Chapter Title: **Aesthetics, Management, and the Organization of Space**

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Abstract
This chapter aims to explore and define a range of ways in which a theoretical
interrelation of aesthetics, management and space is fruitful for contemporary
research. It opens with a definitional exploration of aesthetics and similarly with
space; then with reference to the historical provenance of each of these terms, the
chapter accounts for recent significant advances in management and organisation
analysis. The chapter questions mainstream critical approaches to the spatial design
and the management of the contemporary workplace, and along with examples, it
concludes by surveying new approaches to workplace design and the philosophical
implications for the integration of aesthetics into corporate life.

Keywords Aesthetics, Art, Space, Workplace Design, Management, Organisation

Introduction
The theoretical relation between space, aesthetics, and management is inconclusive
and open-ended: in short, there remains many unexplored avenues and theoretical
possibilities and all too few invested scholars. This chapter will not serve to
summarise all past and present published research relevant to this subject nexus.
The conceptual terrain to be surveyed is, in any case, mostly interdisciplinary and
not specific to philosophy; and as will become evident, the concept of "space" (more
so than "aesthetics") provides for a wide-ranging application across research fields.
This chapter will therefore be limited to defining the terms by which "the spatial" and
"aesthetics" are effectively or suggestively aligned and will serve to identify the key
concepts, definitional trends, and theoretical ideas that could provide significant
questions for the philosophy of management. Attention will be particularly paid to
conceptual innovations, to significant shifts in management practice and design of
the workplace, and to the normative orientation of new research trajectories – where
the theoretical interconnection of space, aesthetics, and management embodies
ethical concerns on the conditions of human labor.

Research scholarship on space has hitherto been forthcoming more from organi-
sation studies (OS) than management research per se (or interdisciplinary "manage-
ment and organisation studies"). This is predictable perhaps, as organisations are
often assumed to be the principal spatial dimension of management. Moreover,
space as a concept within the study of management and organisation is theoretically
hybrid and often used in ways that are not explicit on whether it functions as
ontology, epistemology, or just a general interpretative framework appropriate to a
given sociological subject matter. Unlike "the aesthetic" (outside of science, prop-
erly speaking, such as complex classical mechanics, quantum mechanics, or space

science), there is no established theoretical consensus on a definition of space or of "the spatial."

As for aesthetics, we can begin with a succinct definition in terms of the study of human sensory experience, particularly the role of perception and its cognitive content (meaning-laden experience). The aesthetic is, of course, a concept with a broad historical provenance, whose breadth cannot be explored in this chapter. We will not attend to notions of "taste," "judgment," the experience of nature, the sublime, and the beautiful, all of which were central to the modern traditions of aesthetics as a branch of philosophy from Hume, Burke, Baumgarten, Kant, and others. But we will indeed have cause to refer to design, creativity, quality, and value, all of which can be found as early as Kant's pivotal Critique of Judgment of 1790. The approach to management that this chapter advances is not prescriptive but will oscillate between aesthetics as it pertains to the manager as subject and aesthetics as it pertains to the environment in which the subject acts. Our object of inquiry can therefore be phrased in terms of the spatial aesthetics of the workplace. And, of course, an exploration of the workplace will also pertain more generally to the landscape of sensory experience occupied by workers as much as managers, by virtue of their co-embodiment and corporeal presence in the spaces and places that are subject to management. Managers are themselves managed, and as Karen Dale observes, the operations of control exclusively associated with management is more thoroughly comprehended if "the whole of the constitution of a particular space is understood as a combined material and social interaction" (Dale 2005: 651). This chapter will attempt to define how places of work are realms of aesthetic materiality (physical, social, or virtual) and, furthermore, that workplaces can themselves be defined as active media of aesthetic production (Burrell and Dale 2003).

By implication, aesthetics pertains to the ever-shifting character of human experience within the organisational formations of the socioeconomic world in which we live. Traditional scientific method (affixing an object of analysis, toward which a systematic, repeatable, and verifiable inquiry is conducted) has not been overly successful with aesthetics, notwithstanding the valuable research that has evolved in neuroscience, cognitive psychology, or visual communication (Smith et al. 2005). This chapter will attend only to research and writing that pertain to management and organisation. It will open with a definitional exploration of aesthetics and then similarly with space; it will consider the recent development and practices of workplace design; it will then conclude with a proposal for a new avenue of research.

An Aesthetics of Space

A spatial aesthetics of the managed workplace is relevant to some fields of management research more than others. Organisational Aesthetics (OA), Organisation Studies (OS), and Organisational Behaviour (OB) have become more receptive to this nexus of subjects, which is not to say that one cannot locate cognate topics of interest in older-style industrial Sociology or interdisciplinary Systems Thinking, Human Relations, or areas of Social Psychology. As a generalisation, operations management, production management, as well as strategic management all tend to define space unproblematically as a physical facility (the bounded arena of a building's interior, for instance), a critical issue to which we will return in the third section.

The discipline of philosophical aesthetics has not made a significant impact on management and organisation studies; it has also not attended a great deal to "space" as a singular or abstract concept, other than in relation to pictorial space (such as perspectival composition and the "tableau" of a drawing or painting; to artistic methods of depiction and representation; or to verisimilitude, illusion, and the ontology of the image). Likewise, philosophical aesthetics has not awarded a significant degree of attention to the spaces of artistic production (i.e., art's management and organisation), at least, outside the traditional art historical concerns with artist patronage and commissions or the division of labour in the artist's studio. It was American philosopher Arthur Danto who, in an article in *The Journal of Philosophy* in 1964, first framed artistic production as an object of philosophical inquiry. His premise was "telling artworks from other things is not so simple a matter" (provoked by the emergence of Pop art and its incorporation of everyday consumer objects). But, rather than proceeding with an inquiry into aesthetic ontology, Danto ventured speculation on a subject, normally the preside of sociologists – the "art world" (Danto 1964). George Dickie, in *American Philosophical Quarterly* in 1969, ventured a similar leap, and both Danto and Dickie are now widely recognised as initiating significant philosophical interest into the so-called "institutional" theory of art – how our experience, if not our very concept of art, is constructed in and through a theory-laden sphere of social interaction we call the "art world" (Dickie 1969, 1971). Understanding how a prevailing theoretical cognition of art becomes internal to the institutional formation of art production (and distribution, display, and reception) continues to be a subject of philosophical inquiry into aesthetic experience, meaning, and value.

Why this is significant is instantiated by several avenues of fruitful research yet to be fully pursued by philosophical inquiry. With Danto and Dickie as reference points, Howard Becker's sociological inquiry *Art Worlds* (1984) and, later, Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio's *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (1991) still represent seminal and enduring theoretical advances in our conceptualisation of art and aesthetic experience and which had been growing since the 1970s (Becker 1974; diMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991). Both art and aesthetic experience are herein defined in terms of a managed succession of organisations and institutions, central to which is linguistic improvisation and new aesthetic terminologies. Indeed, throughout the 1970s a new lexicon of interpretative thought was gradually replacing historical reference points from philosophical aesthetics with a more critical, pragmatic, and sociological comprehension of art's function in everyday life. In fact, by the 1980s, the "aesthetic" per se was being marginalised in favour of new cultural and literary appropriations of linguistics (primarily structuralist and poststructuralist) and its theorisation of "signification" and the "semiotic." Art was cast as a form of symbolic communication or meaning-construction alongside other media of material culture, and even where the role of the linguistic remained central, the perceived embeddedness of language in political ideology or other discourses of power meant that the philosophical problems of aesthetics (taste, values, quality, and beauty and so on) were thought to obscure, not reveal, the significance of the experience of art.

The rapid growth of research on "creativity" during the 1990s presented further challenges. Many of the attributes of the aesthetic (inspiration, visual communication, sensory stimulation, profound ideas, and emotional communication) seemed to be more credibly provided for by new creative industries (fashion, magazines, video

games, etc), and post-Pop contemporary art no longer made explicit reference to the history of art but to popular culture, media, and current social issues. Public policy makers began to testify to the economic significance of the new "creative industries," and international policy models of "creative economy" challenged the singularity of the fine arts and, with that, the autonomy of the aesthetic realm as traditionally conceived. Yet, the spaces of art's display and experience (principally, museums and art galleries) radically revised their own practice and role in society – with marketing, branding, media celebrity, and controversy inadvertently or not succeeded in situating the experience of art on a continuum of lifestyle choices for the consuming public. Bilton's *Management and Creativity: From Creative Industries to Creative Management* (2006) is indicative of this shift and along with Bas Van Heur's *Creative Networks and the City: Towards a Cultural Political Economy of Aesthetic Production* (2010) together represent two poles of contemporary research – where the arts exist within a matrix of other forms of creativity and cultural experience, all of which are involved in the production of aesthetic phenomenon.

The so-called cultural turn in management research during the 1990s (Küpers et al. 2017) has allowed for a greater openness to these shifts and to the dispersal of the aesthetic across an array of new cultural products. What was once the subject matter of cultural studies or the sociology of culture can now provide occasion to reformulate analytical problems and approaches to interpretation and to writing itself, in management and organisation studies. While Frankfurt School critical theory still tends to secure the use of some of the categories of philosophical aesthetics – in critical management studies (e.g., Carr and Hancock's *Art and Aesthetics at Work* of 2003) – the use of artistic and literary references in the course of management analysis has provided a means of resistance to what Parker calls "the hegemony of managerialism" (Parker 2002: 158). With Burrell's innovative *Pandemonium: Towards a Retro-Organization Theory* (1997), the act of research writing becomes positively "artistic." The aesthetic values of the historical baroque directly inspired the production of new concepts and modes of cognition of management and organisation phenomenon. The first chapter features a symbolic inscription: "Warning: linearity kills" (1997: 8).

Both Burrell and Parker are aligned with a critical polemic against "scientific" approaches to management, where they understand scientific method to have shorn research of the aesthetic experience of the researcher as much as the social content of everyday working experience. Burrell's book (with Karen Dale) *The Spaces of Organisation and the Organisation of Space: Power, Identity and Materiality at Work* (2008) is a corrective to this, using space as framework for reconnecting management and organisation analysis with the social identity, subjectivity, and experience of the worker – in other words, the experiential dimensions of the workplace. An earlier edited book, Clegg and Kornberger's *Space, Organizations and Management Theory* (2006a), offered a similarly critical if more catholic overview of potential avenues for new spatial research; and it remains a pioneer publication in this regard and is worthy of further comment (Dale and Burrell 2008; Clegg and Kornberger 2006b; See also de Vaujany and Mitev 2013; Hernes 2004; van Marrewijk and Yanow 2010). Its diversity of content is symptomatic of the evident hybridity of organisational space as a concept – involving the design of buildings, the structure and divisions of facilities, internal hierarchies and priorities in the arrangement of rooms and offices, the operational processes of labour, and the

communications (symbolic, verbal, and semiotic) that animate pervasive strategies of power and control. Diversity notwithstanding these approaches all differ radically from recent research on Workplace Ecology, Environmental Auditing, or Workplace Psychology, insofar as they promote a deep scepticism on the socioeconomic constitution of the manager as conduit of corporate authority. They all adhere to a principled opposition to prevailing conceptions of workplace management as the organisation of labour and control of production and the assumed moral agency of the manager (as bringer of order, rationality, cooperation, productivity, and so on). Clegg and Kornberger, along with Burrell and Dale, serve to dissolve the naturalist empirical (sometimes "common sense") understanding of space as the broad realm in which management (or managed processes) affects change. Space is all too easily assumed to be a container and self-evident physical site and location for workers and their productive activity (a building interior, for instance). However, the interconnection of worker, production, building, or location is not altogether apparent to the human eye or to empirical methods; and it is not reducible to a bounded arena of labour activity, equipment, and artifacts, which is all shaped in productive form by managed strategy. Space, rather, is not self-evident at all: it both provides for and generates latent, often invisible, and ever-changing conditions for experience, identity, values, meaning-production, and action, both in relation to and providing a means of resistance against management authority and an organisation's strategy.

In summarising the range of ideas, observations, and assertions that feature in Clegg and Kornberger's indicative volume, we may say that the contemporary corporate environments construct many forms of space (along with many ways of comprehending space – the sensory and the cognitive are interrelated). The contemporary corporate environment actively mediates meaning and symbolic communication through the presentation of corporate identity and the deployment of style, colour, and lighting. It also uses space to inculcate company values and behavioural norms, as a "discipline" enforcing patterns of productive self-regulation (the discipline and surveillance that creates a cohesive "workforce"). Space may purposively engage in the stimulation of the worker's senses, using brand design and where a particular "look and feel" is a strategic requirement. Yet even non-branded spaces – the traditional Fordist factory office space, whose visual, design, or ergonomic dimensions are arrayed in predictable linear geometry – can transmit knowledge through experience (of values that signify neglect or an inability to develop or respond to new social conditions or a suppression of new social values). Even the "look and feel" of management neglect can take the form of a visual language of mediated meaning (from values and priorities to anachronistic methods of control or outdated assumptions on the linearity of worker productivity).

All built interiors and functioning working environments have been carefully designed and assembled according to a plan that articulates a form of rationality, sense of order and authority, and, more importantly, an analytical representation of the processes of production (and by implication, the role of management in the control and optimisation of that spatial interior). Most environments, in fact, contain predesigned and re-appropriated objects deployed according to a logic and form of practical rationality – the "useful." One does not have to be a devotee of actor-network theory (ANT) to understand how objects (or spaces and objects as a unified entity – like a workshop or fitted office) can possess "agency." Objects are not inanimate entities whose ontology resides in an orbit exterior to the dynamics of

social interaction and communication. Objects are used and are always in motion, even if that motion is the motion of the perception of the managers by whom they are continually deployed. Objects moreover possess an aesthetic power to represent, affect, and define meaningful experience (where meaningfulness can be of a negative variety, affecting the denigration of the worker, the value of their work, or indeed in promoting a sense of alienation from the decision-making orbit of management).

Clegg and Kornberger's introduction to *Space, Organizations and Management Theory* serves to remind us how prevailing tendencies in management research continue to ascribe an exclusive priority to the thought and actions of individuals (in explicit positions of authority) as abstracted from the immediate environment of the plurality of management (and the collective habitation of the workplace). This may seem obvious and internal to the very definition of management as an object of inquiry; yet, it can also be to the neglect of many other factors in the management process that relate to the material conditions of such individual self-assertion, thought, and action in space. The primacy of the individual manager as fulcrum of research inquiry can all too easily rest on an assumption of "centred" human agency, which is to say, the manager is (for purposes of the inquiry) ontologically autonomous – from workers, from other managers, and from their immediate environment. While the historic "master-slave dialectic" goes some way to conceptualise the symbiotic interrelation of management and worker (Klikauer 2010: 105), the relation between manager and (populated) spatial environment is less theorised.

The autonomy of the agency of the individual manager is a common feature of traditional and contemporary scientific management research. It tends to harbour assumptions on the voluntarist or rational independence of the human mind and its epistemological facility for understanding the world, objects, and other people in it. In doing so, it tends to posit a direct and self-evident relationship between strategy (or codified corporate plan), decision-making, communication, control, and impact or effect on production or workers (Harding 2013). Moreover, the manager is cast as the originary source of the principle ideas, cognitive understandings, values, and governing conduct that supposedly define a given workplace. The manager's mind is supposedly reproduced in the minds and actions of workers or employees, and as a direct result, the operations or production will be affected (whether positively or not). This conception of the manager will determine an understanding of the spatial environment of the workplace: the environment becomes intelligible largely in terms of an exteriorisation of the mind of the manager or at least the way they articulate of their practical rationality in relation to the demands of production.

The spatial environment of the manager, with its quotidian environmental phenomenon (desk, equipment, light, interpersonal communication, office door, office furnishings, and so on), is easily viewed as self-evident or a matter of simple empirical description. But if human agency is less centred than a product of intersubjective communication or is understood as operating on a continuum of experience and social interaction with both workers and environment, then the spatial organisation of the workplace is less epistemologically neutral. And this might even attribute greater significance to the manager's own behavioural proclivities – what the manager does, decides, experiences, intuits, engages with, enjoys or not,

and operates in accordance with written, spoken, and unspoken codes of corporate expectation, refracted, of course, through their own aesthetic experience (Flecker and Hofbauer 1998; Halford 2005).

However, the *specific* role of the "aesthetic" within this spectrum of research interests (as within Clegg and Kornberger's stimulating range of papers) is not obvious, and few scholars attempt to delimit an actual orbit for the aesthetic (from other environmental, phenomenal, or affective factors). While it is clear that the aesthetic cannot be safely assigned to exclusive psychological or sociological categories (exclusively to the realm of mental apprehension or to either structure or agency), there is something internal to its history that interconnects both. Aesthetics, traditionally speaking, could be ascribed in a very general way to an environment (such as the expanse of a natural landscape) and equally to the experience of that environment and to the expression of that experience (through, e.g., the act of perception and taste or conveying a capacity for self-awareness and reflection through the creation of a work of art or literature). In this sense, aesthetics has always indicated how human agency is intertwined with its environment and where the subject and object of knowledge cannot be categorically separated, notwithstanding epistemological confusion. Kant's theory of "judgment" (Kant 1790/1987) was indeed constructed to account for such a subject-object interrelation, and later phenomenological traditions allow for aesthetic experience to become a species of knowledge (Merleau-Ponty's "carnal knowledge" as exhibited by artists or Pierre Bourdieu's "habitus" and the education of the senses in ways that can be used in other realms of social life). It remains difficult to disassociate the aesthetic from phenomenological inquiry but therein is its potential. The aesthetic of the workplace can be more fully comprehended through a triangulation of management, worker, and environment and whose criteria of interpretation pertain to the articulation of agency (as the operation of the sense-perceptual apparatus of experience in response to, and in interrelation to, a designed and symbolically encoded workplace environment).

The Spatial as Intersubjective Agency and Environment

For Plato, space was a receptacle (*kora*) of, or containing, matter (*hyle*), whereas for Aristotle, space was the expanse of, or extent to which, matter was dynamic and in motion. At the outset of the modern era, Descartes, then Leibniz, and Locke and a host of other seventeenth and eighteenth-century thinkers expanded on what would become the foundations of a scientific theory of space (initially, classical mechanics). The mature Immanuel Kant plays a pivotal role in separating a philosophical inquiry from a scientific theory of space. From the time of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781, Kant defined space not in terms of objects, bodies, or their relations and movements (we do not experience "space" in itself) but in terms of "the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible" (Kant 1781/ 1988: A 26/B 42). That is, space is an a priori cognitive interconnection with the world, presupposed for our experience of the world to be intelligible and open to inquiry. Like time or temporality, space cannot be abstracted from the sensible world but is internal to our relation to it – a perceptual as well as physical relation (hence objective and universal).

While the philosophical history of the concept of space is complex, as are Kant's

interrelated ideas, the emergence of space as a major theme in the social sciences in the twentieth century is instructive. Today, the "sociology of space" is a designation for a diversity of inquiry into the constitution and function of space as a social and economic phenomenon (as form, limits, boundaries; as dynamic interaction, net- works and orbits; and as a priori of all human cognition, representation, and organised action) (See Baldry 1999; Gieryn 2000, 2002). Georg Simmel's 1908 book Sociology: *Investigations on the Forms of Sociation* [Soziologie: Untersuchungen Uber Die Formen Der Vergesellschaftung] sets a precedent. In revising his earlier published papers, Simmel first used the term "sociology of space" and also used the concept of space as a hermeneutic framework with which to explore a range of undefined social phenomena (often for purposes of observation, rather than theory-building). Simmel defined broad thematic areas, which included social organisation and institutions, identity and location, social interaction and relationships (insiders and outsiders), authority and the imposition (and breaching) of boundaries, collective association and the form of belonging, symbolic form, money and communications, and other means of intangible space with variable temporalities. When, in his now-famous book *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (1989) David Harvey made the observation that many hitherto intractable spatial barriers were actually dissolving with global digital communications and increasing flows of international finance capital – Simmel's experience of the impact of industrial modernity on social life can be heard.

Harvey is one of the many economic and political geographers (and "urbanists") who employ a sociology of space (Harvey 1989), which is now a considerable resource for research in management and organisation. One enduring principle that animates the sociology of space is the Marxist axiom that the material conditions of society (its economic reproduction – labour and social class in relation to the methods of industrial production) determine its broader social and cultural organisation and development. To understand organisation and development, one therefore needs to understand how human beings and their capacity for labour (embodied intelligence, skill, and perception) are managed in the nexus of the prevailing forces of competing interests (i.e., between social classes and between them and the state). And as with Simmel's original writings, the sociology of space tends therefore to embody an ethical motivation for social justice in the form of equality, identity recognition, rights, and equitable redistribution of resources in particular places and particular forms of labour (See Cairns 2002; Cairns et al. 2003; Witz et al. 2003) and how these are formed by the management and organisation of material conditions. This was evident in Clegg and Kornberger as much as Burrell and Dale.

A seminal influence on contemporary research in the spatial organisation of labor (and spatial aesthetics) is the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's *La production de l'espace* of 1974 (published as *The Production of Space* in 1991). Lefebvre formulated a conception of space through a philosophical inquiry into methods of research on space and the material conditions of space. His now well-known assertions revolve around the way space is socially constructed, multidimensional in our experience of it, and specific to particular places (both cities and interior spaces and even intimate everyday settings of the kind later explored by Michel de Certeau in his now classic *The Practice of Everyday Life* of 1980) (de Certeau 1984). Space is formed out of, and through, the social relations of capitalist economic production,

which is not a macroeconomic abstraction but always specific and local and contradictory. Space mediates the production of values and meanings as they emerge from social conflict and class relations within the space that is society.

The processes of spatial formation, for Lefebvre, also provide the material conditions for intellectual life and for cultural production as well as the aesthetic experience of a place (like a particular city). The "spatialisation" of life is replete with the contradictory and ever-changing processes of capital formation, which are never fully complete or static and often dominated by institutionalised and established forms of control. Spatialisation takes three forms (are realms of three spatial practices): the *perceptual* continuum of the physical space of appearances and the concrete world as presented to us and that we negotiate daily (our own "spatial practices"), the *conceptual* space of planning and the ordered structuring of the spaces we inhabit (whether by urban planners, building or shop floor management, or social codes of behaviour; these are "representations of space"), and then there is the *lived* space of everyday life, where we experience the first two spaces in terms of everyday meaning and values (Lefebvre 1991: 33); this is the realm of "representational spaces" or institutionalised symbolic value, protocol, and hierarchy. This "trialectical" understanding of space has been widely debated. What is clear, however, is that Lefebvre's (Marxist) aim is to promote spatial praxis, which is the conversion of our research inquiry into space into an active social resistance against the structured (spatialised) social relations that govern (and dominate) our lives (See Watkins 2005).

Numerous scholars have extended Lefebvre's trialectics in various directions, some theoretical and some practical, while others continue to explore these themes without explicit reference to Lefebvre. David Harvey's "time-space compression," Edward Soja's "thirdspace," and Marc Augé's "non-place" [or *non-lieux*] are but three examples that are yet to be exploited for research of the spatial aesthetics of the workplace. Harvey observed that economic globalisation has dissolved many of the established spatial coordinates so embedded in our cognition of reality, and this has major implications for how we understand our individual and collective role and position in relation to the production, circulation, and exchange that defines economy and market. Edward Soja has asserted how the changing coordinates of space and time make for new hybrid cultural and urban places, which in turn provide the material conditions for new ways of inhabiting and activating space (Soja 1996). Soja challenged established urban research after Lefebvre, maintaining that traditional empirical categories (separating the social and historical, the subjective and objective, the real and imagined) are still dominant and still enforce a false ontology of space. Rather, the new spatial reality of multicultural postmodern consumer society (particularly in advanced cities) must be understood in a more synthetic, dynamic, and contiguous way; and the researcher, for Soja, must be less philosophically abstract in their spatial inquiry but open to experience, social exploration, and transdisciplinary dialogue. This is particularly the case when looking at subjects that have no stable coordinates or official designation within society (contemporary artistic practices, foreign or marginal people groups, or activist and alternative communities that do not originate, harmonise, or cooperate within the spatial economy of a given place).

Marc Augé's "non-place" was developed around the same time as Soja's "thirdspace" and can be understood as its very opposite (Augé 1995). Non-place seems to collapse the perceptual and conceptual – it is a space planned and controlled so thoroughly it is evacuated of all historical forms of social life (all social relations, any identifiable expression of the material conditions of society, and any trace of the forces of spatialsation). Augé's examples are the new species of luxury hotel, airports, and shopping malls, whose designs convey an impressive sense of order, uniformity, regularity, and a profound integration of service management and consumption, all enforced by a non-negotiable regimes of security. The substantive identity, material production, and social or labouring community that was once constitutive of "places" and spatialisation itself has been erased in the "non-place."

Research in the aesthetics of "non-places" is slight. Management and organisation research tend to take as their object of analysis more open and aesthetically accessible locations, like regular firms or corporations. Nonetheless, two exemplary trajectories can be identified, each notable for their triangulation of management, worker, and environment. In one trajectory, Pierre Guillet de Monthoux attends to art organisations, where the management of art production generates knowledge on the function of aesthetics in the context of organised labour in general. This, in turn, generates critical thinking on how the pragmatics of management and marketing may more beneficially adopt aesthetic approaches. In a second trajectory, Antonio Strati's body of work emphasises the way that every organisation can be understood as aesthetic – indeed, human beings are fundamentally aesthetic beings. Strati has pioneered the study of aesthetic production as a general organisational phenomenon and, moreover, research on which necessitates the researcher to activate their own aesthetic sensibility.

Guillet de Monthoux's *The Art Firm: Aesthetic Management and Metaphysical Marketing* (2004) is a strategic synthesis of management, marketing, and organisation theory. It features reference to philosophical and art historical literature and uses personal insight as much as individual reflections on aesthetic experience, altogether making for an interdisciplinary exploration that intentionally breaches the boundaries of management research. Ostensibly, the book serves to assess how the making of art is subject to the management and organisational pragmatics of any corporate entity; and moreover, in looking at the management and marketing techniques of modern artists, performers, and their companies (from Wagner to Richard Wilson), the conventional understanding of "management" and "marketing" as distinct areas (one internally focussed on the firm, the other externally focussed) is interrelated in mutually enhancing ways. In this, Guillet de Monthoux's principle reference points are not actually contemporary management research but Germanic romantic and critical philosophy, from Kant, Schelling to Schopenhauer and German artist Joseph Beuys, along with the unlikely American John Dewey as a seminal protagonist.

"Management, as an American subject of education, operates with the intention of producing strategies for making people work. Thus American management has a pragmatic ring to it, one that is lacking in the strictly utilitarian British business economy, the functionalist French *gestion*, or the scholastic rationalist kameralism of German *Betriebswirtschaftslehre*. Robert Wilson, artist, theater director, and designer, as well as an MBA himself, pinpoints what makes American management

different in a minimalist Zen utterance: "Americans are interested in effects – Europeans in causes"" (Guillet de Monthoux 2004: 44).

The significance of Guillet de Monthoux's "aesthetics as management philosophy" is most powerful when akin to the work of an artist. Our concept of "artist" is often skewed by romantic stereotypes of mystic, genius, or cultural prophet and where the value of art is, consequently, embedded in esoteric communication and our personal enlightenment. Whereas the artist, historically, aimed not so much to express themselves with some gnostic meaning but to generate "completely new worlds" (Guillet de Monthoux 2004: 47) of both cognitive and aesthetic character (synthesising both analytical understanding and sensory experience), the artist's obsessive and exclusive attention to their object (their self-absorbed interest in the work of art and its materiality) can be misleadingly understood as a pursuit for the mystical – indeed many artists have misunderstood their own profession as such. For Guillet de Monthoux, an historical-critical survey of artistic production in the modern era clearly demonstrates that art is not just an object, performance, or picture that stimulates a desire for mystery. It is a cognitive-imaginative enterprise that makes a significant impact on the space around it. With examples from European theatre, opera, and various art movements, from Diaghilev to Kandinsky to Heiner Müller, Guillet de Monthoux shows us how the making of art engages with local material conditions by which new "spaces" of thought and action arise. These new forms of space, in turn, inspire both a pragmatics of managing people and as much as a semantics for new imaginary ideas on social transformation. Art involves making things for audiences and markets but where the audiences and markets become shaped by its own forces of creation. Art is a triangulation of artists (management), production (workers), and audience (environment; market), where this triangulation takes an aesthetic, not instrumental, form.

Antonio Strati's *Aesthetics and Organization* (2000) was a similarly seminal statement. Aesthetics is defined using classical categories of taste and beauty but where these categories are situated within the spatial and social expanse of workers in the environment of their work (Strati 2000). Aesthetics reveals a topography of experience, where qualitative and quantitative are not exclusive but different means of articulating a continuum of social phenomenon (where, for instance, a sudden growth in the number of workers in a workplace can be both a statistical fact and a radically altered social experience). Strati attends to expression, feelings and emotions, choices, and decisions based on intuition, judgment of quality, memory, narrative, and the artifacts that make up and compose an identity for an organisation in relation to workers and visitors, from inside and from without. Accordingly, this hybrid field of phenomenon requires a form of research writing that is part analytical, part anecdotal, part descriptive and interpretative, and part exploratory, and all the while insisting that the classic and once-outdated concepts of historical and philosophical aesthetics (taste, beauty, judgment, form) remain useful for an aesthetic investigation of organisations.

Strati's text is suitably fluid and engaging, at times deliberately invoking a literary sensibility and sensitivity to how the terms of analysis and description are only meaningful to the extent that they invoke a sensible knowledge of phenomena in the reader. With its range of cultural references, Strati's theorisation is not distinct from the genre of "criticism," once the preside of the art connoisseur or the essayist. The

reflexive interrogation of his own experience of cultural events and artworks in turn provides phenomenological reference points for a concerted assessment of organisational spaces; indeed organisations are cast as human creations involving artistic improvisation, a spontaneous apprehension and intuition of events, and sometimes extra-sensory awareness of the tacit and concealed.

Strati states: "In fact, most of the research and analysis in the area of organisation theories and management studies describes the following, somewhat bizarre phenomenon: as soon as a human person crosses the virtual or physical threshold of an organisation, s/he is purged of corporeality, so that only his or her mind remains. Once a person has crossed this threshold, therefore, s/he is stripped of both clothing and body and consists of pure thought, which the organization equips with work instruments and thus reclothes. When the person leaves the organisation, the mind sheds these work instruments and resumes its corporeality, and with it the perceptive faculties and aesthetic judgement that yield aesthetic understanding of reality, but only in the society lying outside the physical or virtual walls of the organization" (Strati 2000: 3).

This quotation is, of course, indicative of a critical polemic (against what was, for Strati, until the 1990s at least, a reigning orthodoxy in management and business schools around the world and still remains so in some places). The paradox of Strati's position is that higher-level corporations, certainly by the year of the book's publication, were highly sensitive to aesthetics – if only within product design and packaging and marketing communications (principally, advertising and branding). Moreover, the 1990s saw a huge trend in new office design, which was highly sensitive to the affective and even creative potential of the working environment, whether instrumentally on employee motivation and influence or design-based, on an employee's sense of identity and strategic aims. Strati's critical point, however, remains true: there remains an antipathy within management and organisation research as much as education (if we consider the major institutions of learning, their courses and products) to aesthetic and creative dimensions of working life and activating the aesthetic sensibility in managers and workers as part of their practical skill set. The functional and measurable dimensions of organisations – those dimensions quantifiable mathematically and integrated with economic paradigms of growth, productivity, labour, and profitability – continue to be most useful and to that extent marginalise the aesthetic.

Art, Design, and Spatial Planning

Most managers work within a physical space that is planned and designed according to a technical specification of measured requirements; and this technical specification usually embodies empirical knowledge on the processes, tasks, and scope internal to a given field of production. This is particularly true of the benign "office" as much as the factory or assembly plant. The office, more than any other spatial entity, is a uniquely modern phenomenon and internal to the Industrial Revolution as much as the rise of the bureaucratic state and modern civil service and government through public administration. In terms of industrial production, Frederick Winslow Taylor's writings are a prime example of the way methods of administration were extrapolated from methods of technical production (specifically, engineering) and in turn converted into practical knowledge on a new species of

labour – clerical, bureaucratic, administrative, and management work (see his *Shop Management* of 1903 and then *Principles of Scientific Management* of 1911 (Taylor 1911, 1919). William Leffingwell's similarly well-known *Scientific Office Management* (1917) exhibits the same tendency, while propounding a scientific method (as opposed to past customs, guess work, or individual judgment), the scientific method assumes that both production processes and management can be ordered by the same mathematically adjudicated logic. Standardisation, specialisation, and methodical repetition were assumed to conform to the demands of this logic and thereby the conditions of efficiency, improved performance, and lower costs. Even later more socially minded administrative models – like Henri Fayol's influential "Administration industrielle" (from 1956) – exhibited a strict subjection of the individual to the set task, set plan, and preconceived system of operations, to which all workers conformed. Efficiency through the compartmentalisation of tasks, analytical measurement of process and movement, and the rationalization of resources came to characterise what was later called "Taylorism" in industrial production, rightly remembered for its social, as much as industrial, authoritarianism.

Critical research on office space is often characterised by a radical dichotomy between traditional "scientific" ("empirical" and quantitative) approaches to spatial research and interdisciplinary social and aesthetic approaches (Linstead and Höpfl 2000). The "empirical" is less used in its historical-philosophical sense – as perceptual observation followed by inductive reasoning and so on – than as social metaphor for a range of methodological presuppositions on the nature of experience. These presuppositions might, for example, involve the equation of mathematical measurement with analysis or equate descriptive observational data with "reality" or the world "as is" (and thereby assume that an analysis of production, for example, can be analytically distinct from labour itself or the spaces of labour or the social identity and behaviour of the worker). More importantly, the intellectual legacy of Frankfurt School critical theory has generated a general consensus among critical researchers that the world "as is" does not, in fact, allow us to understand the real social conditions of production and why production is shaped like it is or is "productive" at all. The empirical (or the world as seen, represented, or quantified by observational measures and experience) is, rather, replete with "instrumental rationality," whereby what is understood as objective "knowledge" is actually embedded with particular forms of power and interests.

While situating "production" on a continuum with the processes of labour and the worker on the one hand and the interests of ownership or authority on the other presents a range of analytical possibilities (and not necessarily Marxist), they will all return to the question of material conditions and the social basis of experience. Adorno's conviction, now largely discredited, remains a powerful one – the impact of mathematical logic as a model of human social, economic, and cultural organisation has marginalised crucial phenomenon of social relations (phenomenon not easily quantifiable), notwithstanding the obvious advances in science because of the mathematical facility for "abstraction" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979).

"What appears to be the triumph of subjective rationality, the subjection of all reality to logical formalism, is paid for by the obedient subjection of reason to what is directly given. What is abandoned is the whole claim and approach of knowledge: to comprehend the given as such; not merely to determine the abstract spatio-

temporal relations of the facts which allow them just to be grasped... The task of cognition does not consist in mere apprehension, classification, and calculation, but in the determinate negation of each immediacy. Mathematical formalism, however, whose medium is number, the most abstract form of the immediate, instead holds thinking to mere immediacy" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979: 26–27).

For Adorno, the modern subject remains convinced that "reality" itself is what is immediately apparent to our tools of statistical measurement and that reality is primordially ordered according to the same mathematically consistent objective and preformed logic that structures mathematical reason itself. Numerical consistency and repetition is an order to which human life must conform if we are to optimise efficient and productive coexistence. This "means-end" rationality is invested in the value of the means (efficiency, optimised production, profit) and not the end (collective cooperation and belonging, communal prosperity, freedom from want, and so on). The Frankfurt School's general disdain for philosophical naturalism and its modern variants of scientific positivism and empiricism was that it could only take effect if human subjects suppressed all other forms of life (the body, emotions, social conflict or difference, existing patters of social cooperation) or ignored social phenomenon that did not conform to the ordered systems of production around which a model of society itself was constructed. And this suppression was only possible in a specific (capitalist) economic system.

It is in these terms that we can "frame" a significant breadth of research on the modern office, where offices are generally viewed as a form of containment, unnatural order and control, and altogether symptomatic of instrumental rationality. Within the bounded entities of mathematically proportioned offices, the spatial deployment of labour was routinely affected without regard for the value or potential ends of labour itself (as distinct of the products generated by labour). For the Fordist factory, space was a negative property of an absence – in the terms of Euclidian geometry, merely the distance between coordinates and points and whose contemporary equivalent is spatial planning.

Sometimes referred to as production flow planning (and often in coordination with human resource management and facilities management), Spatial Planning has evolved intricate methods for the mathematical calculation of organisational space, particularly in the context of digital technology and new approaches to workplace design (Becker and Steele 1995; Brookes and Kaplan 1972; Kaczmarczyk and Murtough 2002). Methods of mathematical calculation are often internal to spatial design, as it is mediated by computer software for architecture, building design, floor layout, 3D information modelling, and furniture distribution. The management of services, power, lighting, and energy consumption is now optimised in coordination with work flow and production, and while production remains the priority, the now heavily regulated workplace equally demands safety, security, and surveillance. Of late, digital wireless and optical networking systems, lighting design, acoustics management, and air quality control have all become internal to systems of maintenance, which were once purely practical measures but are now interrelated with the increasing need to control energy outputs and environmental impact. For office management strategy, an accurate algorithmic means of measurement and comparative assessment of building performance is routine. Spatial planning is utilised in cost control through space-saving efficiency techniques, promoting space-

sharing and multisite solutions, or optimising current production cycles through compressing spatial flows. Organisational life is defined as a spatial economy of energy, embedded within it is an instrumental conception of space as the designed control over resources.

The phrase "instrumental rationality" invariably invokes an image of a machine-like instrument of human domination or a closed system in which human beings are material resource for an indifferent system of production. However, such "images" can homogenise a more complex reality, and indeed, most present-day corporations use Spatial Planning, which is not in itself exhaustive of the many strategic approaches to constructing a workplace, nor actually indicative of the worker's social agency or aesthetic experience. It is with some irony that one of the achievements of industrial modernity – bureaucratic administration – later became, for philosophers like Adorno, a model of social domination. Max Weber's classic essay on bureaucracy (Gerth and Mills 1991) echoed Hegel in praising bureaucracy's rationalisation, functional efficiency, efficient exercise of authority, and the decisive segregation of work from the private realm of the worker (Shaw 1992). The organisation of labour based on the set plan, contractual agreement, and certified information enabled an objectification of roles in the labour force as much as a discrete definition of practical tasks. Significantly, for Weber the office (or "bureau") was not just a concrete containment of labour (in the sense of a room or hall equipped with the necessary tools); it was a series of spatial conditions – a consolidation and interconnection of competencies, professional identity and responsibility, and hierarchy and the recognition of authority.

Bureaucratic modernity was, therefore, both a liberation (from previous regimes of patronage and local idiosyncrasy) and a form of domination, through instrumental rationality. The paradoxical combination of both can be identified in the contemporary office and the growing literature that celebrates its reinvention. Corporate spaces of today are often remarkable in their seeming critical revision of the modern Taylorist office, as they respond to human sensory requirements like comfort and leisure, individual technical preference, improvised working patterns, and the desire for spontaneous social interaction. The new "funky" office space is an extreme example of the pervasive trend in the integration of leisure and cultural facilities into the workplace (van Meel and Vos 2001) (Warren 2007). Cafes, lounges, "downtime" rooms, personalized work stations, multimedia equipped "break out" spaces replete with bespoke ergonomic furniture are common, along with new spaces to stimulate and facilitate creativity, from "skunk" rooms to creative "labs."

A significant trajectory of academic research into the increasing significance of aesthetics for contemporary organization was pioneered with Fred Steele's *Physical Settings and Organization Development* (1973) and later continued with Franklin Becker's *Workspace: Creating Environments in Organizations* (1974); it was significantly advanced in critical fashion by Pierre Gagliardi and his edited volume *Symbols and Artifacts: Views of the Corporate Landscape* (1990). Introduced as a book on organisational culture (or in terms of method, organisational ethnography), it became a singular innovation in a new interdisciplinary field of organisation studies, where "organisational life" inhabited an "aesthetic landscape" of symbolic meaning through artifacts (where the "artifact" could be the building as much as carpet, a uniform, or the graphic layout of the office). Gagliardi was analytically attentive to the

relation between management, worker, and environment, from corporate representation to dress, office furniture, buildings, and brand design. In the book's preface, Gagliardi states that "The analysis of artefacts in most cases implies the analysis of a fundamental category of experience: space" (Gagliardi 1990: 4).

In Gagliardi's terms, a new intellectual movement was emerging, against dominant empirical and instrumental understandings of the organisation. Organisations were increasingly understood as one space on a continuum of social life, where workers were also citizens, belonging to a culture, and where the location of the workplace manifested itself in its spatial inflection and arrangement of its interior. The study of organisation should, therefore, move beyond a focus on "behaviour" and even the more holistic "culture" but encompass the whole range of "expressive forms" and "systems of meaning," situated in a "general theory of sensibility," which is of course aesthetics (Gagliardi 1990: 30).

Continuing Gagliardi's research trajectory, Rafaeli and Pratt's edited volume *Artifacts and Organizations: Beyond Mere Symbolism* (2006) posits and advances the integrated "landscape" metaphor. Artifacts are no longer discrete or delimited phenomenon picked out for independent analysis (or interpreted in terms of how they emit single units of meaning); they are conceptualised as moments in a temporal flow of communication and signification and work together as a lexicon of an ongoing and evolving corporate language of self-representation. The new conditions of labour animating corporate space are indeed more liberal, allowing for social diversity at the same time as strategically managing institutional norms, legitimacy, and shared points of reference. Corporate self-representation does not require a "Fordist" homogeneity or enforced conformity but can manage individual proclivity with the more pervasive influence of aesthetic values. The aesthetic landscape of artifacts generates common perceptual horizons and educates the sensibility. For this research trajectory, space is not conceived as an abstract meta-framework for containing interpretations of organisational life. Rather, space is entirely relative to the coordinated instrumentality of the artifacts within it (their function and manifold practical uses); and instrumentality is effective only through aesthetics. It is through aesthetics that management affects the operation of identity, authority, governance, and learning that were once conducted as an internal command economy of the scientific management of the workplace.

Considering how the rise of the aesthetic landscape is manifest in practice, we need to turn to industry-based literature. One publication that celebrates the recent reinvention of the office is Myerson and Ross's colourful *The 21st Century Office* (2003). Here the contemporary workplace is defined as essentially supportive of the sensibility and social character of the individual worker. Their rich compendium of images, plans, and specifications show us a spectrum of very different corporate environments, whose design ideas have been evolving since the 1970s (the earlier stages were the subject of their previous book, *The Creative Office* of 1999). Myerson and Ross illustrate how so many of the world's major MNCs (multinational companies) have, intentionally, become design leaders in the production of new workplaces. Firms like Reebok, Sony, or Toyota (along with lesser known design firms, architects, and advertising agencies) are going to great lengths to demonstrate (and publicise) a critical and reflexive approach to office design, emphasising individual self-determination for workers and enhanced facilities for collaboration and

innovative forms of cooperation. The selection of examples is, of course, limited and reflect trends in professional working life (in the USA and North America) and not so much the factory shop floor or heavy industry. And yet the contrast with modern scientific office management is stark: new movements in office design are actively working against "visual uniformity and banality, operational inflexibility, lack of human interaction, and place-dependency" (Myerson and Ross 2006: 9). The *21st Century Office* is, rather, modelled on forms of social interaction, which Myerson and Ross categorise sequentially as "Narrative, Nodal, Neighbourly and Nomadic." Each category is a generalisation of a form of contemporary social life and then appropriated by designers and interpreted within the specific place-based requirements of each industry (i.e., they are not exclusive to an industry or mutually exclusive to each other).

Narrative environments are animated by a prior conceptualisation of the company, its products or services, and its values and personality, usually mediated by a carefully implemented brand strategy. In areas of industry like design or advertising, where buildings are rarely owned, the articulation of interior (not the exterior or architecture) is a strategic priority. Traditionally outward-facing dimensions of strategy (marketing, e.g.) now play a role in the inculcation of corporate aspiration as much as organisational learning (e.g., encourage employees to be examples of "living and breathing" the brand). The narrative environment is where brand strategy is aesthetically translated into a commercially inflected cultural lifestyle: labour takes on the character of the consumer lifestyle articulated by brand.

The *Nodal* office, by contrast, does not provide content so much as infrastructure: it is an interior design-based construction prioritising communication and the technology and spaces for communicative interaction. This takes the form of incubation spaces, "cocoon" forms, and other spaces for comfortable yet stimulating spontaneous or planned communication. The *Neighbourly* office is designed to facilitate social informality and community, a friendly multiculturalism where the personalisation of space is expected (but not in ways that territorialise or promote exclusivity or selective collegiality). It attempts to provide the conditions and stimulus for the fluidity, spontaneity, and improvisation of everyday social life. And lastly, the *Nomadic* office would equate to the many mobile, dynamic, and co-working spaces that facilitate workers of no-fixed location. Digital media and Wi-Fi are central to the nomadic, but not exclusively so; its purpose is to dissolve the traditional office altogether, where a workplace is simply a temporary site or platform for improvised activity, owned and adapted by the worker. There is no sense of the worker being restricted, enclosed, ordered, or subjected to arbitrary corporate limits; the authority over space is devolved to the worker.

While it is true, these above characteristics pertain mostly of global corporations like Google's Zurich offices or TBWA in New York; the normative orientation that animates the design is significant. A new pragmatic philosophy of management seems to have emerged, where the rights, liberty, and self-regard of the worker are visible corporate objectives. More importantly, the workplace articulates an attempted optimisation of a new social contract of labour, where the firm's strategic aims and the worker's highest aspirations find a form of agreement. In other words, the new contemporary organisation seeks to activate a worker's aesthetic and social faculties so as to optimise their individual capability for labour. Design has not only

absorbed and adapted knowledge on the phenomenology of aesthetic experience (particularly that nebulous nexus of pleasure and intellectual stimulation), it has co-opted realms of human subjectivity (identity, personality, expression, the intimacy of sensuality, and so on) and integrated them into corporate production.

Conclusion: Space, Aesthetics, and the New Model Worker

What needs to be emphasised by way of conclusion is how aesthetics (as articulated in workplace design and to some extent architecture) has been enrolled in combatting the social authoritarianism and instrumental rationality of past hegemonic scientific office management. Yet, we cannot assume that instrumental rationality has simply been defeated or replaced, given the sophistication in how the new corporate landscape has co-opted human subjectivity and aesthetics in the service of brand and an expanded field of corporate production.

This is the brave new world defined by the bestsellers, Pine and Gilmour's *The Experience Economy* (1999), Anderson and Ray's *The Cultural Creatives* (2000), and David Brooks' *Bobos in Paradise* (2000). There are three different subjects (consumer experience, the rise of the creative industries, the co-option of hippy counter-culture by the new professional classes) but where each is grounded in a shared economic narrative on the "postindustrial" (or post-Fordist) society. This narrative plots how and why the West experienced a rapid contraction of manufacturing capacity; a pressing need to innovate and develop competitive advantage (over East Asia); new divisions of labour favoring administrative, communication, and creative skills; and a substantive expansion of corporate office complexes as an integral part of every major city. Where industrial labour was once embedded in a stable slowly evolving heavy infrastructure, itself embedded in a clear system of social class and occupation, the proliferation of freelance, sole trading and sub-contracting, outsourcing, network, and partnership-based employment, signifies a changing interrelation between economy, society, and the labourer. This is the emergence of the so-called flexible, mobile, and multiskilled worker, whose individual talents (particularly for "flexible specialization," innovation, and creativity) were and are highly valorised. The worker's individual identity becomes more apparent; it is composed of a highly differentiated yet highly coordinated skill set, along with interpersonal skills, strong work ethic, and a demonstrable facility to identify with a variety of corporate values. This is the world of the "new model worker" (Austin and Devin 2003; Dobson 1999; Flecker and Hofbauer 1998; Kingma 2018; Hancock and Spicer 2011).

Combining the examples of the above publications with others in this genre (Bahamón et al. 2009; Doorley and Witthoft 2012; Turner and Myerson 1998; Yee 2018), it is possible to characterise the "new model worker" in spatial terms – in terms of the new spatial aesthetics of the workplace:

Spatial mobility: an imperative for interspatial movement dissolves the once-all defining triad of corridor, foyer, and stairwell; segments of space are designated for tasks and functions more than managers, and reorganisation and adaptation become perpetual routine as the organsation interior is no longer bound up with the symbolic mediation of corporate management authority; space it is understood as enabling not controlling and as organic or evolving not fixed.

Expressive agency: the contemporary corporation's invested interest in employee freedom and welfare means that employees are afforded unprecedented independence – to accumulate individual capital in terms of skills and knowledge; this severs the direct bond between worker and company, as worker is potentially mobile; the authority of corporations becomes less dictatorial and more paternalistic, where learning, cooperation, and discussion replace the unidirectional command or request; the organisation ceases to "contain" the worker and rather becomes a place of influences and persuasions, pleasure, and aspiration.

Fluency of adaptation: the workspace has become more integrated, where productivity is closely associated with an employee's freedom of spontaneity and choice in gaining access to other workers or information and where the visual, ergonomic, atmospheric, and relational dynamics of the space serve to facilitate employee performance (even branded environments serve to direct performance, not simply express corporate identity).

Laterally dispersed: the corporate interior no longer organises itself (either physically or dynamically) around the functions of management but through a workforce continuum (where management is increasingly devolved or absorbed into project-structured labour); segments of space are consequently less delineated, boundaried, or expressive of social superiority and authority; there emerges a priority for groups, project work, cross-team conference, consultation, and collaboration which are formative forces in how the space seems flattened and decentralised. The "open plan" is no longer a mandatory space-saving technique but an assumption of access to management and the obligation of management to develop specialist knowledge in the worker (who must contribute to a general open knowledge infrastructure in the workplace).

Internal transparency: organisational space is conceived in terms of the temporal dynamics of production and not just a physical structure; this, in part, has been influenced by the rising centrality of communication and IT within the workplace but also the increasing scrutiny of company performance by executive management, shareholders, and stakeholders. The organisation is no longer opaque but open and outward facing; in this, the worker is made conscious that their productivity is relative to external perceptions, interests, and the shifting regimes of value (for instance, in the market).

The point of improvising the above spatial world of the "new model worker" is to provoke questions concerning agency and the role of aesthetics in constructing the new corporate environment. To what extent has the new spatial design (as much as Gagliardi's aesthetic landscape of meaningful artifacts) collapsed the distinction between work and leisure and thereby compromised the aesthetic faculties by rendering both equally pleasurable and a stimulant of taste and the senses? To what extent does the new spatial design, developed out of an explicit critique of modern scientific management, cultivate (or fails to cultivate) a cognitive reflexivity with regard to new forms of repression, conformity, deference to authority, or the emergence of social division? Does the normative orientation (and quasi-democratic forms of cooperation) that characterises the new approach to office design extend the ethical consciousness of workers? Or the subtle new social relations between workers and managers? If these questions are more sociological than philosophical

to that extent, we will need to investigate the actual epistemic function of the new corporate spaces and whether they articulate or conceal new social relations. It raises question on the distinction between subject and object: is the new model able to conceptualise their own experience and exercise judgment or a critical discrimination on how their environment facilitates their aesthetic sensibility, or not?

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