

# Abstracts

## **User participation in architectural and organizational design**

*Marianne Stang Våland & Susse Georg*

There is a growing interest in design and design thinking within organization and management – amongst practitioners as well as within various research communities. The general argument is that managers may benefit from the approaches and ways of working traditionally associated with professional designers. Despite this interest, there is surprising little research on how design thinking can, practically, be brought into organizational contexts. In the paper, we focus on the concept of “managing as designing”, one of the ideas that has emerged from design thinking, and explore what this approach to the management assignment might mean in practice. The empirical context of our study is the merger between two municipal administrations that took place as a result of a Structural Reform of the Danish public sector in 2007. In this venture management’s aspiration was to combine two substantial development projects: the organizational merger and the development and construction of a new town hall to house the new administration. Organized user participation was an important means to this end that entailed engaging the staff in developing the interior design of the building; their future workspace. Based on ethnographic methodology, we explore how material artefacts in different ways brought the participants

together, enabled them to visualize their work processes and influenced their experience of the spatial organization of their work. Drawing on insights from actor-network theory, we argue that designing organizations and organizational change is a socio-material effect rather than a ‘pure’ management decision. The material artefacts served as mediators, affecting staff members’ comprehension of their work and their workplace; an outcome that not only provided valuable input to the design process but also introduced new managerial challenges. Our analysis is illustrative of some of the processes involved in taking a design approach to management – engaging others in the design processes, working with multiple solutions and decentering of management. However, like other management approaches, a design approach is not without challenges. What is different is the conditions under which these challenges arise – through materially mediated interactions that can lead to new understandings of the organization and change the roles of those involved.

## **Design dialogues about space and work**

*Thomas Binder & Christina Lundsgaard*

Workplace Architecture and workplace design no longer follows fixed templates for good or effective work. Today, companies use architecture and design to

show how they are special both in what they deliver and in the way they work. This development has provided an increased attention to the concrete everyday work practices, as it is expressed through for instance User Surveys, but employee involvement focusing on the interaction between space and work, is still not very common in building projects. Based on a concrete case, the first part of the article discusses how such involvement can be strengthened through the establishment of so-called Design Dialogues stemming from a participatory mapping of the employees existing work practices. We conclude that through the Design Dialogues the employees appropriate the future workplace as a resource that can support a work in change, even though the Design Dialogues in the concrete case only to a limited extent affect the construction process and the result. In the second part of the article, we raise the question, of how Design Dialogues about space and work may have greater significance for the actual building project. In a study of a technical development center created based on a comprehensive user dialogue, we find that the Design Dialogues between design professionals and employees has led to new and more workplace related typologies for space and interior design. At the same time, the study shows that there was only limited opportunity for employees to work with the spaces, after they occupied them. Based on a series of workshops with project engineers and architects, we propose that Design Dialogues that involve both employees and designers are not limited to the construction project. Instead they should be open towards a workplace architecture and design that to a much greater extent than today is based on co-production and rethinks the spaces of the workplace as shapeable and constantly changing.

## **“Too many interruptions during the morning and time for work in the afternoon” – waves gives words to the experience of the work day**

*Sidse Grangaard*

In a Danish workspace design context there is no tradition of creating a common picture of the client and their way of working as a platform for the discussion of needs and design solutions in the predesign phase. Inspired by the process architecture and the design game of participatory design, the intention in this study, executed in close collaboration with an architect's office, was to develop a model for the predesign phase. It was the intention to create a common picture of the public organization Human Resources, HR. Later, this study was included as a case in a PhD project on dialogue-oriented mapping of space and activity in office space.

The HR-management aimed for an open office design in order to support knowledge sharing and teamwork, while the employees wished for cell-offices. The video material from the observations of four informants during their work day in the office space became a starting point for the making of a graphic video log. This log registers changes in activity and use of space during the observation. This work resulted in the definition of the concept of waves. The larger the size of the wave's amplitude, the more consistent periods of work, whilst the smaller the size of the wave's amplitude, the higher presence of shifts in activity. During a dialogue-based workshops the informants and the entire organization was involved in describing the wave motions respectively.

This article presents the development of the concept of waves and the wave motion as a type of boundary objects, which can be used to describe and articulate the experience of the work day and its rhythm.

The concept of waves encompasses both a specific time segment and the relation between various work activities. This correlation is usually neglected in the new office design community. The concept of waves makes it possible to evaluate how the supportive role of space for everyday work. The employees become creators of knowledge and awareness about work practice. The organization gains access to a communal language and an opportunity to a dialogue based on knowledge about what are going on in the office space and how the employees perceive the work day. The employees did already share knowledge, but many of them were disturbed due to shifts in activity caused by telephone calls and informal meetings. This awareness has not previously been present in the organization but it contributed to an understanding of the organization and their work practice which had not been visible before. HR gained an ownership to the waves and chose to implement the concept in their LEAN process. The top management chose to implement an alternative solution to that originally envisioned. The architect firm experienced that the concept of the waves qualifies dialogue between the client and the architect during the design process.

### **Workplace design – with ethnographic methods and employee**

*Eva Bjerrum & Anne Bøgh Fangel*

To design new office environments that work is not only a design challenge. It is to at large extend also a matter of developing organizations and creating new perspectives of the relation between work and office space. In this article we want to explore how we can use ethnographic methods and employee involvement in a process for the design of workspaces. This includes

processes that provide architects with input for the design of better office spaces, processes that provide the organisations with a new foundation for discussions that go beyond the classical management-employee conflict about noise in open office environments and processes that give the organization a basis for developing a new conception of work and strengthening employee welfare

The purpose of this article is to present and discuss a number of methods we have developed in recent years to investigate whether it is possible to find new ways to stimulate the working environment through ethnographic observations and employee involvement. In the article we will present a set of methods that we use in our research and consultancy in organisations and show how we have applied them in our collaboration with three different organisations.

### **Conflicting perceptual frameworks of conflict – sensemaking and enactment in conflict at work**

*Elisabeth Naima Mikkelsen*

An ethnographic study in a nonprofit development organization illustrates significant processes of how both staff and management enact and make sense of conflict. The organization's practice of framing 'conflicts' as 'frictions' sets the scene for how to make sense of conflict. Staff and management draw on five perceptual frameworks when making sense of conflicts: the defective personality, culture clash between departments, status inequality between organizational groups, absent leadership, and external pressure. The five perceptual frameworks are rooted in institutionalized meanings of individualism, egalitarianism, inequality, opposition, and adaptation, respectively.

Additionally the article shows that conflict sensemaking may evolve from conflicting perceptual frameworks. Consequently, individuals and groups within organizations may not make sense of the same conflict in the same ways. While conflicts may have indisputable manifestations in clashes and arguments, these are peaks in a process that is, most of the time, enacted in oppo-

sing perceptual and verbal representations of what is going on. I show how some ways of making sense of conflict are more legitimate than others and I discuss power relations between individuals and different organizational groups and how power relations shape legitimacy in conflict sensemaking.

I end the article by discussing the study's implications for practice.