

A Spatial Approach to Transformational Change: Strategic Alignment of the Spatial and Cultural Environment

Abstract

Purpose: This paper explores how strategic alignment of the corporations' real estate with the organisational strategy may be used to facilitate change within an organisation's collaborative culture. The focus is on the interconnectedness between, spatial and behavioural artefacts in the transition process to a new workplace concept.

Design/methodology/approach: The discussion builds on observational studies and semi-structured interviews with 65 employees in a Norwegian organisation.

Findings: The findings indicate that the physical change, when supported by behavioural artefacts as change management actions, paved way for a cultural change towards increased collaboration. However, misalignments between the new workplace concept and existing behavioural artefacts and cultural constructs also restricted the organisation in fully achieving the intended ends.

Originality/value: When new workplace concepts are implemented with the aim of effecting organisational change they require support of a focused change management process where both spatial and behavioural artefacts are designed to support employee adaptation to the new concept. By conducting the change as a continuous iterative process, extending beyond the moving process itself, the CREM may add to the success by guiding and steering the organisation in the right direction.

Research implications: Applying a socio-material perspective with explicit focus on issues such as management and culture in workplace studies is important to develop better models for strategic use of an corporations real estate.

Keywords: Artefacts, Change management, Workplace concepts, Activity-based working, Socio-materiality, Transformational change.

1. Introduction

Strategic alignment of the corporate real estate with the organisational strategy to enhance organisational performance has recently gained increased momentum in CREM research (Haynes and Haynes, 2012). The need for an interlinked perspective is emphasised by the increased recognition of spatial and social constructions as interlinked units of the overall organisational construction (Clegg and Kornberger, 2006). Observing organisations as complex ecological systems, characterised by multiple interlinked social and physical systems, may provide the building sector with greater tools to improve the relationship between buildings and their users (Becker, 2007). With such a usability perspective to spatial design, organisations may strategically use the spatial assets to improve and change organisational functioning (Alexander and Price, 2012). Building on this perspective, authors

such as Duffy and Powell (1997) have emphasised the great value the office building may play in facilitating change.

Succeeding in organisational change is however often a challenging task (Cameron and Green, 2015). Often advocated spatial efforts to enhance organisational effectiveness have also been found to have limitations and sometimes fail to achieve the intended ends (Pepper, 2008; Rylander, 2009). The aim of this article is to explore the general assumption that spatial change may influence organisational change. This is done by studying a case, where the relocation to a new workplace concept was strategically used to explicitly affect the organisational collaboration culture.

1.1 The Role of Spatial Strategies for Creating Transformational Change

According to the change theory of *punctuated equilibrium* proposed by Lewin (1951), organisations consist of deep and highly stable structures, which define a state of *equilibrium*. In the state of equilibrium, the organisation seeks to resist change in order to maintain stability. Transformational change may however occur when the current state is *punctuated* by larger events. After punctuation, the organisation again seeks to re-establish a state of stability and equilibrium. By “unfreezing” existing cultural behaviours and patterns, further “moving” these to a desired state and then “refreezing”, the organisation may successfully succeed with the change. However, to succeed, the driving forces must outweigh the resisting forces.

When a new spatial environment is implemented, instability or punctuation is introduced by the new spatial context. This changed situation opens up for a new socio-material reality, which may contribute to change and further create a new period of stabilisation around the new spatial construction (Hernes et al., 2006). In this perspective, the spatial structures may function as a catalyst for change (O'Neill, 2007; Inalhan and Finch, 2012; Allen et al., 2004) and further be used to reinforce and stabilise the change (Bate et al., 2000). Transition to a new workplace concept, and especially into activity-based working, may therefore offer a unique opportunity for creating transformational change (Heerwagen, 2008; Finch, 2012).

However, as spatial and social constructions are interlinked, unintended changes within the political culture of the organisation may occur when; spatial change is made without addressing the other cultural dimensions (Markus, 2006) or when the change affects the way people operate in a direction that the existing culture is not comfortable with (Bull and Brown, 2012). Building on the cultural theory by Schein (2004), an organisational culture consists simultaneously of three reciprocally connected levels: (1) *artefacts*, (2) *espoused believes and values*, and (3) *taken for granted assumptions*. The levels are based on the degree to which the phenomenon is visible to the outsider, taken for granted assumptions being on the lowest level and artefacts on the highest – most visible level. Changes made to the physical structure are therefore mainly able to impact the superficial structures without getting through to the more resilient deep structures. As activity-based working may challenge the deep cultural structures within an organisation, this might explain why implementation of such concepts sometimes fail (Finch, 2012) – especially when implemented in highly hierarchical cultures (Robertson, 1999).

To succeed with spatial change initiatives, it has recently been emphasised that not only spatial, but also other organisational factors need to be aligned with the new strategy (Haynes and

Haynes, 2012). Interweaving organisational structures and culture in organisational change processes may provide organisations with greater opportunities to achieve with transformational changes (Schriefer, 2005; Thompson, 2008). However, in execution of organisational change, Miles (1997), argues that organisations often start by changing structures and infrastructures. Aligning people, culture and core competencies generally require a longer process. Becker et al. (1994) therefore argue that succeeding with transformational change requires a business driven and process oriented relocation strategy – which continues after the relocation.

1.2 The Influence of Spatial Environments on Organisational Behaviour

The spatial environment may influence change by affecting organisational behaviour in a multitude of ways. Artefacts are in this perspective considered as a form for organisational message (Allen et al., 2004), conveying information about social orders (Baldry, 1999). Building on this argument, change management and leadership may be formed without the presence of the leader, but rather through artefacts providing the observer with information forming actions and the meaning-making process (Ropo et al., 2015). Artefacts are therefore commonly used to lead, manage and divide people and support hierarchies (Vaasgaasar, 2015; Grenness, 2015; Baldry, 1999), and may be seen a powerful cultural creator – forming and reinforcing the desired culture (Schein, 2004; Steele, 1973).

Actions are however formed not only by space and its artefacts, but also by social processes, informing people about space and its meanings. In this perspective, artefacts do not determine behaviour, rather provide cues to socially accepted behaviour in a particular context (Värlander, 2012). Space and artefacts are therefore socially produced and culturally constructed – leading people through embodied experiences in the form of feelings, emotions, and memories (Clegg and Kornberger, 2006). Espoused values and beliefs, as well as assumptions created through social interaction in the former workspace have therefore been found to have a significant role in determining employee perspective, adaptation to and use of new spatial environments (Hirst, 2011). Therefore, when moving from one spatial concept to another, organisational members need to change their assumptions about space and social artefacts and so ‘unlearn’ old values and norms and ‘relearn’ new ones (Grenness, 2015). As also noted by Clegg and Kornberger (2006), outcomes are formed through individual and group sense making, i.e. perception of reality and understanding of the change based on currently held assumptions and shared social meanings.

As cultural behaviour is created through social interaction in spatial environments, the influence of different organisational members’ use of the new spatial context is especially important in the creation of new cultural behaviour and understandings. The ways in which leaders and organisational members act, behave and use space – such as the CEO’s position at the head of the table – are in fact behavioural artefacts, affording people and their actions. Placement of oneself in relation to others and to different functions therefore symbolise factors such as membership, status and social distance (Schein, 2004). In this, the leaders’ actions, are pivotal in forming values, behaviours and norms (Balogun, 2006). Especially the actions and example set by top-level management with regards to the value of change have been found to be pivotal in succeeding with organisational relocations (Bakke, 2007; Schriefer, 2005).

The general trend to move from a ‘hierarchical’ control system to ‘horizontal’ network structures, is however changing the role and view of organisational leadership (Dale, 2005). Transition to open, transparent and activity based workplaces, where leaders and employees work side-by-side, may thus influence new cultural assumptions (Blakstad, 2015), decrease boundaries and hierarchies (Värlander, 2012), and support values of equality amongst organisational members (Grenness, 2015; Bakke, 2007). Miles (1997) further argues that successful change managers are those who take any opportunity, no matter how trivial, to demonstrate and act the change. This may constitute a new corporate storytelling, which, by guiding employees in their everyday decision making processes may act as an effective support mechanism for the spatial change (Stegmeier, 2008). This is a continuous process where the ‘change agent’ assists others in the transition from the present state to the desired state (Becker et al., 1994).

To this end, actions in space may function as meaning-making triggers contributing to organisational learning (Balogun, 2006) and through ‘learning by doing’, activities gradually form new sets of values and norms (Steele, 1973). In the transition to new workplaces, managers need to ‘walk the talk’ and exemplify the new strategy through their own actions. For the management, this is often a challenging process, especially as the transition to a non-hierarchical structure in turn may lower their status and force them to earn status in new ways. Therefore, to alter behaviour and cultural traits, the management style needs to **be** changed (Grenness, 2015).

Higgins and Mcallaster (2004), however, observed that managers generally do not perceive the links between changing strategy, changing culture, and changing cultural artefacts. As behaviour and assumptions often are taken for granted, managers are seldom aware of what effect their own actions has on the change process (Schein, 2004). If manager behaviour is not in line with the new strategy this may become a hindrance, allowing employees to act on old values and norms (Balogun, 2006).

Vischer (2005) therefore argues that managers at different levels need to develop skills for making good workspace decisions, i.e. understanding how they may use the workspace as a resource in their leadership. Such understanding may significantly add to their change management skills. To lead in change, managers need to know in detail what they are expected to do and how they are expected to behave (Cameron and Green, 2015).

Building on the presented literature, use of spatial strategies may be used as a powerful tool to effect transformational change. However, in the face of established social and cultural constructions the spatial change are also likely to meet resistance, leading to a desire to go back to the old constructions. To fully succeed with the change, the current literature suggests that the spatial change need to be supported by an extended change management process where additional behavioural artefacts are implemented to **guide** employee meaning making process.

2. A Case Study Approach to Study A Strategic Relocation

The aim of the study was to explore how alignment of a corporations’ real estate with the organisational strategy may be used to facilitate organisational change. To do so the article builds on a case study from a Norwegian professional service network provider that recently conducted a strategic relocation. The organisational relocation had prior to the study gained significant attention, both

amongst building professionals and media, for its interesting architecture and new strategic workplace design – as such represented a good starting point for a case study.

The organisation in question provides services within the fields of auditing, consulting, financial advisory, risk management as well as tax and legal. The organisational structure consists of six main departments; three larger (130-250 employees) and three smaller (10-50 employees). In addition to this, four support units (5-25 employees) serve the different departments with IT, HR and legal and marketing services.

In the studied case, the change started with a new organisational strategy, named “As One”. The new strategy focused on a higher degree of collaboration and a stronger utilisation of knowledge within and across the different departments. The intention of the relocation was to create transformational change by reframing the culture-structure relationship, with explicit focus on creating: “*A new standard for collaboration*”. The main focus was on facilitation of interaction processes. As explained by one manager: “*It is important that the new building facilitates employee interaction. The building cannot create interaction by itself, but it may facilitate interaction*”. To further allow for flexibility and work flow within and between the departments, the new concept was designed to be activity-based – also supported by free-seating and clean-desk principles.

To better explain the concept prior to the transition, a set of visualisations were made. These were strategically designed with the purpose of explaining the different activity based areas in the new office, and by the use of a set of spatial cues influence new forms for collaborative work related activities. The most central visualisation was ‘the concept fan’, which arranges 12 activity-based areas in a 180-degree wide fan, spanning from silent and semi-silent areas to different collaborative, project and informal areas. The different areas were marked with a colour and a symbol, representing the activity facilitated by each area. In the office, signage suspended from the ceiling marked each area. The signs are colour coded, with symbols and brief descriptions giving cues to appropriate activities in the given area.

To create a good fit between the activity-based areas and the different departmental work processes, a work profiling process, as suggested by Greene and Myerson (2011) and Duffy and Powell (1997) was carried out during the planning process. Accounting for the varying needs, each department got a ‘tailor-made’ floor plan. For example, departments with a high degree of mobility and collaborative work patterns, received more collaborative work areas, such as project places and open informal work areas, whilst departments with more stationary work patterns and focus on individual work processes received a workplace concept with focus on places for individual working, withdrawal and concentration. Employees were free to choose from the different workstations available within the assigned floor or area. Due to high resistance towards free-seating, confidentiality requirements and other practical needs, some departments were allowed individually owned workstations.

The organisation moved into the new concept in December 2013. The strategic relocation project was finished soon after. Despite an annual survey, addressing amongst other things satisfaction with the physical workplace, neither evaluation activities nor strategic actions had been conducted by the organisation to change the concept prior to this case study.

The case study was planned and structured together with the organisational management in advance. The case study was conducted approximately 1.5 years after the transition and had a 6 months span. The case study was further conducted in three phases, where data from each phase was briefly analysed before moving on to the next phase. This allowed for an interpretative approach, where the methods were continually refined during the research (Maxwell, 2009; Yanow, 2006).

During the first phase, first hand interview data and second hand material was collected. First, a member of the corporate management board and the CEO, were interviewed to get an initial overview over 1) the aim of the strategic relocation, 2) the process leading up to the transition and 3) the status quo. Second, to gain a deeper understanding of 1) the strategic aims, 2) the different activities during the process and 3) the activity-based IWC with associated strategies, secondary materials were gathered and studied. The secondary material consisted of; concept presentations, architectural drawings, media articles and the survey results form the annual internal survey. All data from this phase was used to gain understanding of the organisation; its mission, goals and daily practices as well as to understand the status quo of the strategic relocation. The information gathered was also useful for structuring the case study approach – forming the main topics for the investigation.

The main bulk of data was collected during the second phase. 63 participants were interviewed, either in individual interviews or group interviews (2-5 employees per interview). All participants were selected based on an information oriented selection process, meaning that members were strategically chosen to find participants with different roles, work tasks and responsibilities. Since organisational members, depending on their history, former experience, position in the organisation and role in the strategic development may have different perspectives and interests (Rylander, 2009) managers/leaders and employees were always interviewed separately. See Table 1 for full overview over the interviews.

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour and were structured by pre-defined thematic categories addressing issues such as: 1) the process and transition, 2) use and understanding of the IWC as well as 3) perceptions of the effects of the new IWC on managerial, socio-cultural and collaborative aspects (See Table 2). The interviews followed a semi-structured approach, enabling the emergence of new aspects based on respondents' own perceptions and interests (Yin, 2010). Following a walk-through methodology (e.g. Hansen et al., 2010), 1-2 employees from each department were after the interview asked to guide the researcher around the office and explain in more detail how they utilised and experienced the different activity-based areas. A total of 11 walk-throughs with 17 employees were conducted. With written permission from the participants, all interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

Use of different areas underwent further study in-between interviews. Spatial usage was mainly studied through gathering 'snapshots' on activities within the different activity-based areas (e.g. Bjerrum and Bøgh Fangel, 2010). Brief informal discussions spanning between 5-15 minutes, with approximately 40 employees, were also conducted during the total of ten days spent in the office. All data on space usage was gathered as field notes (a total of 22 edited A4 pages).

The collected data was analysed and verified during the third phase. The analytic approach was based on cross-unit analysis, and explicitly on differences between the departments (main units) and organisational levels within the departments, i.e. manager and employee levels (sub units). Data gathered from the different research methods were sorted into the correct unit and coded into key thematic categories within each unit. To allow for cross unit analysis the same thematic categories were used during the whole process (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002). The main thematic categories were drawn from the by the organisation defined aim for the strategic relocation, and consisted of; 1) collaboration within and 2) across departments as well as 3) between organisational levels and hierarchies. An additional category of 4) time and management was also added as this during the iterative approach was identified as an important aspect for the success of the strategic relocation. Each unit was first analysed separately and then compared to find similarities and differences.

To further verify findings and gaining the organisations' reactions to the researchers' conclusions, a 44-page report was presented to the organisational management during the third phase.

This was followed by a discussion session with the corporate management board, where managers from each main unit were able to express their view on the researchers conclusion.

The reported observations, views and experiences in this article are based on triangulation of the collected data, as suggested by Yin (2010). Presentation of the findings is derived from all departments and organisational levels. Findings are presented in accordance with the identified thematic categories used in the analysis. Unless otherwise stated, the reported findings cut across all units.

3. Findings

3.1 Collaboration within Departments

The IWC concept was designed with an explicit aim of increasing intradepartmental collaboration. In departments where free-seating and space-sharing structures were implemented a general belief held by both employees and managers was that internal communication and collaboration had increased. Work was described as “more social” and collaborative. Both during interviews and the walk-throughs several commented that they had increased their internal network and befriended new colleagues, this again eased the threshold for seeking assistance from colleagues. As recounted by one: *“You come into contact with people that you normally don’t come into contact with”*. *“I’ve got new friends here”*, commented another. Some employees from the larger departments also remarked that they had gained a closer connection and more knowledge about different areas of expertise within their own department. Working in open spaces was furthermore reported to help streamline work processes and ease the integration process for new employees.

However, the cross unit analysis also revealed that perceptions of internal collaboration varied between departments. In departments where individual workstations had been implemented, or where the free seating did not function as intended, some managers stated that there had been an increase in collaboration, whilst most of their employees did not describe any noticeable increase. At these locations several rather stated that, as one were afraid to disturb others one did not “dare” to initiate a conversation in the open landscape. Thus a ‘whispering’ culture was created in several areas. The assumption made by the employees in question was that work processes were mainly to be conducted as individual tasks, thus the workspace ought to be quiet allowing for individual concentration – rather than collaboration. Existing cultural norms and value systems therefore challenged the new concept. As cultural norms were shared between groups they also affected interaction within adjacent located groups, as one employee stated: *“I find it useful to throw out a question to colleagues in an open workspace, however, I don’t feel comfortable with doing that here”*.

Furthermore, due to confidentiality requirements, several lawyers found it challenging to discuss work related issues in the open landscape. This perception, however, was not shared by everyone – especially not by managers. Contrarily, the opposing group argued that confidentiality was not an issue as long as one followed the organisational confidentiality ethics and guidelines in general and in addition availed oneself of withdrawal rooms for sensitive discussions. Nevertheless, some argued that their individual work processes and their confidentiality requirements was a legitimate claim for having separate offices – as in the former office.

To facilitate collaborative work processes, each floor had a centrally located coffee area, furnished with lounge furniture and high-stand tables. Despite this, and the descriptive signs, these areas were mainly observed to be unused in the immediate period after transition. Many believed that spending time in these areas would be perceived as laziness or non-efficient use of time. Although the collaborative areas were free from externals one employee stated: *“As a consultant, you charge the customer by the hour. You need to be efficient. Hanging out in a sofa may give the wrong impression”*. Aiming to appear efficient, many partly resisted the new spatial structure. To better emphasise the value of collaboration, managers at one of the larger departments arranged for **implementation of** additional signage, highlighting the value of informal interaction. To further ‘walk the talk’ managers started to spend more time working and collaborating from these areas. At the time of the study, **use of these spaces was described to have** increased markedly. However, at other departments where no additional actions had been taken, similar areas still remained largely unused.

To facilitate team collaboration, open landscape ‘project areas’ were also located adjacent to the informal areas. Similarly to the social **areas** these areas were mainly unused after the transition. The general open layout combined with employee’s caution of sharing sensitive information seemed to restrict use of these areas. Furthermore, as these areas were new additions compared to the previous office some reported that they felt insecure with regards to what kind of behaviour and activities were appropriate or even allowed. However, when employees had had time to settle into the new structure, these areas **became** highly appreciated and by many believed to be crucial for collaborative work and ‘workflow’. The ability to share documents on wall mounted screens and spread out work material on larger surfaces than the typical **work** desk was seen as especially important. The cultural change was also indicated by several employees, commenting that project places were efficient for knowledge sharing and informing others – *“the people just passing by”* – about on-going projects.

3.2 Collaboration across Hierarchies

The former workplace had a hierarchical structure with individual offices mainly assigned to seniors and managers. Going from this to a non-hierarchical structure where members with different levels of authority shared workspaces created benefits as well as challenges. By facilitating a flatter structure organisational members at different levels were allowed to sit ‘side-by-side’. **The general belief across all departments and organisational levels was that** collaboration across hierarchical levels had been improved **in the new office**. Many also described the organisational hierarchy as flat, especially compared to similar organisations outside Scandinavia – an observation in line with research on Scandinavian workplace culture in general (e.g. Grenness, 2015). Arguably, the new workplace was perceived to have changed the hierarchical map of the work space, to better reflect the low-hierarchical structure.

Change in the hierarchical structure was also illustrated by a change in the socio-spatial structure. Some years prior to the office relocation free-seating had been implemented in one of the larger departments. However, at that juncture, the hierarchical structure was used by employees to define where different organisational members were *expected* to find a desk. ‘Unofficial areas’ for managers, seniors and new employees had thus been created. When this topic was discussed during the interviews, some employees laughed and commented that the former system was “silly” and

“idiotic”, based on an ‘old way of thinking’. With only one exception, this structure disappeared after relocation to the new offices. The exception was a table where members from the top-level management often situated themselves. Lower ranking employees and managers seemed to avoid this particular table. Nevertheless, as this table was located adjacent to the informal areas the general belief was that when managers worked at the ‘manager table’ they simultaneously signalled that they appreciated a low-hierarchical culture and were open for inquiries and interactions. Several employees also reported that knowing managers’ spatial patterns both eased locating them and whether they would be available for inquiries.

However, at another department the free-seating structure was gradually redefined into one area for the managers and another area for the rest. This was not a formalised structure, rather, as one employee put it: “*When managers always choose a place in the same area, no one else dare to sit there*”. Thus, there were still instances where managers’ behaviour maintained the former hierarchical structure – ultimately restricting development of the desired collaborative culture.

Moving managers from assigned offices was, however, seen by some employees, especially at departments where individually assigned desks were implemented, to have created a somewhat higher threshold for seeking contact. Previously, the sign of an open door functioned for many as a cultural artefact informing organisational members of the person’s availability. Uncertainty of whether the persons were actually available for conversation or having to ask them to join in for a conversation at another location created barriers for some. On the other hand, few managers perceived this to be an issue. In their opinion the number of inquiries had increased, but were in general shorter and more efficient. Instead of dropping by the office, many had also learned to use the chat message software to contact managers, which by managers was believed to make for more efficient collaboration. Managers also perceived that working next to others facilitated ‘workflow’, tacit knowledge sharing and sharing of sensory experiences.

3.3 Collaboration Across Departments

In the former office building, a centrally located staircase connected the different departments and was described as the central node in the office. The new office building – higher and more narrow in structure – seemed to decrease spontaneous encounters and therefore also perception of collaboration across departments. However, areas such as the in-house coffee bar, the previously mentioned social areas at each floor, and a project area accessible for the whole organisation on a separate floor, created substitute areas for collaborative work. Employees who spent more time at these locations did not to the same extent share the view that collaboration across departments had decreased. On the contrary, these employees believed that the new facilities provided better locations for more relaxed and ‘deeper’ conversations and interactions. Especially the in-house coffee bar functioned as an area where members from different departments were seen to interact with each other. Additionally, internal staircases connecting some of the floors were found to benefit spontaneous interactions.

Nevertheless, the view shared across the organisation was that knowledge of, and connection to, other departments had diminished. The ultimate effect is however questionable, as most employees perceived that their own work had little or nothing to do with other departments. In instances where specific projects were held across departments, employees were however seen to move around more, working across multiple floors. The sharing structure and freedom of movement facilitated working across different departmental floors. The perception of less cross-departmental collaboration may

however be related to the fact that the organisation post-office relocation had experienced significant growth. Some expressed that this had influenced a cultural change and ultimately resulted in less communication not only across departments, but also within their own department.

3.4 Time and Management

Prior to the relocation, workshops and process activities were conducted with the aim of defining what 'a new standard for collaboration' meant. The general answer to this question was: "*The new standard for collaboration is something we develop together over time*". As previously described the patterns for socialising, collaborating and communicating had since the relocation gradually changed.

When relocating to the new workplace many seemed to categorise the workplace into primary, secondary and tertiary workstations. One's 'own' desk was described as the primary workstation – i.e. the place where 'real work' was conducted. Meeting- and project rooms functioned as secondary workstations and informal meeting places were described as tertiary workstations. As the different cultural dimensions and employee value system gradually changed, many started to regard the former secondary and tertiary workstations more as primary workstations – ultimately considering a multitude of workstations as being suitable for conducting different work processes. Such perceptions were especially found in the departments where free-seating had been implemented and functioned as intended.

Statements and actions given by specific organisational members were further seen to influence organisational members' assumptions and norms. Early in the process, the CEO and the top-level management informed the organisation of the intention and vision for the new workplace. Doing so they also stated that they would work in the same way, under the same space sharing principles as everyone else – adding that anyone who wanted something different was free to raise their concerns. Few came forward. Since the transition the CEO and the top-level management have kept their words, working according to the free-seating structure. Some other managers commented that they felt obligated to be 'early adopters' and set an example for others. This question was also raised during the process where managers were told that if they didn't feel that they could lead the change, they should at least try not to be openly negative.

Nevertheless, most managers perceived that there had not been any demand for them to act as 'change agents', neither did they regard their own actions in the office to be of any major importance. Several organisational members, however, commented on specific managers, their actions and how this had been important for creating a 'new standard'. Placing oneself in a highly visible area, working from different locations and actively participating in the everyday work environment was seen as important cultural artefacts – supporting the collaborative strategy. On the other hand, when managers were perceived to do the opposite – creating their own areas, choosing the same place each day or detaching themselves from the work environment – employees often reacted negatively. As a result, some groups of employees also had a tendency to break the concept rules, creating sub-groups and own rules. Noticing the importance of the process and management actions, some managers emphasised the value of putting enough resources into the process: "*If you really want to create a transformational change, you need to put resources into changing minds*".

4. Discussion

In line with the initial theoretical assumption, that spatial change may facilitate organisational change, the new spatial strategy did in several ways facilitate “a new standard for collaboration”. However, as also discussed throughout the literature review, creating the desired change did not only require a physical change, but also a change within behavioural artefacts and other cultural constructs. If supported by behavioural norms the workplace and its artefacts may very well pave way for the change, as suggested by O'Neill (2007), Inalhan and Finch (2012) and Allen et al. (2004), and as also suggested by Bate et al. (2000) function to reinforce the change.

Further, as suggested by Hirst (2011), employee and manager assumptions, values and behavioural norms strongly guided and formed adaptation to, use of, and satisfaction with the new workplace. Old assumptions such as: the standard desk is the primary workstation, that fun and informal conversations are not an important parts of core work processes, and that work ought to be conducted as individual tasks created barriers for the spatial change initiative. The fear of sharing information and the pending confidentiality discussion at some departments also represented a ‘confidentiality culture’ where information should be guarded rather than shared. In line with the reasoning of Grenness (2015), Markus (2006) and Bull and Brown (2012) this lead to employee resistance of the new workplace. From this perspective, the new artefacts in themselves did not have the power to ‘break through’ and create the punctuation needed. In accordance to the theoretical assumptions proposed by Lewin (1951) and Schein (2004) the transformational change was limited by resisting cultural forces, outweighing the driving spatial forces and turning the organisation back towards the previous cultural and socio-spatial constructions. Ultimately, where no changes in assumptions, values and norms had happened, the concept was resisted and outmanoeuvred by the existing culture.

Support by additional cues and behavioural artefacts may thus be crucial for achieving the intended ends and creating the needed punctuation (Balogun, 2006; Schriefer, 2005; Bakke, 2007). Supporting such claims, successful transition towards a collaborative and low-hierarchical culture was identified in instances where managers were more visible in the landscape, worked from multiple locations and actively engaged in social and collaborative activities. However, as some managers’ actions and use of space also reinforced hierarchical levels, the hierarchical boundaries were not eliminated – rather redrawn in the new office. This created a situation where new socio-material constructions were created, however not in line with the original intentions. In line with Becker et al. (1994), Balogun (2006) and Miles (1997) corporate managers’ actions strongly defined the meanings attached to the new workplace concept. As such, sub-cultures and different socio-material constructions became visible in the open workplace structure – forming the adaptation process in unintended directions.

The transition and the process of ‘unlearning’ and ‘re-learning’, as emphasised by Grenness (2015), may in this perspective be seen as an iterative process where the spatial strategy is in a constant battle with old values and assumptions. If the strategy is strong enough, and/or supported by other behavioural cues, new insights may be formed. In the studied case, the process of time allowed for the new concept and the collaborative culture to gradually work more in harmony – stressing the fact that structure and culture must co-evolve (Bate et al., 2000). As the former hierarchical and socio-cultural constructions were broken down employees also got more freedom to start to explore the new concept – further allowing for organisational learning (Steele, 1973).

Arguably, for strategic change to be successfully achieved, the spatial change needs to penetrate into the core values of the organisation. In the studied case, this happened fairly naturally at some departments however failed at others. As the relocation was handled as a project rather than as a process, and as no formal structures were developed to guide development of the collaborative culture after transition, the change effort was at some departments found to have fizzled out. The fact that departments may vary in their adaptation process stresses the importance of constantly keeping an eye on the change and when needed implement additional measures to guide the organisation in the right direction. In practice, adhering to cultural differences needs to be a key aspect throughout the entire process. The traditional focus on spatial change as a tool for affecting cultural change, have however amongst practitioners, and also in research, contributed to the creation of a rather rational deterministic thinking, focusing on the spatial parts of workplace concept alone. For spatial and organisational aspects to merge and fully work in harmony more focus needs to be placed on the cultural values attached to the spatial environments.

Although the role of managers in this process have been argued to be important (De Paoli et al., 2013) management practices during spatial change processes have however, in practice as well as in research, been underexplored and underutilised. Consequently, for spatial punctuation to succeed both the spatial and the cultural structures within the organisation needs to be addressed continuously throughout the entire transition. As managers may have little understanding of their importance in the change process, the CREAM team should further function as a strategic advisor, training and coaching managers during the change initiative. Such an active process may as noted by Cameron and Green (2015) significantly add to managers change management skills and further to the success of the strategic change initiative.

5. Conclusions

Strategic alignment of the corporate real estate with the organisational strategy to transform organisations requires change both within the spatial and cultural constructions. Supported by behavioural artefacts, especially in form of management action and behaviour, the transition to a new spatial environment may be successful in achieving with transformational change. To succeed with transformational change, both organisational aspects and cultural values need to be addressed and handled as an integrated part of the spatial strategy.

By actively addressing different socio-material constructions, employee meaning making processes as well as management behaviour during the transition to a new workplace concept the CREAM team may add to the change initiative by steering the organisation in the right direction. Addressing the socio-material relationship between different organisational groups and levels in research as well as in implementation of new workplace concepts may provide the building sector with more knowledge with regards to strategic use of the built environment. Applying a socio-material perspective with explicit focus on issues such as management and culture in workplace studies is further important to develop better models for the development, management and evaluation of IWCs.

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