Introduction

The ubiquity of the office as an organisational location for many workers in myriad ‘knowledge-based industries’ (Greene and Myerson 2011: 20) to undertake some or all of their work is without question. What seems also beyond question is that organisational space matters to both organisations and to their people. It matters in a wide range of different functional and symbolic ways, to the extent that its provision is now a specific management area. Since the early 1980s (Price 2003) facilities management (FM) has become the organisational function typically responsible for overseeing organisational workspace in use: ‘ultimately, the practice of FM is concerned with the delivery of the enabling workplace environment – the optimum functional space that supports the business processes and human resources’ (Then 1999: 469). From FM’s unique organisational perspective, the extent to which organisational space matters is often experienced viscerally first-hand, particularly during workspace change initiatives.

Consequently, the provision of office workspace as a dominant type of urban corporate real estate has become a lucrative business. A complex built environment industry ecosystem including developers, architects, designers, engineers, consultants, surveyors, project managers, construction, product and service suppliers, FM specialists and many more has evolved to provide organisational workspace for clients. Parallel academic disciplines fuel knowledge production and transfer. Yet despite this elaborate and established framework of ‘expertise’, for many, the working environment remains objectively and/or subjectively mediocre. Worse still, it can have various negative effects on working lives and performance (Baldry 1999). Particular approaches to workspace provision like ‘open-plan’ and ‘hot-desking’ have become terms which often trigger perpetual dismay.

Systemic design solutions that promote spatial allocation by task rather than as a default user entitlement, with names including ‘the non-territorial office’, ‘activity-based working’, ‘agile working’, ‘nomadic working’ and the ever-vague ‘new ways of working’ are claimed as contemporary, despite a heritage now approaching 50 years old (van Meel 2011). But after literally decades of research, few organisations seem able to claim physical working environments that have a genuinely positive impact on both their staff and their organisational outcomes, despite the wealth of claimed expertise. Significantly, whilst objective performance measures of built
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What lurks beneath many such debates is a lack of ontological and epistemological awareness, compounded by media-fuelled populist and often naively empirical accounts of science (Blaikie 2007). By reaching beyond the typical literature and research of the workspace industry to reconsider the socio-spatial, the bounded nature of such expertise becomes clear, alongside the political and economic ramifications of perpetuating such received wisdom. Essentially, the industry responsible for the provision of organisational space shows little evidence nor desire for a ‘spatial turn’, whereupon a discipline embraces the reciprocal and inherently political socio-spatial interplay. Lefebvre is widely associated as a seminal figure here (Dale and Burrell 2008), yet scant few in the workspace industry are aware of his contribution. Is this paradoxical, even alarming, given its core purpose of providing organisational space for users? This context became the departure point for the research that underpins this chapter, which sought to step clear of received industry wisdom and explore ‘what matters about workspace?’ to both providers and users (Dale and Burrell 2008) of knowledge workspace in two radically different contemporaneous case-settings. The study then considered the qualitative data analytically, through the holistic lens of Lefebvre’s conceptual apparatus (Boano 2015), his doubly-designated spatial triad. The remainder of this chapter traces the literature, methodology, findings and implications of the study.

A case for Henri

Despite, as Crang and Thrift (2000: 1) contemplate, ‘space being the everywhere of modern thought’, different disciplines demonstrate differing spatial awareness. Built environment disciplines evidence decades of research concerning different workspaces, particularly the office, and its interrelationship with workers. To some degree clerical offices have existed for centuries, but for many the history of the organisational office commences substantively in the late 19th century. With the industrial revolution and the birth of the corporation, significant administrative functions became necessary to support organisational processes (Saval 2014). From here, different organisational ideologies and corresponding workspace design propositions evidence an ever-present socio-spatial interrelationship. Limited space prevents deeper exploration of this historical line of enquiry. One key observation though is that this wealth of literature, past and present, remains virtually divorced from far rarer socio-spatial consideration within mainstream organisational theory (Elsbach and Pratt 2007). A range of authors from different fields cite Mayo’s 1920s/30s Hawthorne studies as a seminal reason for this. Here, revelations about ‘human relations… eclipsed the physical environment’ (Sundstrom and Sundstrom 1986: 47) and henceforth relegated it to a subordinate role, reinforcing ‘an implicit assumption that the physical work environment can be disregarded in any analysis of work organisation’ (Baldry 1999: 535). This position was likely reinforced by the likes of Maslow’s (1943) and Herzberg’s (1959) ‘universalist’ psychological theories.

While we ought to remain sceptical of such decisive and linear origin stories, the under-representation of spatially aware research in organisational theory resulted in calls from more sociologically inclined theorists like Halford (2008) and Kornberger and Clegg (2004) to bring space back into organisational studies. Consequently, Taylor and Spicer (2007) evidence a nascent field rich with the potential to, as Halford (2008: 393) puts it, ‘stop seeing the spatialities of work and organisation as only supporting actors… [and] start taking space seriously as a starting point in its own right’.
Organisation theorists Dale and Burrell (2008) were amongst the first to respond substantively, drawing critical attention to FM and the managerial interests of workspace provision by the second paragraph of their book’s preface! What at first seem like sociological outliers on the periphery of an established built environment intra-disciplinary knowledge base unfold to reveal a far broader, more philosophically informed and more interconnected socio-spatial constellation. Metaphorically, we might consider whether, until the built environment industry undergoes a spatial turn, its conventional/dominant wisdom is on the primitive side of a Copernican revolution. Gazing beyond this myopic field, one intellectual figure seems omnipresent: Henri Lefebvre. This chapter need not revisit ground covered elsewhere in this volume, but it is important to locate the study. As Merrifield (2006) notes, despite Lefebvre’s spatial exhibitions during the 1960s leading to *The Production of Space* in 1974, the political implications of Castell’s critique meant it didn’t receive an English translation until 1991. Consequently, apart from early exceptions including Marxist geographer Harvey, it was its post-translation rediscovery by post-modern and cultural geographers including Soja and Massey that presented a seminal platform from which the spatial turn rippled through sociologically inclined disciplines.

In some ways, it seems so befitting. This is a theory which foregrounds the production of space, rather than space per se, for the industry responsible for the producing! Taking Lefebvre’s oft-quoted line with its ‘just right’ brackets (Till 2009: 125), ‘(social) space is a (social) product’ (Lefebvre 1991: 26), such a short, deceptively simple sentence represents hotly contested philosophical ground. To appreciate this requires an awareness of both Cartesian (space as a container for the social) and Kantian (space as socially constructed) perspectives. The existent locus of managerial and broadly positivistic workspace knowledge (Cairns 2008) underpinned by Cartesian duality (Kornberger and Clegg 2004) within those who provide organisational workspace promotes the notion that there are right (and wrong) workspace decisions in relation to intended outcomes.

Yet the broader interpretive, critical, trans-disciplinary awareness underpinned by the Kantian notion of socio-spatial dualism where ‘the spatial characteristics of buildings… are both medium and outcome of actions they recursively organize’ (Rosen et al. 1990: 71) implies that the socio-spatial relationship, or spatiality, is far from objective. Put simply, there are socio-spatial considerations beyond Cartesian notions of space as ‘distance’, which may include socially constructed elements relating space to ‘materialised power relations’ and ‘experience’ (Taylor and Spicer 2007: 327). For Till (2009: 126), this ‘banishes any notion that space could be treated as an abstract matter… [and] once and for all scotches the myth that space is produced by a single person… space is “produced” by a complex set of overlapping societal agencies’. Lefebvre (1991) further unfolds a subtlety to such agency, acknowledging that we all produce space, whether ‘experts’ with authority displaying *savoir* knowledge, or ‘inexpert others’ with *connaissance* knowledge. By shifting attention from material workspace per se to our interaction with and within it and how we all produce space in different, mutually constitutive, interacting ways, we can begin to apprehend not just the rich diversity of experience, but the ongoing, unfolding *quotidienne* of spatiality and the power dynamics concealed within. The spatialities of provider intent and user enactment become entangled perspectives. Accordingly, Till (2009: 126) counsels architects as providers: ‘remember that you too use buildings, occupy space… users, you included, are more than abstractions or ideals; they are imperfect, multiple, political, and all the better for it’.

What unites all perspectives though is the implicit acceptance that workspace provision and design decisions are intertwined with their impact. Elsbach and Pratt (2007: 181) eloquently invoke the notion of trade-offs and tensions, explaining from extensive review that no workspace solutions ‘are exclusively associated with desired outcomes’. Further, they conclude that the physical environment serves ‘aesthetic, instrumental and symbolic functions’. Consequently,
workspace provision can be considered at a strategic level in terms of what it intends to achieve, as permutations of design decisions for change, control, commodity and community (after Cairns 2002 and Halford 2008). Embracing the totality of spatial production and appreciating that typical industry narratives foreground certain design elements, whereas more sociological commentators might foreground others, offers an opportunity to consider the interplay holistically through a philosophically ambivalent approach (Cairns 2008). In the following sections, Lefebvre’s spatial triad is deployed analytically to this effect.

Locating Lefebvre

Following Cairns (2008) and answering Airo and Nenonen’s (2014) call for more interpretive FM workspace research, the study was intentionally subjectivist, acknowledging knowledge, truth and validity of workspace issues as socially constructed. Some might associate Lefebvre more closely with Critical Theory, beyond interpretivism, given his ideological Marxist associations. However, there were three reasons for the interpretive positioning of the study. First, by intentionally attempting to cast aside received industry wisdom and reflexively stretch beyond, the research focus was a deliberately open question, ‘what matters to providers and users about workspace?’ to potentially challenge conventions, including my own. Second, the novel research technique utilised afforded an emergent and entirely subjective opportunity. Third, and arguably most importantly, in attempting to encourage a broadly positivistic yet naively empirical industry to consider alternative spatial perspectives, interpretivism had more tactical potential than Critical Theory. This need not be problematic. From a Giddensian perspective, sociology can be regarded ‘as an inherently critical discipline in its capacity to undermine ideology and the capacity of dominant groups… in contrast to Critical Theory, Giddens’s form of critique is incidental to, rather than an integral part of, his scheme’ (Blaikie 2007: 162–3).

Accordingly, two organisational case-settings were accessed in London, UK: ‘PropCo’, a ‘top twenty’ built environment professional services firm that recently relocated into a contemporary office workspace, designed and built in consultation with ‘workplace specialists’ ‘D&BCo’ to industry ‘agile working’ principles; ‘ShareCo’, a brand-franchised co-working environment for ethical start-up businesses, designed and initially managed by architecture practice ‘ArcCo’, according to their own principles of ‘placemaking for innovation’. Both case-settings exist as single-floor leasehold arrangements within larger multi-tenant landlord-managed premises, accessed through communal building entrances. Seventeen participants joined the study voluntarily. Provider roles included an architect, researcher, designers, consultants, workspace hosts and a chief operating officer. User roles ranged widely in occupation, although given Till’s point above that all providers also use workspace, this distinction is somewhat arbitrary.

Participants were asked ‘what matters to you about workspace?’ and encouraged to use their own camera-phones to gather a small portfolio of images in response. This technique, called participant-led photography, is novel for built environment research and can be ‘deployed with the aim of exposing the ways in which social positions and relations are both produced by, and produce, distinct [spatial] experiences’ (Rose 2012: 299). The images were the catalyst for emergent qualitative interviews where empowered ‘participants [explained] why they took the pictures and the meaning and significance they hold’ (Vince and Warren 2012: 281). Interviews were regarded as co-constructions rich with value-laden inter-views (Kvale 1996) reflexively acknowledging ‘the interview is a negotiated text… a conversation… not a neutral tool… [which] produces situated understandings’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 633). Following intelligent verbatim transcription, deep immersion in the audio recordings, images and transcripts afforded considered construction of participant vignettes (Tracy 2013). These were offered for
participant consideration. Over half reengaged with the study at this stage offering further input from endorsement to additional information. The vignettes became the basis for a reflexive constant comparative manual coding approach (ibid.). As a visual sense-making framework, a matrix organised the resultant analytic codes according to case-setting and participant type similarities and differences. This emic, emergent process became the basis for an etic counterpoint, the reconsideration of the codes utilising Lefebvre’s spatial triad as an analytic tool. Ultimately, sense-making was through iterative analysis (ibid.). Before exploring findings, however, this Lefebvrian approach warrants further methodological attention.

Moravánszky et al. (2014: 16) counsel three uses of Lefebvre, to guide research, as a source of inspiration and as an invitation to use and develop ideas via ‘exchanges between theoretical experimentation and empirical research… not to search for catchphrases to decorate a text, but as an instrument of analysis and research’. There are now numerous Lefebvrian studies which mobilise his concepts and particularly the triad, some respecting Lefebvre’s lifelong approach of sketching concepts and calling for their active use to promote enlightenment and change: ‘The perceived-conceived-lived triad… loses all force if it is treated as an abstract “model”. If it cannot grasp the concrete… then its import is severely limited, amounting to no more than that of one ideological mediation among others’ (Lefebvre 1991: 40). That said, the applied degree of sophistication is often moot. The triad is typically articulated (through translation of l’espace perçu, l’espace conçu and l’espace vécu) as perceived, conceived and lived space. However, its social construction is actually doubly-designated, determined both semiotically (what space is being materially produced) and phenomenologically (how spatial production happens through experience) (Schmid 2014). This subtlety can get overlooked or ignored.

The relationship between these dialectic moments, or the trialectic, as Soja puts it (Dale and Burrell 2008), has a bearing on the ‘present’ spatial outcome (Merrifield 2006). Where the conceived dominates the lived, as is according to Lefebvre (1991) typically the case in capitalist modes of spatial production, the result is dominated, abstract present space. Such conceived spatial production, positioned politically as ‘true space’ by ‘experts’ (typically those in powerful positions of provision) is set up through the knowledge and authority of modernity and capitalism, and dialectically privileges the conceived whilst repressing the lived. The potential outcome is the alienation of ‘inexpert others’. Alternatively, in situations where ‘subaltern communities accomplish the physical manifestation of their socio-spatial particularities’ (Carp 2008: 130), one can consider an alternative, perhaps more dialectically allied ‘truth of space’, where the appropriation of space for lived purposes affords myriad possibilities of differential present space. In this respect, Lefebvre’s discourse tends to pit the provider and the user against each other. Spatial production therefore represents a perpetual interplay between the strategies of the dominant and the tactics of the dominated (De Certeau 1984).

Of particular relevance here is an aesthetic analysis of the new Israeli Ministry for Foreign Affairs, claimed to be the first study to use all three Lefebvrian spaces (sic) in a single organisation. The authors, Wasserman and Frenkel (2011), outline an extensive but rigid approach which considers both providers and users of the Ministry building and workspace. According to their analysis, the organisation is materialised within a clearly abstract, dominated, resisted and contested workspace, to the extent that one might wonder how the American Institute of Architects award-winning ‘experts’ of ‘one of the ten most beautiful buildings in the world in 2004’ (ibid.: 506) failed to recognise or consider the organisational implications of their architectural conceptions. Yet the authors mobilise the triad in an analytic fashion which seemingly serves to underline the conflict. By essentially locking the conceived to providers, the lived to users, then observing and critiquing the material practised outcomes, is the conclusion potentially a fait accompli?
Alternatively, Carp (2008: 130) conceives the triad’s utility as ‘an analytical tool for discerning imbalance between abstraction and difference in social space’ which might reveal clues to facilitate greater understanding and interpretation. Her approach, and evidence-based testimonial to its success, catalysed a more holistic rendering of Lefebvre’s triad in the present research. Crang (1999: 176), appreciating and critiquing Lefebvre’s own positionality seems to agree: ‘although there is an implicit drift in Lefebvre’s work to privilege lived space… there seem other angles we can draw out. Looking at the categories together offers the chance to think about the reflexive interactions between the various components’. According to Moravánszky et al. (2014: 16), ‘the three “moments” of space production, as theorised by Lefebvre, do not form a synthesis but rather exist in interaction, in conflict or in alliance with each other’. They caution against applying the triad as a schematic, ‘but develop with a view to complexity and specificity of each case’. Thus, following the initial emic coding analysis, the themes in each case-setting were reconsidered according to their semiotic and phenomenological attributes within Lefebvre’s doubly-designated etic tool (Tracy 2013: 184) by location, dialectic valency and interplay. The following section unfolds and explores the evident present spatialities of each case-setting.

Henri on the case

Fundamentally, by asking ‘what matters?’ and embracing emergent responses, a huge range of aesthetic, instrumental and symbolic functions (Elsbach and Pratt 2007) are offered, immediately challenging the Cartesian notion of space as a social container. Providers tended to foreground conceived elements and users lived, but by no means exclusively. Many participants reflexively explored different socio-spatial elements, thinking about the thinking behind workspace provision decisions. The majority also stretched beyond their workspace as a specific locale, considering work praxis, work/life balance, well-being and indeed humane activity.

Articulating each case-setting’s socio-spatial dynamic in turn, the analytically-derived themes of PropCo evidenced an ‘agile’ workspace approach (van Meel 2011) conceived with D&BCo to materially reflect PropCo’s brand, embodying a discerning quality experience for clearly valued staff and client users alike, managed by protocols within a hierarchical, traditional organisation. Resultant emotional responses embodied both organisational pride and individualism. Users displayed a range of perceived and lived behaviours, including resistance tactics such as tribalism, mischief, to some degree territoriality and notions of personal identity. An acute awareness was shown regarding trade-offs of the agile approach, including work continuity, interruption and distraction. A focal point for this was PropCo’s clear-desk policy (as a hot-desking enabler), likely to become more stringently enforced due to increasing headcount. Beyond such organisational accounts, a minority more abstractly considered the inherent challenges of contemporary workspace wisdom including agile approaches.

Conversely, the ShareCo dynamic foregrounded a permissive, democratic ethos manifested socio-spatially. Reflecting the emphasis of co-working for mutual benefit through community engagement, ArcCo sought to enable agentive users through a range of conceived behavioural nudges. The well-being of ShareCo’s members was integral to the community endeavour. An integrated socio-spatial conception sought to disarm preconceived workspace expectations and entrenched behaviours. Resultant emotional responses embodied tribal community pride through a range of perceived and lived behaviours, including ownership, trust, learning and togetherness. Rather than providing conceived protocols, the lived realities about working at ShareCo existed in the stories people shared. Tensions experienced by some users and providers were related to the inherent chaos some perceived in the socio-spatial dynamic. A minority of participants also discussed how this bespoke, purposefully experimental workspace was at risk of
creeping managerialist practices eroding the carefully conceived socio-spatial system, jeopardising its inherent permissiveness.

Considering PropCo in terms of change, control, commodity and community (after Cairns 2002 and Halford 2008), change by means of ‘agile’ flexibility was sought through controlling protocols. The commodity value of space was clear from aesthetic brand conceptions and the importance of the user entrance experience to convey quality. A rhetoric of community was contested by the reality of incumbent hierarchy. Alternatively, ShareCo achieved change as flexibility with no espoused control or ‘agile’ nomenclature. Commodity value was also clear from aesthetic brand conceptions and the importance of the user entrance experience to disarm conventional expectations. The rhetoric of community was reflected in the rich socio-spatial interplay foregrounded by design.

Clearly, both case-settings are rich with socio-spatial complexity. Echoing Elsbach and Pratt (2007), variously perceived positives and negatives were inevitable, materialised and embodied. Space was always already produced, ‘perceived individually and collectively, experienced, interpreted, contested and appropriated’ (Moravánszky et al. 2014: 8), conversely conceived by users and lived by providers. It would be entirely inappropriate and arguably impossible to judge the case-settings in any absolute sense. But we might consider contextual appropriateness through holistic consideration of their qualitatively different ‘present’ Lefebvrian spatialities (Merrifield 2006). Accordingly, the dialectic interplay of PropCo’s themes suggests an example of what Lefebvre would have considered a typically capitalist, dominated abstract organisational workplace. Conversely, ShareCo provides an example of something less common, a differential workplace conceived deliberately with appropriation by the user community in mind. The carefully introduced distinction between workplace and workplace from this point onwards is deliberate. It affords the introduction of two broad, qualitatively and ideologically different Lefebvrian ways to conceive of or ‘do’ organisational space (Awan et al. 2013) and does not, as is typical in space as distance parameters (Taylor and Spicer 2007) typical of the built environment, relate them by scale: workplace as essentially a collective container for various localised individual workspaces.

Dominated space-making and place-making for appropriation afford alternative organisational outcomes by approaching the inherently political production of organisational workplace from different socio-spatial perspectives. Through space-making, facilities are managed, typically from above. Space is regarded as a static product. Through place-making, communities enable themselves from within. Space is accepted as active process. Place-making is not a new term, and indeed has been mainstreamed in recent years for varying agendas. But the resonance here with ‘placemaking’ as originally conceived in the 1960s as a human-centric urban design movement is clear, and is indeed specifically acknowledged in ArcCo’s narrative. Space-making as a counterpoint to highlight the qualitative differences in both design approach and outcomes appears to be a novel expression.

**Lefebvrian implications**

We are not able to act within a space without having developed [a communicable] idea of what that space looks like… thus representations of space are defined in a twofold manner – as (conceived) ideas and (communicated) concepts. They signify something, they prescribe something, they guide our actions and give them a direction.

*(Schmid 2014: 40)*

Lefebvre may well have disapproved of such dichotomous simplicity, given one aim of his triad was to challenge the binary nature of thesis/antithesis, instead embracing the possibility of one
and the other. A more developed conception, and indeed a prime area for further empirical research, might be to explore whether different ‘present’ organisational spaces could be considered along a continuum from domination to appropriation according to their dialectic interplay, unearthing no doubt diverse reasons as to why. But the new nomenclature presented here is a canny, tactical play. As Merrifield (2006) attests, using Lefebvre is fascinating, unsystematic and perplexing. Attempting to invoke such esoteric notions to enlighten an industry yet to acknowledge the spatial turn is a move some might dismiss as foolhardy. But, echoing Lefebvre’s Marxist sentiments, what is the point of research if not to challenge and potentially emancipate? ‘Lefebvre’s theoretical concepts therefore cannot simply be applied… explaining various empirical case studies. Rather, the purpose is to confront these concepts with reality… and thus make them productive’ (Schmid 2014: 36). Analysis can therefore become an instrument of transformation, both project and critique, to open possibilities of practical change. Thus, relatively accessible conceptualisation, like place-making vis-à-vis space-making, is an attempt to afford a seed from which something far more significant can germinate.

We know, as did Giddens in 1979 with his principle of the under-determination of theory by facts, that promoting alternative knowledge is a tricky business (Blaikie 2007). Before the findings of the case-settings unfolded through the stages of analysis, there was no preconception of their dominated and appropriated spatialities, nor their different systemic interrelationships between the control, change, commodity and community facets of workspace design. For sure, both case-settings were radically visually different modern working environments. Turning to design briefs from D&BCo and ArcCo might have afforded siloed information regarding conceived intent, as it did for Wasserman and Frenkel (2011). But only by mobilising Lefebvre’s triad analytically to ground truth, as Carp (2008) puts it, in each socio-spatial dynamic, did a holistic awareness of each spatiality unfold. In this sense, there is no absolute right or wrong for each case-setting, because both revealed socially-constructed unfolding, often transient rights and wrongs. Consequently, the value of this analytic approach seems clear, in that it affords an alternative perspective which helps bridge the dichotomy of providers and users to reframe what are often debates about rights or wrongs in organisational space design.

Ultimately, the study suggests three things of importance for the industry ostensibly ‘responsible’ for producing organisational space. First, embracing alternative research philosophies to positivism, along with unconventional research approaches, can yield unexpected, diverse and inherently valuable findings. Second, radically different socio-spatial dynamics are possible by moving beyond long-maintained workspace solutions and dominant industry narratives. As a consequence, we can make more contextually informed choices about how to provide workplace differently. Third, it is possible to conceive workplace with user appropriation in mind, but the stakes can be high. In a wider capitalist socio-economic system, the risk of erosion of such alternative ideology is ever present. Yet wherever workplaces like ShareCo exist, they can be celebrated as examples of ‘doing’ space differently, through and for users, not to them, by foregrounding place-making through Awan et al.’s (2013) fundamentally Lefebvrian principles of what they term ‘spatial agency’, summarised here:

1. The production of space is a shared enterprise. Professional expertise involves facilitating and enabling collective contribution, not exclusive expert authorship.
2. Social space is dynamic space, meaning its production continues over time. It is generative (Kornberger and Clegg 2004). There is no single moment of completion, project plan or otherwise.
3. As people live out their lives in social space, it is intractably political, charged with the dynamics of power/empowerment, interaction/isolation, control/freedom and so on.
Interestingly, architects DEGW, seminal advocates of FM (Price 2003), demonstrated early principles of spatial agency (Awan et al. 2013). Not unlike the documented transformational impact of the Hawthorne studies on workspace significance (Baldry 1999), Cairns’s (2008) rhetorical questioning of whether the organisational contribution of FM might be different had the discipline followed a more sociological path comes to mind. The previously declared ideological assumption regarding the core purpose of the built environment industry as providing enabling organisational space for users may well mask a far messier and politically contested reality. Given that organisational property and workspace costs are typically dwarfed by the costs of human resource, yet efficiency decisions regarding the former regularly influence the effectiveness of the latter, alternative ways to articulate the potential organisational contribution of organisational space are invaluable.

Appropriated spatialities are often associated with transient external urban occurrences, such as carnivals, protests, festivals, skateboarding and graffiti. The study discussed here shows not only how they leave the pavement outside, move through corporate reception areas and unfold inside knowledge workplaces, but how contextually appropriate design decisions might encourage them. In summary, there are ideological possibilities in the Lefebvrian consideration of organisational space. Place-making vis-à-vis space-making offers a reflexive counterpoint to conceive of alternative workplace design, and place-making in particular represents a politics of hope for a reimagined and far more deeply appreciated work place industry in service of its users.

Conclusions

The study explored in this chapter shows how the considered application of Lefebvre’s spatial triad as an analytic tool can reframe the perceived rights and wrongs of workspace provision. Conceived strategies will always coexist with lived, emergent tactics. Acknowledging this, the role for providers of workspace isn’t to try and oppress one in favour of the other. Instead, it becomes an appreciation of how they are irreconcilably intertwined, and an endeavour to seek to conceive contextually appropriate spaces accordingly. Lefebvre’s triad provides a conceptual tool to frame the sheer possibility of generative, empowered social space. Moreover, spatial agency embraces a Lefebvrian perspective, particularly a differential mode of ‘doing’ space, with appropriation as an aspirational goal. In seeking to embrace place-making and the deep-seated ideological differences of this alternative approach to spatial production, more humane workplaces can be the result. But being open to the potential of place-making requires awareness, tolerance, patience, inquisitiveness and experimentation.

The study presented here is the only known application of Lefebvre’s triad as an analytic lens from the field of facilities management and workplace provision at this point. It seems fitting then to conclude with some reflexive questions to promote further ‘spatial turn’ work in this disciplinary area. In the spirit of Cairns (2008), what would a more ambivalent Lefebvrian approach to theorising the built environment look like? How might such findings challenge and enhance the practices of workspace production and provision? Finally, what possible spatialities could unfold if expert savoir and inexpert connaissance knowledges of spatial production were more complementary by design?

References

Facilities, 32:1/2 27–45.
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