of either/or choice between objectivism and subjectivism (Stern 2003, 185), practices incorporate all aspects of human activity such as bodily movement, mental activities, objects and the way they are handled, contextual understanding, normative understanding, emotion and motivational knowledge. Practice can therefore be understood as a nexus of routinized performances of the body (Bourdieu, 1990; Foucault, 1992; Goffman, 1977). By "performance of the body" practice theorists refer to "bodily doings" (e.g. walking, making power point presentations, checking emails, etc.) and "bodily sayings" (i.e. speech acts). Thus the use of language is considered as one form of bodily performance (Rasche & Chia, 2009). Therefore, following the line of reasoning of Rasche & Chia (2009) and Schatzki (1996, p. 89), for whom the notion of a practice is "a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings", research on spatial practices of organizational life does not deal with spatial activities per se, but with the patterns of bodily doings and sayings that the organizational members perform. It is important to note here that as practices are comprised both of doings and sayings, the analysis must concern both practical activity and its representation. This performance of variety of social practices is considered as part of "the routine accomplishment of what people take to be 'normal' ways of life" (Shove, 2004, p. 117).

One consistent theme among practice scholars is the relationality of mutual constitution. This refers to Foucault (1978) and others' view that no phenomena can be

taken to be independent of other phenomena. "Phenomena always exist in relation to each other, produced through a process of mutual constitution" (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, p. 1242). The notion of mutual constitution suggests that social orders (structures, institutions, routines, etc.) are always bound with the agency that produces them, as well as agency is always already configured by structural conditions. Practice theory thus removes the individuals from the centre of attention and instead considers them as the "carriers" of social practices, carrying out a bundle of activities and tasks the practice requires (Reckwitz, 2002). This, however, does not render individuals as passive, mindless beings that are dictated by practices, but rather conceives them as skilled agents who actively negotiate and perform a variety of practices in the normal course of everyday life.

Another widely held view among practice theorists is the notion that everyday actions are consequential in the production of social life. Thus, the theory is, to some extent, a criticism towards an earlier emphasis in organizational theory, that has focused mainly on structural features, while neglecting the importance of human agency in producing organizational reality (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). Schatzki (2001), on the other hand, argues that social order is enacted through the bundles of human activity that constitute practices .

To say that practice is consequential for social life, means that most theorists have taken on a strong humanist perspective, considering human agency as privileged to materiality and identifying the explanatory variables exclusively in the human and social world (Schatzki 2001). Recent works in the posthumanist stream, however, have challenged this notion and proposed a shift on our conventional ways of seeing practices as "social practices", and suggesting that instead we should see practices as

sociomaterial (Orlikowski, 2007; Pickering, 1995; Schatzki, 2001). Sociomateriality therefore does not privilege either humans or materiality (the other influencing another in one-way interaction), nor does it assume them to form a mutual two-way interaction, where they would respond to each other. Instead Orlikowski argues that they are inextricably related; "there is no social that is not also material, and no material that is not also social" (Orlikowski, 2007, p. 1437). Thus sociomateriality moves away from the distinction between actors and objects as self-contained entities to seeing materiality playing an intrinsic role in producing social life, and thus "for researchers in this stream, practices are always sociomaterial, and this sociomateriality is integral, inherent, and constitutive, shaping the contours and possibilities of everyday organizing" (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008, p. 463).

Sociomaterial practice approach has been largely applied to organizational studies however, much of the work has focused on technology (Leonardi, 2012; Orlikowski, 2007), and yet the perspective has relevance to concerns and concepts that extends far beyond technology (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). It offers a useful analytical lens to understand the dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship between space and what people do at work. From a sociomaterial perspective, the material (e.g. walls, furniture, digital tools) and the social (i.e. what people do at work) are "entangled" (Orlikowski and Scott 2008) or "imbricated" (Leonardi 2012) through practice.

Leonardi (2012) refers to the metaphor of imbrication of social and material as a way to describe how the social and material are distinct yet interdependent. According to him people have intentionality and artifacts have materiality. People approach these artifacts with particular goals (human agency), and they use certain of the artifacts in order to accomplish them (material agency). Together the human (social) and material

agencies become *imbricated* in the space of practice. This metaphor is particularly interesting as it acknowledges the differences in material and human agencies (i.e. organizational spaces do not have "intentionality" per se, but their designers and employees do, potentially projecting ideas and stories onto spaces) while suggesting that material and social are in "synergistic interaction" (Leonardi, 2011, p. 151).

3.2.   *Organizations as Spaces of Practices*

Taylor's thinking and Ford's factories were particularly concerned with effective spatial arrangements (Clegg, Stewart & Kronenberger, 2004) but for various reasons spatiality has been largely neglected in organization theories for a long period since. However, lately there has been a growing body of organizational research that place an explicit focus on spatiality and space (e.g. Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Clegg, Stewart & Kronenberger, 2004; Dale & Burell, 2010).

Häkkinen and Kivinen (2013) suspect that the recently found interest towards spatial matters in organizational life is due to the rising awareness among organizational scholars in recognizing space not only as material but also as social, as well as the paradigm shift towards social constructivism and postmodernism within organization theory, emphasizing situated knowledge and situated practices. Furthermore, the introduction of ethnographic and anthropological approaches to organizational studies has provided valuable empirical data through which to study space and spatial practices.

Organizational spaces, understood as buildings, offices, factory floors etc., are suggested to project organizational legitimacy, for example when an organization unveils their new and expensive headquarters, thus proclaiming the organization's achievement and strategic orientation through materiality (Van Marrewijk, 2009). At the

same time, organizational spaces are conceived as the physical environments where work happens and thus concretely "make" the organization (Clegg, Stewart & Kronenberger, 2004). For instance, Clegg and Kornberger (2004) explore the symbolic and material meanings of architecture and management, and their relation to power, and the ways in which buildings can affect the people that work within them. Many of these studies, however, still conceive organizational spaces as rather stable as they focus on them as forms of organizational space, or as spaces within organizations. Fleming and Spicer (2004) have criticized studies that focus solely on spatiality within the organization, which therefore set a boundary between what happens inside and what happens outside the organization. Instead, they have brought understanding on how these boundaries of an organization that extend beyond the physical walls of an office, are negotiated among the employees. Similarly this thesis understands organizational spaces as comprising of a multitude of spaces, both internal and external to the physical organization, that are negotiated among the individuals, and how thus "space comes into being in the everyday, mundane interactions in the workplace" (Häkkinen & Kivinen, 2013, p. 140).

Indeed, spaces and the infrastructure make up the everyday life in the office, but it is the very definition of the office that is intriguing, as contemporary organizing is increasingly dealing with the demarcation of boundary between work and non-work (Fleming & Spicer, 2004). Contemporary knowledge workers are more reliant on material forms of modern communication technology rather than the physical office building. A company slogan of "my office is where I am" proclaims the new modes of work where organizational space is within the body of the agent carrying the work practices with material objects such as the laptop. Therefore, studying organizations as

spaces in themselves provides better means into understanding the complex and dynamic activities of everyday organizational life. In this view, space is explored and analyzed in the making and thus "comes into being in the everyday, mundane interactions in the workplace" (Häkkinen & Kivinen, 2013, p. 140).

The challenge lies in how can we study organizational spaces where activities are being performed (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011), especially when focusing on constantly changing modes of materiality, where artefacts move and shape spaces, and simultaneously change the artefacts and their materiality (Knox et al., 2008). This study will draw upon earlier research on organizational spaces and the sociomaterial practice approach. The practice approach has the capacity to describe our contemporary experiences in an ever so flux and interconnected world where social entities come about as the result of on-going work and complex machinations, and in which boundaries between social entities are increasingly difficult to draw. For example, when entering an office, it is difficult to think of it as the outcome of a detailed blueprint and a plan, or as a single system with definite boundaries. Nicolini (2012) points out that "things seem to fall into place much better if we think of the fluid scene that unfolds in front of us in terms of multiple practices carried out at the same time. In other words, there seems to be particular purchase in a practice view that consider organizations both as the site and the result of work activities; a view that connotes organizations as bundles of practices, and management as a particular form of activity aimed at ensuring that these social and material activities work more or less in the same direction" (ibid, p. 2).

Space and spatial practices have been studied in social sciences as the products of social and generative force. This emergence of spatio-ontology is heavily influenced by

the work of Lefebvre and his book *The Production of Space*, which has even been praised as '*the* event within critical human geography during the 1990s' (Merrifield, 2006, p 103). In his book, Lefebvre (1991) distinguishes two key spatial practices of appropriation and reappropriation, through which people are continuously and distinctly involved in the production of space. According to him, appropriation refers to the adaption of a space to satisfy and expand human needs. Through appropriation of space, a person makes it one's own with all its symbolic and affective dimensions. In addition, the term refers to the transformation of a space for a specific purpose or purposes, as noted also by Lefebvre (1991, p. 164) "an existing space may outlive its original purpose and the raison d'être which determines its forms, functions, and structures; it may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible to being diverted, reappropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one."

Lefebvre's work has particularly inspired scholars who have been calling for a spatial turn in organizational theory and who suggest that "organizations are themselves configurations of multiple, distinctive, differentiated spaces" (Halford & Leonard, 2005, p. 661). For example, Vaujany and Vaast (2014) have mobilized Lefebvre's concept of spatial practices to study how spatial legacies might help organizations to maintain alignment between space and organizational legitimacy claims. Beyes and Steyaert (2011), scholars following critical organizational theory, however, argue that many interpretations on Lefebvre's thoughts tend to reify space, which thus turn spaces into representations of the beings of organizational spaces, and thus are calling for non-representational modus of theorizing as a way to explore the everyday and the performing of organizational space.

But organizational space is also material as pointed out by Orlikowski (2007, p. 1436): "considerable amount of materiality is entailed in every aspect of organizing, from visible forms – such as bodies, clothes, rooms, desks, chairs, tables, buildings, vehicles, phones, computers, books, documents, pens, and utensils – to less visible flows – such as data and voice networks, water and sewage infrastructures, electricity, and air systems." Thus, sociomaterial practice approach enables us to understand space not as office comprised of four walls in which action takes place, but as the result of social and material practices that shape our environment. Sociomaterial practice lens has been applied for instance in the work of Häkkinen and Kivinen (2013), who suggest that an office can be conceived as a material frame of a shared space in which certain people and objects are present at particular times and places. As knowledge work has become interwoven with employees' private lives, suggesting a paradigm shift from traditional to contemporary boundaries of workspace and time, they argue that power should be recognized as reflexive and performative rather than as stable or one-sided, with oppressive spaces designed and imposed on the workforce. Reflecting on these arguments, the contemporary managerial discourse of an emancipated employee becomes controversial. Moreover, as architectural office design still seems to hold its legitimacy as an important factor for business success, what becomes interesting is how knowledge workers negotiate their workspace and time in the context of virtual multispace office environment. This study will draw upon earlier research on organizational spaces and the sociomaterial practice approach. By building novel theory from empirical data, this study aims to contribute to the research gap on current organizational theory, which has mainly focused on managerial discourse on office spaces neglecting actual practices of the employees appropriating the spaces.

4.   EMPIRICAL CASE STUDY

In this chapter I will introduce the chosen research methods and discusses how the methodological foundations are linked to the aim and the research question of the study. First, the interpretive practice approach following Rasche and Chia (2009) is introduced, which will frame the research philosophy and the research approach of this study. Secondly, the chosen data collection methods of direct observation, interviews and informal discussion as well as company documents and videos are introduced. Lastly, the reliability, validity and limitations of the study are discussed.

4.1.   *Methodological foundations*

According to Van Meel (2000), most researchers studying office work environment tend to adopt a positivist research philosophy, relying on the researcher's objective observations using quantitative research methods and aims, to make universal generalizations applicable to different contexts. In this study, I will adopt an empirical interpretative approach that moves away from the idea of a social scientific practice, in which models on human behaviour are abstracted from physical and/or natural sciences, building instead on rehumanized, contextualized set of practices (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2005). I will specifically follow the work of Rasche and Chia (2009, p. 15) to frame my empirical research and lean towards neo-interpretative tradition, which understands practices as a "nexus of routinized performances of the body", comprised of "bodily doings and sayings".

Even though Rasche and Chia's (2009) research focuses on strategy-as-practice, it offers good explorative grounding for studying the managers' and designers'

expectations of the ways to use the virtual multispace office versus actual practices of the employees appropriating the spaces. Therefore, a researcher needs to observe the performance of a body comprised of bodily doings and sayings, as they are the clue to understanding how subjects make sense of their environment. Furthermore, what makes Rasche and Chia's (2009) take on practice theory from a neo-interpretive perspective even more interesting is their emphasis on studying objects and how people handle them through their bodies, in addition to focusing on bodily movements.

To be able to engage in an interpretative approach in social science, a researcher needs to add a degree of reflexivity; "If one asks how knowledge claims are generated, the role of the researcher – her own a priori knowledge, the filter of her own consciousness – in interpreting observational, conversational, and documentary evidence becomes paramount" (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2005, p. 3). Following hermeneutics, the interpretative approach takes the stand that knowing depends on 'a priori knowledge' – an idea that individuals do not perceive the world from an objective point of view but hold some pre-established concepts or categories through which he/she filters his/her perception and various physical sensations (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2005). Building on these principles, I note that my own 'a priori knowledge' stems from my personal experience working as a consultant on office design projects and from working as an employee in offices that had slowly started transforming towards virtual, multispace offices. Furthermore, while doing my research for this study, I have familiarized myself with the history of office design and the evolution of ways of working. This prior experience has both enabled and limited my interpretations on the subject at hand.

There is a wide range of intepretative research methods, from action research to value-critical analysis. However, for the purposes of this study, I will focus on ethnographic methods, which due to the scope of this study are referred to as 'fieldwork'. The fieldwork has been conducted in two companies that both exemplify the recent shift towards virtual multispace office design.

4.2. Data Collection

The empirical setting for this study is offered by two organizations, companies X and Z (actual company names are anonymized), both set in virtual multispace offices. Company X is a multinational software corporation, having its Finnish headquarter in Southern Finland with approximately 300 employees. The company has been an active promoter of flexible work, also due to their status as a leading global producer for software and devices, that can support remote working practices - for example cloud computing that enable virtual collaboration. Therefore, it has been logical for the company to strive to become a textbook example of transforming their office design to virtual and multispace design, along with flexible ways of working. Company Z runs a global employment website established in 1999. A large Finnish media company (MCS) had acquired majority of Z few years back and as a result Z had moved into MCS's recently build headquarters located in Southern Finland. The building is a part of a business area solution, aiming to create modern, high-end business premises for different companies' headquarters. MCS's new building has approximately 9000 m^2 in five floors, and houses altogether 450 employees across 14 business units. Approximately 30 of these employees are employed at Z.

Both companies operate in knowledge-intensive industries, which entail demanding and autonomous job descriptions. The highly autonomous, mobile employees of the companies must negotiate their own time/space segmentation on when and where to work, and when to disengage from "work mode". As the spatial settings and ways of working in the two companies were not significantly different, observing two companies instead of one enabled to enlarge the dataset and thus bring more insight. I was granted two full working days in the premises of the two companies in Finland. My fieldwork comprised direct observations, interviews and informal conversations, and collection of company documents and videos.

4.2.1. Direct Observations

Direct observations were used to gather data of actual practices of employees working in the virtual multispace office. Practice-based research requires the researcher to "get closer" to the everyday practices of the organization (Rasche & Chia, 2009, p. 5). Observations are a valuable research method as they allow the researcher to collect data of the mundane features of everyday life that typically are not viewed as relevant, even to participants themselves (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Thus, activities that are considered so routine-like or common to the participants, that they would not necessarily even get raised during interviews, can be recorded through observations.

Observations can be conducted in multiple ways, depending on the membership role that the researcher adopts, noting that "observations as a research method means that the ethnographer systematically observes everyday events, interactions, conversations and the use of objects in social settings over time" (ibid, p. 52). In a typical research situation, an in-depth ethnographic approach, using extended participant observations

would be used (Rasche & Chia, 2009). Due to the scope of this study, I will, however, refer to the data collection method used as fieldwork, rather than ethnography, as short-term, non-participant observation was used. The research sites also affected the scope and term of data collection, as it was important that the observatory activities interrupted the employees' work as little as possible. In this method of observations, the researcher observes and records behaviour in its natural setting but does not intervene to the unfolding events (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). The observations were recorded by taking field notes, drawing and taking photographs of the research site. Visual data has long been seen as an important source of data in anthropology and ethnology (Bateson & Mead, 1942), and has been strongly advocated for in organizational studies (Meyer, et al. 2013). During the intermediate stages of this research, this type of data also allowed me to contrast and collate my own emerging interpretations of space and practices through time.

Before starting my fieldwork, I had familiarized myself with the theoretical framework of studying organizational spaces through the practice lens. The theories and theoretical frameworks from existing literature provided inspiration; however I strived not to let them narrow my vision (Alasuutari, 1996).

4.2.2. Interviews and Informal Conversations

Observations often include interviews, which may vary from informal conversations to well structured in-depth interviews (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). In this study, both interviews and informal conversations were used to collect data of the managers' intended ways of using the virtual multispace office, as well as discuss actual practices of the employees.

Qualitative research in organizational theory often sees personal interviews as the primary means of data collection. This is suggested to result from a belief among scholars that with appropriate interview techniques, a researcher can "step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (McCracken, 1988, p.9). In cultural research, however, the idea that interviews can mirror some external world is seen as problematic and thus they are considered merely as a supportive way for producing cultural talk, in order to gain cultural knowledge through analysis (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Similarly, interpretative approach views interviews as a subset of talking with people, and considers them solely as a supporting data collection method to observations. The interpretative mode of interviewing is best described as having conversations (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2005).

In this study, in addition to the recorded observations, I interviewed managers and employees from various functions in the two companies. During the semi-structured interviews we discussed the respondent's job description, work tasks, the managerial expectations towards the virtual multispace office design, his or hers experience of the new office design, as well as their general observations on the everyday practices at the office. The interviews lasted 60 minutes on average and were recorded and later transcribed. In addition, I had a few informal discussions with employees I met spontaneously at the research sites during my observation periods.

4.2.3. Company Documents and Videos

In addition to the observations and interviews, marketing material such as newsletters and YouTube videos of the companies were studied in order to gain a broader perspective on the managers' as well as designer's expected ways of using the virtual

multispace office. The YouTube videos depicted the companies' marketing of their new premises and the flexible ways of working they accommodate. In addition, news articles that covered interviews with the HR manager and the CEO discussing the new contemporary ways of working were included. In table 1., I have summarized the data that was collected during the fieldwork.

Direct observations					
Company X	Full working days during the period of 3rd and 5th of December 2013 Access given to limited premises				
Company Z	Full working days during the period of 23rd and 24th of October 2014 Access given to the entire premises				
Interviews and informal conversations					
IV1	Manager, HR manager	Company X	3.12.2013	Expected ways of using the space	Presentation and interview
IV2	Employee, Business Strategists	Company X	3.12.2013	Actual practices	Interview
IV3	Employee, Intern	Company X	5.12.2013	Actual practices	Informal discussion
IV4	Employee, consultant	Company X	5.12.2013	Actual practices	Informal discussion
IV5	Employee, Sales	Company Z	23.10.2014	Actual practices	Interview
IV5	Employee, Product Manager	Company Z	23.10.2014	Actual practices	Interview

IV6	Employee, Graphic Designer	Company Z	23.10.2014	Actual practices	Interview
IV7	Employee, E-job coach	Company Z	24.10.2014	Actual practices	Interview
IV8	Employee, Product Manager	Company Z	24.10.2014	Actual practices	Interview
IV9	Manager, Country Manager	Company Z	24.10.2014	Expected ways of using the space	Interview
Company documents and videos					
YouTube videos, news articles, and newsletters					

Table 1. Summary of Collected Data

4.3. *Reliability, Validity and Limitations of the Study*

The assessment of reliability and validity of this study follows the general principles of qualitative and interpretive research (Alasuutari, 1996; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006; Rasche & Chia, 2009). In qualitative interpretive research, a case study is not expected to analyse universal phenomena but aims to particularize the understanding of the social. Therefore one is dealing with local phenomenon, where structures of meanings are always bound to the specific historical and cultural context.

Moisander and Valtonen (2006) suggest five criteria to evaluate the validity and reliability of cultural analysis. Firstly, they emphasize the importance of insightfulness

and relevance of the study. Cultural analysis should offer new theoretical as well as practical insight. Furthermore, it should be relevant to the existing body of literature. Secondly, a good cultural analysis follows methodological coherence and transparency. Thirdly, the researcher should show sensitivity towards the studied phenomena by carefully choosing the method and analytical procedures in order to understand the particularities of the phenomena at hand. Fourthly, Moisander and Valtonen (2006) also suggest that the researcher should demonstrate sensitivity to ethics and politics of interpretation. Lastly, they highlight the importance of credible communication.

This study aims to raise thoughts and discussion on our work environments rather than offering an exhaustive overview of the phenomenon. Alasuutari (1996) points out that there is a clear distinction between a theoretical framework and a particular case analysed within it. The former one, aims towards generalizability, which would be applicable to various settings. The latter one, such as this study, however, aims towards transferability; the readers of the study transfer the findings from the empirical data to other contexts and situations (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

The main limitations of this thesis are related to the limited access I was given at one of the case companies both in terms of moving in the space as well as choosing whom to interview. Thus, in order to understand what was happening at the spaces I did not have access to, I needed to rely on the descriptions of those whom I was allowed to interview. Furthermore, due to the scope of this study, the observations were conducted within a short period of time that could, from an ethnographic point of view, be considered problematic, as I was not able to fully engage in the everyday work practices. However, the collected data fulfilled the research objectives and the findings of this study serve as fruitful groundings for a longer study.

5. EXPECTED VS ACTUAL PRACTICES OF VIRTUAL MULTISPACE OFFICE

In this section, I first describe the expectations of the managers and designers of the two companies, X and Z, as to the use of virtual multispace office. These expectations were brought about through the interviews with the managers as well as the company documents and videos. I than describe the actual practices that came about through the direct observations and discussions with employees. Lastly, I contrast the expectations with the actual practices of employees working in the two virtual multispace offices. Furthermore, I will discuss of the consequences the office design has on the employees.

5.1. *Managers' and Designers' Expectations of Virtual Multispace Office*

In both companies, the strategic aim was to promote new ways of working by moving from the traditional, cubicle office design with more rigid work practices, to the new virtual multispace office layout with flexible work practices. The changes within the chosen companies took two broad forms (extracted from company documents):

(1) Complete transformation of the office environment to facilitate flexible work practices and inspiration (in X's case the refurbishment of existing premises and in Z's case move to completely new premises)

(2) Encouragement to transparency in work process: communicating across business units, enabling employees to participate more in each other's projects by commenting on them, achieving collaborative working styles without being dependent on the time or location through virtual presence.

X's building represents a typical business building; a grey box with the company logo attached to the sides. The HR manager gave me a presentation on the

refurbishment project as well as a tour around the office premises, while explaining what were the intended ways for using the office space. Key components of the refurbished building include three floors with 4150 square meters. The ground floor consists of a reception lobby, cafeteria, meeting rooms and a space where the company's achievements are displayed in a glass vitrine. The first floor also functions as a showcase space for visitors interested in the multispace office concept, comprising of various different spaces with different moods that vary according to different needs; a "library" space for silent work that requires concentration, an open plan space for collaborative work, meeting rooms for more private teamwork, a bistro for ad hoc meetings, a "beach room" (see figure 9) for a more relaxed way of working with music playing on the background, and an "inspiration room" (see figure 10). Both the beach room and the inspiration room were equipped with beanbags to communicate a relaxed atmosphere. The beach room had been furnished to create a sense of a beach with a sand coloured carpet, small palm trees, soft cushion lighting to simulate sunshine, with pictures of a beach on the walls and chilled music playing at the background. On the other hand, the furnishing in the inspiration room was aiming to create an atmosphere that would foster creativity. Here, themes of playing had been applied, such as full wall size picture of Lego bricks, bright coloured beanbags, and flipcharts for sketching. The room also had a kids' corner with toys, where employees can from time to time bring their children in case of an emergency during the workday. The second floor comprises of traditional meeting rooms and an open plan workspace. According to the HR manager, none of the employees, including the CEO, have appointed desks but instead the employees select a space that best matches their work task at hand. Personal belongings can be stored in appointed lockers.

The office design included also inspirational texts hand-written on white boards, which answered to the handwritten title question: "What makes this place a great place to work?" Many of the texts emphasized how the individual worker's input to the company would also benefit the society at large and increase the wellbeing of their loved ones, and included praises of the company's inspirational working culture and how proud the writer felt to be a part of a "winning team". Most of the texts were written in first person; however, it did not become clear to me, who exactly had written these texts. I noted that many of them were written in the same handwriting, only changing the colour of the pen. In addition, large tiles were hanging from the office ceiling, including management-initiated sentences such as "encouragement to grow together".

In addition to physical materiality, the office design included new technology tools such as instant messaging, video conferencing and internet teamwork tools, which support new, flexible and virtual ways of working. According to the HR manager, the aim of the tools is to make an individual's work more visible to colleagues and thus increase collaboration across business units, as well as to enable an employee to be present even when not physically present.

Figure 9 Beach room at X

Figure 10 Inspiration room at X

The other expectations regarding the virtual multispace office at X, included "descending" the CEO and other managers to the same level with the other employees. This meant that whereas in the previous spatial setting they were located in a management wing, in the new spatial setting none of the managers would have appointed desks but would share work desks with other employees and similarly switch spaces multiple times a day. During my fieldwork, I noticed the CEO pacing down the open plan spaces of the office and being interrupted by employees, who asked quick questions. Similarly, I observed the HR manager using the space in diverse ways in between her meetings, for example at one point I observed her having a video call in an open plan space and in another occasion sitting on the sofas located next to the Bistro writing something on her computer. She was interrupted a few times while sitting on the sofas, and at one point she put on her headphones, which I interpreted as a sign of not wanting to be disturbed. The HR manager told me that she typically switches places between 5 to 8 times per day.

At Z, I was given a tour around the office premises by one of the employees from the sales team, during which she explained to me how they used the space. The ground floor consists of a large entrance lobby, with waiting areas for guests, colour themed according to different media branches. Behind the lobby, there is a large conference centre with traditional meeting rooms. In addition, there is a restaurant in the ground floor. From the lobby there are three glass lifts taking to the office floors. The layout solutions on the office floors are the same, comprised of a multispace with open plan spaces, with different sized boxes for work requiring concentration (see figure 11), different sized meeting rooms, and break and informal meeting area with a kitchen. The floor where Z was located had also a library space (see figure 12), available for all of

the business units, consisting of chairs and tables where employees can have ad hoc meetings, as well as read professionally related books and magazines. Different business units have their own appointed areas but the building's space can be described as "no man's land", in a sense that none of the employees have appointed personal desks but are free to do their work from wherever they wish to. Thus, in each floor of the building, so called "drop-in desks" (see figure 13) have been implemented, for anyone to use for a short period of time to work in, after which all personal belongings must be cleared. Z's office area was equipped with brand artefacts, such as stuffed corporate mascot figures that had been placed around the office desks, and a corporate mascot costume that was lying in a corner. In addition, the corporate mission statement and values had been printed onto three framed posters, which were placed on top of cabinets.

The tools used for internal communication have been selected by the larger corporation and were the same collaboration software as was used in X. With the software, the employees could indicate whether they were available or offline, when not being physically present at the office.
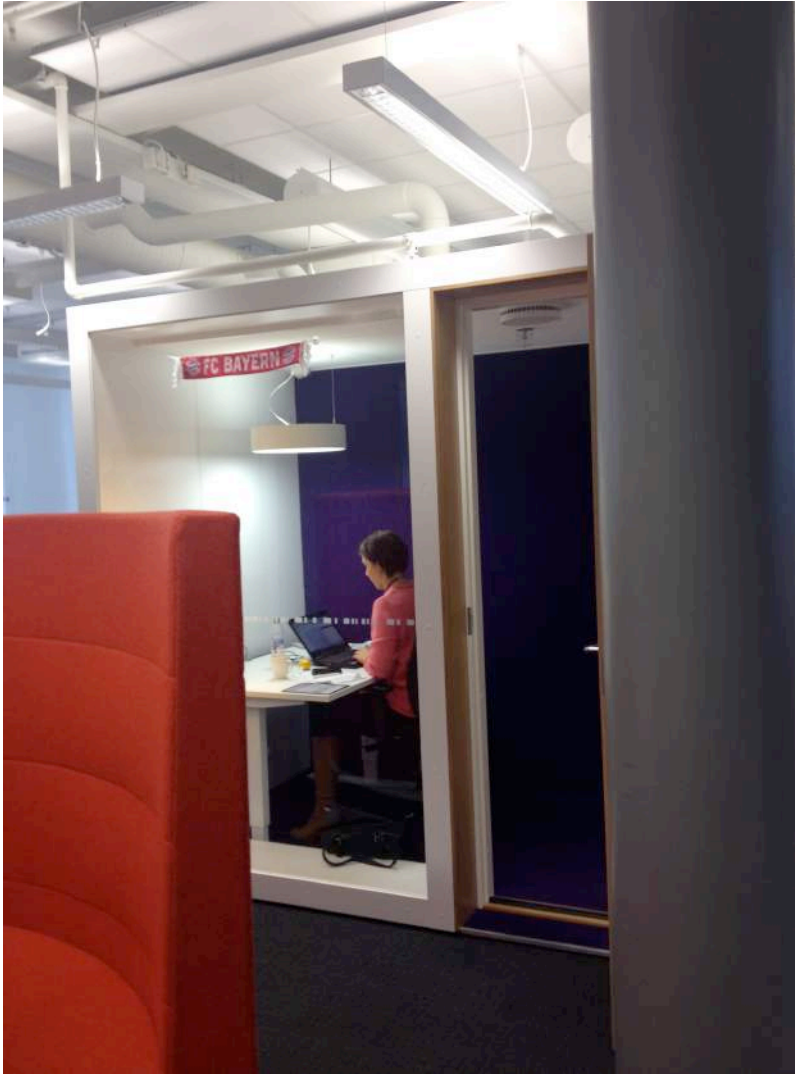
Figure 11 "Box" for silent, individual working at Z
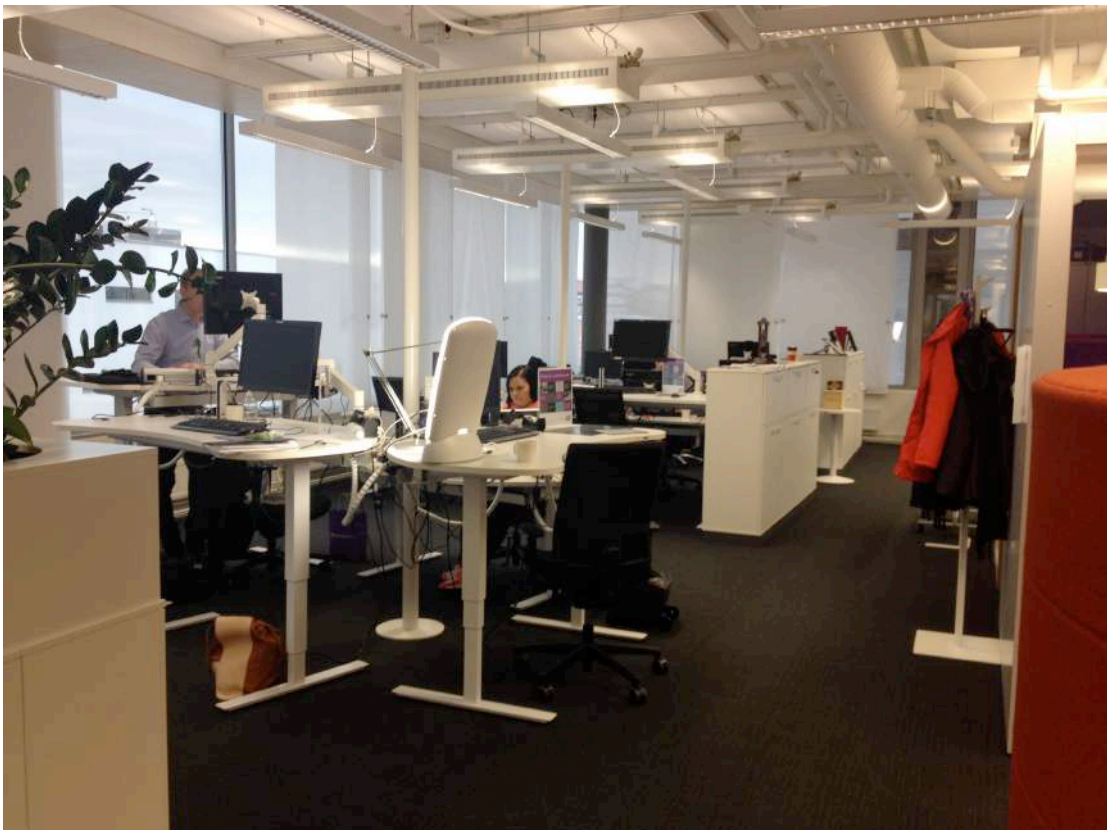
Figure 12 Library space at Z

Figure 13 Open plan space with drop-in desks and other work desks at Z

According to the HR manager of X, specific terminology for the new office design and ways of working had been created. At X, the spatial transformation project was referred to as the *Journey to the future of work.* The HR manager explained that this was seen as a way to communicate that the project was not an external project created by the managers, that would be imposed on to the employees or one having a starting and an ending day, but rather an on-going *journey* created together with the employees. Furthermore, the organizational space was not being referred to as an office, but as a *meeting point.* This term was launched by the CEO of the company, with one of the employees describing the term to me as a space "where you move a lot and see each other". The new spatial arrangement was planned to facilitate mobility where, as described by the HR manager, *camping* was not allowed. This meant that a person is not allowed to occupy a certain desk more than an hour at a time. The new working environment, including both the physical as well as the virtual space, is referred to as *presence work*, referring to the individual's freedom to choose where and when one wants to do their work. According to the HR manager at X, presence work challenges the traditional ways of working and is being supported by the spatial solutions: "what is essential is being present and available and through that making one's work transparent and sharing it with others". The expected ways of using the space at Z did not include as much formal terminology, except that the word *drop-in desk* was used to describe the certain desks not meant for general use. In both companies, the research participants used the word "ad hoc meetings" frequently when describing what was the specific aim of the multispace office design. For example, the HR manager at X described the Bistro as a "market place or heart", where people gather around for example to eat breakfast, thus creating a lot of cross-organizational ad hoc encounters. She explained how these

encounters are an important factor in employee wellbeing and a source of value to knowledge work content-wise.

Similarly, a manager from Z emphasized the desire to increase ad hoc encounters between employees from different business units, as this was considered to create organizational value. He mentioned that the building's three lifts were hoped to serve as a common space for these ad hoc encounter amongst employees from different business units, where they could exchange ideas and create new ones.

In both companies the office design included setting rules on work time and space management. X's HR manager showed me how using the software for internal communication, the employees are expected to inform whether they are present. The software had color codes to indicate the status of each employee: green for available, orange for "busy", red for "do not disturb", yellow for "appear away", and light peach for "offline". In addition, the software showed for how long a person has been inactive. The employees are expected to use the software to check the person's status they want to communicate with before for example calling them or trying to find them from the office. Furthermore, by selecting a certain space, employees are meant to communicate their status on whether they are allowed to be disturbed or not (i.e. working at the Library room or in a box indicates to others that the person does not want to be disturbed whereas the Bistro and the common kitchen area indicate that a person is available even for a non-work related, casual talk).

The freedom to choose when and where one wants to work was a particularly communicated expectation of the managers. According to the HR manager of X, the employees are the ones who nowadays demand flexibility and individualization of work practices, and therefore these flexible work practices should increase employee

wellbeing. Furthermore, as X's CEO communicated in a 2011 letter to the company's shareholders, "by increasing flexibility we can enhance employees' quality of life and strengthen their commitment and productivity. By utilizing communication technology efficiently, a person can indeed be present without being physically there." He continued explaining how these new ways of working are a way to create an inspiring environment for the employees to thrive in, then again leading into better overall work performance, profitability, reduced absenteeism, lower stress levels, longer employment relationships and even to higher customer satisfaction.

This managerial expectation of how to use the space, however, varied between the companies slightly. At X, the HR manager emphasized the desire for mobility by stating how camping was not allowed and describing how, for instance, she changes the seating even 5 to 8 times a day. In addition, she said that some of the employees do not move as much as is hoped and therefore she sometimes has to remind them to change seating every once in a while. In addition, there were screens installed into the space, displaying texts on the desired usage of the space. At Z, on the other hand, the country manager thought that it was up to the employees, more or less, to decide how they wish to use the office space, as he explains here:

"Some of the rules have even been printed on to a mouse pad, which I think is the most depressing thing ever… I think that it goes like this: you have this some sort of a thing and you put people into it, they start using it in the way they want. If we were to define what you are supposed to do in a particular space, to me, sounds ridiculous." (Manager at Z).

Company Z even had some appointed desks, for example for customer service. The only rule concerning the space, that was to be followed strictly, was that the employees were allowed to have maximum of two remote days – aside from Mondays, which was reserved for team meetings. In addition, he thought that it was important for the

managers to be physically present at the office most of the time as their work is always related to someone else's, and it is not the same to co-work via emails or phone calls, as it is face-to-face.

What also became an evident expectation of the managers was the identification of an ideal worker for the virtual multispace office. The ideal worker is identified as a person who can autonomously balance work and private life better with the new flexible work practices, as described in an example by the HR manager at X:

"What it means in practice is that I look at my calendar to check what we have planned with the family, and if I see that for example my son has a doctor's appointment in the morning at 10, than I won't drive to the office during the rush hour to be in a meeting at 9 but instead I participate to the meeting via a conference call from home and come to the office after the doctor's appointment."

She continued explaining how you need to be able to trust the employees to do their work, even though they would not be physically present at the office, but also that there needs to be clearly set objectives for the work to be done, leaving it up to the employees to decide where and when to meet those objectives. Furthermore, she said that a person's ability to adapt to these flexible work practices is assured already in the recruitment phase.

The managers both at X and Z, emphasized that with freedom comes a great responsibility, as described here:

"If you give employees the freedom to decide where, when and how they want to work, it requires strong trust, but as you give freedom you also have to have the ability to take responsibility of your work." (Manager at X)

A manager at Z described the ideal worker as someone who is highly motivated and genuinely enthusiastic of his/her work, and believed that with this kind of a person it is best to release all control and let that person decide for him/herself how he/she wants to

do his/her job as it can even double their productivity. However, he recognized a more problematic type of an employee, describing:

"There are people whom you know are here to 'just do the job' and do only those things that are obligatory, and giving freedom to these people is much more risky. And if you add to this a loose attitude towards whether it is necessary to tell the complete truth to the manager, then I would say this is much more challenging and then you need more control." (Manager at Z)

It thus seems, that the expected ways of using the virtual multispace office identifies practices that do not fit with the idealized version. These problematic practices are seen as fore example rigid negotiations on time/space segments to work, which creates a lack of trust to give as much freedom to an employee carrying out this practices rather than to an employee who carries out flexible work practices.

5.2. *Actual Practices of Virtual Multispace Office*

In this chapter I report the actual practices of employees appropriating the virtual multispace office spaces at X and Z. These practices are than contrasted with the managers' and designers' intentions towards how to use the virtual multispace office. The identified practices between the two companies were so similar that they should be discussed simultaneously, instead of two separate analyses. The identified practices of virtual multispace office are: the practice of nomadism, the practice of negotiation of office boundaries, the practice of socializing space, the practice of camping, and the practice of space rematerialization.

The practice of nomadism is defined as the act of moving from place to place in order to do work efficiently. This act of changing space multiple times a day both within the office space and outside, became evident with some employees during my

fieldwork. One employee at X said that due to his job description, requiring him to move between the clients' premises and the office, mobility is a norm in his daily routines. For him, as well as for the other employees who carried out this practice, it was difficult to describe a "typical work day" as the work is in a constant flux. Furthermore, an employee at Z described how the changing of scenery gave her inspiration and a better drive:

"I feel like I can do my work wherever I want to. For example the other week I spent half of the day at a café nearby… I get a new kind of drive for my work when I change scenery." (Employee at Z)

An employee from Z said that even though she had a fixed work desk, due to her needing large screens in her work, she has started to do work more and more at the kitchen where the space is calmer, as she explains here:

"I feel it's a nice place and I can be efficient there, still being able to have a quick chat with a colleague if they pass by" (Employee, Z)

This practice became clear in my observations, as I could see how some employees appropriated different spaces within the office environment and changed seating multiple times during the day without hesitance. The employees engaged in this practice were very flexible and autonomous in their ways of using the space, as stated by one of the employees from X. According to him, the decision to choose where to work became very intuitively and he did not have to put too much thought into it. This practice included using the office space to stop by in between meetings to write documents, do analytics or calculations, prepare power point presentations, check emails, and to get input from colleagues. These activities required spaces both for calm, concentration needing work, as well as social spaces where information could be exchanged rapidly.

Many stated that matters that needed quick input were easier to handle face-to-face at the office.

The practice of negotiation of office boundaries was another identified practice within the virtual multispace office. This practice included the on-going negotiation of both spatial and temporal boundaries between work and non-work. All the employees in both companies carried out this practice; however, it varied among people concerning the negotiated flexibility of the boundaries and the assumptions regarding availability and responsiveness. Some employees remarked that they tended to reply to emails and other work related messages as soon as possible, even if they were sent outside the agreement-based working hours, with matters needing more effort being left to the agreement-based working hours. For instance, one of the employees at Z expressed her frustration on the fact that her work contract permitted her from doing work during the weekends and described how she had overcome this problem:

"I find it annoying that the company is measuring your work hours. Creative work should not be measured by hours but by results. I come up with good ideas whenever, on weekends for example, but as we don't have working hours on Saturdays I basically cannot do the thing even though I would want to. I've come up with my own solution, where I do the thing anyway and count how many hours it took, then for example I reduce those hours from my next remote day" (Employee at Z)

According to one of the employees at Z, closing the computer meant that she had shifted to the "home-mode", however, the usage of mobile devices with email push notification mode being turned on, kept her checking emails even just before going to bed. This resulted in finding it difficult to disengage from the device and therefore from work.

Some employees on the other hand had set more rigid boundaries between work and private life. For example, one employee at Z described how she had turned the email

push notifications off from her phone, as she felt it was annoying that her colleagues would send work emails late in the evening. Many, however, acknowledged that their work involved tight deadlines and time pressures, increasing the informal overtime whether they wanted it or not.

The practice of socializing space comprises of activities that require employees to meet either on spontaneous or planned meetings to get input from each other for work purposes but also to engage in informal socializing activities with close colleagues. The activity of wanting input for a particular work case typically started by first checking from the computer whether the sought person was on "available" mode, and then sending an instant message or calling directly, in case the person was allowed to be disturbed. In case the matter required further discussion, an ad hoc meeting was set for example to the Bistro in company X, or to one of the boxes in company Z. At Z, however, as all the employees were sitting close to each other, some of the employees tended simply to shout out to the colleague to receive an immediate answer.

The informal encounters evident in the practice of socializing space seemed to be one of the main motivations for many employees to come to the office, as the employees felt they could unwind after intense client meetings by sharing experiences with their colleagues, and also chat about things unrelated to work. Many of the participants noted that remote working was a lot more intensive as there were no disturbances, and that they enjoyed detaching themselves from work by starting a chat about something non-work-related with their colleagues, as described here by one the employees from Z:

"Working at the office is a lot more social. We can spend a half hour at the 'library' space just chatting, without touching upon any work related topics" (Employee, Z).

Another employee from Z noted that the shared experience of socializing made him feel less guilty of not working all the time, whereas at home even emptying the dishwasher left him feeling guilt as the task was not work related. At Z, the office space seemed to be an integral part of the collaborative work style practice.

Out of the 30 employees, a rather large majority seemed to have formed close relationships with each other. This became apparent through the interviews, as many employees would describe how some of the colleagues had become very close friends, and even had been invited to weddings. These relationships were made visible also in material form at the office. The employees had brought personal items to the office; for example wedding and other group photos had been placed onto one of the shelves next to the sofas, with one of the boxes being decorated with a scarf of a sports club. In addition, one of the employees had decorated the space with Halloween themed items, in advance of the approaching festive season. The relaxed, friendly atmosphere became very apparent when observing their workday, as this particular group played music and created playlists collaboratively by shouting out different song suggestions to their colleagues in the open plan space. General interruptions occurred also every once in a while, for example through someone asking everyone to come and see a cat video on YouTube from his laptop or telling a joke.

The practice of camping refers to the activity of appropriating one's space and making it one's own. This was carried out for example by leaving personal items, such as clothes, behind to mark the place and thus forbidding others from working in it. This was an interesting observation, especially at the office in company X where this was a forbidden, yet still a clearly evident practice. During my fieldwork, I observed how a group of men had occupied an area where they sat everyday. The men left their jackets

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on the backs of the chairs to reserve the desk. It was later revealed to me that they belonged to the same team. Some of the employees, however, carried out this practice on a more persistent manner, therefore not having to mark their territory with material items, as it had become commonly known at the office that the certain space was "reserved" for them. For example at X, it was commonly known that the employees from the financial department had appropriated some of the tables from the second floor for themselves. As I was not allowed to observe this floor, nor allowed to interview these employees, I have to rely on the conversations I had with other employees who had witnessed this particular practice. One of the employees at X revealed to me that sometimes he teases these "campers" by occupying a desk where they usually sit, causing a moment of chaos when the regular occupants of the space (i.e. the campers) have to find a new place to sit.

Some of the employees at Z had appointed desks, but it was normal that even those employees who would work in the drop-in desks, tended to come to the same desk everyday. One employee suspected that it feels natural for a person to select a desk and routinely use the same desk everyday when coming to work. In addition, none of the employees at Z wanted to work at another business unit's area, even though this had been planned to happen when designing the interior of the building.

The practice of space rematerialization is an activity of the employees reappropriating the space according to their needs by changing the original spatial setting or its meaning. One of the originally set out plans for the virtual multispace office was to increase collaboration among the employees through the open plan space, hoping for the employees to exchange ideas spontaneously. This obviously would lead into an increase in the volume levels of the office space, which is why the boxes were

implemented for workers wanting to do work in a quiet environment. An example of the practice of space rematerialization was performed by one of the workers at Z. Her work is mostly individual writing work, which she could perfectly well do at home. However, as she is only allowed to have two remote days, she has to come to the office three times a week. She said that she feels irritated for having to come to the office as she is disturbed by the noise in the open plan space where she typically sits as she does not feel like working in one of the boxes.

"I have been planning for a little protest for not being allowed to do more of my writing work at home but have to come to the office. I've been planning to close myself to one of the boxes located in a visible spot for the whole day just to show that this is me doing this teamwork and this is why I'm supposed to be here." (Employee at Z)

Through this act she would rematerialize the box as a space of protest, in opposition for its initially meant purpose as an enjoyable, calm space for individual work.

As mentioned already earlier, a group of employees at Z had formed close relationships with each other and also spend recreational time together. For them, the office was a place for seeing each other, not only as colleagues but also as friends. This group carried out the practice of rematerialization of the space by decorating it with personal items, such as personal photos that had been placed on one of the shelves in a bundle. Thus a space that was originally intended to be impersonal was now made personal, through showcasing the individuals working in the space in a material form. The re-materialization practice was noticed also by other members of the organization from different business units, as pointed out to me by an employee from another department, located at the same floor with the group from Z:

"They seem to play with their own rules: For example they've had a couple of parties after the office hours, which isn't allowed." (Employee working at the same corporation as Z's employees)

They even had taken a personal initiative to get rid of one of the bigger boxes, that was meant for client meetings, and replacing it with a sofa that now served both as a place for informal discussions with colleagues and for meeting clients. An employee from Z acknowledged the marking of one's territory:

"I feel that despite having these drop-in desks, we have divided into certain groups, for example the other company being there and us here."

The photos and other personal objects the employees from Z had brought to the office had clearly marked their business unit's territory, with them seeming to be the only business unit making such a clear division between "us" and "others" with materiality. I interpreted this as a sign of them still seeing their unit as a completely separate company from MSC's other units, despite the acquisition.

5.3.   *The Interplay of Accommodating and Resisting Practices*

One of the findings of this study has been to acknowledge that an office is not a stable space in which managers and designers can expect employees to act in a certain way, but that office design has consequence on the individuals appropriating the space and that these practices might also be contradictory to the intended ways of using the space. The empirically identified practices of virtual multispace office performed by the employees bring evidence on how those practices make up the everyday life of the office space and how they both accommodate to and resist the intended ways of using the space. In both companies the office space with all its materiality emerges as a dynamic and generative force that transforms those who are partaking in the processes of the organization.

The empirical data gathered from the two companies suggests that the managers' and designers' intended ways of using the virtual multispace office are mostly aligned with the actual practices of employees. Those actual practices of virtual multispace office that accommodate the managers' and designers' expectations as to the use of the space are the practices of nomadism, practice of negotiation the office boundaries, and practice of socializing space. They also frame a certain "front", as the employees carrying out these practices shape their social identity by performing their work as credible virtual multispace workers. Thus the virtual multispace working practice entails the on-going constitution of the virtual multispace worker, a certain identity that is constructed and realized through the engagement in social practice (Rasche & Chia, 2009). The constitution of a virtual multispace worker as a subject consist of the language he/she uses and the ways he/she utilizes the office space and handles the objects within it. Thus, his/her identity is embedded in the practice of a virtual multispace worker. Following Rasche and Chia (2009, p. 22), this practice represents the idealized version of the workers front, "i.e. one that is consistent with the socially expected behavior" – one that is in line with the ideal virtual multispace worker, defined through the expected ways of using the virtual multispace office.

In addition, there seems to be resisting practices, which are misaligned or in opposition to the intended ways of using the virtual multispace office. These resisting practices become visible in the practices of space rematerialization and practice of camping. For example, one of the expectations of the managers and designers concerning the virtual multispace office was to have the employees to increase collaboration by coming to the office. An employee at Z planning a protest by occupying herself to one of the boxes for the whole day reveals how she intentionally

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resists the intended ways of using the space by rematerializing the box as a space for protest. The forbidden practice of camping was also an evident resisting practice towards the intended one. The employees at X, carrying out the camping practice by occupying the second floor, resisted the managerial expectation of having employees switching places multiple times a day, as their work comprised mostly of solo-work activities, and thus changing seating within the office for the reason of "just because" made little sense for them. Similarly, the camping practice of Z's employees can be portrayed as a resisting practice, as the act of marking their area with material artefacts misaligns with the managers' and designers' expectations of ongoing mobility in virtual multispace office. Furthermore, the practice of negotiation of the office boundaries can become a resisting practice if the employees negotiate a rigid work/non-work segmentation by turning off the email notifications outside office hours, thus making the practice not flexible *enough* when compared to the ideal flexible work practice which, as discussed earlier, may make it difficult for individuals to set the boundaries and disengage from work. Thus, it can be noted that the identified practices may shift from accommodating to resisting practice.

The table 2. summarizes the identified actual practices of virtual multispace office and which of them are either aligned (accommodating) or misaligned (resisting) with the managers' and designer's expectations of ways of using the office space.

Accommodating practices	**Resisting practices**
Practice of nomadism	Practice of camping,
Practice of negotiation of office boundaries	Practice of space rematerialization
Practice of socializing space	

Table 2. The Identified Accommodating and Resisting Practices of Virtual Multispace Office

6.   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis is focused on studying the sociomaterial world of virtual multispace offices both from the managerial and design discourse point of view, and through the everyday practices of employees appropriating the spaces. Most of the previous research on office spaces in organizational studies have taken the perspective of seeing them as abstract macro-level organizational systems and making assumptions on how organizations adapt to their changing environments through office design. Furthermore, in many cases materiality and its effects on the everyday practices of organizations have been neglected or rendered as neutral for organizational research. Sociomaterial practice theory, on the other hand, has not focused on the reactions of the employees towards office design and on the complexities they may pose with regards to the alignment with the expected ways of using the virtual multispace office. As such, the main objective of this thesis is to add to the existing knowledge on contemporary organizational spaces from the perspective of virtual multispace office design, and raise further discussion on how office design effects the everyday work practices of the organizational members. These objectives were studied through following research questions:

RQ1: What are the expectations of managers and designers for the use of the virtual multispace office?

RQ2: How do these intended ways of using the space realize in actual practices of the employees in the virtual multispace office?

I began by providing a literature review on the history of office design and presented an overview on how spatial matters have previously been studied in organizational research. Importantly, the concepts of practice theory and a particular sociomaterial lens were explained. Together, these segments aimed at bringing in the insight on how

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materiality plays an intrinsic role in the everyday practices of an office and how employees appropriate and reappropriate the spaces through sociomaterial practices.

The practice of socializing space suggests that in both companies at X and Z the office plays an important role for physical encounters that unites the employees, who could perform their work tasks individually outside the physical office space. Furthermore, it seems that the concept of office is perceived as a materialized shared space where certain people with certain objects are present at particular times.

The empirical data revealed how the office space is not a stable box that could be imposed with expected ways of using the space, assuming that the employees would act according to the intentions but that both space and materiality emerge as dynamic and generative forces shaping the individuals appropriating the office space in an on-going manner. This finding became evident through the interplay of identified accommodating practices that were aligned as well as through the resisting practices that were misaligned to the intended ways of using the virtual multispace office. However, the practices of virtual multispace office that accommodate to the intended ways of using the space still pose complexities, permitting them from completely aligning with the expected behavior. These complexities have to do with the practice of negotiation of office boundaries and the time-keeping issues it holds. The employees carrying out this practice are responsible for negotiating how much work is allowed to spill over to their private spheres, and despite the employees being very flexible in deciding when and where to do their work, there were still occasions when this negotiation became problematic. Thus, these everyday complexities keep the virtual multispace practice dynamic.

The dynamic performance of accommodating and resisting practices of the virtual multispace office communicates the everyday the individuals face. The individuals carrying out either the accommodating virtual multispace working practice or resisting practices seemed to reinforce these practices by making a clear distinction between the two, as evidenced for instance through the example of one of the employees at X teasing his colleagues for carrying out the camping practice by deliberately choosing to do work from the desks they had silently occupied. This act entails a conflict between the opposing practices. Furthermore, in some cases, such as the practice of negotiation of office boundaries, suggests that the two practices of accommodation and resistance can shift between one and another.

Furthermore, there seems to be a paradox between the managerial and design discourse on ways of using the virtual multispace office and the realized materiality of the office space. The managerial and design discourse emphasized the importance of an individual employee, and taking his/her needs into consideration when designing the office space. The office design was seen as an important factor in serving the intrinsic needs of the employees by offering them flexibility in deciding where and when to do their work, thus increasing their control over their work-life balance. In addition, the office space was said to have an impact on the image of the company as an appealing employer in a highly competitive labour market.

When observing the materiality of the two virtual multispace offices, it was a striking observation to note how similar the interior designs of X and Z were in terms of their aesthetics. The colours, the materials, and the furniture were as if from the same manufacturer or designed by the same interior designer, even though this was not the case. The only major difference was that company X's expected ways of using the space

included more emphasizes on the aestheticization of the space by creating different themes resembling recreational spaces such as the beach, or spaces for fun and inspiration.

My personal reading into the matter is that the managers' and designers' intended ways of using the virtual multispace office strives towards a standardized office design model in which the individual does not bring so much of his/her personal identity from the recreational world to the office, traditionally manifested through personal items such as family photos or a favourite coffee mug. Instead, he/she identifies him/herself through the corporate identity, like do his/her colleagues, and together they network with each other forming a collective self, which exceeds the sum of its parts. The organization's space can support this process by stripping away the office cubicles around the employees, and by reorganizing them into a shared glass cube decorated with brand artefacts. Thus, the flexibility embraced by the managerial discourse does not seem to deal as much with taking into consideration the needs of individual employees but rather focuses on enabling companies to become more flexible with employment, as the impersonal space presented in these standardized office design models requires less material modifications in rapidly changing settings of employees.

Furthermore, the practice of negotiation of the office boundaries revealed how employees have to negotiate the limits to how much work is allowed to spread on their private lives themselves, by either making a conscious decision to close the computer or stop checking emails, and depicts how drawing the line sometimes can be difficult. The subjectification of work means that individual employees are held responsible for managing his/her own subjectivity according to the needs of the workspace. Thus an individual has to make a conscious decision on how flexible he/she wants to be when it

comes to work time, and what time is left for recreation. The reference made by one of the managers at Z of a person who is "here just to do the job", echoes Häkkinen and Kivinen's (2013) observations on how power operates in a reflexive and performative manner; the ideal, virtual multispace worker is recognized as an individual who is able to perform work tasks individually, and to work flexibly outside the traditional boundaries of "the office" and "office hours". A person, who negotiates rigid work/non-work segmentations to work, on the other hand, is seen as problematic in this type of an office environment.

6.1. Implications for Further Research

The objective of this study is to contribute to the existing academic research on organizational spaces by bringing in new empirical insight on how offices are constituted through the performance of the individuals appropriating the space. The sociomaterial practice approach has brought some much-needed understanding on how the imbrication of social and material play an intrinsic role in everyday organizing. Yet, much of the previous studies have focused on technology (e.g. Leonardi, 2012; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008; Orlikowski, 2010). This thesis contributes to the existing body of sociomaterial research by broadening the definition of physical spaces of the offices. Furthermore, by discussing the expectations of managers and designers towards the use of virtual multispace offices and the actual practices of employees, the current study has provided fresh understanding on the effects that office design has on the individuals appropriating the spaces, and how these spatial strategies are both accommodated and resisted by the employees.

Due to the scope of this study, the empirical data was gathered in rather short period of time, using direct observation within the physical office space of the companies. The findings of this study, however, provide fruitful groundings for a long-term participant ethnography in which the research site could be extended to other organizational spaces that exceed the traditional spatial boundaries of an office - for example to spaces of recreation. Earlier research, such as Land and Scott's (2013) studying brands and identity creation, has provided interesting basis for further studies on how spatial virtual multispace office practices shake the boundary between work and personal life into a two-way direction: work leaking to the non-work spheres of the employees but at the same time employees' non-work lives spreading into workplaces. Thus, I agree with Häkkinen and Kivinen (2013) on their suggestion that organizational studies should reframe the ethical and moral questions of organization by acknowledging the processes of power as potentially reflexive and performative as the process of subjectification molds the boundaries between work and non-work.

6.2. *Implications for Managers*

The managerial recommendations of this study are based on the findings on the practices of the virtual multispace office. A clear paradox was revealed between the managerial discourse and the realized materiality of the office space, suggesting that perhaps the underlying reason for an increasing number of companies striving towards this type of an office design does not solely rest in the publicly communicated desire to take individual employees' needs better into considerations. This study has revealed how the virtual multispace office design sets ground for both accommodating and resisting practices, and how the two opposing practices might even entail conflicts with

one another. Thus, this study invites managers and practitioners from the field of office design to consider the implications of office design refurbishment projects, as they might not be aware of the perhaps unintended consequences of the office design. Thus these projects might not lead to the intended or purposeful practices but also to other types of practices that are dynamically constructed in the daily activities of the sociomaterial setting of the space, which might not be aligned with the expected ways of using the space.

For some companies, the underlying rationale for undertaking major office restructuring projects may very well be the fact that space costs money, and with fewer employees occupying the office space on a regular basis, the company gains direct impact on the density of square meters per employee, and can thus reduce the cost of leasing the office space. However, seeing spaces merely from the cost perspective might bring about harmful long-term effects to the sustainability of organizations, as these new structures can lead to employees having to cope with everyday negotiations between the boundaries of work and non-work, potentially leading to anxiety and stress; both unwanted consequences for a productive working environment.

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