

**HOLDING THE VANISHING ORGANISATION:
CAN AN 'AGILE' WORK ENVIRONMENT
FACILITATE EMOTIONAL CONTAINMENT?**

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Abstract

Over recent decades, 'lean', 'activity based' and 'agile' working environments characterised by a non-proprietary use of space and resources, networked communication, and porosity between experience in public, private and organisational contexts have proliferated within organisations. As this transformation of the physical territory for office work has taken place, the concept of the 'vanishing organisation' was proposed (Cooper and Dartington, 2004; Cooper and Lousada, 2005) to provide an account of how in a networked society, established mechanisms for sustaining emotional containment in organisations, through the maintenance of concrete and symbolic boundaries, appear to no longer function or even exist.

The research explores the extent to which the contemporary workplace might be supportive of or deleterious to emotional containment in organisations and its implications for theory, practice and research within the systems psychodynamic approach to consulting. Social photo matrix focus groups were convened at four organisations which deployed elements of 'lean', 'activity-based' or 'agile' workplace design to record narratives of the felt experience of place at work, with further data gathered from detailed case notes covering the researcher's engagement with each organisation and personal reflexivity, in-part drawing upon their personal memory of place in a transient institutional, organisational and domestic context as a military child.

In-case analysis was carried out using a grounded theory exercise where social photo matrix transcript text was used to develop axial codes which for each workplace abductively invoked Freud's exclamation in the *Aetiology of Hysteria* of "saxa loquuntur!" [the stones speak] (Freud, 1896), as well as its manifestation of 'murality' (Cox, 1995; Adshead, 2019), a concept developed within forensic psychotherapy to refer to the experience of an instrumentally derived and beneficial experience of 'wallness' realised through the pairing of a bounded perimeter with an emotionally containing organisational and institutional culture. This exercise generated rich and emotionally evocative data for each site relating to the felt experience of place, as well as tentative indications of the manifestation of patterns of emotional attachment (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth et al., 1978), basic assumption function (Bion, 1962) and 'commensal', 'symbiotic' and 'parasitic' forms of containment (Bion, 1970). Further cross-case analysis of the gathered grounded theory axial codes helped develop the hypothesis that rather than instrumentally facilitating emotional containment, the workplaces served to both reflect the particular forms and levels of containment arising within each organisation's already-existing culture, and in certain circumstances, to reinforce them.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“Where once role, task, and authority in the context of a bounded system were the guarantors of the possibility of organisational sanity, the employee or manager now struts naked in the open-plan, hot-desking office of interorganizational vulnerability.”

Cooper and Dartington (2004, p.148); Cooper and Lousada (2005, p.176)

Over recent decades, global economic, societal and technological changes have transformed office life, where a range of new methodologies for the design, configuration and management of the ‘white-collar’ workplace have emerged and proliferated internationally across all industries and sectors. These include ‘agile’, ‘lean’ and ‘activity-based’ workplaces (here, for brevity described collectively as ‘agile’), environments expressly designed to deploy the physical architecture of the workplace, human relationships and networked space to maximise productivity and to establish a “dynamic relationship between work and the workplace and the tools of work” (Joroff et al. 2003, p.293). Accordingly, by deploying a range of techniques for the design and governance of the workplace, including the non-proprietary use of space and resources through ‘hot-desking’ and ‘clear desk’ policies, the provision of a diverse range of work settings for different activities through distributed’ and ‘remote’ working methodologies, and porosity between experience in public, private and organisational contexts, the ‘agile’ workplace is purposively curated to facilitate a ready formation, disruption and dissolution of both interpersonal and organisational boundaries to become a material agent of change within

organisations. In these contexts, the 'agile' workplace has effectively replaced the late twentieth century cellular office as the dominant global model for the configuration of place at work.

While transformation to the organisation of work and the workplace has occurred, discussion has also taken place within the systems-psychodynamic tradition of consulting to organisations around how technological and societal change has impacted upon the emotional life of organisations, and the implications that these new conditions hold at a theoretical level and for consulting practice. As a key example, in two separate papers titled *The Vanishing Organisation: Emotional Containment in a Networked World*, Cooper and Dartington (2004) and Cooper and Lousada (2005) present a commentary and critique of prevailing trends observed in consulting practice with businesses and public sector organisations respectively, where as if by some imaginative process or sleight of hand, established elements of hitherto present organisational structure appear to have 'vanished'. The authors describe how accompanying the transition to a 'networked' society, established mechanisms for sustaining emotional containment derived from the maintenance of physical, psychological and hierarchical boundaries are observed to have somehow disappeared, creating organisational experience that while potentially being more fluid, creative, and productive can be also be precarious and toxic. In this changed organisational environment, the issue of the means by which it might be possible for personal dependency needs to be met or derive emotional 'containment', the capacity in Bion's formulation of 'container and contained', for individuals and groups to tolerate and convert traumatic experience into thought

(Bion 1962), presents a crucial contemporary challenge and dilemma. Drawing upon analysis by the psychoanalyst Sonia Abadi (Abadi, 2003) and the social and spatial theorist Manuel Castells (Castells, 2000), the authors of *The Vanishing Organisation* argue that as the function of the 'boundary' in organisations and wider society has become superseded by the 'network', both the role of the consultant and the wider theoretical framework of the systems-psychoanalytic tradition, each in-part founded upon an acceptance of the primacy of the governing concept of the 'bounded system' in organisations, requires a contemporary re-evaluation.

By observing the disappearance of established containing structures and boundaries relating to task, profession, status and career progression, and the commonplace experience of precariousness associated with working and managing in contemporary organisations, the authors of 'The Vanishing Organisation' provide an implicitly Marxian critique of the prevailing conditions for organisational life in 'late capitalist' society, characterised by the movement towards more flexible labour within a globalised neo-liberal economy. Here, through the depiction of working life as a stage for the enactment of flexibility and volatility in social and economic relations, the 'vanishing organisation' provides a systems-psychodynamic corollary to the sociological account by Standing (2021) of the emergence of a global social class termed 'the precariat', characterised by low pay, insecure, precarious and unstable working lives, reliance upon short-term, part-time and zero-hours contracts, frequent remote working, and a lack of access to the social protection and in-work benefits that more stable employment can make possible. In this context, in addition to its

potentially benign, dynamic and creative characteristics, the 'agile' workplace may be considered to function as setting, stage, active agent and material artefact for economically and socially exploitative relations within organisational life.

As with Castells, Abadi and Standing, the authors of 'The Vanishing Organisation' texts provide an account of human experience and socio-economic relations in contemporary society which contains an intrinsically spatial element, where hitherto-held assumptions about the nature of place in organisations have substituted for new realities in the networked age in ways that remain to be fully processed. As such the articulation of the concept of the 'vanishing organisation' within the systems psychodynamic tradition in the very early 2000s may be understood to be reflective of what has been proposed by some epistemic theorists as a multidisciplinary movement and epistemic shift, a 'spatial turn' (Warf et al., 2009) in changed societal and technological circumstances, that re-validates and re-problematizes the status of place, space and materiality across both the wider human sciences and culture. It is argued that the 'spatial turn' provides a particularly advantageous point of reference and conceptual bridge for connecting emergent ideas and practice developed within the systems psychodynamic tradition concerning the nature of place in organisations, for example in relation to 'the vanishing organisation', with discourse from other traditions concerning the nature of work, space and place in contemporary society. It is further argued that concept of 'murality' (Cox, 1995; Adshead, 2019), a relatively little-known and infrequently used term in systems psychodynamic discourse and originally developed within forensic

psychotherapy to describe a beneficial experience of “wellness” in institutional and clinical settings, represents a powerful organising concept and heuristic frame for connecting established concepts and methods within the wider systems psychodynamic tradition around the themes of place, space and the workplace in contemporary organisations.

The purpose of this investigation is *to explore the emotional significance and impact of the workplace in contemporary organisations and its relevance for theory and practice in the systems-psychodynamic tradition of consulting*. It is borne from a strong personal interest in the theme of place and its status within contemporary organisational life. My thesis title and primary research question *Holding the vanishing organisation: Can an ‘agile’ work environment facilitate emotional containment?* encapsulate what I consider to be a central issue and challenge both for contemporary organisational life and the design of the built environment: the extent to which the physical landscape of the contemporary organisations can be supportive of emotional containment. They are constructed to provide a heuristic frame through which a number of related questions can be posed about what it is like; individually, as part of a group, and in consultancy practice to encounter the contemporary or ‘agile’ workplace in organisational life: how its physical configuration informs feelings of relatedness to self, other and organisation; the extent to which its architecture and territory workplace can be experienced in ways to facilitate thought, connectedness with others, personal integrity, psychological safety, agency, and productivity; and alternatively, in which circumstances might experience of the workplace

become problematic either individually or organisationally, and how then are challenging experiences and dynamics negotiated.

Through this work, I am seeking to develop knowledge and understanding in the systems psychodynamic tradition relating to the 'containing' and 'bounded' status of contemporary organisations, for example: whether the contemporary or 'agile' workplace represents a physical and cultural manifestation of a failure, retreat from, or 'vanishing' of emotional containment; or, alternatively, whether this landscape might provide evidence of other, possibly emergent and creative manifestations of attachment, relatedness and containment, both organisationally and in wider society. I also consider what might be the implications of the contemporary or 'agile' workplace for how boundary, authority, role, task and technology can be understood and framed theoretically; and how classic and contemporary systems psychodynamic perspectives might be deployed to inform understanding about the nature of the interrelationship between person, place and organisation in a contemporary context. A final aim of the investigation relates to the application in practice of the learning gained: to explore whether or how it might be possible in consultancy to engage reflexively with the theme of place, and also to work more knowledgeably and creatively with the contemporary or 'agile' workplace to help support thought, change and wellbeing in organisations.

The thesis contains seven chapters. In **chapter two**, I describe my professional and personal motivation for investigating the theme of place and the 'agile' workplace as well as introduce a strand of reflexivity or 'me-search' to the

investigation. Here, I reflect upon personal childhood experience of domestic and institutional environments as a military 'brat' to highlight what I see to have been key emotional and aesthetic challenges linked to belonging in a transient or impermanent institutional context, and their potential correspondence with belonging in relation to the contemporary workplace and work landscape.

Chapter Three provides a review of relevant literature in three sections. First, a multi-disciplinary account of the status of the workplace in contemporary society, concluding with a discussion of the 'spatial turn' as a conceptual bridge connecting discourse within the workplace sector and the systems psychodynamic tradition, and exemplified by the themes of the 'agile' workplace and the 'vanishing organisation'. Second, a discussion of how psychoanalytic and psychoanalytically-informed ideas, including Freud's foundational contributions, object relations theory and attachment theory may together support an understanding of place, space and materiality in organisations; Third, a discussion of how both historic theory, research and practice from the systems psychodynamic tradition and more contemporary perspectives, themselves indicative of a 'spatial turn', may help inform and develop understanding of the theme of place in organisations. The section ends with a description of the concept of 'murity' and an assessment of its potential value as an organising theme and generative concept within the systems psychodynamic tradition for facilitating understanding of place, space and the workplace in contemporary organisations.

Chapter Four presents a methodology and includes: an account of the process by which an epistemic frame was developed incorporating a critical realist stance within a systems psychodynamic paradigm; the methods and techniques adopted to gather data and carry out the analysis, namely the social photo matrix and grounded theory; a summary of the research design arrived at; and, an assessment of limitations, ethical considerations risks and mitigations pertaining to the investigation.

Chapter five provides a chronological account of my reflexive engagement with four organisations to initiate contact with, observe, carry out social photo matrix workshops, and negotiate exit. This considers in order of engagement, the pilot site, a co-working facility, followed by an architecture practice, an English police headquarters and finally a mental health charity. For each social photo matrix workshop, I also include copies of the photographs that were taken and shared.

Chapter six summarises my analysis in three chronological stages. First, I describe my initial engagement with the research data, including outcomes from my participation in participation in a paired reflexivity exercise with an academic colleague, through to commencing in-case grounded theory coding. Second, I summarise the axial grounded theory codes which were arrived at for each organisation and workplace. Third, I identify key cross-case themes. Finally, I draw upon the analysis to respond directly to the primary research question *can an agile work environment facilitate emotional containment?*

Chapter seven Concludes the thesis with some final reflections on the status of the social photo matrix as a method for evaluating the murality of contemporary organisations and the related function of personal reflexivity in this process.

Chapter Two: Motivation

2.1 Place as an aesthetic and emotive theme

For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated by place and the thoughts and emotions it can evoke. I am intrigued by how an everyday encounter with place is accompanied by what can feel to be an almost magical material and psychological process, where from an assemblage of insensate objects and stimulate, domestic, public or organisational environments can be converted in consciousness and imagination into something experienced as whole and alive. I am also intrigued by how it is possible to claim a sense of internal emotional and imaginative ownership over place, and how the personal geographies of home, family, neighbourhood, affiliation, community and organisation can flex and re-shape, creating a constantly evolving locus for identity, relatedness, activity and growth. Crucially, I feel a sense of wonder in the immediacy of the sensory and emotional response that accompanies initial or renewed experience of place; the feeling of 'whoosh' as location, artefacts, surfaces, configuration and atmosphere are grasped by sense to become known in sudden and perfect clarity.

In contrast to a fulfilled experience of place, I am also mindful of encounters in domestic, organisational, or public contexts which can feel unsatisfactory, incomplete, or unsettling. These can happen in a number of ways, for example where thinking, realisation of potential or creative engagement with or relatedness to others feels less possible; where unpleasant associations are evoked; where a feeling of a history is experienced as if unsettling, or conversely, is strangely missing; or, where some sense of taint or toxicity can

be felt; experience which in Freud's formulation and vocabulary might be described as *unheimlich*, meaning unhomely or uncanny (Freud, 1919).

I am fascinated by how the encounter with place connects us with both external phenomena and internal, emotional experience, and since my early twenties as a student of English literature I have felt drawn to the literary device of the 'pathetic fallacy'. This was defined by George Eliot in 1856 as "the transference to external objects of the spectator's own emotions" (Eliot, 1990) and finds advanced expression later in the nineteenth century through Gerard Manley Hopkins's and Emily Dickinson's poetic fusion of physical landscape and natural phenomena in the presentation of internal mental states (Hopkins 2009; Dickinson 1991). Alongside these authors, I have also been moved imaginatively by Gaston Bachelard's 'The Poetics of Space' (Bachelard, 1994), whose phenomenological, associative and literary account of the features of an archetypical house "from cellar to garret" (p.3) has provided a continuing accompaniment for my emotional and aesthetic engagement with buildings, and exploration of the theme of place in organisations.

I live in London, where whenever I can, I prefer to navigate and explore by foot. Here I am fascinated by how an exchange between the realms of inner and outer, person and place, self and other, past and present, and the physical and electronic may be experienced viscerally whilst moving through the complex, multi-faceted and porous settings of the built environment. Here, for all connection with place, whether domestic, public or organisational, benign or *unheimlich*, physical or electronic, I am given to wonder about the psychological

and emotional transactions that underpin my experience. However, in this 'space' I can encounter a 'block', as if in our 'ubiquitous' encounter with place, we somehow lack a requisite vocabulary or conceptual frame to give adequate voice to the significance and depth of the experience. Despite this challenge, I have found myself drawn to try to explore and map the emotional territory of 'place', both in my personal and domestic life, and in organisations.

2.2 In the workplace

I am fascinated by the emotional presence that the workplace can hold within an organisation. For about the first half of my career, a period of sixteen years, I worked in a range of roles in mental health support and social care in community and criminal justice settings where, I encountered a variety of working environments including residential care homes, day centres, the administrative centres of organisations as well as police stations, courts and prisons. Since then, I have continued to work in the same fields but in a research and consultative capacity, the last fourteen as the joint-owner of a business. In my current role, I work from my own home and a personal studio, from client organisations' offices as well as public spaces such as libraries and coffee shops. Also, in the context of the COVID crisis, like many, I have become only too familiar with working in 'virtual' space through using online meeting platforms such as Zoom, and in negotiating 'hybrid' environments which combine both networked and in-person experience.

It was during the first part of my career that I began to appreciate the emotional significance of the workplace in care settings. For example, I remember working

with former asylum residents placed in residential facilities as part of the 'care in the community' programme who continued to locate their 'home' in their now long-closed or demolished asylum. I also learned to be mindful about how the organisation of a client or tenant's domestic space might inform me about the nature of my responsibilities, including working with people who demonstrated troubled attachments to their home environment, sometimes rendering accommodation uninhabitable. Further, at an organisational level, I discovered that the atmosphere and 'smell' of a well-managed and emotionally containing project could feel markedly different to one which was poorly managed or had a consistent record of damaging outcomes for residents and staff. Here, it seemed as if a troubled culture and history could in some way be experienced as if held or encoded within its physical fabric and surfaces to form an atmosphere that somehow got under the skin and persisted in-situ even following the departure and replacement of those who had originally lived or worked there.

As a consultant and researcher, I am always thrilled, to encounter an organisation's premises for the first time. I wonder about the role that the location and physical configuration of a particular working environment might play in the structuring of organisational experience and relationships. In this context, I am fascinated to observe how minutely detailed information about an organisation's history, culture and trajectory exists, quite literally, on and through the physical surfaces of every workplace. In this context, workplaces act as palimpsests, carrying traces of former activity and occupation through artefacts until they become overwritten or erased. When I start work with a new

organisation or client, I sometimes ask whether the building or office I am in has a 'story' and am fascinated by what can be discovered, as well as what must have been lost or forgotten. Also, when working with organisations with larger workplaces I sometimes creatively exploit my quite poor personal sense of direction to become intentionally 'lost' in my environment, and in my effort to find my way back to where I should be, learn something extra in turn about its configuration and material culture.

While in the first part of my career I worked within the physically separate and diverse bounded environments of residential care and outreach support, in my current role as a researcher and organisational consultant I am fascinated by the multiformity of the architecture and objects in the contemporary workplace; for example, the panoply of hot-desks, standing desks, meeting spaces, pods, mezzanines, plazas and associated franchise outlets for coffee and fast food which collectively create its universally recognisable topography within the built environment. I am also struck by the fluidity of movement and the interchangeability of experience which is possible here between public, private and organisational contexts, as well as how every organisation's workplace, even those of quite mundane and easily recognisable construction and configuration, can seem to hold a particular and even unique character or atmosphere.

Although I enjoy spending time in the 'agile' workplace, its particular characteristics and qualities also lead me to inquire about the nature and quality of our attachments: to self, place and other within contemporary organisations.

Here, in what can be closely regulated or curated environments, the workplace can feel less like a 'palimpsest', where signs of individual occupation, organisational history and emotional attachment may be visible and tangible, and more like a 'tabula-rasa', where evidence of use is purposively erased after each event or working day. Here, as a function of the porous and networked architecture of the 'agile' landscape, the nature and status of the 'boundary' between the personal, the organisational and the public is inherently problematised.

In my professional work I have experienced 'agile' workplaces, and workplaces that adopt elements of 'agile' design that are both hospitable, generous and comfortable in their configuration. However, I have also encountered others which are environmentally impoverished, overcrowded and where flexibility of movement and thought is constrained. In all of these contexts, I wonder as to the extent to which this now near-universal, but historically revolutionary environment for work might be supportive of emotional containment, characterised by Bion (1962) in the concept of 'container and contained' as the capacity to tolerate and convert traumatic experience into thought.

Before the Covid crisis, whenever I could, I avoided 'networked' forms of meeting, preferring where possible to engage directly with organisations and clients in their own physical spaces. Encountering lockdown therefore represented, as for many white collar and knowledge workers a profound shock necessitating adjustment to a whole new means for carrying out work, connecting with colleagues and constructing professional identity. While

ultimately appreciative of the capability and privilege to be able to work remotely, I also felt simultaneously connected but also profoundly separated from close and loved colleagues and the workplaces I knew so intimately. In this changed environment I felt left with a measure of personal incompleteness, but also an implicit understanding that in the wake of the Covid crisis our engagement with the world of work and the workplace would in all likelihood be altered forever.

Separated from the workplaces of organisations and 'confined' within separate physical spaces under conditions of lockdown, in some way it became possible to call into question or reimagine the very notion of organisations and organisational life as holding an intrinsic physical or embodied identity. Thus, in the context of networked and remote working, precisely *where* does an organisation now exist? Is it within the distributed spaces and places of those who participate in its activity, manifest electronically within the internet, or in the mind of those who are involved in its activity, or a combination of all three? Further, how does 'hybrid' work, where in-person and networked interactions are combined, impact upon the felt experience of place and the workplace in organisations? I note that it is possible to say in a 'hybrid' or virtual meeting that "it's nice to be here"; but also wonder where actually in this simultaneously connected but separated context is 'here'? Conversely, I am intrigued by the embodied context and status of the networked environment we occupy, where sight and sound are shared, but touch, smell, taste are experienced individually. In this space, clear non-physical dynamics at the 'boundary' do exist: the login; the failure to 'unmute' before speaking; the intermittent breakdown of video and

audio signals; a pervasive sense of ‘clunkiness’ pertaining to the technology and applications we use to connect in the networked world, and also, a feeling of sadness and loneliness I can experience when meetings end when I am left alone in my personal workspace sitting in front of a blank reflective screen.

2.3 Personal and reflexive context

I locate an origin of my interest in the theme of place and the ‘agile’ workplace, and my choice of career as an organisational consultant to the personal experience of growing up as a child, or colloquially a ‘brat’, within the British armed forces [a term possibly derived from the eighteenth-century expression ‘barrack-rat’: see Clifton and Powell (2008) for a discussion of the disputed origins of the term]. In this context, from birth until the age of eighteen when my father retired from service in the Royal Air Force, I lived with my family at numerous bases across the United Kingdom, North-Western Europe and the Far East, forming part of a continuous circulation of personnel and their families between postings. Accordingly, whenever I am asked where I am ‘from’, I have to pause, as the question of reconciling a geographic starting point with the institutional cultures and places I grew up in, my subsequent personal and professional experience, and where I consider myself now to ‘belong’ in middle-age is impossible to address through a simple response. Further, even though I have spent nearly my entire adult life in civilian society, and have worked hard to establish a secure and settled domestic and family life and career in many ways markedly different in its orientation and values to the martial culture I grew up in, because of the powerful formative institutional circumstances of my childhood, I still do continue to identify myself as being a ‘brat’.

My father served in the Police branch of the RAF while my mother occasionally worked as a nursery nurse. Unusually for a uniformed service, my father frequently wore civilian clothes on duty. He never spoke about what he did and whenever I asked him about his job, he would reply in a calm voice “that’s secret”, even years after he had retired. Sometimes he would spend time away from home on assignments in the UK or abroad which could last between a few days or several months, leaving my mother to look after me and my younger brother. Our education took place off-base, at civilian schools located in the villages or small towns closest to wherever we lived at the time, except during overseas postings, when we attended military-run day or boarding schools.

Although a childhood in the armed forces might be considered to confer benefits such as the opportunity to travel and to experience at first hand different localities, countries and cultures, it is also a hard way of life because it is inherently ‘agile’. Thus, my brother and I grew up in a state of repeated movement between the locations of my father’s postings, where the severing of relationships with friends, neighbourhoods, schools, and also parents when sent to boarding school most certainly impacted on the formation and development of our characters. To be raised in this context was also to have been part of and subject to an authoritarian institutional culture, mirrored in my particular domestic circumstances by having a loving, but also quite strict and sometimes violent family environment, where personal concerns were subordinate or non-existent in relation to operational requirements. Also, while unspoken in the communities we lived, but also surely registered in some way, was the awful

reality that fathers might be commanded at any moment to leave their homes and families to fight and potentially lose their lives.

Looking back on childhood experience of home and of place from the position of middle-age, there are few concrete facts I feel able to recall categorically. For example, I have now lost count of, or more accurately consciously stopped trying to list and incant, the succession of stations and homes where I lived, schools I attended, and who were my friends, classmates and teachers. I also hold only sketchy memory of friendships before teenage years, and hardly any of leaving or moving between different locations and homes, except the sense of a fixed and repeated routine of packing a few belongings into cardboard boxes, saying a final 'goodbye' to now empty and echoing married quarter, moving into a similar space in another location without trace of previous occupation, and after a few days or weeks taking delivery of our boxes, unpacking and then resuming the sense of an everyday life. However, I do hold a strong and fond composite memory of the general architecture, layout and atmosphere of the RAF stations and married quarters where I lived. These were located in rural settings, fenced-off from neighbouring civilian territory, frequently secured under armed guard and operating as self-contained and highly curated entities, with on-site shopping, social, religious, library and medical facilities, as well as separate housing estates, parks and play areas for the families of officers and non-commissioned ranks. Furnishing of married quarters was of standard design, marked with a 'long arrow' symbol denoting government property, and of a type and design I immediately recognised when I

was a little older when I encountered it in local government offices and NHS residential facilities.

Crucially, it seems as if even after a remove of several decades, aspects of my imaginative life and aesthetic sensibility exist somehow located in relation to or in exchange with this remembered domestic and institutional landscape. For example, from about the age of five I became fascinated by the boundary, marked with warning signs to outsiders, between the stations that formed our neighbourhoods and the surrounding civilian countryside, and how the familiar, ordered and contained space inside the perimeter fence suddenly gave way to a landscape and architecture that felt other and mysterious, infinitely unfolding and even in some way magical. Also, possibly in response to both my father's secrecy about his professional identity and personal life before enlisting in the military and my mother's manifest unhappiness about our style of living, from a quite early age I recall imagining the existence of a hidden world, concealed in compartments and airspaces behind the surfaces of the homes where I lived, or the bomb shelters and pill-boxes that punctuated the landscape, which could somehow if only I could find it, reveal secrets of my existence. Following on from these early experiences, a sense of fascination about and yearning to explore even mundane or transitory space and territory has informed my aesthetic imagination in adult life, which I think represents in part a significant motivating factor for carrying out an investigation into the felt experience of everyday sites of work in contemporary organisations.

My experience and journey as a military 'brat' has also sensitised to a spatial-temporal context in which feelings about place in an organisation can become formed, and at a personal level I remain moved by the material and emotional labour in childhood that accompanied moving between near-identical homes and the repeated dynamic of establishing a new but temporary locus for belonging. Further, while many RAF stations had been active airfields during World War Two and the early stages of the Cold War, changes in the technology of warfare and the size of the British armed forces meant that these sites had started to become repurposed, placed in 'mothballs' or decommissioned. From this historical and organisational context, I hold a powerful composite memory of the *unheimlich* experience of rambling through largely empty estates of married quarters, and then when slightly older actively exploring deserted and dilapidated mess and administrative buildings, bunkers, enormous rusting aircraft hangers and weed-strewn runways, parts of an ominous but mundane institutional landscape which held my imagination and today continues to exist in my dreams. These kinds of experience have I think helped shape my personal sensitisation to the affective atmospheres of domestic and organisational environments, providing material example of how place can be a container for personal, family and organisational memory, and a locus for letting go of memory and forgetting.

In an investigation of the experiences of children of United States military personnel, Elizabeth Wertsch (1991) describes four tasks that the 'brat' must engage with in adult life in order to develop emotionally: One, to dismantle the myths about military life and the martial ethic that one has internalised; two, to

find ways to heal the emotional wounds that have been inflicted; three, to make peace with one's parents; and four, and most crucially, to address "the question of belonging" (p.419). Wertsch considers this fourth task to be an actual source of potential creativity for the 'brat'; and "an asset of immense value if we can learn how to use it", helping establish a form of relatedness to self, others and environment that can keep us "stretching, learning, experiencing" in a continuing cycle of becoming and belonging (p.424). In this sense, throughout my adult life I have worked hard to create and sustain a domestic and family environment which is so markedly different from the one I was familiar with growing up, so that my now teenage daughter has known only our one happy and stable family home. Further, by engaging with personal psychoanalysis and systems psychodynamic perspectives and nurturing working relationships I have found it possible to move into a physical and emotional space in which personal growth and the expression of creativity possible, and which in its richness and hard-gained nature has also me to both relinquish and repudiate the rigidity, authoritarianism and rootlessness that was integral to experience in childhood, while valuing and honouring those positive experiences and relationships that did exist.

However, accompanying this life mission, I think that there are ways in which traits of relatedness and identity inculcated in childhood, also represent an asset in a professional consulting context. For example, I find myself both drawn-to and confident to gain entry to and navigate opaque or inhospitable organisational or institutional environments, despite the inevitable accompanying anxiety that this entails. I also adhere to 'soft' martial values of

loyalty to close colleagues and fidelity to ethical principles in my work, as well as a willingness to confront organisational experience 'under fire' to wrest and assert an internal locus of control. Crucially, I feel drawn to work imaginatively, as if as a detective, with the tangible and intangible data that the workplace contains to explore what might be taking place both 'on' and 'below' the surface in organisations and systems. Here, it seems that childhood experience, both from the struggles and suffering, and from the insights I gained, has placed me in a favourable position to navigate and investigate experience in the contemporary workplace, a near-universally known but also still largely unmapped element of contemporary organisational experience, to explore with compassion the nature of belonging in this environment.

Chapter Three Review of Literature

3.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter provides an account of literature to inform the investigation title and primary research question *Holding the vanishing organisation: Can an 'agile' work environment facilitate emotional containment?* and describes how the design and organisation of the contemporary workplace, and the themes of place, space and the workplace may be framed in relation to systems psychodynamic discourse. Following short contextual descriptions of the systems psychodynamic tradition of organisational research and consultancy, and of the meanings of the three interdependent terms 'place', 'space' and 'materiality', the review of literature is progressed within three sections.

Section 3.2 describes the status of the workplace in contemporary organisations and society. It begins by presenting the foundational concept developed within the systems psychodynamic tradition of the 'vanishing organisation' and how in its account of the disappearance of containing structures within organisational life in the opening years of the millennium directly invokes the workplace. Drawing upon texts from the workplace sector and social sciences, it then provides an account of the contemporary workplace including its key design typologies, material culture and wider societal implications. It ends by presenting the concept developed within human geography of an epistemic 'spatial turn' occurring in the contemporary age, informed by technological and economic disruption and change. This is described as providing a conceptual bridge for connecting discourse within the systems psychodynamic tradition,

exemplified by the 'vanishing organisation' with that taking place the workplace sector and other disciplines about the relationship between work and place in contemporary society.

Having outlined the 'vanishing organisation', described the contemporary workplace and its societal context, and also raised the foundational theme of the 'spatial' turn within social science and culture, Section 3.3 commences a two-part account of the workplace in systems psychodynamic theory, research, and practice with a discussion of how psychoanalytic themes may support an understanding of place and space. This begins with an exploratory assessment of how key elements of Freud's theoretical and practice foundations; the 'archaeological metaphor', dreams and dreamwork and the configuration of furniture and objects in the psychoanalytic consulting space, may all be understood to invoke spatial themes. This is then followed by assessment of how first object relations theory and related perspectives, and then attachment theory, either invoke spatial themes or facilitate understanding of intra-psychic spatial experience. The section ends by describing how two concepts from Bion's later work; 'thoughts without a thinker' and O, facilitate a movement beyond the intra-psychic to contribute to a wider epistemic frame through which psychoanalytic understanding of place and space might start to be imagined and applied in relation to interpersonal, group and organisational contexts.

Section 3.4 completes the account an account of the workplace in systems psychodynamic theory, research, and practice by showing how both historic theory, research and practice from the systems psychodynamic tradition as well

as contemporary perspectives that are reflective of the 'spatial turn', may help inform and develop understanding of the theme of place in organisations. It concludes with a discussion of the value and significance of the concept of 'murity' (Cox, 1995; Adshead, 2019), originally developed within forensic psychotherapy to describe the beneficial experience of 'wellness' in institutional and clinical settings - a relatively little-known and infrequently used term in systems psychodynamic discourse - which it is argued nonetheless represents a powerful organising concept and heuristic frame for connecting established concepts and methods within the wider systems psychodynamic tradition around the themes of place, space and the workplace.

3.1.1 The 'systems-psychodynamic' approach to organisations

Across the thesis, the 'systems-psychodynamic' tradition or approach to organisational research and consultancy, also known as 'systems-psychodynamics' (Sher and Lawlor, 2022) is presented as a foundational frame for theory, research and consulting practice. This represents a conjunction of two separate terms; "open systems concepts" and "psychoanalytic perspectives" (Gould 2006, p.2-3) and as such links integrally with a wider grouping of subtly differentiated movements, academic traditions and descriptors of practice, each with broadly overlapping concerns, assumptions and methods: This includes the place and institutionally informed "Tavistock approach" to organisations (Obholzer and Roberts, 2019) or "Tavistock tradition" (Armstrong and Rustin, 2020), which developed out of clinical and organisational work conducted within the Tavistock Clinic and the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations, and founded on "the integration between

psychoanalytic and social [...] oriented perspectives” (p.15); ‘socioanalytic’ approaches’, “the study of human social phenomena from a perspective combining systems theory and psychoanalysis” (Long 2013, xix); and, the emergent discipline of ‘psychosocial’ studies, defined as using “psychoanalytic concepts and principles to illuminate core issues within the social sciences” (Clarke and Hoggett 2009, p.1). Unless there is a requirement to refer to a particular movement within this wider tradition of practice, in the review of literature, the term ‘systems-psychodynamic’ will be used as a common descriptor.

3.1.2 The terms ‘place’, ‘space’ and ‘materiality’

While frequently used interchangeably in everyday use, the terms ‘place’ and ‘space’ hold distinct etymologies and meanings. The Oxford English Dictionary states that *place* is derived from the Latin *platea*, denoting ‘street’, the shared root for *platz* in German, and *piazza* in Italian (OED Online). It has four main categories of meaning: “a public or residential square”; “senses relating to space or location”; “senses relating to position or situation with reference to its occupation or occupant”; and, “position in some scale, order or series” (ibid); all which denote some aspect of materiality or relational specificity. The human geographer David Seamon defines *place* phenomenologically as “any environmental locus in and through which individual or group actions, experiences and meanings are drawn together spatially” (Seamon 2014, p.11). The word *space* is derived from the Latin *spatium*, denoting a “course or track”, an “expanse of ground” and “the expanse within which the universe is situated” (OED Online). Its meanings represent “time or duration” and “area or extension”

(Ibid), and can be defined geographically as “a dimension within which matter is located or a grid within which substantive items are contained” (Agnew, 2011, p.316). Reflecting on the interrelated characteristics of *space* and *place* Tuan (1977) writes “What becomes undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value [...] The ideas of ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition” (p.6).

By contrast, the term ‘materiality’ carries intermediary meanings between ‘place’ and ‘space’ and relates both to physical presence and intellectual significance, as in: “that which constitutes the matter or material of something”, “material existence”, and “outward appearance or externality, as well as “the quality of being relevant or significant” (OED Online). The term also connects with the social scientific concept of ‘material culture’: “the physical matter with which humans engage to produce and perform their social worlds” (Lunn-Rockcliffe, Derbyshire and Hicks 2020).

3.2 The contemporary workplace

This section draws upon perspectives from a range of disciplines, including architecture, facilities and human resource management, organisational psychology, cultural history, sociology, human geography, and the systems psychodynamic tradition to provide an account of the contemporary workplace as well and its wider societal and intellectual dimensions. First, it outlines the foundational concept of the ‘vanishing organisation’ as articulated within the systems psychodynamic tradition by Cooper and Dartington (2004) and Cooper and Lousada (2005). Here, it highlights how these texts explicitly invoke the

physical workplace in their observation of a disappearance of containing structures in organisational life the, thus making them directly relevant both to an understanding of the nature of work and place in contemporary society. Second, it describes the workplace typologies and design principles of 'lean', 'activity-based' 'agile', and in a networked context 'remote', 'distributed' and 'hybrid' collectively contribute to the physical and electronic landscape for work in organisations in contemporary organisations. Third, it outlines a range of themes and challenges that have been identified within workplace sector and social science more generally at an individual, organisational or societal level, relating to the nature of work and place in contemporary organisations, and which may also hold relevance for contemporary systems psychodynamic thinking. These include: a changed and problematised 'socio-spatial contact' between individuals and organisations; the simultaneous reinforcement of flexibility and precariousness in the workplace; the entanglement of democratic and neo-Taylorist practices; and, ongoing debate about the relevance and future of the workplace in organisational life, and the status and role of the specialist workplace sector within this. Fourth, it introduces a theoretical and epistemic dimension to discussion of the workplace, and to subsequent sections of the literature review by outlining the concept of the 'spatial turn', developed within the social sciences to re-validate and re-problematise the status of space and place in contemporary ideas and culture. It is argued that the spatial turn provides a conceptual bridge for connecting contemporary ideas and themes developed within the systems psychodynamic tradition, for example in relation to the 'vanishing organisation', with discourse from other disciplines and

traditions concerning the nature of work and place in contemporary society, and exemplified by the 'agile' workplace.

3.2.1 The Vanishing Organisation and the workplace

Across two separate papers entitled 'The Vanishing Organisation: Emotional Containment in a Networked World', Cooper and Dartington (2004) and Cooper and Lousada (2005) critically assess the circumstances accompanying what they identify to be a global disappearance in contemporary organisational life of mechanisms and structures for personal dependency needs to be met or to derive emotional 'containment' - in Bion's formulation of 'container and contained', the capacity for individuals and groups to tolerate and convert traumatic experience into thought (Bion 1962). Writing from the perspectives of consulting to public sector organisations delivering 'welfare' services (Cooper and Lousada), and in wider organisational and sectoral contexts (Cooper and Dartington), the authors observe a disappearance or 'vanishing' of hitherto shared and accepted conventions relating to task, profession and demarcation, status and career progression. In this changed context, while working life is understood to have the potential to be more fluid and creative, it may also be economically precarious and at times individually, organisationally and societally toxic.

The authors of the 'vanishing organisation' texts locate this change in organisational experience within a socio-economic and political frame of reference and provide a psychoanalytically-informed account of its psychological and emotional consequences. With the former, an implicitly

Marxian stance is adopted to locate this disappearance of structures for containment as a function of a transitioning in society to 'networked' modes relatedness and an integral product of globalisation and neo-liberalism within the economy, society and organisational and political discourse. The authors also quote Abadi (2003) who provides a psychoanalytically-informed account of the emotional and psycho-social consequences of the dissolution of concrete boundaries within human experience and their replacement with electronic networks.

Through the presentation of an ostensibly new form of relatedness in organisations, and a faintly humoured but wary articulation of a sense of both tangible and intangible loss to working life that this confers - itself suggestive of the stage magician's apocryphal expression 'now you see it, now you don't!' - the idea of the 'vanishing organisation' carries both ethical and spatial-material connotations. In this context, the authors write evocatively about the emotional labour of working as if without boundaries in contemporary organisations and of the depleted emotional and material landscape that is encountered:

"Where once role, task, and authority in the context of a bounded system were the guarantors of the possibility of organisational sanity, the employee or manager now struts naked in the open-plan, hot-desking office of interorganizational vulnerability" (Coper and Dartington, p.148; Cooper and Lousada, p.176).

With this memorable sentence, the authors explicitly link emotionally uncontained and economically precarious experience in contemporary organisations with the physical organisation of the workplace, where the ‘open plan’ office and ‘hot desking’ practices represent cultural artefacts of a neo-liberal economic logic that is staged and reinforced both materially and spatially within everyday working life. However, in these texts, the specific nature of the interrelationship between the architecture and material culture of the contemporary workplace and emotional experience in the ‘vanishing organisation’ is not directly explored or elaborated.

3.2.2 Contemporary workplace typologies and design principles

Myerson and Ross (2022) describe how technological developments and changing ideological perspectives have interrelated to inform workplace design in the modern age. This is seen as having taken place across three overlapping stages, with first a ‘Taylorist’ and then a ‘social democratic’ model of office design, elements of whose material and cultural legacy now find contemporary expression in the model of the ‘networked’ office. In this account, the first modern offices were designed and created in the early twentieth-century in the United States and Western Europe to reflect ‘Taylorist’ principles of industrial production (named after Frederick Taylor who founded the practice of ‘scientific management’ in manufacturing), applied to office work. Using the advanced construction technologies of the age, which enabled the creation of large open spaces without requiring supporting walls, the ‘Taylorist’ office was subsequently codified by Leffingwell (2017) in the text ‘Scientific Office

Management' and advocated the standardisation of office practices in a heavily visually regulated and stratified environment.

However, following the mass-struggle of the Second World War, a new vision for the design and configuration of the office came into being, founded on a belief the capacity of the workplace to act as an agent of empowerment, teamwork and decentralised processes, characterised by Myerson and Rose as 'social democratic'. This included in continental Europe, the concept of *Bureaulandschaft* ('office landscape'), a cost effective open-plan methodology initiated in the context of post-war reconstruction during the nineteen fifties, which deployed groupings of individual workspaces in distinct geometric patterns to visually and spatially reinforce small-team cohesion within a wider vision of community; and in the United States, the model of the 'action office' (Propst, 1968), providing a suite of ergonomically adjustable and interchangeable desks, chairs, screens and units to create a model for office furniture that is universally recognisable in workplace settings to this day.

The third and most recent development of the workplace, the 'networked' office, is described by Myerson and Ross to have been established in response to the rise of the internet and the expansion of 'knowledge work' in organisational life. Here, the workplace is visioned as a flexible and fluid 'hub' which is responsive to organisational change and environmental volatility, and equipped to facilitate both in-person and networked activity, deploying artificial intelligence to regulate the internal environment through the monitoring and facilitating the use of space and resources. Within the 'networked' office, a number of key movements and

typologies for the organisation of work and place developed may be observed including in historical order 'lean', 'activity-based', 'agile', and then propelled into prominence by the Covid crisis and its aftermath, 'remote', 'distributed' and 'hybrid', all of which collectively contribute to the contemporary work landscape as it is currently encountered.

i) Lean working

Staats and Upton (2011) describe how 'lean' working developed during the 1970s out of a system adopted by Toyota for manufacturing cars to subsequently become applied globally across other industries and sectors, including finance and other 'white-collar' areas of work. Knight and Haslam (2010) describe 'lean' as being reflective of a later reapplication of centralising and hierarchical Taylorist principles to contemporary organisational contexts. In this context the 'lean' workplace is characterised by "the removal from the workspace of everything except the materials required to do the job at hand", the "tight managerial control of the workspace" and, a "standardization of managerial practice and workspace design" (p.158).

The centralising and totalising principles and practices of 'lean' are particularly evident in the concept of '5S' (Hirano 1996) which emphasises the exercise of visual, and visible, controls over the organisation of the physical workplace through five key processes: 'Sort' – removing unnecessary items from the workplace; 'Set in order' – making sure the workplace is organised with all objects in the correct place; 'Shine' – maintaining cleanliness of the work environment; 'Standardise' – establishing set ways of carrying out tasks;

‘Sustain’ – involving the workforce to maintain systems and processes. In practice, ‘lean’ workplace design has had a significant and foundational impact upon the design of the workplace in both corporate and public sector contexts in the United Kingdom since the nineteen eighties, where continuing efforts to rationalise and downsize workforces and negotiate the need for continuing flexibility has found material manifestation in the proliferation of minimalist open-plan spaces.

ii) Activity-based working

‘Activity-based working’ represents a methodology for the design of the workplace where a range of work settings are available for employees according to the nature of the task they are involved in as well as individual choice or preference. This concept was first articulated during the early stages of the digital era by Lucretti and Stone (1985) in a paper entitled ‘Your Office is Where You Are’ which provided a critique of the static or ‘cubicle-based’ model of workplace layout on grounds both of effectiveness and human experience: “The premise of the activity-settings approach is that one place – an all-purpose workstation per person – no longer suffices. Instead, people need multiple workplaces.” (p.106).

As an example of the implementation of activity-based working principles in a British context, the architecture practice DEGW (DEGW, 2008) collaborated with the government on the re-design of the civil service estate from a largely cellular workplace into an activity-based landscape. This deployed networked technology, open plan working spaces and ‘clear desk’ workplace policies to

effect two key objectives: first at a spatial level to achieve “the unlinking of work and place” (p.12) meaning that employees need not be restricted to specific physical locations and could therefore be more flexibly deployed according to organisational requirements; second, at an instrumental level, to establish the workplace in itself as an “agent of change” (p.1) such that its very physical configuration might reinforce both acceptance of and active engagement of the workforce with organisational change and restructuring processes. In a UK corporate and public sector context, ‘activity-based’ working effectively represents an ethical and material development from ‘lean’ that is more supportive of ‘knowledge work’, advocating for and facilitating access to a range of different work settings, reinforcing personal discretion in the context in which work is carried out, and also validating the physical quality of the working environment.

iii) Agile working

In a workplace context, the term ‘agile’ was first used at the end of the twentieth century as a descriptor of a set of principles for flexible working practice within in the emergent software design industry in California. This was encapsulated in the sixty-eight word ‘Manifesto for Agile Software Development’, popularly known as the ‘agile manifesto’ which was released as a public resource in 2001, and which is quoted below in its entirety:

“We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools

Working software over comprehensive documentation

Customer collaboration over contract negotiation

Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.” (Beck et al, 2001a)

Here, a method of organising work is advocated which deploys the activity of small and flexible teams that are unconstrained by formalised organisational systems and processes. In an addendum to the manifesto, the authors identify a set of twelve principles which underpin ‘agile’ working. These include the preference for completing projects within shorter timescales, welcoming the changing requirements of customers, even at a late stage of development and efficiently “maximising the amount of work not done” on a project. Crucially the authors advocate the deployment of “self-organising teams” working face-to-face in a shared physical space, and which are both trusted and materially equipped to deliver on projects: “Build projects around motivated individuals, give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.” (Beck et al, 2001b).

Following its publication, the principles of workplace organisation described in the *Agile Manifesto* became popularised within other sectors and contexts outside of the technology industry, leading to a development of formalised behaviours and practices termed “agile project management” (Oseland, 2021,

p135). These are described by Rigby, Sutherland and Takeuchi (2016) to include work taking place in small changeable project teams or 'scrums', the practice of convening 'standing meetings' (where in order to minimise the time taken by meetings, participants stand rather than sitting down), and planned activity being completed in time-limited 'sprints' under the direction of a 'process facilitator' or 'scrum master'. Here, the authors acknowledge that 'agile' working practices may be most appropriate for sectors characterised by environmental and technological change rather than more stable and established contexts requiring the delivery of standardised interventions, where close collaboration with customers and clients is understood as being both possible and desirable, and performance of task is linked to product innovation and engagement with complex and novel problems. Accordingly, as with 'activity-based' working, agile practices appear to lend themselves to forms of 'knowledge work' a term first coined by the organisational theorist Peter Drucker and referring to work informed by a "shifting from the production of objects to manipulation of abstractions, ideas and concepts" (Visser, 2005, p.14).

'Agile' has subsequently become used as a generalised term for more flexible working practice applied across a range of different sectors (Rigby, Sutherland and Takeuchi, 2016) and within the applied fields of workplace design, facilities management, human resource management and corporate real estate where it has taken on a further range of diverse and contested meanings relating to the organisation of work and place in contemporary organisational contexts. For example, in an early re-definition, Joroff et al (2003) locates 'agile' within an emergent 'ecosystem' of planned urban space and organisational design

facilitated through the rise of networked communications, through which a “dynamic relationship between work and the workplace and the tools of work” may be achieved (p.293). Alternatively, writing from the perspective of commercial workplace design, Alsop (2009), describes ‘agile’ as:

“[...] bringing people, processes, connectivity and technology, time and place together to find the most appropriate and effective way of working to carry out a particular task. It is working within guidelines (of the task) but without boundaries (of how to achieve it).”

From a perspective of corporate real estate management, Kane (2020) defines ‘agile’ in terms of facilities that offer “maximum flexibility and minimum constraint in the way employees work” (p.240), while Oseland (2021), an environmental psychologist, frames it as the establishment of new forms of culture and management in large organisations assisted by the intersection of flexible work patterns facilitated by human resource management; systems for remote working facilitated by information technology; and, shared workspace facilitated by facilities management and corporate real estate functions. However, in all formulations of ‘agile’, the sustainment of working practices that reinforce organisational adaptability and resilience in the face of volatile environmental and market conditions is understood as imperative.

iv) Remote, Distributed and Hybrid working

O’Meara and Cooper (2022) provide an account of the growth of ‘remote’, ‘distributed’ and ‘hybrid’ working practices in a contemporary organisations,

which represents a revolutionary but still developing field of activity. While work from a variety of locations away from the office has historically been an integral feature of organisational life, the growth of networked communications and video conferencing platforms from the late twentieth century onwards has enabled 'remote' working practices to flourish. From an information technology and facilities management perspective, 'distributed' working refers to the capacity for individuals and teams to be equipped to work productively from a range of different physical settings within systems of organisational governance and accountability. As a development of this, 'hybrid' working refers to the simultaneous collaboration between on-site and remote workers, again utilising networked communications and protocols for coordinating meetings and decision-making processes.

Berkun (2013) provided a foundational account of how using networked communications, including video-conferencing, email and chat applications, it became readily possible for a team of workers to operate flexibly from any place in the world, maintaining emotional connection with colleagues and keeping on-task, within a functioning system of organisational and corporate governance. In effect, Berkun's presentation of the potential of 'remote' and 'distributed' working provided a model for corporate working practices adopted by organisations at a near-universal scale in response to the Covid-19 crisis, where over a very short period of time in early 2020 the vast majority of office activity transferred to working online from home, with only publicly essential activity taking place in an in-person context using social distancing – and establishing a 'new normal' environment and context for working life.

However, while the capacity of 'remote' and distributed' modes of working to sustain organisational activity was brought into focus by the Covid crisis, at a moment of organisational, societal and cultural trauma, it has been observed that its underpinning technologies were already at a stage of advanced development. Accordingly, O'Meara and Cooper (Ibid.) state that "Flexible working was on the agenda before we even know what Covid was" (p.4). Thus, rather than evidencing a revolutionary shift in the relationship between work and place, the impact of 'lockdown' restrictions and the resultant changes to working life only served to accelerate pre-existing trends in the use of networked technology in organisations which have still to be fully concluded.

3.2.3 Key themes and challenges

The contemporary workplace in its 'agile', 'lean', 'activity-based', 'remote', 'distributed' and 'hybrid' forms has surfaced a range of interrelated challenges which have been registered within the workplace sector and wider social sciences. These include: a changed and problematised 'socio-spatial contract' linking individuals and groups to organisations; the simultaneous reinforcement of flexibility and precariousness through the workplace; and an entanglement of democratic and neo-Taylorist practices within the contemporary workplace. Further, debate exists within the specialist workplace sector around the continuing relevance of the workplace, an observed convergence between workplace sector specialisms, and the future of the workplace.

i) A changed and problematised Socio-Spatial Contract

In the context of the profound changes that have taken place within organisational life within individual memory, the tension between human expectations around the structuring of organisational life and nature of the workplace environment, and its realisation in practice represents a clear contemporary challenge. Vischer (2005), an environmental psychologist, describes how by the beginning of the twenty-first century, human experience of organisational life and the workplace had changed profoundly from previous eras, impacted by a range of interrelated technological, socio-economic and cultural factors, including:

"the dematerialisation of the economy ... the breakdown of fixed time-space barriers that characterise work in traditional corporations [...] increasing reliance on outsourcing and contract workers, rapid acceleration of mergers and acquisitions, as well as divestments, and flattened organisational hierarchy" (p.14).

Vischer argues that these changes in the nature of work and organisational life, all results of the rise of networked technology and globalisation, and the development of a knowledge economy during the late twentieth century, are seen to have resulted in a profound disruption to a 'socio-spatial contract' - the sets of tacit expectations and assumptions that individuals and groups negotiate in organisations in relation to access and ownership of space, including their level of physical movement and personal privacy.

“This contract, never made explicit and rarely acknowledged unless violated, includes space as a key component of the deal that both sides make when an employee joins a company [...] Workspace is a symbol of a contractual agreement between employers and their employees that is implicitly understood and rarely questioned. It is a powerful mechanism for communicating the meaning of work, and its symbolism underpins the importance of territory in the workplace.” (p.5)

Vischer observes a frequent mismatch occurring between expectations around the relationship between work and place that are founded upon individuals' formative organisational experience, and the workplace as it exists in its contemporary manifestation, such that dynamics relating to the expression of territoriality may frequently become manifest and problematic. In this context, concerns about 'user experience' and the ways in which individuals and groups interact with and make sense of the workplace in their daily activity has gained prominence within the workplace design sector. Starting in a pre-covid context, numerous studies have observed a poor quality of user experience coupled with impaired levels of productivity in many open-plan office environments. For example, in a study on the experience of employees occupying high density open plan workplaces, Bernstein (2014) coins the expression 'the transparency trap' to describe how such environments can serve to increase levels of personal territoriality, thus "reducing productivity and, paradoxically, transparency." (p.61). Bernstein and Weber (2019) further describe how the effectiveness of managers operating at the boundary of organisational sub-systems may be eroded in open-plan environments. However, by contrast,

Congdon, Flynn and Redman (2014) vision the workplace, at its most effective and efficient, as a form of consciously designed-for ecosystem where through creating a balance between experience at the level of 'me' and 'we', both human needs and productivity may be accommodated.

The concept of a 'socio-spatial contract' may also be understood to hold implications for work carried out in an online context. For example, during the Covid crisis, one key trend within organisations globally was a recorded high level of voluntary turnover of employees from organisations, a phenomenon dubbed 'the great resignation' (Anderson, Klotz, Welteroth, 2021) followed by an observed preference of employees to 'rebalance' the amount of time they spend in the physical workplace as opposed to working remotely, characterised by an increase in the take up 'remote' working arrangements (Hobsbawm 2022). There has also been an observed slow increase of employees being present in the physical workplace accompanied by attempts by some organisations, senior managers and sectoral leaders to seek a substantial rebalancing in favour of in-person and onsite activity (Ambrose 2023). However, in the context of networked technologies and the 'electronic' workplace now effectively forming an integral element of the contemporary work landscape, protocols for effective use and curation of 'in-office', 'remote' and 'hybrid' working represent an emergent field and subject to ongoing debate within organisations and research within the workplace design sector, for example Steelcase (2022); Herman Miller (2022).

ii) Simultaneous reinforcement of flexibility and precariousness

Through its environmental adaptability, the contemporary work landscape may be observed to actively reinforce two sets of contrasting discourses and dynamics. In one context, at the level of the employer, this may reflect positive ideals of organisational flexibility. However, in addition to its potentially dynamic and creative character, the contemporary workplace may be understood to function as setting, stage, active agent and material artefact for economically and socially exploitative relations within organisational life, leading to personal experience of environmental poverty and precariousness.

Beginning with its more benign characteristics, the capacity of ‘activity based’, ‘agile’ and ‘remote’ working environments to flex according to the task and organisational circumstances has already been observed to make them particularly amenable to the performance of ‘knowledge work’ (Rigby, Sutherland and Takeuchi, *Ibid.*) and to be deployed by senior managers to act as an “agent of change” (DEGW, *Ibid.*) within an organisation with an established working culture, and by implication, operating under an established socio-spatial contract (Vischer, *Ibid.*). Building on this capacity of the contemporary workplace for reinforcing flexibility, the term ‘permanent beta’- coined by O’Reilly (2005) to describe the conditions in technology development where through routine updating and reconfiguration, a product may be kept indefinitely at the stage of the moment of launch – has subsequently entered workplace discourse to embody the principle that through continuous testing and curation, conditions may be created whereby flexibility becomes routinised within an organisation’s culture, through its workplace. In this context, Usher

(2018), an advocate for contemporary forms of workplace design, argues that “space is a journey, not a product [...] the organisation rarely stands still, so the space will need to move with it” (pp.55-56). In this formulation, the continuous re-configuration of the workplace to accommodate new forms of internal organisation, activity and cultures represents a protective facilities policy ensuring organisational relevance in the face of a volatile external environment.

However, as well as providing a foundation for flexibility adaptability and dynamism, the contemporary work landscape, characterised by ‘lean’, ‘activity based’, ‘agile’ and ‘remote’ forms of workplace organisation has been also observed to reinforce socially and economically exploitative relations, and contribute to the environmental poverty of those accordingly marginalised. For example, one near universal challenge encountered within ‘lower-status’ working environments is that of noise, as described by Cain (2013) who stresses the particular challenges faced by people with introverted personality traits in the contemporary workplace. Further, Oseland (Ibid.) provocatively describes how the combination of enforced co-presence, noise, space poorly configured to task and the resultant diminished productivity as creating, in the worst examples, environments analogous to a ‘human zoo’.

Standing (2021) provides a sociological account of how, in the context of the establishment of a globalised economy, a new social class termed ‘the precariat’ consisting in many countries of at least one quarter of the adult population has been created. The precariat is understood to have been enabled to exist through the unregulated activity of labour markets to create a group

characterised by low pay, insecure and unstable working lives, reliance upon short-term, part-time and 'zero-hours' contracts, and a lack of access to the social protection and in-work benefits, such as allowances for paid holidays, sick leave and parental leave, that more stable employment can make possible. Further, in the context of the universality of networked communications in the twenty-first century, routine remote working also represents a key element of 'precaritised' working life. Standing argues that the precariat does not represent a single homogenous grouping, but rather consists of different groups "with different degrees of insecurity and attitudes to having a precariat existence" (p.103) including migrant workers, people who have been subject to criminalising processes, the young seeking work experience as interns or taking on low-paid temporary roles in the service sector, older people seeking to top up limited pensions and also people choosing to work in consultative or portfolio roles. However, all these groups are united in their reliance upon organisational and economic relationships which are essentially transient, even nomadic, and insecure. In this context, the contemporary work landscape, as well as furnishing environments and cultures that promote flexibility, fluidity and change within organisations may also be understood to provide an active stage for the reinforcement of economically and socially precarious relations.

iii) Entanglement of democratic and neo-Taylorist practices

The contemporary workplace and its associated practices and conventions may also be understood to embody and actively reinforce two sets of contrasting organisational ideologies: on one side democratic principles and practices, on the other a contemporary assertion of Taylorism. In terms of the embracement

of democracy, the 'activity based' and 'agile' models for workplace organisation in 'knowledge work' invoke the adoption of flattened hierarchies in decision making, flexibility of task and working conditions, close collaboration, for example through the 'scrum' in 'agile' practice (Rigby, Sutherland and Takeuchi, *Ibid.*), and the exercise of choice in location and setting of working environment (Lucretti and Stone, *Ibid.*). Further, within 'distributed' and 'hybrid' models, there exists a measure of flexibility and choice around working at the office or from other remote locations, including home. Also central to these practices at an organisational level are an adoption employee 'engagement' practices, workplace diversity, and workplace wellbeing initiatives, with an aim to create an organisational culture and working environment experienced as healthy and ethically grounded, creating what Fenton-Jarvis (2022) advocates as a 'human-centric workplace'.

However, as well as invoking practices which invoke a vision of work and organisational life as being emancipatory for individual and collective human experience, and that reflect the practices of the 'social democratic' office, the contemporary work landscape also incorporates practices reflective of a contemporary manifestation of Taylorism. Myerson and Ross (*Ibid.*) define neo-Taylorism as a contemporary re-application of the principals of scientific office management using digital and networked technologies. In their historical account of the development of 'Taylorist', 'social-democratic' and 'networked' models of workplace organisation, Myerson and Ross (*Ibid.*) and Saval (2014) observe how 'Taylorist' practices persisted in many ostensibly 'social-democratic' workplace settings, for example in the differential location and

accommodation of workers according to their level of status, and in the iconoclastic and sometimes totalising 'campus' workplaces developed within the technology sector during the early twenty-first century. Further, Saval (2014) describes how the model of the 'Action Office', designed to liberate human potential as an integral element of the 'social democratic' office ended up providing the dehumanising models for both the 'cubicle farm' of the 1970s and 1980s, and with the screens taken away, the open-plan and minimalist 'lean' office. Here, Saval quotes a conversation with the workplace architect Francis Duffy, who evocatively describes the mechanics through which this identified environmentally and societally retrograde shift took place:

"I saw it happen ... there was a moment when the orthogonal [right angle] came in. Someone figured out that you didn't need the 120-degree, and it went click. That was a bad day [...] It took only five seconds for Action Office to turn into a box" (p.220).

As an example of how contemporary corporate workplace design principles actively incorporate neo-Taylorist principles, Deloitte (2021) envisions the future of work as being a function of technology and a more flexible workforce shaped by two key practices: "the growing adoption of artificial intelligence in the workplace, and the expansion of the workforce to include both on - and off - balance sheet talent" (Deloitte 2021) – in effect directly advocating for the workforce flexibility and precariousness that Standing (Ibid.) writing from a sociological perspective observes and decries.

iv) Questioning the relevance and visioning the future of the workplace

Accompanying changes in the configuration of the workplace and the reach of networked technology within organisational life, have been discussion of a crisis of adaptability of older modes of design and debate about the very purpose of work and the workplace. For example, Duffy (2008) likens the status of the remaining examples of twentieth-century 'Taylorist' office building, and the associated practices and cultures which have helped to design, build and sustain them to that of dinosaurs "lumbering to extinction" in the face of technical and societal change. In this context, Greenwald (2015) announced "the death of nine to five", brought about in-part by the rise of freelancing creating greater flexibility in working patterns, while at the start of the covid crisis Nixey (2020) observed the "death of the office" as work previously carried out in them continued via remote working. Further, Gratton (2022) argues that the current relative uncertainty in organisations around the appropriate balance between remote and in-person activity represents a point of potential creativity and opportunity to "reimagine place". Similarly, Myserson and Ross advocate the creation of spaces created by and facilitating what they define as "unworking": a "process by which we might unbundle the old assumptions that are baked into the modern office and unlearn the habits, management styles and cultures that are so ingrained in us." (2022, Ibid. p.14).

Operating at the intersection of workplace design and organisational change consultancy, Usher (2018) proposes that the contemporary organisational and corporate workplace may be effectively and productively 'deconstructed' into twelve core elements, combining organisational and social practices with

human needs, forming elemental 'building blocks' from which new work environments may be visioned and recreated. These numbered elements are:

- 1) "Daylight" – "access to as much daylight in the workplace as possible, to provide a permanent visual connection to the external environment".
- 2) "Connectivity" – "Fix the technology. Fix it now."
- 3) "Space" – A balanced ratio of space per occupant that is neither too crowded, or too isolating.
- 4) "Choice" – In line with principles of 'activity-based' working – the capacity of occupants to work from a range of settings and configurations.
- 5) "Influence" – the active involvement of occupants in the design and review of the workplace.
- 6) "Control" – the ability of occupants to regulate the level of temperature and lighting in environments, and also to be protected from excessive exposure to workplace noise.
- 7) "Refresh" – the provision of adequate access to spaces to eat, drink, relax and socialise.

- 8) “Sense” – Integrating colour, texture, sound and scent in the design of the workplace.
- 9) “Comfort” – How the conditions for personal comfort may be strengthened through setting design and product specifications.
- 10) “Inclusion” – Ensuring that the workplace is accessible and usable in terms of physical and neuro diversity and is not designed for a pre-determined social demographic.
- 11) “Wash” – “One of the strongest value signals that can be sent to the occupants of a building is to create a fantastic washroom experience.”
- 12) “Storage” – The availability of adequate on-site space to store clothing, bags and other personal objects, bicycles as well as paperwork and equipment for work.

[Usher 2018 pp.74-144]

While contributing to the re-imagining of the status and form of the workplace within contemporary organisations, one significant issue that has been observed to directly impact upon the specialist workplace sector itself (alongside other areas of work) has been a shifting of authority and responsibility in relation to established disciplines, for example through a development within the discipline of facilities management to locate and assert

the workplace and its curation at the 'ethical' centre of organisational and corporate life to create a "human-centric workplace" that is supportive of human diversity and environmental sustainability (Fenton-Jarvis, Ibid.). As another example, Cane (Ibid.) writes that for decades a gulf "existed between the delivery of a [commercial] building and how it is taken over by a tenant" (p.20). However, in the context of the rise of knowledge work and the development of the networked office, an increasing convergence of interest, fluidity and interdependence has been observed within the workplace sector between the fields of corporate real estate management, architecture and interior design, facilities management, human resource management, information and communications technology management and occupational health functions, as well as a convergence between these functions and organisational change consultancy, as is demonstrated by a range of authors within the workplace sector including Cane (Ibid.) Fenton-Jarvis (Ibid.), Oseland (Ibid.) and Usher (2017 Ibid.; 2020).

Visioning the longer-term future of the workplace in society, Myerson and Ross reference earlier work identity four 'realms' for the accommodation of knowledge work in the networked age which invoke forms of spatial design and social relations derived from historical precedent (Myerson and Ross, 2006): Accordingly, the 'corporate realm' is termed 'Academy' and is visioned on an archetypical renaissance-era university quadrangle or courtyard, modelling a collaborative and collegiate model for carrying out knowledge work that approximates the 'social democratic' office; The 'public realm' is termed 'Agora' and visioned on the permeable commercial and social space (for the slave-

owning elite) that existed in ancient Athens; The 'professional realm' is termed 'Guild' and is visioned on medieval craft societies where the clustering of professional colleagues may take place within a context of low public or corporate visibility; and, the 'domestic or private realm' is termed 'Lodge', visioned on the privately-owned residencies which historically accommodated the early banks and trading companies, in effect the domestic setting which came into close view and took on particular importance in organisational life during the Covid crisis. However, the human, socio-political and cultural implications of modelling workplace organisation on historic examples that pre-date the establishment of contemporary democratic principles and practices remains to be assessed.

3.2.4 Theorising the status of place and space in contemporary society and organisations

The changes that have occurred in living memory in relation to the design and organisation of the workplace have been characterised by Duffy (2008) in epochal terms as being "at least as far-reaching and irreversible as the impact, two hundred years ago, of the Industrial Revolution on English society and the English landscape" (p.8). As an aid to reflecting on the transformation of the experience of work and place in organisations and to help make sense of the nature and limits of human knowledge and experience in this new environment, it is helpful to draw upon the concept of the 'spatial turn'. The 'spatial turn' has been articulated within the field of human geography by Warf and Arias (2014), and other authors to refer to a global epistemic 'shift' observed within contemporary ideas and culture where the themes of space and spatiality have

been understood to become highlighted and problematised. It is in this context that Cresswell (2015) cites the Human Geographer Jeff Malpas (2010) for referring to the theme of 'place' as being "perhaps the key term for interdisciplinary research in the arts, humanities and social sciences in the twenty-first century" (p.1).

While a contemporary phenomenon, it may be noted that there do exist a number of intellectual antecedents to the 'spatial turn' which were articulated in France during the mid-twentieth century and are representative of an early problematisation or drawing attention to space and place within geographic, cultural, political and philosophical discourse, and continue to carry resonance today. These include within phenomenological philosophy, Bachelard (1994 [1958]), Marxist praxis, Debord (1958) and Poststructuralism, Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) and Foucault (**** [1961]) (all of which are discussed further in section 3.4.2). However, for Warf and Arias, the 'spatial turn' within twenty-first Century ideas represents a consequence of socio-economic and socio-technological disruption, where the emergence a globalised economy assisted by networked communications are understood to have effectively "undermined commonly held notions of Euclidean space" (p.5) (through which the interrelation of physical objects may be mapped across three dimensions). Accordingly, the socio-economic relations that networked communications affords, the nature of human experience of place in both a physical and an online context, and changed physical organisation of the workplace together present opportunities for re-thinking the contemporary nature of place and space in organisations, society and culture. In this context the 'turn' that is invoked carries two

meanings: a looking backwards to view a 'distance travelled' in our experience of place and space, as well as a fundamental conceptual 'shift' in the understanding of its contemporary qualities.

Warf and Arias consider that one particular context in which space and spatiality now carry a changed epistemic weight is in relation to the themes of time and temporality. Thus, by facilitating an epochal "re-insertion of space into the social sciences and humanities" (p.1), the 'spatial turn' is understood as enabling:

"a re-working of the very notion and significance of spatiality to offer a perspective in which space is every bit as important as time in the unfolding of human affairs, a view in which geography is not relegated to an afterthought of social relations, but is ultimately involved in their construction." (p.2)

Accordingly, as a corollary of spatiality and spatialised experience in contemporary society, organisational dynamics observed within the contemporary workplace, including its 'lean', 'activity-based', 'agile' and networked forms may be understood as providing an opportunity for establishing new meanings and insights, as well as providing an opportune frame of reference for further exploration of the themes of place and space within the systems psychodynamic tradition and invoking the 'spatial turn'. In this context, the theme of the 'vanishing organisation', through its identification of the disappearance of established structures and mechanisms for deriving containment in the emotional life of contemporary organisations, may also be

understood as being an integrally spatial concept and integral artefact of the 'spatial turn'. For example, both 'vanishing organisation' texts reference Abadi (ibid.) who provides a psychoanalytically-informed account of the emotional and psycho-social consequences of the dissolution of concrete boundaries within human experience and their replacement with electronic networks; a scenario which may be understood as being analogous to the dual character of the contemporary work landscape as already presented, which simultaneously reinforces flexibility and precariousness while entangling democratic and neo-Taylorist practice:

“There are worldwide networks that cut through geographical, political and cultural frontiers [...] it seems that where there was a border, there now is a network. In its luminous aspect, it is a symbol-generating and containing fabric that modulates, diversifies and expends. In its ominous aspect, it spells dislocation, disintegration and degradation” (p.223)

The 'vanishing organisation' texts (along with Abadi) also cite the social, political and spatial theorist Manuel Castells for having coined the term 'network society' (Castells, 2000a) from the beginning of the internet age in the late nineteen-eighties. This refers to the combined technological infrastructure and social practices that enables networked modes of communication to take place. In outlining the network society, Castells identifies two separate classes of 'space' as existing historically within human society: a 'space of places' informed by 'contiguity', the state of social relatedness through co-proximity along a physical boundary; and a newly ascendant, technologically enabled 'space of flows'

defined as “the technological and organisational possibility of organising the simultaneity of social practices without geographical contiguity” (Castells, 2000b, p.14) which had hitherto existed solely within and along historic trade routes and centres of financial exchange. Here, Castells identifies a paradox of place and organisation in the late twentieth century, effectively anticipating a subordination of physical place to the ‘flow’ of networked communication which we can now readily identify today: “while organisations are located in places [...] the organizational logic is placeless, being fundamentally dependent on the space of flows that characterises information networks” (Castells, 1989, p.169), presciently describing the status of organisations as reliant on networked communications. In the context of the contemporary workplace, Castell’s concepts of ‘the space of places’ and ‘space of flows’ is also significant because it highlights the dual-nature of much of contemporary organisational life, simultaneously located in a physical workplace characterised by physical or ‘contiguous’ space, while also existing in an online and electronic ‘space of flows’.

One further sociological and spatial theme not referred to in the ‘vanishing organisation’ texts, but of particular relevance to the contemporary workplace in the context of Castells’ contributions, is the concept of the ‘non-place’ developed by the social and spatial theorist Marc Augé, which effectively relates the spatialised dimension of the ‘vanishing organisation’ to the physical workplace of organisations. For Augé, the non-place represents a key artifact of cultural, political and economic ‘supermodernity’ within the built environment, understood as “space which cannot be defined as relational or historical, or

concerned with identity” (Augé, 2009, p.63). The non-place is seen to proliferate as liminal sites in the infrastructure of contemporary networked society, for example through near-identical transportation hubs, franchised food outlets and meeting spaces. As such, this concept draws close comparison to Castells, where the ‘non-place’ may be considered representative of the space of places as ‘rendered’ to the space of flows, permitting a conceptual linkage between the ‘vanishing organisation’, and the material, spatial and socio-cultural organisation of the contemporary ‘agile’ work landscape.

In a similar way to how advocates of the ‘spatial turn’ in-part locate its significance in the contemporary problematisation of three-dimensional or ‘Euclidean’ space following the rise of networked modes of communication and globalised socio-economic relationships, the ‘vanishing organisation’ texts relate observed changes in the bounded status of organisations to wider socio-political, socio-economic and technological themes. Accordingly, the theme of the ‘vanishing organisation’ represents a promising bridge and point of departure for connecting discourse within the systems psychodynamic tradition about the nature of place in contemporary organisations, with debate taking place within the workplace sector, the wider social sciences and culture.

3.3 The workplace and consultancy (i): Psychoanalytic foundations

This section commences a two-part account of the workplace in systems psychodynamic theory, research, and practice with a discussion of how psychoanalytic themes may support an understanding of place. This begins with an exploratory assessment of how key elements of Freud's theoretical and practice foundations; the 'archaeological metaphor', dreams and dreamwork and the configuration of furniture and objects in the psychoanalytic consulting space, may all be understood to invoke spatial themes. Then, there is a discussion of how first key themes within object relations derived theory, including projective identification, containment and thinking, Winnicott's concept of 'holding', and experience of loss and trauma, and then attachment theory, all contribute to an understanding of the origins and nature of intra-psychic spatial experience. The section concludes by arguing how these themes combine with later Bion's concept of O, to provide the foundations from which it is possible to start to articulate a psychoanalytically-informed understanding of space, place and materiality in an organisational context.

3.3.1 Theoretical and practice origins

i) The Archaeological Metaphor

In *The Aetiology of Hysteria* Freud (1896) draws an analogy between psychoanalytic practice and a colonial-era archaeological investigation, where the physician's engagement with a patient is likened to an archaeologist's endeavour to systematically discover and analyse physical artefacts stratified-by-time to "yield undreamed-of information about the events of the remote past,

to commemorate which the monuments were built". Expanding this comparison, Freud defines the task of the analyst as being "to lead the patient's attention back from his symptom to the scene in which and through which that symptom arose" surfacing "mnemonic symbols" which "make themselves heard as witnesses to the history of the origin of the illness" (ibid p.193). The account ends expressively with the Latin declamation "*Saxa loquuntur!*" [the stones talk] (Freud, 1896, p.192).

By relating psychoanalysis to both archaeology and the themes of place and time, Freud invokes what has been subsequently termed 'the archaeological metaphor' within psychoanalytic discourse (Kuspit, 1989; Hake, 1993). Kuspit describes this metaphor as being "emblematic of the psychoanalytic approach":

"The archaeological metaphor, embodiment of the process of stratification, articulates spatial and temporal stratification simultaneously. It permits Freud to talk of the psyche in spatial and temporal terms, that is as a structure and process at once.

Archaeologically speaking, they are in principle one and the same."

(p.142)

Hake describes the spatially-informed archaeological metaphor as providing a potent "generative metaphor" which "creates through its images the very objects it professes to represent" (Hake, ibid. p.150). Thus, the very themes, associations and meanings which archaeology invokes in psychoanalytic

discourse may be understood to contribute actively and directly to its theoretical and clinical aims.

ii) Dreams and dream-work

The phenomenon of dreams may be understood as being significant as they provide one direct means through which the encounter with space, place and materiality is mediated within everyday human experience. In 'the Interpretation of Dreams' Freud (1900) describes how the 'manifest' content of dreams is formed through three interdependent mechanisms of 'dream-work' which act to process the 'day's residues', the accumulated sensory traces from waking life. Here, 'condensation' refers to how a single image or symbol in a dream may draw together and combine numerous contributory elements from individual experience; 'displacement' to how one element characterised by a high level of emotional intensity may be substituted for another characterised by less; and, 'secondary revision', where the content of a dream is remodelled from a waking position. For Freud, these mechanisms collectively serve to protect or censor the conscious mind from an awareness the psyches' underlying violent and libidinal nature, and when applied to a patient's dreams in psychoanalytic treatment indicate "the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind" (p.608).

Later psychoanalytic approaches to dreams also consider dream-work as representing a process of conversion of sensory data and unconscious thoughts and phantasy but within a modified theoretical context. For example, Klein (1935) considers the phenomenon of dream-work to represent a process for

working through in phantasy of destructive and reparative urges in relation to the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, while Lewin (1946) articulates the spatialised metaphor and concept of the 'dream screen', a blank surface representing a phantasised representation of the maternal breast onto which dreams are 'projected'. However, as a departure from this orthodox position, Bion considers the process of dreaming to extend beyond an unconscious processing of trauma and phantasy to become the actual means through which sensory data is processed and consciousness is attained, where the phenomenon of day-dreaming is ascribed an equivalent status to night-dreaming. Thus, in an entry from 1959 Bion writes: "*Freud* says Aristotle states that a dream is the way the mind works in sleep. I say it is the way it works when awake" (Bion, 1994, p.43). By extension and according to this formulation, dreams and dream work may be understood as foundational means through which everyday sensory experience of place and space are mediated within human consciousness.

iii) The analyst's office

The conditions and conventions first established by Freud for the organisation of space and objects in the psychoanalyst's consulting room demonstrates in the most direct way how psychoanalytic theory and practice connects with the theme of place. Writing about the layout, décor and iconography of Freud's consulting room in Vienna at Bergasse 19, and its subsequent influence across psychoanalytic traditions, Kurtz (1986) describes the analyst's office as holding a conceptual affinity with the scholar's room or cell, a place for reflection and reverie both in the context of solitude and the presence of patients. Through

this, an analyst is understood to maintain an environment to both contain and conserve the various parts of their self, making it “a pure creative act that mobilises and gives *concrete, indeed institutional expression* to the most primitive elements in his personality” (ibid) [my italics]. Kurtz further identifies a direct lineage from the design, function and use of the very first consulting room and later analytic spaces, such that “... every analyst to some degree recreates that office in the Bergasse. And every analysand, walking into such a room, enters a dimension of Freud’s (and of the analyst’s) personality realized in space” (ibid).

While not always used in practice, the couch represents a foundational methodological tool and symbolic object within the psychoanalytic ‘workplace’. In Freud’s description of the analytic setting in *On Beginning the Treatment* (1913), the patient lies on their back on a couch while the physician sits behind them out of view. Two rationales are provided for this arrangement: The first, that the interrelationship between a prone patient and a seated physician represents “a remnant of the hypnotic method” (Freud, 1913, p.133) from which psychoanalysis developed; the second, “to prevent the transference from mingling with the patient’s associations imperceptibly, to isolate the transference and allow it to come forward in due course sharply defined as a resistance” (ibid p.134), in effect to establish conditions in which unconscious thought can be invoked and made apparent within the controlled co-presence of physician and patient.

Writing about the architecture and physical configuration of the psychoanalytic consulting room, Danze (2005) observes that it instrumentally enforces “a particular kind of spatial hierarchy” that “transforms the space of the room from a passive container to a full participant in the work” (Danze 2005). Here, the analyst is “privileged from a very specific position of prospect” in relation to the patient, in a way that is “blatantly non-symmetrical and reinforces a non-symmetrical relationship”, in order to facilitate the task of accessing and working with the unconscious. Within sessions, both analyst and patient are both intimately connected but apart: “The two exist in the room together yet are able to roam imaginatively and physically, freely apart” in conditions where “looking not at any particular focal point, there is made to exist a spatial openness, an implied spatial potential for infinity” (ibid).

In their accounts of the psychoanalytic consulting room, Kurtz and Danze both stress the individually transformational nature of the psychoanalytic project and see it as grounded both in the application of theory, practice and experience mediated through the instrumental organisation of physical space and objects. Here, both also cite the statement by the French writer Noel Arnaud “je suis l’espece ou je suis” [I am the space where I am]: Kurtz to signal the co-presence of analyst and patient in the space of the consulting room, where the primitive emotional states of both analyst and patient can be contained and utilised to facilitate consciousness and change; Danze to state the integrity of self and place, and how “it is impossible to detach the image of Self [in psychoanalysis] from its spatial or situational existence” (Danze, ibid).

3.3.2 Object relations and intra-psychic spatial experience

'Object relations' in Kleinian theory refers to the action of unconscious internal processes by which the self is understood to relate dynamically to others, forming a foundation for 'intra-psychic' activity, the "ideas, conflicts, or other psychological phenomena that arise or occur within the psyche or mind" (APA, 2018). As such it holds a multifaceted character within discourse, and is described by Ogden (1979) as "a psychological process that is simultaneously a type of defence, a mode of communication, a primitive form of object relationship, and a pathway for psychological change". Object relations are understood as manifest powerfully in two key contexts: the interrelationship between the very young child and their mother and in the analytic encounter. In this context, the term 'object' represents "a component in the mental representation of an instinct" (Hinshelwood, 1991, p,362), or "the stuff of a child's phantasy life" (Bott Spillius et. al., 2011, p.423) and as such can relate to a person, part of a person, or a symbol for either.

i) Projective identification and containment

For Klein, a key dynamic in object relations is that of 'projective identification' a "deflected drive to control parts of the self" manifest in early years in the 'paranoid schizoid position' and continuing to a greater or lesser extent through childhood and adult life (Klein, 1946). Using powerful spatial metaphors to describe this process, painful feelings or sensations are understood to be split off and 'projected' into another person or object, while more pleasurable external or environmental experience, for example the mother's breast (or in a

clinical context, the analyst's attention) may be 'introjected' and therefore owned.

In developmental and clinical contexts, the action of emotional 'containing' or 'containment' represents a key dynamic underpinning psychological growth. In Klein's formulation containment is derived directly from an original understanding of projective identification where "one person in some sense contains a part of another" (Hinshelwood, *ibid*, p.246). The theme of containment was subsequently developed by Bion in *Learning From Experience* (Bion, 1984), first published in 1962, and thereafter, through two complementary and spatialised concepts, one expressly relational, the other invoking the transfer of energy and matter in particle physics: In 'container and contained', also presented symbolically as ♀♂, Bion describes how the mother is able through a state of 'reverie' to introject the violent projections of the young child to support an emotionally containing processing of thought which the child can then in turn successfully re-introject, and which is used as a descriptor for corresponding relationship involving therapist and patient. By contrast, the related concept of 'alpha function', also referenced via the ancient Greek letters α and β , or as α -function and β -function, relates to the action of dream work, which Bion considers to take place constantly in both sleeping and waking states. Beta elements represent unprocessed introjected particles of sensory impression which in a dynamic scenario are constantly processed or 'metabolised' by internal mental apparatus within dreams to be converted into alpha elements via a mediating 'contact barrier', enabling conscious thought to be possible.

Bion further draws upon biological and feeding metaphors to identify three possible configurations of 'container and contained' within the relationship between mother and child, therapist and patient and in later writings between mystic and follower. Commensal containment, derived from "eating at the same table" (OED Online), is first used in 1962 to refer to a mutually beneficial relationship within a shared environment:

"By commensal I mean ♂ and ♀ are dependent upon each other for mutual benefit and without harm to either. In terms of a model the mother derives benefit and achieves mental growth from the experience: the infant likewise abstracts benefit and achieves growth." (Bion, 1962, pp.90-91).

Bion (1970) re-defines 'commensal' containment while also describing two further forms that are defined by an imbalance of power relations, reciprocity and inequality in the dynamic between container and contained, namely 'symbiotic' and 'parasitic' containment. Now, commensal is described in more abstract and symbolic terms as "a relationship in which two objects share a third to the advantage of all three". Symbiotic containment represents "a relationship in which one depends on another to mutual advantage", as might be reflective of a productive therapeutic alliance. Parasitic containment, by contrast refers to a more exploitive and invasive co-relationship between container and contained "in which one depends on another to produce a third, which is destructive of all three" (p.95), such as where the 'containing' party becomes dependent upon

and gains sustenance from the 'contained' as might take place in an interminable therapeutic relationship.

ii) Marsupial Space and Holding

Drawing on experience from clinical work with people experiencing claustrophobia and agoraphobia, Rey (1994) combines Piaget's theories on children's cognitive development with object relations theory to articulate "man's sense of reality in its detailed external reality" (ibid p.2) and "a developmental structuration of space and time" (ibid p.163). This commences with the foetus contained within the mother and "moving with the mother in the mother's space" to the baby occupying a "marsupial space" (ibid p.21) where "the baby moves in the mother's space, but only in that portion of her space which is the baby's personal space" (ibid p.21). For Rey, the subsequent psychological development of the child accompanies the taking up of increasing space, which in healthy development coincides both with the "maternal space" and with "general space" (ibid p.21). Here, movement within space is seen as a vehicle and precursor for object relationships, and leading in turn to the development of an understanding of time.

"Primitive thought is centred on the first moves taken by the infant to structure space. This is done by the subject on his objects and vice-versa. Primitive notions of time then follow" (ibid p.30).

In Winnicott's presentation of the 'facilitating environment' (Winnicott, 1965), spatial terms are further used to describe the potentially beneficial significance

of the child's 'total environment' as a site for 'holding', a first chronological element of 'good enough' early care, maintained by caregivers closely attuned to the needs of the child:

"The term 'holding' is used here to denote not only the actual physical holding of the infant, but also the *total environmental provision* prior to the concept of living with. In other words, it refers to *a three-dimensional or space relationship with time gradually added*" (Winnicott, 1965) [my italics].

Thus, by implication, the context of 'place' is rendered as a relevant theme in developmental terms. Winnicott further identifies a form of thinking he terms "transitional space", that is realised by play and exists as "an intermediate area of experiencing to which inner reality and external life both contribute" and which functions as "a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated". (Winnicott, 1971). Further, Akhtar (2003) validates the significance of environmental factors in children's psychological development, and the "sustaining and symbolic significance of the inanimate surround in which the human mind evolves and functions", where from early life "a child has to distinguish itself from not only primary objects, but also its non-human environment".

iii) Loss and trauma

Bion identifies a developmental origin for human experience of 'space' both as a physical or geometric phenomenon, and as a mental construct. In

Transformations, first published in 1965 Bion argues that our capacity to imagine physical space and geometric relationship derives from infantile experience of loss:

“It is supposed that Euclidean geometry [the study of the properties of points, lines, shapes and three-dimensional objects within a set of established postulates] was derived from the experience of space. My suggestion is that its *intra-psychic* origin is experience of 'the space' where a feeling, emotion or other mental experience 'was'.” (Bion, 1991, p.121)

Bion deploys the term 'no-thing' (Bion 1965, p.79), to argue that it is the very experience of maternal absence in infancy that makes thinking possible. This scenario is further articulated by Reiner (2023) in spatialised terms: “This no-thing is essentially the presence of absence, creating a space in the mind where a thought – “no mother” – can exist” (p.18). Developing the linkage between loss, thought and spatial experience, in *Attention and Interpretation*, first published in 1970, Bion writes:

“...if the geometer's concept of space derives from an experience of 'the place where something was' [...] it is in my experience meaningful to say that 'a feeling of depression' is 'the place where a breast or other lost

object was' and that 'space' is 'where depression or some other emotion used to be'". (Bion, 2001, p.10)

Bion further articulates a relationship between the concepts of mental and physical space, between the world 'inside' us and the world 'outside', where the "realization of mental space" (ibid p.8) is interdependent with the capacity for geometric and spatial awareness, and which together enable thought to be possible:

"Ability to use points, lines and space becomes important for understanding emotional space, for the continuance of the work and avoidance of a situation in which two inarticulate personalities are unable to release themselves from the bondage of inarticulation" (ibid p.15).

Bion's consideration of the intra-psychoic origin of 'space' in human consciousness bears close affinity with his earlier theory of alpha function, which uses the spatialised metaphor of the action of particle physics to present a scenario of thought and consciousness constantly coming into being through a dynamic and constant process of introjection of beta elements and their conversion into alpha elements through a mediating contact barrier. Brown (2012) describes alpha function as representing a working-through of Freud's theory of dreams and Klein's theory of projective identification, but mediated by Bion's traumatic experience as a tank commander in the First World War, where the capacity to 'think under fire' on the battlefield becomes analogous for the action of thought as if under bombardment from external stresses and stimulæ.

3.3.3 Attachment Theory and place

Attachment theory provides a set of concepts through which the sensual and tactile experience of place as well as feelings of attraction, absence and loss in organisations may be explored in a psychoanalytically-informed context.

Holmes (2014) describes how the principles of attachment were developed by Bowlby in the 1950s as a counter to Kleinian consensus concerning the primacy of object relationships and unconscious fantasy in child development, where in response Bowlby asserts that the need of a child to form an emotional attachment and seek physical closeness to a mother or primary caregiver represents an instinctual need. This was argued to be demonstrated across ethological studies, and then later through tests conducted by Ainsworth et al (1978), where patterns of attachment and responses to loss involving young children and their caregivers were assessed in controlled conditions.

Bowlby characterises attachment as being indicative of “any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived as better able to cope with the world” (Bowlby, 2005 p.29). Here, a tendency is identified for attachment relationships in childhood to focus upon a single figure, or indeed place or physical object, a phenomenon Bowlby terms ‘monotropy’, which is viewed to represent the precursor for intense emotion in human relatedness, and which accordingly bears resemblance to Winnicott’s identification of ‘holding’ taking place in the context of a “total environment” (Winnicott, 1965, *ibid*):

“It is because of this marked tendency to monotropy that we are capable of deep feelings, for to have a deep attachment to a person (or a place or a thing) is to have taken them as the terminating object of our instinctual responses” (Bowlby, 1960).

This focus upon attachment taking place within a field of physical proximity and distance in relation to an identified object leads Holmes to characterise Bowlby’s presentation of attachment theory as “in essence a spatial theory, both literally and metaphorically” (ibid, p.53). Similarly, observing the young child’s sensuous and tactile bond with a mother, Stuart-Smith (2020) states that “the mother is the very first place” (p.20).

Bowlby (1969) further identifies three key elements of attachment which all hold spatial connotations: “proximity maintaining behaviour” where the child actively seeks physical closeness to their mother or figure of attachment; the effect of the “secure base”, the sense of comfort and safety that the child derives from this closeness; and the phenomenon of “protest” followed by “despair and detachment” where separation takes place. Drawing upon the close observation of the behaviour of young children and their mothers in experimental situations where the child experiences separation, Ainsworth et al (1978) identify three key patterns of attachment as well as an underlying ‘attachment system’ for each, providing “a strategy that provides the greatest possible degree of security and support in relation to their particular caregivers” (ibid, p10). ‘Secure’ attachment is seen to become formed in circumstances where caregivers demonstrate close attentiveness to the signals given by their child,

as well as comfort and care when the need for this is expressed. The 'attachment system' of children where secure attachment is manifest is accordingly particularly straightforward and effective in facilitating security and support. By contrast, 'avoidant attachment' occurs where caregivers demonstrate indifference to requests for comfort and emphasise both their and their child's independence. Here a "systematic deactivation" (ibid, p.11) of the child's attachment system is observed. 'Ambivalent attachment' occurs where the caregiver's response to the child alternates between actual care and preoccupation with other concerns. In such circumstances, a "systematic hyperactivation" (ibid) of the attachment system is observed where the child lacks ongoing security as to whether care will be available or not. While Daniel (2014) stresses that avoidant and ambivalent attachment patterns need not necessarily be indicative of a pathological organisation, a fourth category of 'disorganised' attachment (Main and Solomon 1986, cited in Daniel, ibid) is indicative of particularly damaged attachments, where "the child experiences irreconcilable impulses to simultaneously approach and withdraw from the caregiver (ibid) for example in relation of experiences of severed neglect or abuse.

Research into the 'attachment styles' of adults, as they relate to romantic and sexual attraction, as well the formation of friendships, locates them broadly within Ainsworth's categories of secure, avoidant and ambivalent, and linked to childhood relationships with parents. For example, Hazan and Shaver (1987) consider romantic love "as an attachment process", "a biosocial process by which affectional bonds are formed between adult lovers" (p.511) which can in

turn be 'secure', 'avoidant' or 'anxious' in organisation. Further Mikulincer and Shaver (2017) develop Ainsworth's model of childhood attachment patterns to create a model of adult attachment founded across the axes of 'avoidance' and 'anxiety'. Here, a 'secure' attachment is associated with low levels of anxiety and avoidance, 'preoccupied' attachment with high anxiety and low avoidance, 'dismissing' attachment with low anxiety and high avoidance, and 'fearful' attachment with high levels of anxiety and avoidance.

Attachment theory emphasises the centrality of separation and loss to human experience, both developmentally and in adult life. In this context, Bowlby's evocation of intense restlessness and pining in adult bereavement, characterised as "the urge to recover the lost object" (Bowlby 1962, p.5), draws a parallel to the negotiation of the depressive position in Kleinian theory, where "the work of grief consists of rebuilding an inner secure base" (Holmes, *ibid.* p.77). Here, just as attachment relationships in childhood may be conceptualised spatially, so too the search for the 'lost object' in the context of adult bereavement. Parkes (2015), a colleague of Bowlby, describes several "components of searching" observable in behaviour of people who are bereaved. These include: a level of motor hyperactivity or restlessness indicative of physical and spatial search; the development of a "perceptual 'set' for the person" (p.13) which sensitises the bereaved person to stimuli that are indicative of their presence; and being conscious of the impulse to search, such that "the search for the lost person can be associated with a sense of presence of that person" (p.15). As a further parallel to Winnicott's view of the "total

environment” being integral to the action of “holding”, Parkes further identifies human attachment as also relating to physical or non-human elements:

“I am uncomfortable with the use of the term ‘object’ for all objects of love. It does, however serve to remind us that it is not only human beings to whom we become attached” (p.7).

While there exist essential differences between the process of attachment and loss in childhood and adult life, the concepts and metaphors developed within attachment theory present a compelling avenue for inquiry into the felt experience of place in organisations. For example, by viewing the ‘fabric’ of an organisation through the lens of attachment it becomes possible to imagine the workplace as symbolically holding a function analogous to a primary care giver, or an object of adult emotional investment. This is clearly implicit in the comment attributed to Henri Rey of the Maudsley Hospital, where it is cited as representing a “brick mother” for both patients and the staff who worked in it (Steiner, 1994, ix). Here, the motif of the ‘brick mother’ presents a compelling metaphor, for the strength of attachment to place in an organisational context.

3.3.4 Towards framing a psychoanalytically-informed understanding of place and space

As a physician and theorist of unconscious intra-psychic processes, and the originator of set of set of therapeutic conventions, Freud cannot be termed an explicitly spatial writer or thinker, or psychoanalysis a spatial concept. However, as has been presented, spatialised metaphors and the themes of space and

place clearly do register across a range of psychoanalytically informed perspectives, including Freud's foundational 'archaeological metaphor', dreams and dream work, the organisation of space and objects in the analyst's office, and via elements of object relations and attachment theory.

Commenting on the conceptual challenge of reflecting upon or validating the theme of place within psychoanalysis, Freshwater (2005) writes "while space is a non-entity as a psychoanalytic concept, when observed with focussed attention and internal alertness, it has the power to convey meaning in a relationship" (p.178). Thus, reflecting on the universal and all-embracing presence of place and space in human experience, Freshwater quotes Bachelard (1994) from the 'Poetics of Space' who observes the epistemic paradox that place and space represent for psychoanalysis: "the structure of therapy comprises a vocabulary of space so critically important that few inquirers, including practitioners note it". In this context, Bion's theories of the origins, function and action of human thought, including the concept of container and contained, alpha function and commensal, symbiotic and parasitic containment, together furnish a diverse set of spatially-receptive concepts and spatial metaphors through which it is possible to facilitate understanding of the intra-psycho processes through which human experience of place is formed. Also, with their focus upon proximity, co-proximity and attraction within human relations, attachment theories may be understood to reflect spatialised themes which extend beyond the intrapsychic to incorporate inter-personal and group contexts and dynamics. These ideas may also be understood to inform and resonate with elements of Bion's theories of the nature of thought, including

'alpha function' and two concepts from Bion's later work; 'thoughts without a thinker' and O. These similarly facilitate a movement beyond intra-psychic understandings to contribute to a wider epistemic frame through which psychoanalytic understanding of place and space may start to be imagined and applied in relation to interpersonal, group and organisational contexts.

The concept of 'thoughts without a thinker' was first described by Bion in 1967 in the essay 'A Theory of Thinking' (Bion, 1984), and represents a development of his earlier formulations of 'container and contained' and 'alpha function'. With this, Bion observes how in aspects of human development and experience, or other contexts characterised by the necessity of survival, thoughts (such as the demand placed on the infant to 'think' about the mother's breast) may effectively be imposed on the thinker, thereby conferring them with an autonomous and precedent epistemic status:

"It is convenient to regard thinking as dependent on the successful outcome of two mental developments. The first is the development of thoughts. They require an apparatus to cope with them. The second development therefore, is of the apparatus that I shall provisionally call thinking. I repeat – thinking has to be called into existence to cope with thoughts" (pp.110-111).

By implication, intra-subjective experience and thought may be understood to not simply to take place as a function 'of' or 'within' the mind of the thinker, but rather exist within a wider psycho-social frame incorporating interpersonal and

group dynamics as well as the non-human or environmental realm. In such an understanding, some 'thoughts' may be considered to pre-exist as a function of this wider context, leading Reiner (Ibid.) to observe "thoughts without thinkers are essential truths that exist whether or not anyone thinks them" (p.41).

Following the analysis of Brown (Ibid), who locates Bion's development of the concept of alpha function within his personal experience as a tank commander during the first world war, it is possible to understand the epistemic origins of 'thoughts without a thinker' as a symbolic re-processing of the inherently spatialised trauma of armed combat, characterised by the necessity to be able think and respond in a battlefield environment characterised by complexity, uncertainty and mortal risk, and the later repurposing of this experience to contribute to a psychoanalytically informed theory of thought in 'everyday' circumstances.

Bion's later concept of O represents a powerful and significant means by which everyday human experience of place and space may be validated within a psychoanalytic frame of reference. In 'Attention and Interpretation', Bion (1970) characterises the symbol O as being reflective of an ultimate or transcendent truth manifest in a therapeutic relationship (or more widely) which extends beyond the capacity of a therapist, patient or any other person to fully grasp:

"I shall use the sign O to denote that which is the ultimate reality represented by terms such as ultimate reality, absolute truth, the godhead, the infinite, the thing-in-itself." (p.26)

Following this statement Bion invokes the symbol K, representing individual human knowledge, to present the numinous character of O, which is understood to defy conscious efforts to intellectually encompass, demarcate or reduce, but which may be partially apprehended via the unconscious and experience of the senses:

“O does not fall into the domain of knowledge or learning save incidentally; it can be “become”, but it cannot be “known”. It is darkness and formlessness but it enters the domain K when it has evolved to a point where it can be known, through knowledge gained by experience, and formulated in terms derived from sensuous experience; its existence is conjectured phenomenologically.” (Ibid.)

The concept of O may be seen to mark a progression from Bion's earlier intra-psychic theories of thinking - 'container and contained' and 'alpha function' - and a further development of 'thoughts without a thinker' - as here he is less concerned with inter-psychic thought process or the nature of 'knowing' about something, but rather with the nature of 'being' in the here and now, in relation to an ultimate reality bearing spiritual significance of which one may hold only incomplete and fleeting access. Accordingly, Bion's concept of 'thoughts without a thinker' and O move beyond established psychoanalytic concerns to locate human thought as well as emotional and aesthetic experience, including by inference that of place and space, within an epistemic field which transcends the boundaries of individual psychology.

3.4 The workplace and consultancy (ii): Systems psychodynamic perspectives

This section provides an account of how theory and practice developed within the systems psychodynamic tradition in both pre-digital and contemporary eras have incorporated the themes of place and the workplace. This starts with an assessment of how in its initial formative fusion of psychoanalytic and systemic perspectives, and in the later developed socio-psychological, socio-technical and socio-ecological research perspectives, systems psychodynamics has both explicitly and implicitly utilised spatial themes, as exemplified in the expression and generative metaphor of working 'below the surface'. It then describes how in a contemporary context, the 'spatial turn' may be observed to be manifest within systems psychodynamic theory, practice and research, for example through the expression of spatial themes and metaphors, the invocation of intellectual antecedents to the 'spatial turn' and the epistemic pairing of psychoanalysis and geography in contemporary discourse. The section concludes with a discussion of the potential validity of the term 'murality' (Cox, 1995; Adshead, 2019), originally developed within the field of forensic psychotherapy, for articulating a psychoanalytic and systemically-informed understanding of human experience of place in contemporary organisations.

3.4.1 The Tavistock tradition

i) Theoretical and practice origins

The 'Tavistock approach' to groups and organisations has its origins in a drawing together of clinicians and social scientists under conditions of war effort, leading to the formation in 1947 of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations as a partner organisation of the Tavistock Clinic, and the establishment of the journal *Human Relations* as a means to "manifest the connection between field theory and object relations psychoanalysis (Trist and Murray, 1990, p.8). As the originator of action research and field theory, Kurt Lewin is characterised by Armstrong and Rustin (2021) as having provided a "crucial theoretical link for the Tavistock between individual and social perspectives" in the understanding of groups and organisations (Rustin 2021, p.19). The methodology and practice of action research places the researcher directly and immediately within the system they are investigating, and through a "a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action" (Lewin 1946) become implicated in a process of learning, reflection, iteration and systemic change. In field theory, Lewin advocates principles derived from physics and the natural sciences to frame the social world as a function of the interplay of forces, whether internal and psychological, external or environmental in origin. Here, Lewin (1947) advocates "a system of analysis which permits the representation of social forces in a group setting" (p.14); a 'topological' modelling of the forces which dynamically constitute a given social field, with accompanying mathematical formulae, in order to represent phenomena and predict outcomes. Integral to field theory is the concept of "life-space" (Ibid pp10-12), which represents the total 'constellation' of interdependent factors that may be seen to inform human experience within a particular social context and point of time. Here internal psychological 'space',

the action of external forces, and an individual's relationships with their surroundings, as well as the "positions inside or outside regions; and the relations between parts and wholes" (Rice, 1963, p 21) are modelled diagrammatically to enable a comparison of the respective forces, pressures and boundaries for different occupants of a social system.

Reflecting the early theoretical and methodological impact of Lewin's perspectives around action research and democratic change, Bridger (1990) characterises a process of "Lewinfiltration", as it was known to staff, as occurring within the activities, culture and dynamics at Northfield Hospital during World War II, where rigid military hierarchies relating to status and rank had been suspended or flattened on account of the need for group learning and effort to fight and overcome trauma caused by war (Bridger, 1990). Integral to this process was the innovation of small group work in "circles" (ibid, p. 497) as a site of learning, forming a therapeutic 'workplace' which in its configuration represented a physical embodiment of the hospital's changed clinical ethos (and in itself also physically reflective of the cyclical process of investigation, hypothesis formation and learning in action research. [note the difference between the spatial organisation of the 'circle' and the psychoanalytic encounter]

The combination of field theory with psychoanalytic perspectives as a foundational principle within the early Tavistock institute is also present through the ideas of organisational culture existing as a function of psycho-social process. In a 1950 speech entitled 'Culture as a Psycho-Social process' (Trist

1990), Trist proposes a close interrelation between the 'psychological' and the 'social' within systems, such that "psycho-social processes are resultant compounds in which the psychological component attains social experience while the social component attains psychological existence" (p.541). Here, one element of the "social environment" which may attain psychological significance within groups, systems and organisations includes "the various sets of behavioural products which have been called cultural objects. These also include all the technologies of material culture" (p.544), thus implicitly validating physical artefacts and the workplace itself as a site of psychological experience and meaning.

Further, across the three volumes of *The Social Engagement of Social Science*, Trist and Murray (1990, 1993 and 1997) outline three closely interrelated 'research perspectives' as having defined theory and practice within the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations: the 'socio-psychological', the 'socio-technical' and the 'socio-ecological'.

ii) The Socio-Psychological perspective

The socio-psychological is described by Trist and Murray (1990) as being the "original perspective" developing during World War II and afterwards, and drawing together "the object relations approach, field theory, the personality-culture approach and system theory, especially in its open system form" as "source concepts" (p.30). Drawing on and developing insights at the intersection of the psychoanalytic and the systemic, elements of this approach (all of which invoke the theme of place in organisations) include: the concept of

organisational culture as psycho-social process; open systems theory; social defences against anxiety and group relations.

Open Systems Theory

Open systems theory represents a drawing together of the concepts of field theory with Bertalanffy's observation of the bounded and cellular status of living organisms in their habitats (Bertalanffy, 1950) in relation to groups and organisations. In *Systems of Organisation*, Miller and Rice (1975), state that "any enterprise may be seen as an open system which has characteristics in common with a biological organism" (p.43), for example where it demonstrates processes of import, conversion process and export across a semi-permeable boundary in order to survive. A fundamental element of research in this context involves a detailed mapping of an organisation both in relation to its macro and economic environment, its internal and bounded structuration, and invoking the psycho-social, how organisational processes relate to sentient factors including the emotions and meanings that are ascribed individually and collectively in relation to the construction of task.

Social Defences

The concept of social defences, first articulated by Jaques and subsequently developed by Menzies-Lyth and later theorists represents an application of Kleinian developmental theory to group processes in organisations. In contrast with open systems theory, where a direct link is drawn between the structural, environmental context of organisations and sentient factors, Jaques (1953) stresses how primitive anxiety at an individual level connects with and shapes

organisational systems and processes. In this context, one function of consultancy is seen as being to “show the way toward better adaption, taking into account the needs of individuals to deal with paranoid and depressive anxiety” Jaques 1953, p.21) so that more emotionally containing organisational structures may be arrived at. Note: In later work, Jaques reversed their position on the status of psychotic anxiety in organisations, considering it be a manifestation of badly organised systems rather than an inherent feature within organisational life (Jaques, 1995). Thus, in the concept of the “requisite organisation” (Jaques, 2006), Jaques proposes that through the careful delineation of authority and role it is possible to engineer a working context which maximises effectiveness and minimises anxiety or conflict.

In a study of systems and process in a general hospital and nurse training facility, Menzies (1960) develops Jacques’ concept of social defences to consider anxiety within the system to be derived not from the collective manifestation of individual pathology, but rather the shared organisational task. Thus, primitive anxiety experienced universally at an individual level linked to the inherently distressing, distasteful and intimate work of nurses is considered to give rise to “socially structured defence mechanisms” becoming formed institutionally, which both to the nurse and observer appear integrally as “elements in the structure, culture and mode of functioning of the organisation” (p.101). In this context, the first ‘defensive technique’ which Menzies identifies, “splitting up the nurse-patient relationship” (ibid), is clearly spatially organised and manifest, resulting in the breaking down of the task of nursing into separate

roles and tasks, and the “excessive movement of student nurses” in their performance of task in their place of work and training.

Group Relations

The concept of group relations brings together a global tradition of experiential learning in groups with Bion’s theoretical perspectives around the psychodynamics of group behaviour. In its experiential context, group relations originates from the model of conferences initiated by the first ‘Leicester Conference’ in 1957, “a laboratory method of training in group relations”, which itself represents a development from Lewin’s establishment of experiential T[Training]-Groups at Bethel, Maine during the 1940s (Allaway 1957; cited in Miller 1990, p.166). In a group relations conference, the work of participants and staff is centred around the task of understanding the manifestation of group dynamics in the here and now, and is informed by three “boundary conditions” of “time”, “task” and “territory” (Miller, *ibid.* p.174). Here territory, or the ‘workplace’ of a group relations conference, can relate to the specified, negotiated or appropriated locations for group activity.

Bion’s concept of basic assumptions provides a dynamic frame for conceptualising the action of unconscious group process both within a group relations context and more universally. In *Experiences in Groups*, Bion (1961) re-applies Klein’s perspectives of developmental psychotic anxiety from individual process to groups. Here, three types of ‘basic assumption’ are considered to represent fundamental mechanisms through which anxiety in groups may find expression at the expense or impairment of the work group, all

of which (and as with Bion's concepts of container/contained and alpha/beta function) may be represented kinetically and spatially. Thus, 'basic assumption fight-flight' (BaF) is characterised with the hostile search for or identification of an 'enemy' either within or external to the group; 'basic assumption pairing' (BaP) where the formation of pairs is reflective of enthrallment to an imagined offspring; and 'basic association dependency' (BaD) where "the group agglutinates itself around a leader felt to be a saviour" (Sandler, 2005, p.72).

iii) The Socio-Technical perspective

Trist and Murray (1993) describe the socio-technical research perspective as a development from the socio-psychological, with the additional consideration of how technological factors impact upon the interrelation between task and sentient structure in order to create "the best match between the social and technical systems of an organisation" (Trist and Murray, *ibid*, p.31). The socio-technical vision is integrally reflective of post-war concerns around the need for increased productivity, balanced with a social vision grounded on therapeutic notions of self-organisation, democratic participation in the workplace and the "movement towards humanizing industry" (Emery, 1993, p.184), and the application of the principle of 'joint optimization' (Hill and Emery 1959) to ensure "the best possible matching together of the people in any unit and the way their jobs are organized" (p.266).

Trist and Bamforth's examination of the impact of technological change upon industrial relations and productivity in the UK coal mining industry in the mid nineteen-fifties (Trist and Bamforth, 1951) provides a particularly vivid

illustration of the socio-technical vision, where the physical configuration of the workplace combined with the particular forms of technology that are used, informs a correlation between the organisation of the workforce, felt experience arising from this and the resultant productivity. In this study, the combination of an instrumental imposition of mechanical coal-getting technology with the collective requirement of “contending with underground conditions” (p.23) (also reflective of the expression ‘working below the surface’) was shown to have harmful consequences both for productivity and workforce morale. Trist and Bamforth accordingly advocate for “a work system basically appropriate to the underground situation” (p.23) founded on a greater level of small-group autonomy to groups throughout the system “so that a social as well as a technological whole can come into existence” (p.37).

Socio-technical perspectives attained high prominence within the ‘Tavistock’ tradition through the nineteen fifties, sixties and seventies via a range of projects and interventions, including: Jaques’ research and consultation at the ‘Glacier Metal Company’ (Jaques, 1951) Rice’s investigation of process at an Indian Weaving Facility (Rice, 1953); Miller and Rice’s consideration of the operations in an airline (Miller, 1993) and Lisl Klein’s investigation in the early nineteen nineties into the impact of electronic patient records on staff and patients across hospitals (Klein , 2008). In all of these contexts, the status of the workplace and its physical organisation and configuration implicitly represents an integral element of socio-technical interest.

iv) The Socio-Ecological perspective

The third foundational perspective of the 'Tavistock' tradition the 'socio-ecological' (Trist and Murray, 1997) developed from the 'socio-psychological' and the 'socio-technical' perspectives in the context of an encounter from the late nineteen-fifties onwards with of new organisational dynamic associated with technological and social change. Emery and Trist (1965) observed how in the context of contemporary conditions, organisational experience in certain circumstances had on account of its environmental and causal complexity to have effectively moved beyond the bounded structuration framed in open systems theory. Environments in which this was possible, termed 'type IV' conditions were characterised as 'turbulent fields' and understood as spaces within which 'autochthonous' [or spontaneously occurring] phenomena could occur, with high levels of systemic interdependency, and where change was a continuous mechanism.

The socio-ecological perspective in consultation is focused upon developing and strengthening adaptive responses in relation to the encounter with turbulent environments where behaviours may contribute constructively and integrally to the systems themselves. In this same text, Emery and Trist characterise the role of the consultant engaging with a 'turbulent field' as being about supporting "the emergence of values that have overriding significance for all members of the field" [p.28] which are supportive of negotiating the experience of uncertainty: "Social values are here regarded as coping mechanisms that make it possible to deal with persisting areas of relevant uncertainty [Ibid.]". Thus, the configuration of the workplace, and its instrumental impact upon the formation

of values, and of human experience within a field implicitly represents an integral element of socio-ecological interest.

The socio-ecological approach has been recorded by Trist and Murray (1997) as being applied across a wide variety of organisational settings and contexts, and effectively anticipates interests articulated around the beginning of the networked age about complexity theory, dissipative structure, non-linear dynamics in organisational dynamics, for example by Stacey (2001). In a paper entitled 'The next thirty years', written in 1967, Murray (1997) anticipates an increase in organisational, systemic and societal complexity where human endeavour "will evolve around attempts to create social forms and ways of life that are adaptive to turbulent environments or which downgrade them to less-complex forms of environment" (p.80), and rendering the socio-ecological approach of increased importance.

In a paper by Trist written in nineteen eighty-three providing a commentary upon organisational and systemic challenges linked to 'advanced information technologies' of the age, Trist likens emergent conditions in the electronic age and their fluidity and unpredictability to those experiences personally encountered as a staff officer in the British Army during World War Two. Here an epistemic link is implicitly drawn between the founding environmental circumstances in which the Tavistock Institute was formed, and those of the contemporary age, requiring a re-assessment of organisational values, systems and structures.

“Given the rapid change and high uncertainty now prevailing, the business environment is becoming more like a wartime environment. The need is greater therefore in nonroutine work to bring discretionary coalitions into the foreground. For this to happen, easily and reliably, the alternative organizing principle which presupposes openness and trust rather than possessiveness and suspicion needs to be explicitly recognised.” (Trist, 1983, p.666).

v) ‘The Unconscious at Work’ and ‘Working Below the Surface’

Two texts, ‘The Unconscious at Work’ (Obholzer and Roberts, 1994), and ‘Working Below the Surface’ (Huffington et al, 2004) serve effectively to consolidate themes developed within the ‘Tavistock’ tradition of organisational consultancy and research and its socio-psychological, socio-technical and socio-ecological approaches. As such, alongside the later issued ‘The Tavistock Century’ (Waddell and Kraemer, 2021) and the reissued second version ‘The Unconscious at Work’ (Obholzer and Roberts, 2019), these represent foundational texts defining the approach. As such, in its presentation of a conceptual framework, including unconscious aspects of organisational life (Halton, 1994), basic assumption function (Stokes 1994) open systems theory (Roberts, 1994), and group relations theory and practice (Obholzer, 1994), ‘the unconscious at work’ only explores the theme of place and the workplace implicitly and non-directly. However, in its consideration of Bion’s spatially informed theory of basic assumption function, this presentation of place extends beyond an intra-psychic understanding to include inter-psychic, group and institutional formulations.

However, in the title 'working below the surface', Huffington et al (2004) do directly invoke Freud's 'archaeological metaphor' (Freud 1896 Ibid; Kuspit, 1989 Ibid), this time as a function of a conceptual framework now described as 'systems psychodynamic'. However as with 'The Unconscious at Work' the authors again only implicitly and non-directly reference the theme of place or workplace, and do not consider the theme of workplace design in their assessment of contemporary organisational themes and dynamics.

3.4.2 A Spatial Turn within consultancy

While the themes of space, place and the workplace, as have been described, have always been integral to theory and practice in the established 'Tavistock' approach to organisations, this relevance was and is frequently implicit and secondary to established themes and concepts. However, following the coining of the term 'systems psychodynamics' with the formal institutional separation of the Tavistock Clinic and the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations during the mid-nineteen nineties, and the proliferation of networked technologies in organisational life, it may be observed that these themes have become more prominent within consulting discourse. This shift towards place and spatiality may be understood as being evidence of a 'spatial turn' occurring within organisational discourse, an epistemic trend observed by spatial theorists as occurring within the social sciences and culture around the beginning of the twenty-first century. This is reflective of a problematisation of place in the context of changed social and economic relations caused by the rise of networked communications and globalisation, and as has already been described in section 3.2.4 is also directly relatable to the spatialised concept of

the vanishing organisation as developed by Cooper and Dartington (2004) and Cooper and Lousada (2005)

The following section will show how the spatial turn may be understood to be more explicitly manifest in systems psychodynamic discourse across three fields: First, with reference to the now 'mainstream' methods and themes; second, through the invocation of key intellectual precursors of the spatial turn in the late twentieth century, and finally in relation to an intellectual and epistemic exchange between psychoanalysis and human geography.

i) Spatial themes in established contemporary practice and theory

To recap from section 3.1.1, the term 'systems psychodynamics' represents a conjunction of "open systems concepts" and "psychoanalytic perspectives" (Gould, *Ibid.*, p.2-3) and as such re-articulates the two core elements of the 'Tavistock' tradition or approach to organisations and its socio-psychological, socio-technical and socio-ecological manifestations in the context of societal and technological modernity. Gould continues:

"The systems psychodynamic framework is specifically intended to convey the notion that the observable and structural features of an organisation – even quite rational and functional ones – continually interact with its members at all levels in a manner that stimulates particular patterns of individual and group dynamic processes" (p.3).

Within this definitional frame, a number of key contemporary concepts deployed may be shown to carry particular spatial values and meanings: Psychoanalytic organisational observation; Schein's topographic model of organisational culture; organisation in the mind; social defences; the psychic retreat and the invocation of turbulence and boundarylessness in contemporary organisational experience.

Psychoanalytic organisational observation

The development of psychoanalytic child observation into organisational observation as articulated by Hinshelwood and Skogstad (2000) represents a clear 'shift' in emphasis and focus from the observation of the interaction between mother/primary care giver and child, to the consideration of the 'emotional ambiance' of an organisational setting as manifestation of 'culture as a psycho-social process'. They describe the origins of psychoanalytic organisational observation as "harking back to the ideas of the 'Tavistock' tradition" (p.3) and a drawing together of Trist's concept of culture as a psycho-social process, Jaques and Menzies-Lyth's perspectives on social defences and Bick's formulation of a model for mother-infant observation as an integral element of therapeutic training (Bick, 1964) but directed towards organisational research.

Utilising "inwardness" (p.15) the "observer observes his or her own subjective experience within the culture" (p.16) so as to reach a non-objectifying understanding of both "tangible" elements of an organisation's culture such as "characteristic work practices", as well as "less tangible phenomena" which may

be experienced through “emotional atmosphere” (p.9). Further, Skogstad (2004) stresses an equivalency of process occurring within psychoanalytic organisational observation as with clinical psychoanalysis, with core psychoanalytic concepts of the use of “the mind as a research instrument” (p.67) as well as “unconscious; anxiety; defence and conflict; splitting, projection and projective identification; transference and counter-transference” (p.74) being considered to be directly applicable to an observational frame.

Schein’s topographic model of organisational culture

Edgar Schein (2004), an organisational theorist from the United States, and closely influenced by the work of Kurt Lewin, articulates a topographic model of organisational culture which bears strong affinity with the ‘socio-psychological’ perspective and is particularly applicable to an assessment of the workplace as an artefact of organisational culture. Here, the most readily accessible and observable elements of an organisation’s culture are seen to be ‘artefacts’, which includes all aspects of the workplace.

“Artefacts include the visible products of the group, such as the architecture of its physical environment; its language, its technology and products; its artistic creations; its style, as embodied in clothing, manners of address, and emotional displays; its myths and stories told about the organization; its published lists of values; its observable rituals and ceremonies.” (p.17)

For Schein, it is through the encounter with artefacts in the here-and-now that it is possible through an inductive process to gain understanding of an organisation's "espoused beliefs and values"(p.19), which in turn can facilitate access to "basic assumptions", the "unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings" (p.21) that characterise its particular identity.

Organisation in the Mind

The concept of the 'organisation in the mind' developed by Armstrong (2005) represents a more contemporary re-articulation of the socio-psychological vision, presenting organisational life as an interplay between mental or internalised identities and manifest characteristics. Here, emotional experience of an organisation represents a "function of the interrelations between task, structure, culture, and context (or environment)", with clear implications for the internal re-presentation of physical features of the workplace (p.6), a phenomenon which is also evocatively expressed in the title of Hirschhorn's text "the workplace within" (Hirschhorn, 1990).

Social Defences

The contemporary re-visiting of the concept of social defences against anxiety, marked by Armstrong and Rustin (2015), demonstrates one further way in which the theme of place and the workplace have been problematised in the context of organisational and technological modernity in the systems psychodynamic tradition. Here, the problematisation of the status of the boundary as a physical and emotional 'container' within organisations, and

manifest in the landscape and technology of the 'agile' workplace, represents a clear contemporary challenge reflective of the socio-ecological perspective framed by Trist and Murray (1997).

In a discussion of the status of social defences in digital working contexts, Krantz (2015) identifies the phenomenon of 'virtual organisation', where members are geographically dispersed but operate largely through networked communications, as representing a key phenomenon within knowledge work and society (and now made only more relevant through the Covid crisis). Here it is speculated that in this new environment it may be technology applications themselves, in effect the electronic 'architecture' of networked organisational life, which may "begin to serve containing functions that have previously been located in [concrete] organisational structures" (p.68).

Psychic Retreat

The clinical concept of 'psychic retreat' articulated by Steiner (1993) forms a theoretical frame for considering individual psychological defence mechanisms spatially. Here, Steiner draws upon Rey's (1994) understanding of the mind as a spatialised entity to characterise the psychic retreat as a mental representation of a physical place of hiding, into which the patient may withdraw to escape anxiety, for example as if "a house, a cave, a fortress, a desert island". As "an organization of objects or part-objects which offer to provide security" a psychic retreat may also resemble a form of organisation, for example "as a business organization, as a boarding school, as a religious sect, as a totalitarian government or a Mafia-like gang" (p.2). Applied to the context of

the contemporary 'agile' and 'remote' workplace the concept of 'psychic retreat' is potentially helpful as it may assist to surface the action of social defences manifest spatially within organisations. For example, Scharff (2015) identifies a risk in 'online' forms of psychotherapy, in extremity as representing "a psychotic enclave in which to escape the terrors of corporeality" (p.5).

Turbulence and boundarylessness

In the context of the digital age, the concept of the 'turbulent field' first articulated by Emery and Trist (1965) as well as the wider socio-ecological perspective originating in the 'Tavistock' tradition of consulting, represents a key influence on systems-psychodynamic perspectives developed up to half-a-century later. For example, Hirschhorn has progressively developed ideas relating to organisational dynamics and consulting in turbulent environments. In an early text, Hirschhorn and Gilmore (1992) observe an emergent development in corporate organisational structures towards the creation of the "boundaryless company" and the establishment of more flexible organisational structures achieved through the replacement of vertical hierarchy with horizontally constituted networks. In this context, rather than simply disappearing, boundaries are seen to become redefined to address new challenges of negotiating authority, task, politics and organisational identity.

Similarly, applying the theme of boundary redefinition to a more contemporary context, Hirschhorn (2018) validates a movement "beyond BART" [boundaries, authority, role and task] for organisations or teams classed as "development projects" (p.41) and which engage in high levels of innovation. In place of

bounded organisational structures to contain “existential risk” (p.42), a range of practices are identified and recommended, which in effect implicitly replicate elements of ‘agile’ team working (as described in section 3.2), including: the creation of temporary task structures or “scaffolding”; the invocation of “promises” – whereby in the absence of clearly defined roles, workers may “create their own obligation by promising others to do some work” (p.55); utilising the “edges” of “under-bounded” system to enable participants to make different or varying commitments on the work of the group (p.56); the construction of “deadlines” to “create psychological spaces for moments of truth” and the invocation of different “boundary objects” (p.57) across the lifetime of a project.

ii) The invocation of intellectual antecedents of the spatial turn

In addition to the ‘mainstream’ formulations of systems psychodynamic practice and theory addressing the themes of place, space and the workplace, a range of other contributions from within the tradition and related perspectives from outside also exist, all of which integrally invoke French authors from the late twentieth century who’s contributions may be understood as intellectual antecedents of the spatial turn. These include the phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard, the Marxist spatial theorist Guy Debord and the post-structuralist social theorists Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault.

Bachelard: Topoanalysis and organisational atmosphere

In ‘The Poetics of Space’ Bachelard (1994) articulates a phenomenological and poetic account of the aesthetic elements and associative features of an

archetypal house and evokes different the states of mind and associations that different elements of its structure and contents evoke. Here, a method of phenomenological investigation of self and place is proposed termed 'topoanalysis', a means for locating human aesthetic experience associatively within the context of the built environment to achieve "the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" (p.8) and provide "the topography of our intimate being", where "by remembering 'houses' and 'rooms' we learn to "abide" with ourselves" (p.xxxvi). Directly drawing upon Bachelard, Armitrage (2012) advocates the use of aesthetics to as a means of surfacing alternative organisational realities. Describing a topoanalytic exploration of their own organisation, it is observed that "the exploration of my inner reality whilst personal revealed an alternative perspective of the organisation contrary to the outer reality of 'scientific' method that is often the case in traditional organisational theory" (p.21).

Another way in which it is possible to frame place as a psycho-spatial or psycho-social theme is through the phenomenon of atmosphere. Writing from a phenomenological perspective, Griffero (2016) considers atmosphere as a precursor for sensuous encounter with place, and "a qualitative-sentimental prius [a necessary prior condition of something], spatially poured out, of our sensible encounter with the world". Accordingly, the experience of atmosphere in an environment prefigures "grasping a feeling in the surrounding space" (Griffero, 2016, p.5). This formulation draws close comparison with the idea of "emotional atmosphere" as a source of data as developed by Hinshelwood and Skogstadt (Ibid, p.9) in relation to psychoanalytic organisational observation.

Writing from the perspective of business studies, Warren investigates the status of 'smell' in organisational life and coins the term "corporeal porosity" to describe intrinsic "intecorporeal creativity involved in negotiating working life" (p.806). Further, the business theorist Sumantra Ghoshal was recorded at a World Economic Forum speech in 1995 as describing how in a corporate context, organisational cultures may be experienced sensuously as having particular 'smells' where the smell in the encounter of "constraint, compliance, control, contract" in a risk averse and hierarchical setting, contrasts markedly with the smell encountered in an organisation whose culture is based upon "stretch, discipline, support, trust (Ghoshal, 1995).

Another way in which organisational atmosphere has been explored is in relation to time, and to the particular experience of haunting. For example, Davidson (2009) explores how buildings carry out a function of structuring memory in domestic architecture, coining the term 'prosthetic memory' to describe the phenomenon by which as material structures they may 'hold' stories from other peoples' past-experience. In this context, Yanow (1995) describes how buildings contain policy 'stories' that were integral to their construction and use over time, in effect becoming a repository for otherwise unspoken experience or 'haunting'. Further Edensor (2004) describes how industrial ruins facilitate an experience of haunting which unlike the "didactic and constrained" remembering afforded within the regulated built environment is by contrast "inarticulate, sensual and conjectural" (p.829).

In the paper 'Ghosts of Place' Bell (1997) invokes Freud's concept of the 'unheimlich' to describe how the "language of ghosts" and the experience of haunting may be deployed in geography as "a way to speak generally about the specificity of meaning of place". Bell writes:

I use the term [ghosts] here in a broader sense of a felt presence – an anima, geist, or genius – that possesses and gives a sense of social aliveness to place. Ghosts in this broader sense may be unsettled and scary, but they can also be rooted, friendly and affirming [...] The ghosts of place may seem uncanny at times, but they are nevertheless a familiar and rooted part of our lives (pp.815-816)".

The social photo matrix (Sievers, 2008; Sievers, 2013; Mersky and Sievers 2019) - originating from the practice of social dreaming and bearing close affinity with the practice of social dream drawing – is a form of facilitated participative organisational research in which role holders take digital photographs of a shared organisational or institutional environment also engages with themes of emotional atmosphere and haunting that pertain to place. For example, Sievers (2008) provides a case example of a social photo matrix workshop conducted by students at a German hospital, which produced visually unsettling data that invoked Freud's concept of 'the uncanny' or *unheimlich* (Freud, 1919), and in so doing helped participants to generate new thoughts in relation to a challenging environment. In this context, Sievers observes how the "destruction of what is familiar and homelike [in the social

photo matrix] may lead one to take the depressive position in the Kleinian sense” (p251).

Debord: Psychogeography and the 'dérive'

The term 'psychogeography' was originally developed by the Marxist social theorist Guy Debord as a descriptor for a range of playful cultural and intellectual activity supporting imaginative and politically transgressive engagement with the built environment in contemporary society. Central to Debord's praxis is 'dérive' - "a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances" while walking in the city. While the term has been adopted or attributed a range of authors and theorists including Self (2016), Kinsky (2018) and Richardson et al (2015), in a systems psychodynamic context, the term psychogeography may be seen to reflect range of creative approaches for engaging with the theme of place in psychoanalytic, therapeutic and organisational contexts, for example through practices of walking, re-imagining place, remembering place and mapmaking as identified by Rose et al (2019).

Stein (1987) deploys the term 'psychogeography' to present a psychoanalytically informed account of how "the geography of space recapitulates the topography of the mind" (p.10). In this context, human engagement with place involves both a projective dynamic where we invest the environments and spaces we occupy with material from the unconscious, and a reciprocal re-internalising introjective dynamic. For Stein this results in an existential confusion between 'inner' and 'outer' being an inherent element of human experience, a "narcissism of place" characterised by the paradox "I am

where I am” (p.22) which in a socio-political context may serve to reinforce conflict and competition between groups linked to ‘ownership’ of territory. Applying this theme to an organisational context, Stein [the same author] and Allcorn (2021) provide an account of “projection-driven psychogeographic transference” (p.212) in the workplace. Recognising that “*perception* is largely contaminated and shaped by psychological *projection*” (p.215), the authors validate practice of psychogeography in organisational contexts as a method of qualitative organisational research, where through self-aware engagement with conscious and unconscious process as they pertain to the workplace and physical artefacts of an organisation, it may be possible to reach an enhanced understanding of organisational life.

Further, in a paper titled “‘Here’ is where I have a presence’, published as a contribution to ‘Psychogeography and Psychotherapy’ (Rose, 2019), Izod (2019) effectively provides a counter to Stein’s understanding of a pathological “narcissism of place”, invoking both topoanalysis and psychogeography to present a playful meditation on the significance but also frequently mysterious status of place in both human consciousness and organisational life. Here they eschew a linear narrative structure to present a number of ‘episodes’ from engagement with the landscape and built environment, personal relationships and professional practice, where meaningful experience of place is described as taking being part of a dynamic and changing interplay between the internal and the external. Repeating a quote from their earlier paper (Izod 2016), Izod writes of the theme implicit in the title of “‘Here’ is where I have a presence’:

“I am inferring that ‘here’ is a place in which I have a presence; without my own presence, it would be ‘there’, so that place evokes a dynamic sense of self, and self and place become interwoven (p.151).

Relating the experience of place within organisations within systems psychodynamic discourse, Izod (2016) considers how orientation to place at a personal-level may as a determinant of organisational identity: “I will suggest that “place” and how we relate to a sense of where we are at any one time, is a formative aspect of the way we encounter organisations and undertake representational tasks within them and on their behalf [...] places lodge in us, cling to our skins, and play a part in the way we interact with our environments (p.111-112). In this context the encounter with place activates encoded personal and procedural memory from childhood, influencing patterns of relatedness to self and other in an integrally transferential process. Accordingly, place represents an elemental “feature of how we find our own minds”, “access our inner worlds” (p.125) and form attachments, both at an interpersonal and an organisational context.

Lefebvre and Foucault: Power relations

The post-structuralist social theorists Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault represent one further influence upon systems psychodynamic authors and organisational theorists concerning the status of place, space and the workplace in organisational life. In a narrative review of different studies of place and space in organisations, Taylor and Spicer (2007) cite Lefebvre’s (2001) concept of ‘spatial production’, whereby space may be understood as a

social, political and ideological construction with multiple meanings, which in turn make it possible to frame it through three organising categories: space as distance, as experience, and as a manifestation of power relations. Focusing on space as a manifestation of power relations, Foucault (1977) deploys the motif of the 'panopticon', a form of prison design developed in the eighteenth century by Jeremy Bentham whereby inmates' location, movement and behaviour could in principle be visually monitored and controlled from a central vantage point along a series of radiating wings.

In 'Borderline Welfare' (where one of the 'vanishing organisation' texts is located) Cooper and Lousada (2005) deploy the historic example of the panopticon as being emblematic of systems of governance and control that find manifestation in modern health and social care systems and processes:

In the patient, in the welfare culture we are investigating, and in Foucault's disciplinary regime, we find a need for unending watchfulness or vigilance. The question in all cases is; what requires this degree of extreme, anxious, and continual observation? (p.65)

While the idea of the 'vanishing organisation' is reflective of an initial problematisation of the status of experience and place within contemporary organisations, later authors have developed this theme and framework in relation to digital health interventions. For example, writing about the delivery-at-scale of frequently online psychological interventions within mental health services in the UK, Risq (2012) identifies a culture of "unconscious loss" as

being enacted, “where the institutionally-sanctioned repudiation of containment cannot be spoken about, addressed or mourned”. In its manifestation, Cotton (2020) further provides a critique of what is seen as the application of principles and methods of “digital-Taylorism” to create an “Uberisation of therapy” (p.18) in relation to the management and delivery of online psychological interventions.

iii) The pairing of psychoanalysis and geography

The pairing of psychoanalysis and geography

Over recent decades, the discipline of geography, in a move independent of systems psychodynamic thinking, has considered potential congruences with psychoanalytic ideas and themes, and as such may be further indicative of an underlying ‘spatial turn’ within ideas. For example, in the introduction to the collection of essays ‘Psychoanalytic Geographies’, Kingsbury and Pile (2014) argue that Freud’s ‘topographic’ model of the id, ego and super ego (Freud, 2023) is linked integrally with geographic themes and metaphors, and in so doing shows how geographic sensibility can enhance psychoanalytic understanding:

“The unconscious then, as if it were a tightly sealed container inside the mind where we “bottle up” all the painful stuff; nor is it a set of contents, as if the bottle only held repressed sexual desires associated with the father [...] Rather the unconscious is best associated with processes such as “the contiguity of ideas”, reversal into opposites, repression, over-determination, trains of thought, trains of association, timelessness, contradictoriness and conservatism. In this sense, the unconscious is

how thoughts and ideas are placed at a distance from consciousness or blocked from becoming conscious; even as the dam prevents the Zuider Zee from being swamped, it does not stop the seas from moving, nor having its own forces and dynamics, nor does it seal the oceans in a bottle” (p.14).

Also in this collection, Davidson and Parr (2014) describe how a focus on aspects of psychoanalytic theory, including object relations and the concept of *unheimlich*, within geographical thought “can serve to connect the unconscious, emotions and the social and material world. (p121)” and take seriously the notion that “psyches as well as selves are socio-spatial phenomena” (p.122).

The term ‘place attachment’ has been used to describe an emergent movement within human geography that Seamon (2014) characterises as being concerned with understanding and describing the “lived dialectics” that exist between people and place (p.13). As part of this emergent interest, Scannell and Gifford (2014) invoke attachment theory to consider the possible applicability of different attachment styles, for example those of ‘secure’, ‘anxious-ambivalent’ and ‘avoidant’ developed by Ainsworth et al. (1978) to the construction of “place attachment” to observe “parallels between the psychology of bonding to people and to places” (p.32).

Stedman et al. (2014), observe the proliferation of concepts and terms being used within contemporary geographic discourse relating to human experience of place, and which includes: ‘topophilia’, ‘rootedness’, ‘place dependence’,

'place identity', 'urban identity', 'place attachment', 'sense of place' and 'sense of community'. Here they advocate for a consolidation of these concepts within a yet to be established "precise definition of the concept and a consistent correspondence between the theory and measurement procedures adopted" (p.134), and propose that further work is needed to take place to co-relate place attachment to other related themes – for example with 'place attachment' representing a superordinate concept, or 'place attachment' itself being an integral dimension of a governing superordinate concept.

3.4.3 Conclusion: Murality and the workplace

This review of literature has described how the design and organisation of the contemporary workplace, and the themes of place, space and the workplace may be framed in relation to systems psychodynamic discourse. Central to this account has been the idea of the 'vanishing organisation' (Cooper and Dartington, 2004; Cooper and Lousada, 2005), a disappearance observed by theorists and consultants working within the systems psychodynamic tradition of containing structures in organisational life at the beginning of the twenty first century. As an implicitly spatial theme reflective of the stage magician's expression "now you see it, now you don't!", the 'vanishing organisation' has been shown to have the capacity to connect systems psychodynamic discourse to contemporary ideas and themes developed within the specialist workplace sector, for example around the changed and problematised socio-spatial contract (Vischer, 2005) formed between individuals and organisations, the simultaneous reinforcement of flexibility and precariousness (O'Reilly, 2005; Standing 2021) the entanglement of democratic and neo-Taylorist practices

(Saval, 2014; Myerson and Ross 2022) and discussion and dispute around the relevance and future of the workplace (Usher 2018; Myerson and Ross Ibid). The idea of the 'vanishing organisation' may also be understood to be reflective of an observed 'spatial turn' (Warf and Arias 2009) occurring within social science and culture, brought about by the problematisation of our understanding of place and space in the context of the rise of networked communications and changed political and economic relations in a globalised society.

While not expressly forming a coherent spatial theory, a range of psychoanalytic and psychoanalytically-informed ideas and concepts, including Freud's 'archaeological metaphor' (Freud 1896) Freud's ideas around dreams and dream work (Freud 1900), the organisation of objects and space in the analyst's office (Freud 1913; Kurtz 1986; Danze 2005), and elements of object relations theory (Klein 1946; Bion, 1984) do contain spatial ideas, themes and metaphors. Additionally, attachment theories and elements of Bion's later concepts of the nature of thought and thinking derived from 'container and contained' – 'alpha function', 'thoughts without a thinker' and O (Bion 1991, 1970) - do extend beyond intra-psychic understandings to form an epistemic frame through which place and space might start to be imagined and applied in relation to interpersonal, group and organisational contexts.

Further, while 'classic' 'Tavistock' and established systems psychodynamic perspectives (For example Trist and Murray 1990, 1993, 1997; Hinshelwood and Skogstadt, 2000) may be understood to implicitly address and engage with the themes of place, space and the workplace, a more contemporary

approaches are shown to do so far more directly, particularly those which directly invoke the spatial ideas and practices originated by Bachelard (1994), Debord (1956), Lefebvre (1991) and Foucault (1977), or are involved in the contemporary exchange of ideas between psychoanalysis and the discipline of human geography. This review of literature now concludes with a discussion and assessment of the meanings and uses of 'murality' - a relatively little-known and infrequently used term in systems psychodynamic discourse - which it is argued nonetheless represents a powerful organising concept and heuristic frame for connecting established concepts and methods within the wider systems psychodynamic tradition around the themes of place, space and the workplace.

Writing in the context of managing the environment within secure mental health services, Cox (1985), a forensic psychotherapist, provides a spatially-informed account of the beneficial sense of psychological wholeness and containment that may be afforded through the purposive integration of a bounded physical space, and workplace, within a wider therapeutic culture. Here, Cox coins the term 'murality' to define the resultant beneficial sense of "wallness" (p.10) which may be experienced by both patients and staff, to help form an emotionally containing environment within which constructive and desirable forms of self and relatedness to others may be established, reinforced and sustained. Observing its rhyme with the word *morality*, Cox characterises murality as a psycho-spatial embodiment of:

“the inherent nature of every kind of boundary; the intrapsychic defences (or lack of them) and the quality of the interdisciplinary boundaries between all within the custodial secure perimeter at last being the ne plus ultra of the concrete reification of all that murality stands for” (ibid.).

Here, a process and dynamic connecting person to both place and culture in a bounded environment is lucidly presented which also invokes the core systems-psychodynamic themes of social defences and the significance of the boundary within open systems theory. While argued by Cox to be most clearly demonstrable in the highly controlled setting of a special hospital, murality is nonetheless understood to carry far wider application, framing the experience and identity of individuals and groups at the intersection of the tangible, bounded and physically containing territory of an organisation or institution, and the intangible but nevertheless emotionally containing elements of organisational task and culture. Further, Cox cites Bachelard for helping to point the way via phenomenology of the significance of the aesthetic in the framing and experience of murality and writes:

"In my experience their inner world is often entered with least resistance and most welcoming affirmation via the poetic pathway of aesthetic access. This has been explored in several publications, yet we merely seem to have stirred the surface after touching the depths to adapt Bachelard" (Ibid.).

Adshead (2019), writing again from a forensic mental health perspective in a foreword to an anthology of texts on 'unhoused' states of mind, re-frames Cox's purposive construction of murality to characterise it in phenomenal terms as "the experience of being inside a space in such a way as to create an identity of the inside" (p.xviii). Through this succinct statement, a sophisticated introjective and projective dynamic is framed which effectively relates the everyday encounter with space and place to a structuring of self, where the creation of 'an identity of the inside' may be understood to contain two complementary functions: In a manner also congruent with Bion's theory of alpha function (Bion 1984, *Ibid.*), engagement with place may advance momentarily and in micro-scale a dynamic of individuation where a particular state of mind becomes activated; and simultaneously and reciprocally, the space itself is invested with a particular sense of physical and emotional coherence. In the context of Adshead's text, the process of murality may inform healthy constructions of self and attachments to place, or alternatively may be reflective of 'unhoused' states of mind indicative of more damaged patterns of attachment.

While Cox's original instrumental definition of murality and Adshead's subsequent phenomenological definition are intended to illustrate ideas about the significance of place and space within forensic psychotherapy 'unhoused' states of mind respectively, the term in both of its uses remains highly relevant for psychoanalytic and systems psychodynamic concerns. Accordingly, through its articulation of an amalgam of two reciprocal dynamics - the process of conferring identity to the organisational spaces and cultures we occupy, and the identities we are in turn conferred with by occupying them – murality carries a

strong conceptual affinity with object relations theory and the foundational, and metaphorically spatialised concept of projective identification (Klein 1946, Ibid.). This may be seen to be particularly so in relation to Bion's concept of 'container and contained' (Bion, 2004, Ibid.), but applied directly to emotional experience held and processed in an organisational and institutional context, or in relation to the built environment, rather than the within the relationship between mother and child or analyst and patient. Further, through the linking of spatial location, physical co-relation and identity formation, Cox's and Adshead's formulations of murality also show affinity with attachment theories (for example Bowlby 1969; Ainsworth et al. 1978; Mikulincer and Shaver 2017), and further materially exemplified by the Rey's metaphor of the 'brick mother' (Steiner, 1994, Ibid.) signifying the way that buildings, and the institutional cultures they contain, may act as a locus for the expression of human attachments – to others, to culture, for the buildings themselves – and for belonging.

The concept and process of 'murality' may also further understood to connect with and helpfully complement a range of classic and contemporary systems psychodynamic ideas and concerns. For example, developing Schein's theory of organisational culture (Schein, 2017 Ibid.), the workplace of an organisation may be understood to hold a complex psycho-social status where while existing as a physical artefact of an organisation's culture, it also functions as site of stratified individual and group attachments and emotional investment.

Additionally, the originating systems psychodynamic concept of 'culture as a psycho-social process' (Trist, 1990, p.540) where organisational and societal culture is understood to act as a bridge between 'psyche' and the 'social' may

be further illuminated with reference to human experience of and relatedness to the material culture of an organisation. Likewise, the concepts of social defences against anxiety (Menzies, 1960, *Ibid.*), theory and practice relating to group relations (Bion, 1960 *Ibid.*; Lawrence, Bain and Gould, 1996 *Ibid.*) and psychoanalytic organisational observation (Hinshelwood and Skogstad, 2000, *Ibid.*), as well as the later concept of 'organisation in the mind' (Armstrong, 2005, *Ibid.*) all may be understood to embody or reflect the action and processes of murality deriving from engagement with the felt experience of place in group and organisational contexts.

Through its double formulation by Cox and Adshead as a descriptor of the feeling of an instrumental and beneficial sense of 'wallness', and as a phenomenal descriptor of how individual and by implication collective identity both shapes and is shaped by an environment, the concept of murality facilitates an understanding of place in an organisation in a way that is both epistemically and theoretically grounded, and readily accessible from a lay-perspective. Here, the image and metaphor of a mural – an arrangement of small fragments of ceramic or other material on the surface of a wall to collectively form a complete image and a word - and derived from the Latin *Mūrālis* – meaning “of or relating to a wall” or “growing on a wall” (OED Online) - may also usefully illustrate the phenomenon and action of murality.

The inherently projective and introjective dynamic that murality describes enables it to also connect with and help inform with a range of key psychoanalytic and systems psychodynamic themes and concepts as they

relate to the themes of place, space and the workplace. From a psychoanalytic context, murality implicitly connects with Bion's concept of 'container and contained' and the manifestation of 'commensal', 'symbiotic' or 'parasitic' forms of emotional containment as a function of the manifestation of particular power relations in the workplace. Also, from a systems psychodynamic context, in addition to organisational and systemic defences as already mentioned, Murality readily connects with the concept of 'organisation in the mind' and the theory and practice of psychoanalytic organisational observation.

Further, through the concept's effective capacity to accommodate the complex and recursively overlaid interrelation between individuals, groups, culture and the workplace in organisational and institutional contexts, it can in turn be related to organisational contexts to help elucidate phenomenal paradoxes relating to the status of place. For example, in an historic example, the theme and action of murality appears implicit in the statement made by the Prime Minister Winston S Churchill in parliament following the bombing of the House of Commons, and the decision to restore the building exactly to its original form and dimensions, thus reinforcing the 'adversarial' political tradition: "We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us" (Hansard, 1943).

While recognising the generative potential that the concept of murality holds for addressing the themes of place, space and the workplace within systems psychodynamic discourse, it may seem ironic or a shock to also acknowledge the term's origins within forensic mental health services. However, bearing in mind some of the themes already raised in this review of literature, including the

frequently highly regulated, restrictive and sometimes punitive neo-Taylorist workplace models deployed within contemporary organisations (for example Saval, 2014; Standing, 2021; Myerson and Ross, 2022), it is perhaps apposite that this is the case.

Nevertheless, one key conceptual challenge remains – of relating the theme of ‘mortality’ to the parameters and confines of the contemporary workplace, characterised by ‘lean’, ‘activity-based’, ‘agile’ and ‘networked’ modes of working, to reach an understanding of the nature of the experience of ‘wallness’ in organisational contexts where walls and other physical or psychological boundaries may be eschewed. Further questions may also be raised: In the context of the observation of Cooper and Dartington (2004) and Cooper and Lousada (2005) of the ‘vanishing organisation’, what possible forms of emotional containment, whether commensal, symbiotic or parasitic might be derived or sustained in such contexts? Can a ‘non’ place (Augé, 2008) ever function as a locus for secure adult emotional attachment? Can a ‘virtual’ organisation hold the emotionally containing function of a ‘brick mother’? (Rey, 1994). Here the primary research question *can an agile workplace facilitate emotional containment?* poses a crucially germane question for working life and organisations in the contemporary age.

Chapter four: Methodology

4.1 Establishing an epistemic and theoretical frame for the investigation

Development of an epistemic and theoretical frame in relation to the investigation began while I was completing the 'taught' component of a professional doctorate programme and took several years to establish. This process was supported through regular formal discussion with my academic supervisors as well as my own independent research, aided by maintaining a personal process log which acted as a living document for detailing emergent thoughts, themes, dreams and associations, involving three particular interconnected tasks.

- First, I engaged in a process of reflection about the premises and workplaces of the organisations I had encountered in a professional context, whether as an employee or more latterly in consultative roles, to think about the particular meanings that the workplaces held in relation to my professional work, and also personally at an imaginative level.
- Second, I engaged in an extensive search of the literature that was available in relation to the themes of place, space and emotion, which also contributed to themes contained in the literature review chapter. After considerable effort, I was eventually rewarded by the chance re-discovery of the concept of 'murality' representing a beneficial sense of 'wallness' within forensic mental health services (Cox, 1995, p.10) and its later articulation as "the

experience of being inside a space so as to create an identity of the inside” (Adshead, 2019, xviii) which transformed my capacity to articulate the theme of place within a systems psychodynamic frame (see section 3.4.3 of the literature review for a fuller description of ‘murality’).

- Third, in a process of personal reflexivity, I sought to imaginatively reengage with the domestic and institutional landscape remembered from my own highly mobile childhood as a military child which, as I have described in Chapter Two seemed evocative of aspects of the contemporary ‘agile’ workplace. This was informed particularly by accounts of reflexivity in psycho-social research, conducted by Tchelebi (2018) and Jervis (2009). Tchelebi uses the term ‘me-search’ to represent internal and introspective activity in the pursuit and progression of external social science investigation whereby “attention to self-experience can further the learning about the other” (p.189). Additionally, work by Jervis around framing “the use of self as a research tool” (p.145) as part of an investigation into the felt experience of military wives further helped me to validate my own use of self in relation to my experience of a military childhood to further my investigation into the contemporary workplace.

Together, these three related activities helped me to stay emotionally connected with an identified challenge and potential paradox in our felt experience of place contemporary organisations – how emotional containment might be derived from contemporary environments and workplaces that through their impermanence, instability or physically unbound status may be reflective of

what the social theorist Marc Augé terms ‘non places’ (Augé, 2008) (see section 3.2.4 of the literature review for a fuller description of concept of the ‘non-place’).

My earliest working title for an investigation was worded as follows: *Consultancy as archaeology: Theorising the relationship between past and present in an organisation through its working space*. While this clearly invokes both consultancy and the workplace, the theme of the contemporary or ‘agile’ workplace remains only implicit. However, a shift in emphasis is observed with reference to two dreams recorded in my process log:

“I visited [the married quarters at RAF] Hucknall to research the house where I had lived when I was five ... a lot had changed ... a row of the houses on Astral Grove [my street] had been turned into shops, some spectacular, some scruffy ... one of the houses had become an antiques shop with glittering objects in the windows ... my old house was a greengrocer’s shop ... I went inside and told the man who worked there that I was investigating the stories told about these houses ... he looked up to the high ceiling and said “if walls could speak, this house would have something to say!”

“I discovered that there was another room [in my house] under the kitchen. Inside it were shelves to the ceiling containing large glass jars that told the ‘story’ of the house. There was also a window that I had

never seen before. The room was always there – why had I never noticed it till now?”

These dreams, both of which I shared both in my academic supervision and at in-person social dreaming matrixes organised in pre-lockdown conditions felt both revelatory and liberating, and helped me to integrate my powerful sense of yearning to ‘revisit’ and derive containment again from the spaces and places of childhood with a parallel interest in relating past to present in both a domestic and an organisational context. They also encapsulated an emergent recognition of the power of Freud’s ‘archaeological metaphor’ (Freud, 1896) – the likening of the identification of the unconscious in psychoanalytic practice with an archaeological investigation – and the possibility that this metaphor might be applicable also to the workplace via the generative metaphor of ‘working below the surface’ (Huffington et al, 2004). Following further reflection and discussion with my academic supervisors, the following form of words was identified as my primary research question throughout the investigation: *Can an ‘agile’ work environment facilitate emotional containment?*

Epistemology is concerned with the claims about the status and validity of knowledge; “how we know what we know” (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009 p.22), “how we know what we know is true” and “what are the limits of our knowledge” (Alexandrov 2009, p.30) which pertain to a given field of investigation. Linked closely to epistemology is *ontology*, “the science or study of being”; or in relation to social science “the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality” (Blaikie 1993, cited by Crotty

2015 p.11). Epistemic and ontological considerations may in turn together inform and shape *praxis*, the “action entailed, required, or produced by a theory” [OED online], providing a set of theoretical perspectives and methods for gathering and working with data in research to reach meaningful conclusions.

In progressing an investigation into the felt experience of place in contemporary organisations, and the complex interplay between materiality, culture, internal experience and shared experience that the workplace engenders, I adopt a critical realist epistemic stance. Critical realism in organisational research, as articulated by O’Mahoney and Vincent (2014), locates knowledge as a product of an interplay between “an objective world” that “exists independently of people’s perceptions, language or imagination” and the “subjective interpretations which influence the ways in which it is perceived and experienced” (p.2). Through this “double recognition” of what constitutes knowledge in the social science, critical realism counters positivism’s equation of reality to that which can be systematically and empirically measurable and constructivism’s implicit reduction of meaning to discourse.

As an alternative, critical realism proposes a ‘stratified’ model of knowledge which O’Mahnoey and Vincent terms “depth ontology” (p.9). This contains three distinct but recursively interconnected fields; ‘the empirical’, ‘the actual’ and ‘the real’, where the empirical represents the realm of human sensory experience and “what we perceive to be the case”; the actual, the substantive “events that occur in time and space”; and the real, “the mechanisms and structures which generate the actual world, of which we only have partial access, together with

the empirical". Knowledge and 'reality' in organisational research are thus understood to be multi-layered, and in a manner analogous to the concept of the unconscious in psychoanalytic theory, predicated on the understanding that "there are deeper levels awaiting discovery" (ibid, p.10).

Adopting a critical realist epistemic position for this investigation enables the workplace to be framed as multi-layered phenomena which exists both as an objective and empirically measurable entity, and as something which may be 'constructed' in individual, collective and organisational contexts. Here, the complex and stratified framing of what 'is' that depth ontology makes possible, usefully and accurately reflects the intrinsically complicated nature of our lived experience in relation to place and the material world, both in everyday life and in organisational contexts, which frequently may be characterised by the emotional and aesthetic experience of 'messiness' and entanglement as well as through intellectual clarity.

The investigation is conducted within a 'systems psychodynamic' theoretical and practice frame. While, as described in section 3.4.1, the systems psychodynamic tradition represents a diverse grouping of methods and theoretical approaches, one clear shared descriptor is manifest in the expression and generative metaphor of 'working below the surface' (Huffington et al, Ibid.) which in turn may be linked epistemically to Freud's foundational 'archaeological metaphor' (Freud, 1896, Ibid.) which likens the identification of unconscious trauma in clinical psychoanalysis to the systematic discovery and analysis of stratified-by-time physical artefacts in archaeology.

Mersky (2015) identifies three key 'propositions' that frame an epistemology of 'socioanalytic' methods: "the collective unconscious as a source of knowing" (p.285); "knowledge is generated collectively"; and "systematically processed subjective experience generates knowledge and insights" (p.287). Accordingly, the adoption of a systems psychodynamic theoretical frame and praxis enables a multi-dimensional approach for the investigation of space and place in organisations to take place, which may deploy "the researcher's subjectivity as a research instrument" (Crochiani-Windland, 2018) where both tangible elements of organisational life, such as the physical configuration of the workplace, and non-tangible elements, such as its 'affective atmosphere' (Hinshelwood and Skogstad) or formation of 'murality' (after Cox, 1995; Adshead, 2019) might be brought together into focus.

This approach also facilitates consideration of aesthetic and socio-political dimensions of the encounter with place in organisations with reference to theorists and texts from outside the system-psychoanalytic tradition: for example, the social and special theorist Manuel Castells' identification of the 'network society' and two related but opposing modes of spatial experience manifest in the 'space of places' and the 'space of flows' (Castells, 2000a); Marc Augé's sociological and cultural assessment of the phenomenon of the 'non-place' as a material artefact of conditions of 'supermodernity' (Augée, 2008); and the phenomenological philosopher Gaston Bachelard's presentation of 'topoanalysis' as a practice of associative engagement with the aesthetic experience of place (Bachelard, 1995). Accordingly, the systems

psychodynamic tradition provides an epistemically valid, intellectually inclusive, and from the researchers' perspective, a requisitely emotionally containing frame through which it may be possible to investigate the felt experience of place in contemporary organisations

4.2 Methods

For the investigation I have chosen to deploy two key investigatory and analytic techniques: the social photo matrix to surface individual and shared narratives of contemporary working environments; and grounded theory to consolidate data and develop working hypotheses about the nature of this experience.

4.2.1 The social photo matrix

The social photo matrix is a form of participative action research derived from the practice of social dreaming, described by Armstrong as “a method of working with dreams that are shared and associated to within a gathering of people, coming together for this purpose” (Armstrong, 1998, p.xvii) The social photo matrix as a technique was developed by Sievers (2008 and 2013) and Mersky and Sievers (2019) and utilises photographs taken of a shared organisational or institutional context to function as ‘transitional objects’ to help surface understanding of conscious and unconscious process, and hence ‘unthought known’ (Bollas, 2018) experience held in relation to a particular environment or place. In a social photo matrix workshop, a group of participants take photographs of a shared organisational or institutional setting, then meet in a staged, facilitated and contained exercise to share associations and connections. By permitting an interplay between individual and shared

responses to photographs of the environment in question, the matrix facilitates the creation of a vantage point where “it is possible to gain access to the unthought known and thus the unconscious in organisations” (p.249).

In its implementation, a social photo matrix workshop contains an integrally containing process consisting of an introductory session, a photograph taking session, the matrix itself, and a feedback session. This facilitates a collaborative form of investigation, which as described by Sievers (2013) “uses the very eyes (hearts and minds) of organisational role holders”. Accordingly, “whereas most (photographic) approaches resemble that of an ethnographer or anthropologist in so far as they are based on the perception of an outside observer” the matrix process facilitates a more intimate and participative focus (Sievers, 2013 p.132). As an intrinsically ‘abductive’ method for generating and capturing what would otherwise be unspoken and unthought in an organisational context, the social photo matrix methods activates Bion’s concept of ‘thoughts without a thinker’ (Bion, 1984), where thoughts may be considered to exist in a collective context which have yet to be individually articulated or attributed. In this context Mersky and Sievers refer to the idea of the ‘strange intruder’ (Pierce 1992, cited by Mersky and Sievers 2019, p. 164) where unthought known experience, when surfaced in a group setting, may be experienced as if it were some kind of mysterious and intrusive external phenomena. Citing Winnicott, Sievers (2013) considers matrix photographs to represent ‘transitional objects’ for accessing cultural data: “In taking up a role in organisations, we introject parts of external reality and transform them into inner objects and part-objects. These objects build an inner matrix, which is only partly conscious and, not least because of its

often-frightening character, partly remains unconscious. The photographs can be a medium through which “these inner objects and part-objects can be “externalized” and become objects for associations and sources for further thoughts and thinking. In this sense, the photographs are transitional objects” (p.132).

In the social photo matrix workshop, the role of the facilitator (or facilitators) is complex as, like with other methods of psycho-social research, it challenges and traverses a rigid distinction between research and consultancy as well as the implicit understanding of an ‘expert’ researcher/consultant as being instrumental in the generation of knowledge. Accordingly, in the social photo matrix itself, while the facilitator is responsible for establishing the staged conditions and boundaries through which unthought known data may be accessed, it is the matrix group itself which represents the active agent, out of whose shared consciousness elements of unthought known experience become generated. However, in the feedback session, the researcher/consultant holds a more active and conventionally consultative role to support participants to reflect upon their experience in the social photo matrix, this time with the organisational sponsor present and enabling a processing of the data and experience from an organisationally-focussed and task-focussed perspective that is not possible in the matrix itself, and as Mersky (2012) describes: “transforming the thoughts from the infinite into actual thinking relating to reality” (p.37).

While not having used the medium of photography before in research or consultancy before, I adopted the social photo matrix because of the method's capacity to directly engage organisational stakeholders in discourse and dialogue about their felt experience of place and culture. Having participated in social dreaming matrixes, where dreams represent the object for the generation of further associations or meanings, I was already mindful of the evocative and emotive power of 'matrix' approaches to surface tacit or 'unthought known' experience in the contained context of a structured workshop format. Further, in the taught component of the doctoral programme and in my own professional development, I had also participated in visual methods for surfacing personal and organisational experience, for example the use of drawing in group exercises to surface 'unthought known' experience (Sapochnik, 2013); and in the visual representation of the 'organisation in the mind' in professional supervision (after Armstrong, 2005). Accordingly, the choice of the Social Photo Matrix was made not primarily on account of its status as an 'arts-based' or 'visual' methodology, but rather because of its position within contemporary systems psychodynamic theory and practice as a means for surfacing 'unthought known' experience within organisations and systems.

Nevertheless, the Social Photo Matrix does bear outward similarity with a range of arts-based and photography-based methodologies in social science research, social change practice and therapeutic practice with epistemic lineages independent of the systems psychodynamic tradition. For example, Harper (2002) describes the established practice in social science research of 'photo-elicitation', whereby photographs are used to elicit qualitative responses

from interview participants and thereby provide deeper and more valid data than simple word-based surveys and questions. Stedman et al (2014) further develop the principles and practice of photo-elicitation within social research into the fields of place attachment and place meanings, advocating its use in relation to places at risk of destruction as well as processes of depletion, encroachment and restriction. By contrast, the technique of 'photovoice' represents a form of participative action research originally developed by Wang and Burris (1994) and designed to give a voice to socially marginalised or misrepresented groups and communities through the process of taking and discussing photographs which can then be used to communicate required change to the makers of policy. As a contemporary example, Keating (2021) carried out a photovoice exercise with nineteen black men living in a London borough, engaging them in critical dialogue about their mental health and wellbeing, and in so doing pointing out ways in which community mental health 'outreach' services could be better organised to meet the needs of this demographic. Further, in a specifically clinical context, Weiser (2023) describes 'photo-therapy' as the purposive and structured use of photography by a trained therapist or other mental health professional to support personal growth and self-awareness. By contrast, 'therapeutic photography' refers to more self-directed practice with a similar beneficial intent.

At an early stage of my research, I had considered deploying an established narrative-based research methodology, such as Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) (Wengraf, 2001) or Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) (Holloway and Jefferson, 2013) to gather rich data about

individual experience of the workplace. However, I rejected these options in favour of the social photo matrix on account of the inability of these methods to surface with shared or collective organisational experience; or engage as directly with the visual and aesthetic experience of place in organisations.

4.2.2 Grounded theory analysis

Grounded theory is an established technique within the qualitative social scientific research and analysis which facilitates the generation of theory from qualitative data through a repeated process of coding, cross-referencing of findings and formation of hypotheses. Lansisalmi, Peiro and Klvimaki (2004) describe it as being an iterative interplay between “conceptual categories and their conceptual properties, and hypotheses about or generalized relations between these categories and their properties” (p.242). Thus, through the repeated process of coding and hypothesis formation, it may become possible to identify novel relationships between diverse data which otherwise might not otherwise be identified.

Glaser and Strauss (2008) [1967], the conceptual originators of grounded theory, locate the method within the discipline of sociology as a “general method of comparative analysis” (p.1); a process of “discovering theory, rather than validating existing theory”, as part of an inductive process whereby “one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept” (p.23). In a more contemporary construction Charmaz (2014) characterises grounded theory in social research as being an application of coherent and

systematic, but also flexible “guidelines” for the collection and analysis of qualitative data in order “to construct theories from the data themselves” in such a way as researchers may “construct a theory [which is] ‘grounded’ in the data” (p.1). The coding process in grounded theory “requires us to stop and ask analytic questions of the data we have gathered” and then to direct subsequent data-gathering toward the analytic issues we are defining” (p.109), making space for “the imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon” (p.231), and through interpretation give “abstract understanding greater priority than [simple] explanation” (p.230).

For Charmaz, the process of grounded theory analysis is accumulative, starting with the identification of an initial research question, the sampling and recruitment of research participants, the collection of rich data followed by processes of coding then the categorising and building of theory. In grounded theory, a diverse range of sources of rich data may inform the analytic process, including transcripts from recorded interviews and focus groups, documentary sources and the researcher’s own process notes. This is developed through a process of systematic word-by-word or line-by-line coding which acts as a “pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data” (p.113) starting with ‘initial’ and then ‘focused’ coding. While initial codes first log manifest themes as they occur in the data, subsequent focussed coding seeks to identify possible emergent themes within and across initial codes. In the final stage of coding, ‘axial’ codes serve to abductively generate new understandings from the data by establishing themes and connections between focused codes. In considering how personal and

emotional experience may be incorporated in grounded theory coding, Starr (2007) cites Winnicott to argue that the coding process is fundamentally 'grounded' in a process of "object relations" (p.82). Here codes may be considered as "transitional objects" (p.84) in a process of analysis, such that new meaning may be emblematic of "a matter of both attachment and separation" (p.83) in the researcher's consciousness.

Grounded theory accordingly represents a robust mechanism for processing rich qualitative data from diverse sources concerning the felt experience of place in organisations, including photographic and narrative data from the social photo matrix, the researcher's own process notes and also data derived from personal reflexivity. In this context, the abductive capacity of grounded theory to facilitate the generation of new theory from diverse media represented a clear asset in comparison to the method of 'thematic analysis' (for example after Braun and Clarke, 2006), whose scope is more limited to identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data.

4.3 Research design

To recap from Chapter One, the purpose I have set for the investigation is *to explore the emotional significance and impact of the workplace in contemporary organisations and its relevance for theory and practice in the systems-psychodynamic tradition of consulting*. In this context, my primary research question *can an 'agile' work environment facilitate emotional containment?* establishes a heuristic frame through which relevant questions may be posed about what it is like individually and as part of a group to work in and experience

the contemporary workplace, whether in its 'lean', 'activity-based', 'agile' and networked manifestations. For example: how or whether the material presence of the contemporary workplace informs feelings of relatedness to self, other and organisation; whether the architecture and territory of the 'agile' workplace may be experienced in ways so as to facilitate thought, connectedness with others, personal integrity, psychological safety, agency, and productivity; and alternatively in which circumstances might the experience of the 'agile' workplace become problematic, and how then are challenging experiences and dynamics negotiated.

To carry out the research, I engaged with four separate organisations, of different area of activity, size and configuration of workplace. My strategy for sampling was to identify a set of organisations and workplaces of different sector (public, private and voluntary); size (large, medium, small); and also, configuration of environment (for example deploying different aspects and levels of 'lean', 'activity-based', 'agile' and networked configuration. One further important sampling criterion was to identify and engage with organisations whose workplaces demonstrated an intrinsic sense of 'ordinariness' in their configuration and design and be readily recognisable and considered commonplace in their particular organisational context and milieu.

Engaging with each site in-role as a researcher over a period of weeks, and maintaining a process log throughout, I negotiated access, carried out a half-day informal observation of the workplace, facilitated a social photo matrix workshop focused on the theme 'what is it like to work here?' and finally at a

separate meeting negotiated my exit with the organisational sponsor. This set of detailed activities allowed me to cumulatively establish a sense of reflexive 'positionality' in relation to each organisation and research site. Detailed descriptions of my engagement with the research sites and the social photo matrix workshops that were carried out is provided in Chapter Five.

In-case analysis took place using grounded theory, based upon detailed completed transcripts of the dialogue from audio recordings from each social photo matrix, cross referenced with contemporaneous notes from my process log. Using line-by-line coding, I developed initial, focused, and then sets of axial codes forming working hypotheses around what it is 'like' to work in each particular workplace.

Cross-case analysis took place as a working through of my engagement with the research sites to develop a set of working hypotheses about the emotional significance of the workplace as it was manifested, leading to addressing the heuristic question *can an 'agile' work environment facilitate emotional containment?* This included a detailed assessment of the primary research question can an 'agile' work environment facilitate emotional containment? A detailed account of the processes of preparing and engaging with the data, the in-case analysis and the cross-case analysis is provided in Chapter Six.

Changes to the research design

In the original proposal for the investigation, it was stated that in addition to the social photo matrix workshops, there would be a further set of one-to-one

interviews with up to five individuals to record their personal experience of engaging with the workplace. However, due to the richness and volume of data available through my engagement with each organisation and workplace site, and the four social photo matrix workshops, it was decided that interview data was not required.

4.4 Limitations, ethical context, risks and mitigations

A discussion now follows about the epistemic and methodological limitations that pertain to an investigation into the felt experience of place in contemporary organisations carried out within the systems psychodynamic paradigm, its ethical context and the risks and mitigations that need to be considered and implemented. These relate to the application of psychoanalytic concepts to social phenomena, the individual, relational and organisational implications of systems psychodynamic research, a summary of institutionally-led ethical requirements, and the depth of analysis and non-generalisability of findings.

4.4.1 The application of psychoanalytic concepts to social phenomena

Using a theoretical frame derived in-part from psychoanalytic clinical practice applied to societal and organisational themes, the systems psychodynamic tradition and its associated movements engage in an epistemic project which differs radically from both psychoanalysis and empirical social science research methodologies, and therefore contains a number of inherent limitations, tensions, dangers and risks. For example, the particular insights that may be gained through psychoanalysis in a clinical context holds a markedly different claim to knowledge than that which may be derived in application to societal or

organisational themes. In this context, Thomas (2018) observes that “there is a tension between psycho-social research and psychoanalysis located just exactly in that ever-troublesome area, the epistemological query, “how do you know?” more traditionally put as a question about verification or falsification” (Thomas 2018 p.20). For Holloway and Jefferson (2013), while psychoanalysis represents “the only body of theory that could furnish ways of understanding the ‘psyche’ part of the psychosocial subject” (p.149), there therefore exists an inherent risk accompanying the re-imagination and re-application of this theoretical framework and set of techniques outside of the context for which they had originally been intended. They also warn of the epistemic and ethical risks associated with ‘wild psycho-analysis’, a term originally coined by Freud (1910) to describe the pursuit of psychoanalytic themes outside of an established theoretical, institutional and practice framework. Applying this concept to contemporary research and consultancy practice, Holloway and Jefferson also warn of the inherent danger that accompanies extracting and deploying concepts “shorn of their theoretical links, from the body of theory in which they belong” (p.149).

In order to mitigate the inherent risk of ‘wild analysis’ in systems psychodynamic research, Holloway and Jefferson cite Frosch (2010) in advocating a meeting between psychoanalysis and other disciplines which is reciprocal, appreciative and dialogic rather than being mutually reductive, thus enabling the “radical potential” of psychoanalytic epistemology and method “to disrupt and unsettle the status quo” (p.149) and find expression both within social scientific praxis and other fields. Citing Baraitser (2008) they advocate the careful establishment

of a psychoanalytically founded psychoanalytic “sensitivity” founded on principles, of free association and reflexivity, to establish a form of working that “instigates a constant reworking of the knowledge bases we come with”, which in turn may be more aptly defined as “psychoanalytically-informed” instead of simply ‘psychoanalytic’ (p.150).

To help maintain a ‘psychoanalytically informed’ stance and mitigate the risk of ‘wild analysis’ in relation to this investigation, and as already discussed in section 4.1, throughout the planning, delivery and write up of the investigation, I actively sought to challenge, test and enhance my subjectivity by maintaining regular contact with my identified supervisor(s), maintain a process process log and dream diary, participate in social dreaming matrixes and engaged in an extended process of reflexive investigation about my experience of work and place and my memory of institutional and domestic space in childhood.

4.4.2 Individual, relational and organisational implications of systems psychodynamic research

Ethical challenges in social research are described Sumner (2006) as arising from an inherent tension between the objective of “the search for new or better knowledge” and “the rights and interests of individuals and groups which may be affected (p.96). Writing in the context of a clinical research Gabard (2000) argues that there exists an inherent conflict in using clinical material between interests relating to client privacy, the generation of knowledge within a field, and also the personal and professional ambitions of the researcher. Further, in the context of research being carried out within a systems-psychodynamic

frame but in a non-clinical context, there exists the potential for highly charged and impactful emotive content and themes to be exposed. In this context Thomas (Ibid.) writes: “In the case of psychosocial research, the question arises of what changes might come about for research subjects and for researchers and whether those have yet been adequately thought through as an ethical practice” (p20).

Acknowledging the ‘abductive’ nature of systems psychodynamic research which invokes concepts such as ‘thoughts without a thinker’ (Bion, 1984 Ibid.) and the ‘strange intruder’ (Mersky and Sievers, 2019 Ibid.), use of social-matrix approaches such as the social photo matrix in organisational investigations will inevitably lead to outcomes, knowledge generation and emotional impact that cannot be predicted. Therefore, in using such methods it is important to consciously seek to ensure that as far as it is possible that an investigation does not become ‘extractive’ or lead to perverse consequences for participants or organisations. In practice, this risk can in-part be mitigated by strict adherence to the boundary conditions set for the staging of a social photo matrix workshop and ensuring that adequate opportunities are built into the processes for feedback and reflection both before the workshop, on the day and afterwards. This should include the following:

- Social photo matrix workshops are negotiated and organised with the full authority of an organisational-level sponsor who agrees to participate actively in the feedback session to reflect upon the themes raised by participants in the matrix.

- Participants in the workshop are volunteers rather than being co-opted and are informed in advance about its staging conventions and elements. In this process, participants should be made aware of the potential emotional impact of becoming involved, advised that they are able to withdraw from the exercise at any point, and also have access to signposting, if required, to freely available literature and resources about emotional wellbeing in the workplace.
- The social photo matrix workshop itself needs to be carefully timed and staged, with due attention to task, time, location and seating arrangements for each element, with sufficient time allocated for the review session to facilitate processing of the material generated in the workshop. In this context, there must be a clear distinction and marked separation between the two key elements of the workshop: the social photo matrix itself as a means for abductively generating unthought known organisational experience, followed by the review session which is focussed upon a processing and reintegration of experience from the matrix into everyday life and in organisational contexts to task.
- A formal exit meeting with the organisational sponsor should also be scheduled to take place on a later date, to allow for further organisational-level processing of the data and establish a sense of closure to the exercise.

4.4.3 Institutionally-led ethical requirements

In order to gain university-level ethical approval for the investigation to be given, a number of requirements were implemented: Social photo matrix participants at each site provided signed consent to be involved in the workshops, for the matrixes to be audio recorded and for the photographs taken and shared to be included in the analysis. Further, where it was possible to obtain signed consent from possible subjects in the social photo matrix workshop, this was also obtained. I also agreed to provide a summary of findings of the research for research participants and organisational sponsors, once the project and thesis is completed. To secure organisational anonymity in the research, details in photographs which might readily identify the organisation, for example showing organisations' names, address, or logo have been obscured. Further, as an integral part of my engagement with each organisation, and contained within the signed consent to participate forms was an understanding that if participation in the social photo matrix workshops exposed difficult experiences, I would be ready to circulate publicly available information and support materials relating to mental health and wellbeing that I brought with me to each workshop.

4.4.4 Depth of analysis and non-generalisability of findings

Further limitations pertain to the depth of the analysis and generalisability of findings. For example, carrying out a pilot and three single matrices at different organisations provided for only a relatively brief engagement within each setting, compared with the deeper but more limited access that would come from holding a number of matrices at a single organisational location. However, this particular loss is compensated for through a diversity of environment and

workplace spanning private, public and charity sectors, organisations of small, medium and large size and scale, and the possible cross-case comparisons and contrasts that may be gained.

Another limitation is that it is not possible to use social photo matrix data to make generalised conclusions about experience of and within the contemporary workplace, or within particular organisational settings. Rather, each matrix exists as a case study to facilitate continuing discussion, research and learning. However, some mitigation may be arrived at through conscious transparency of process within the research, the establishment of emotional closeness with data, and for the expression of compassion and respect towards the emotional experience manifest in research sites. Further, it is important to acknowledge that no definitive or final single analysis or set of conclusions is ever achievable. Accordingly, while this example of research is representative of my own particular method, coding, analysis, and reflexivity, other formulations are possible and also welcome.

Chapter Five: Engagement with research sites

5.1 Introduction

The four participating organisations that I identified and worked with, in order of engagement were:

- A privately owned co-working space, referred to here as *Synergy*, with a capacity of sixty users at any time, where I piloted the method.
- A medium-size architecture and interior design practice, referred to here as *The Spaceworks*, employing around thirty-five permanent staff.
- The headquarters building of a police force in England, accommodating over five hundred staff.
- The offices of a charity conducting research and policy work in the field of mental health, referred to here as *The Agency* and employing eighteen permanent staff.

Sites were identified via my professional and academic networks. Having applied the sampling criteria to ensure diversity in terms of organisational size, sector, field and workplace configuration, I then made contact with potential internal sponsors, with whom I communicated with by email, telephone conversation and meeting in-person to secure formal agreement to proceed. Once approval had been obtained, I familiarised myself with each organisation

in question by observing its workplace in person for a period of approximately three and a half hours, and also worked with the sponsor to organise the staging of a social photo matrix workshop and recruit participants. Social photo matrix workshops were convened on a single day over the course of three to four hours, and while the details around the particular staging arrangements differed according to logistic factors and the facilities available, each followed a similar format. This consisted of four elements in line with the method described in section 4.2.1 of the Methodology chapter:

- An introductory session, where I clarified the purpose and title of my investigation, briefed participants about the process for the workshop and addressed any questions that arose. Here, in line with university ethical procedures, I also obtained formal signed consent from those participating and from potential subjects in the workplace to engage in the research.
- A photography session, where participants used their smartphones to take as many photographs of their shared workspace, then each selecting and emailing one that personally responded to the question and theme of the social photo matrix: *what is it like to work here?*
- The matrix itself where in an audio-recorded session the photographs were shown in turn on a networked display screen and associations to the images were generated by participants.

- A review session, also attended by the organisational sponsor. Here, the photographs taken and themes raised in the matrix were once again explored, but in a less staged manner, providing participants with an opportunity to reflect upon and make further sense of their experience in the context of their organisational roles.

At each of the four workshops I involved a colleague to provide logistical support in the staging of the event and take notes in the matrix and feedback sessions. At the pilot workshop and matrix, a professional colleague participated in this role. For the second, third and fourth matrices, an academic peer/colleague, a workplace design consultant from my professional network and a professional colleague held this role respectively. After workshops had concluded, I circulated a PDF document to participants containing the images that had been shared to act as an aide-memoir of the data that had been co-created. Finally, to seek any further reflections on the experience of hosting a social photo matrix workshop and to mark the closure of my involvement with each organisation, I organised in-person 'sign off' meetings on a later date with each organisational sponsor.

For each research site, I describe how I made initial contact and the experience of crossing the boundary into the organisation, the physical environment and emotional landscape I encountered, the data that was generated from the social photo matrix workshop, and my experience of exit and overall reflections on my engagement, including a description of the sense of positionality I established with each organisation. Data is presented in the chronological order of each

social photo matrix workshop. Accordingly, the pilot site, a co-working space is presented first (Section 5.2), then the architecture practice (Section 5.3), then the police force headquarters (Section 5.4), and finally, the mental health charity (Section 5.5). In section 5.6, I reflect upon my engagement across all four sites to draw out common themes and learning about the social photo matrix workshop both as a method of organisational research and as an organisational intervention, and its wider ethical context.

Note about anonymity: To protect anonymity, all names of organisational and matrix participants have been substituted in the text with pseudonyms.

Note about the presentation of matrix photographs: Photographs from each social photo matrix are presented in a uniform format of 75 square centimetres, in black and white, moderate resolution and centred on the page. This is to provide a sense of their visual context without this becoming overpowering or detracting from the data and findings derived from the in-case grounded theory analysis, and the cross-case analysis.

5.2 The pilot: A Co-working facility

5.2.1 Beginnings, and crossing the boundary

Synergy was a lower-cost co-working facility, providing workspaces and office facilities to freelance workers and small companies on an hourly or a more permanent basis. My engagement with the organisation started after I met 'Steve', the owner/proprietor, and 'Eddie', its coordinator of activities, at a

conference in London on co-working. Here, they described themselves as affiliates of the 'co-working' movement, an international grouping of activists and entrepreneurs seeking to develop alternatives to corporate capitalism through the establishment of communities of freelance workers and companies operating at a grassroots level and sharing physical resources and intellectual capital. Both expressed interest in my area of research and in using the organisation as a pilot site for a social photo matrix workshop, and I was invited to visit the space and participate in a weekly scheduled writing group for freelance workers that they hosted.

The premises of *Synergy* were located in central London close to a principal rail station in the basement of a converted warehouse, accessible via a street-level lobby and a quite wobbly and narrow spiral staircase. On my first visit, I walked down into the large open-plan workspace to be greeted by Eddie and shown to a bank of office desks at the base of the staircase, around which the participants of the writing group were gathering.

5.2.2 Experiencing the workplace

I attended the two-hour writing group, which took place on Thursday mornings on four occasions over a period of about 10 weeks. Here, I interacted with the participants and other customers of *Synergy*, made use of the kitchen and lounge facilities and on one occasion joined with the group in a trip to a local restaurant to buy takeaway curry which we shared and ate in the kitchen area. I also met with Steve and Eddie to make arrangements for the social photo

matrix workshop and promoted it among people attending the writing group or using the space.

The basement space contained two large banks of tables set closest to and visible from high windows that faced onto the street level, behind and alongside which were smaller shared tables as well as individual desks of varying design and configuration. At the very back of the long basement was a short staircase and mezzanine floor on either side of which were two enclosed meeting 'pods', below which was a small open kitchen and lounge area. Facing frontwards to the left was the door to a self-contained office, and on the right a row of metal lockers and small meeting room fitted with glass windows and blinds. At any one time, the space held a maximum capacity to accommodate approximately fifty people. While adequate and comfortable, furniture and fittings were utilitarian and of standard specification. The walls and structural columns were painted magnolia and decorated with posters, pieces of artwork created by members and notices, which combined with the clashing primary colours of the chair seats, gave the space the look and feel of a university refectory.

The users of *Synergy* comprised a mix of staff from small organisations and companies that rented desk-space, and freelancers who attended with differing levels of regularity. Organisational users included a charity organising mentoring for socially marginalised individuals, an IT consulting company and a start-up firm offering online legal advice to small businesses, which occupied the self-contained office. Freelancers using the space appeared to be mostly, but not exclusively, under the age of thirty-five years, diverse in terms of race

and gender, well-educated and working mainly in roles linked to media and the creative industries, or in marketing, IT or other specialist consulting roles. While *Synergy* did contain elements of 'traditional' design, for example with the enclosed cellular office and the standard office furnishings and fittings, through its largely non-proprietary use of space in the open plan; its flexible provision of space for a transient clientele, and its use of networked communications, it demonstrated a combination of 'lean', 'activity-based' and 'agile' workplace design.

The writing group, called *Write Club* (presumably a pun on the film *Fight Club*) took place on Thursdays between ten o'clock and midday at what was known the 'community table' a bank of several office desks joined together immediately at the bottom of the spiral staircase most visible from the street-level windows. Here, after short introductions facilitated by Eddie, attendees spent ninety minutes working in silence on their individual projects, followed by a period for group feedback and discussion about what participants had achieved in the time, again facilitated by Eddie. Sessions had between six and twelve participants, with a core group consisting of Eddie the facilitator, Steve and a few others. Here, I noticed the diversity of the working roles that attendees held, including on different occasions a comedy script writer, a copy editor, a first-time novelist, a health and lifestyle influencer, a filmmaker, a product 'user experience' specialist, a human resources consultant, a public relations and marketing specialist, a campaigner for healthier working environments and cultures, and others who did not state a particular role or activity. I was also struck on a number of occasions by the slightly incongruous personae of some

attendees, which appeared in some way out of synch, out of place or time with the environment they were in, or in some way seemed to be troubled in their life experience.

Steve, as owner and proprietor managed the contracting of desk space and the general administration of the facilities. In his early fifties, I experienced him as holding a polite and controlled manner while responding to regular calls on the entrance intercom as well as to enquiries from users of *Synergy* about the facilities. He also demonstrated a clear proprietorial, even parental, presence, as I witnessed after the trip to the local restaurant where he walked around the tablespots with a spray bottle with cleaning fluid in it and a cloth, taking care to wipe the surfaces where food stains had been left. In moments of conversation, he talked about having spent a career in the field of commercial real estate and then “giving it up” to develop *Synergy* and undertake a personal project where he published a blogpost with an original piece of self-created art every day for a year. Citing the business author Cal Newport (Newport, 2016) as being a key influence he talked passionately about wanting to use the co-working facility as a “laboratory” for creating and testing a better way of sustaining what he referred to as “deep work”, and sustaining creative focus in networked conditions.

Eddie was responsible for the organisation of group activities at *Synergy*, which as well as the writing group included scheduled workshops for art and crafts, blog production, web design and other social gatherings. In his mid-thirties, Eddie occupied one of the few designated workspaces, personalised with a PC

monitor and laptop covered with stickers and slogans. In addition to his role at *Synergy* he described himself as maintaining a portfolio of work activities including hosting a food and cookery blog, promoting a 'start-up' online IT platform, and holding a function within an international umbrella organisation for co-working spaces. With his friendly, charismatic, and sometimes profane presence in the co-working space, it seemed as if Eddie provided a filial and fraternal foil to Steve's paternal persona.

One particularly memorable encounter that I had with Steve and Eddie was when I arranged to meet them to discuss arrangements for staging a social photo matrix workshop. Here, instead of a conventional meeting that I had expected, a broadcasting-grade microphone was set on the table in the enclosed meeting room, and the discussion started with Eddie making the introductory announcement for a blog recording with me as the guest interviewee. While momentarily taken aback, I acquiesced to proceed, and was left with the sense of a working environment and milieu in which very little 'slack' existed and where every encounter or opportunity had to be grasped for its potential advantage. Here, as with other encounters with them, I was struck by the slightly 'alternative', or 'hipsterish' image that the Steve and Eddie projected, exemplified by the 'Unfuck the World' t-shirts that they frequently wore combined with the grassroots-capitalism and communitarian focus which was inherent in the organisation's vision, business model and workplace.

5.2.3 The social photo matrix workshop

i) Staging

To conduct the pilot social photo matrix workshop, I hired a large meeting room in a business centre situated immediately next door to *Synergy* equipped with a large display screen and wi-fi access. Fixed seating and tables were organised in a semi-circle around the screen, which I used during the introductory meeting to present the title of my investigation and the objectives and process for both the photography session and the matrix. The photography session lasted for approximately forty-five minutes, followed by the matrix itself, which lasted approximately one and a half hours. There was then a short break after which the feedback session took place, lasting forty-five minutes.

In staging and structuring the pilot, I adopted two particular arrangements which were not repeated in subsequent social photo matrix workshops. First, as well as holding our respective roles as convenor/facilitator and note-taker, both I and the professional colleague who accompanied me to help facilitate the staging of the workshop also contributed directly to the matrix by taking photographs and sharing associations. Second, in terms of the ordering of contributions within the matrix, I asked participants to describe/speak to the photographs they took before asking for other contributions. I reflect upon the implications of these staging arrangements and how learning from this informed the staging and structuring of subsequent social photo matrix workshops in section 5.2.5.

Five people who routinely used *Synergy* participated in the pilot social photo matrix, of whom four were freelancers in broadly creative roles while one worked on an employed basis with a small start-up company. Eddie, as an organisational sponsor of the matrix, joined and participated in the feedback session. Photographs from the matrix are shown in the order that they were shared along with accompanying themes and in-matrix dialogue:

ii) The matrix

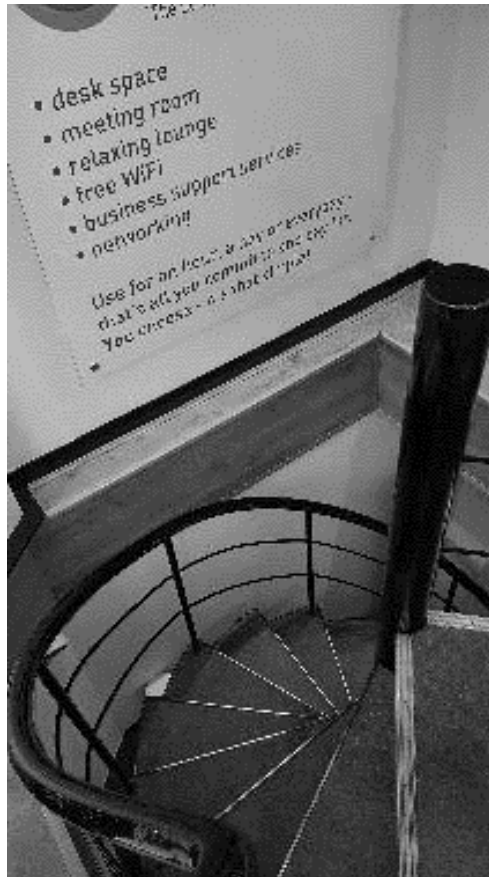
The eight photographs that were shared in the matrix are presented in the order they were displayed along with short contextual descriptions, and a summary of themes, associations and dialogue as they occurred along with short descriptions of in-matrix dynamics.



Photograph 1.1: The spiral staircase leading to the co-working space.

- Entering a secret underground environment: “reveals a hidden workspace [...] more and more space is exposed as you descend ... a revelation ... a diversity of people and art as well ... colourful.”
- Narratives of myth and fairytales: “maybe it’s to do with fairytales and stories”; “fairytales also may show a progress in a sense ... and when you descend once you can’t go back until ... until [...] you have completed the story”

- The image of an ammonite: “this also reminds me of that er ... a prehistoric little snail [...] it’s like evolutionary”.
- Lunar descent: “it’s like one step ... man on the moon sort of thing”; “one small step for a freelancer”.
- Precariousness and finality: “quite enticing and quite inviting ... but [...] quite precarious ... it’s a precarious structure”; “once you’re committed to it, it’s not sure that you can go back”.



Photograph 1.2: Briefly, circulated on a participant's mobile phone with an alternate view from the same location as the first photograph. A sign showing the 'offer' to customers and the spiral staircase leading down to the co-working space.

- Ways in which the second photograph of the staircase catches different details and may tell a different story: "it's more of a close-up"; "a bit more of a birds-eye view"; "it's more visceral"; "I think yours represents more of an emotion, while Michael's represents a story"



Photograph 1.3: The inside of the small enclosed office, leading into the main co-working space.

- The feeling of having a sense of belonging inside the enclosed office, but not the main shared space: “I feel like every time I walk into the common space it’s always like a different office because ... everyone’s doing different things ... I don’t really talk to the people outside as much as ... as the people within my closed office space ... and um ... sometimes I feel like I’m intruding ... sometimes it feels a bit ... strange ... because I do see all these different people ... like these floaters in my life”; “I’m really careful when I’m doing my dishes um and when I’m by the microwave ... I don’t wanna cause like any kind of mess ... or ... or annoy anyone’s space

because I recognise that it might be personal for them and they might be in the zone”.

- Dislike of the environment: “the office is really small ... there are no windows ... and I personally don’t like that because I like being in a free environment”;
- Institutional connotations: “it’s quite clinical”; “an asylum”.
- An interconnectedness between experience inside the workplace and internal emotional experience: “there is space in yourself that you love ... but ... me ... I don’t know ... the environment ... the inner environment needs to be a little bit more er ... you know ... comfortable, accommodating”



Photograph 1.4: A pillar in the co-working space, decorated with pieces of artwork on A4 paper created by users. The wording “why haven’t you done it?” appears on two pieces.

- Feelings of support and encouragement in the environment: “why haven’t you done it’ ... so it’s ... it’s the wording really of those ... those two images ... those two pictures ... er really sort of resonates with me because I’ve got a couple of sort of big dream project ambitions that are ... have been kind of dormant for a long time ... and um I would like to ... I’m trying to tackle those things and being in *Synergy* is helping me to do that ... um so this image along with the posters and the space ... like perseverance ... determination”;

“you’re being supported ... um just by the imagery ... the art ... the ... the creativity”;

- A physical and a metaphorical pillar: “I think this is ... excuse the pun ... it’s like a ‘pillar’ of the *Synergy* community ... because this is definitely one of the things that I think about when I think about the space.”
- How the artwork needn’t necessarily be good “and also, they’re not particularly good ... like they are okay ... they are er are actually quite good ... but it’s like ... it doesn’t make you feel you have to be an artist”
- Very positive attachments to Steve, the owner: “I do actually notice the pillars and er one of the images of Steve I think ... I er noticed quite early-on from outside ... and I said that it looked like ... a bit of a mix between my friend and Jeremy Corbyn”; “I feel like Steve is like the father of the community in a way [...] he is like very much like you know ‘I’m looking after you guys’ “.
- “I kind of have like certain memories with this pillar even though it’s not really part of my day-to-day life”



Photograph 1.5: Inside the co-working space: Tables, computer monitors, chairs, photographs, blackboards and posters

- The level of choice in seating and working: “I was thinking of um ‘together and apart’ ... because you can be together with the *Synergy* kind of community ... but you can also be apart do your own thing ... which is ... there are two opposite kind of things ... but they are also good things to have”; “I find it almost like un ... unnerving like how much freedom you have in there ... it’s like ‘sit where you want ... move around ... change around”
- People engaging in a process of personal and professional change: “there’s a ... a ... sense that people are doing something which ultimately is going to be bigger than where they’re at now”; “you’ve actually taken the time to pick a certain place to be and focus on you ... whatever your goals are”; “even though I’ve got a permanent desk ... It doesn’t always feel permanent ... It feels like I’m here but I might not be here forever”

- The representation of the past and the far-away: “I like those old buildings and colonnades ... well everyone loves that ... I think we go to visit these things when we travel”; “instead of taking photos of here ... this place here ... I want to take photos of something far, far away”; “we need history to inform the present”
- How everyday objects are known but unacknowledged: “I can’t believe I sit opposite to that ... that is opposite me and I’ve not actually noticed that ... that is pretty bad, isn’t it!”



Photograph 1.6: A wall in the co-working space

- Visible pairing and contrasting of objects/images: “I notice that those little flowers ... and I have two flowers ... and there are two chairs ... green and red ... which are kind of contrasting colours as well ... so actually it’s kind of interesting that”

- The combination of or interplay between past and present: “it actually shows that the past and present combined, isn’t it ... and we are all really past and the present combined ... all of us”
- Identification with flow over time and community: “there’s a real kind of testament to kind of the flow of community through time in a place as well”
- How the owner of *Synergy* influences the nature of the objects and images: “it trickles down from whoever owns it ... so those other [co-working] spaces are owned by other organisations ... this is owned by Steve ... it’s owned by the father figure ... it’s owned by one person ... it’s not mass produced ... it’s not everywhere because it’s part of him”



Photograph 1.7: A view inside the co-working space showing desk surfaces, monitors, chairs, wall decorations and the opposite side of the pillar shown in photograph 1.4

- Eddie's presence within the workplace: "I feel that Eddie's like not afraid to express his personality ... and I really sometimes feel a bit intimidated by him"; "but Eddie is the one that remembers people ... so yeah he's kind of like the interchangeable pair ... person sort of thing ... I think he needs that as well"
- Visual representations of pairing, touching and collaborating: "look at those two chairs ... how they are next to each other" [...] "touching each other"; "they're collaborating, yeah ... and the other two are also aligned ... you know the other like two ... not of course working across ... that's ... that's obvious ... but this is also in a way collaborative ... in a ... there is a relationship between the ... the you know ... between something in ourselves isn't it we are not even aware how we make the relationships ... maybe in the family or with friends ... so I don't know ... something like that"
- Duality of space combined with duality of use: "I'm just looking ... I'm just looking behind ... I wanna say something about the pairs ... there's so many pairs going on in this image ... you've got the chairs ... you've got the phones ... on either pillar ... in the back by that corner you've got to tall tables ... and there's two chairs there as well ... there's a lot of duality of ... of ... Space and use going on which I've never realised before ... but being that this is the kind of the central the core of the kind of 'hub' bit at *Synergy* ... that's really yeah really sharpens me"



Photograph 1.8: Furniture and objects outside the enclosed meeting room

- The basketball and its story: “that’s er ... er a basketball ... and there’s a story ... I heard a story about a basketball which is why I put it there”; “Eddie said ‘I look at this every day and I don’t think about it’ ... and then Steve said ‘well this is the ... this is the story ...’”; How on the day of *Synergy*’s opening, a homeless man called to the space to loan the basketball in return for a shower, and who has yet to return to collect this object.

iii) The review session

Following a short break, the matrix review session took place and which was joined by Eddie. Here, with participants sitting in the same locations they were in during the matrix, discussion continued for another forty-five minutes, and where Eddie effectively ‘took over’ the space to engage charismatically and characteristically profanely with participants. However, in this context, one interesting piece of knowledge about the history of *Synergy* was raised; that at its earlier location, there was a massive wooden bench, which became the hub

for social activity and community; and that this idea had then been then carried to the new location in the idea of a 'community table' as a focal point for the workplace. Further, participants continued to engage enthusiastically in discussion about the workplace and their individual and shared relationships with it.

5.2.4 Exit, and reflections

A final meeting with Eddie and Steve to reflect on the social photo matrix workshop took place a few weeks afterwards. This happened during the course of a particularly cold snap in winter and to my surprise took place not indoors but at an outdoor café close to Synergy, with both Eddie and Steve avuncular and warm in large puffer jackets while I shivered in my thinner overcoat. Here, I reviewed the process of the matrix workshop and shared A-4 sized reproductions of the photographs to elicit their responses. At this meeting, as with the earlier one which had turned into a 'live-blog', both Eddie and Steve maintained a convivial 'double-act persona, sharing jokes with each other and clearly enjoying the opportunity to hold court again in the freezing-cold but also quite trendy space.

One key theme that it felt important to feed back at this meeting was my sense that while the matrix participants clearly valued the sense of community that *Synergy* provided, there was also possible indication that some participants may have encountered significant levels of stress in their journey as freelancers and even psychological distress. In response, Steve made the surprising observation that some of the people who came to use the co-working facility

and join in the organised activities seemed like “lost souls”. He also stated, again in a similarly offhand manner, that on account of the high overheads and relatively low charges that *Synergy* was no longer viable to run and if there was not an increase in its revenue it may therefore have to close.

I completed my engagement with *Synergy* feeling deeply moved by the data generated from the social photo matrix workshop, including the both the rich and varied accounts of attachment to the organisation as manifest through the workplace as well as the presentations of the emotional labour of early-career freelance workers in confronting insecurity and anxiety within the fluid markets in which they operated, while seeking connection, creativity and authenticity within the co-working space. In this context, the matrix workshop had appeared to function not simply as a data-gathering exercise but also as a beneficial organisational and group intervention in itself, where it had helped to surface and generate narratives of temporal, physical and interpersonal co-relatedness for an otherwise potentially disparate group of participants co-located in a quite ordinary, low-status and low-cost working environment. Further, bearing in mind the personal stresses that appeared manifest in the accounts of some of the participants, whether through their precarious organisational and economic status as early-career freelance workers, or possibly on account of more serious underlying personal and psychological issues, it seemed that the social photo matrix workshop provided an inclusive, containing, safe and also rewarding space where important themes about the nature of belonging could be surfaced and explored. In this context I was moved by the efforts of Eddie and Steve to create a nurturing, containing and also kind space for the largely

young, educated but also economically precarious people who used it while also equally disconcerted by the slightly offhand use of the expression “lost souls”, the knowledge that the space itself is not financially secure, and a sense of feeling literally ‘frozen out’ in my meeting with them when I did try to raise what I felt to be an important point about emotional wellbeing.

Afterword: Just before the start of the Covid crisis, I part-accidentally, passed the site of Synergy in its central London location to discover that the facility had closed.

5.2.5 Reflections on facilitation and staging

The pilot social photo matrix was staged so that photographer spoke first to their personal associations before other participants. While much useful and emotionally evocative data was obtained through this approach, I felt disappointed with the limited associative and dynamic potential that it afforded, and wondered how the matrix workshop might have progressed if the photographers had spoken about their associations only after the other participants had made their contributions. Accordingly, for the subsequent social photo matrices, I adopted a more focused approach where matrix participants were asked to stay silent until participants had formed and articulated their associations. As well as increasing the amount and level of associations, this changed method also created a clearer vantage point to observe organisational dynamics at play within the matrix workshop, providing further useful data for the analysis. Further, while the feedback session in the pilot social photo matrix workshop constituted an informal ‘chat’ over an ordered lunch, subsequent

sessions took place after a scheduled lunch break and took place in a more closely facilitated context.

5.3 An architecture practice

5.3.1 Beginnings, and crossing the boundary

'Spaceworks' is an architecture practice which specialises in the design of 'activity-based' workplaces for commercial and public sector clients. I identified it as a potential research site on account of its status as a medium sized private sector organisation that deploys a fully 'activity-based' workplace, and also because of its activity in the field of workplace design. Contact was initiated via an email introduction from an academic colleague to 'Sophie', the company's Director of Research. This was followed up with an initial phone conversation where we agreed to meet in person to discuss the organisation of a social photo matrix workshop.

The premises of *Spaceworks* were located in a now highly fashionable area close to central London that is well known for its creative and technological industries, and was immediately noticeable from neighbouring residential and commercial premises by its wide, plate-glass frontage bearing the descriptor 'The Lab.' in black lettering in one corner. There was no intercom and I opened the door and walked straight inside, nearly tripping off a first step onto a slightly lowered floor-level. I then sat down in one of two large, slightly uncomfortable yellow fabric chairs that formed a waiting area, with my back to the shopfront. About five metres opposite were two large banks of desks and monitors facing

each other, fronted by a light wooden panel with the slogan “Making Space” engraved into it. Ahead to my right of the banks of desks was a wide staircase with metal steps leading down to a basement area. After a few seconds a female member of staff who was sitting closest to the panel came over and asked if I needed help and three or four minutes later Sophie walked up the stairs from the basement and greeted me.

Sophie, who was white, casually but smartly dressed and in her mid-thirties led me to a soft-furnished meeting room at the far back of the ground floor, with tall plate windows on one side that faced a small external patio, and accessed by a very heavy sliding wooden door. After re-stating the context for my research, she confirmed she would be happy to support a photo matrix workshop to take place and would support me to publicise this internally with colleagues. Sophie also mentioned her academic background as a geographer, which set her apart from many of her colleagues who were primarily architects and designers, also stating that she knew about the Tavistock Clinic well as her mother worked as a counsellor. Sophie gave me a tour of the workplace, which had been purpose-designed three years earlier. We agreed a half-day slot where I could visit again and observe the workplace and also a later date to hold the social photo matrix workshop.

5.3.2 Experiencing the workplace

The workplace of *Spaceworks* accommodated approximately thirty-five staff over the basement and ground floor of the four-storey building. In addition to the banks of desks, the waiting area and the meeting room on the ground floor,

there was a large static table and chairs facing the shop-front next to a 'virtual reality' zone, where three-dimensional representations of designs were demonstrated to customers, in open view from the pavement outside. At one side of the office were wooden compartments for solitary or small-group work, and at the very back, facing a small patio was a room for storing samples of construction and design materials. The staircase led to a large basement containing a kitchen and long dining table with a bowl of fruit on it and surrounded by high stools, another long row of desks with monitors, a glass panelled board room, smaller meeting rooms and toilets.

The quality of the design and finish of the environment was very high with an aesthetic which appeared to contrast the 'softness' of natural materials, colourful fabrics and tasteful furniture design, with the 'hardness' of stone floors, concrete walls and pillars, and the high ceilings with functionally exposed ventilation ducts, wiring and lighting. Here I noticed that some of the most physically 'contained' spaces in the workplace: the 'pods' for meetings had hard wooden seating, while more comfortable chairs were found in exposed central locations. My overall sense of the workplace was that it was an enjoyable, even 'fun', place to be in, where a pervasive sense of personal exposure was compensated by a multiplicity of interesting spaces to occupy, diverse vistas and high-quality contemporary furnishing and fittings.

Reflective of the practice's area of specialisation and design ethos, an 'activity-based' working policy was implemented, where staff did not have allocated desks or workstations, but rather worked freely across different settings, with

different configurations of colleagues throughout the day according to the task at hand and personal or group preference. Here, employees appeared to consciously or even performatively model the form of use of space and physical resources that it marketed to client organisations, and at the times that I was present, there seemed to be significant movement of employees within and between floors, engaging in brief standing meetings or 'huddles' across the ample space that was available across the ground floor, and around the wide metal staircase which frequently clattered with movement, including from one young man who frequently bounded up and down it energetically, three or four steps at a time. There also seemed to be a noticeably higher level of speech on the ground floor, while the basement area appeared to be reserved for quieter and individually focussed work.

While observing, I held no feeling of being viewed as an intruder, as if employees were well used to and relatively comfortable with being scrutinised at close quarters by outsiders. For an established practice, the workforce appeared quite young, with the vast majority of staff looking to be in their twenties or early thirties. They were attractive, casually dressed, predominantly but not exclusively white, modelling assured courtesy and relaxed positivity in their interactions with each other.

During my observation I spent several minutes sitting at a bank of computers in the basement opposite a man in his early fifties who was in discussion with a younger colleague, who from his avuncular pedagogic manner, I assumed was one of the partners of the company, and who made no attempt to communicate

with me or enquire as to what I was doing, as if modelling the acceptance of unintroduced strangers in the working environment. While in this location, having been provided with guest login details I checked the company's website and was surprised to see within it earlier photographs of the same workplace from the previous year, but with many different (as well as older) faces, now clearly departed following a process of organisational restructure. I also read about some of the key tenets of the organisation's ethos from a section of blog-posts – including the provision of free fruit for employees, and a policy of unlimited paid leave – meaning that staff in principle were free to work the hours they chose, where they chose, as long as they were able to fulfil their contracted responsibilities.

Following my initial sense of awe within the pristine 'agile' working area, I did become mindful of instances of imperfection or flaw in the environment. For example, I noticed that the toilet area (which used the symbols ♀ and ♂ to respectively denote designated 'female' or 'male' facilities) seemed a bit grubby and smelly and also lacked towels. Further, as part of my observation I decided to sit for twenty minutes at the most physically exposed location I could find in the office, a position at the bottom of the staircase facing the back wall where I was visible from both floors, and remember in my discomfort fixing my gaze on a damp mark on the wall, and as with the poor toilet conditions, wondered why this had not been noticed and addressed.

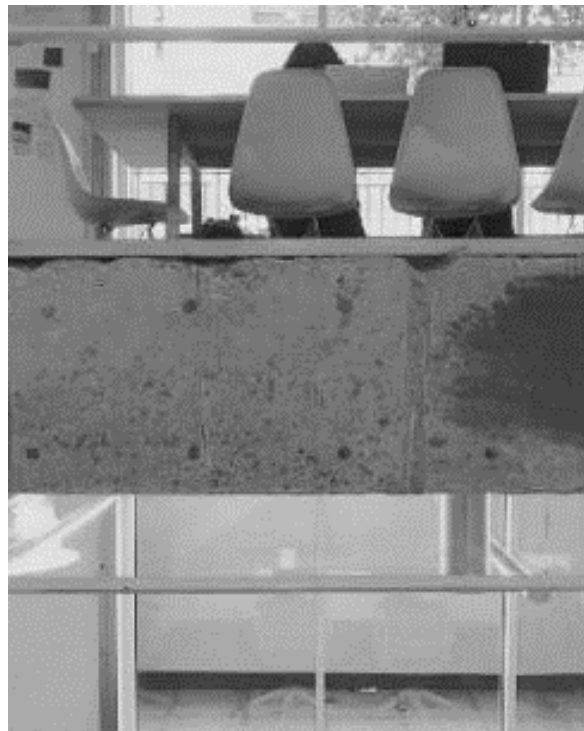
5.3.3 The social photo matrix workshop

i) Staging

The social photo matrix workshop took place on a single day over a period of approximately three and a half hours. The briefing meeting took place in the ground floor meeting room at *Spaceworks* and was attended by five members of staff who distributed themselves across the various soft furnishings and also sat on the thickly carpeted floor. The group consisted of five women and one man, a trainee architect, a development consultant and a project manager and three interior designers (one of whom subsequently did not attend the matrix and review session). They were aged between their mid-twenties and mid-thirties and were diverse in terms of ethnicity and nationality. After the photography session, the social photo matrix and review meeting were staged away from *Spaceworks* at a nearby business centre in a meeting room equipped with a large networked display screen. The Matrix was scheduled for ninety minutes with participants facing the screen across a large circular table, the lighting dimmed, and the session audio-recorded. Following a break, the review session resumed in the same but with the lighting turned on full and participants sitting in different seats, with contemporaneous notes being taken instead of an audio recording.

ii) The matrix

The five photographs that were shared in the matrix which are presented in the order they were displayed along with short contextual descriptions, and a summary of themes, associations and dialogue as they occurred along with short descriptions of in-matrix dynamics.



Photograph 2.1: From the central staircase showing the ground and basement floors of the workplace, separated by a thick level of concrete.

- The existence of a “big separation” between the two floors of the workplace. How personal mood and what the weather is like outside can inform decisions around which floor to work on.

- The conflict between having an organisational aesthetic founded on “exposing things and [...] to some degree making things feel authentic” and the potential loss of authenticity by covering over a surface “to make it more functional or more kind of useable for what we need it for.”
- The abstractness of the image, despite it relating to a view from the staircase that everyone in the organisation is familiar with; the top part of the image feeling so much heavier than the bottom; a sense of floating.
- The physical interconnectedness of the whole of the workplace on account of the open staircase, the “hole in the middle” taken up by the stairwell and how this is emblematic of a unique organisational culture and identity.
- Weighing up the options of whether to work in one space or another. How “to get the task done” requires breakout meetings and then work on a computer creating “two different sides of the office”.
- The staircase being a site for so many encounters and memories; “Lena fell down the stairs [...] bump, bump [laughter].”

After a slightly hesitant start, matrix participants engaged enthusiastically, demonstrating a very high level of visual articulacy. However, with this, and also the other photographs, responses appeared to hold a sense of collective pressure to fill each moment with speech and to avoid moments of silence. Here, participants seemed most comfortable to focus on acknowledging the

technical, compositional and representational skills of the photographer as opposed to speak to their emotional experience of the organisation and workplace, leading me to restate on several times the question “what is it like to work here?”



Photograph 2.2 – Part of the frontage, showing the office interior and reflections from the street, including that of the photographer [Identifying organisational branding on the window-panes obscured].

- How the moment of arriving at the office in the morning represents “a key moment in the day”; the emotional, aesthetic and spiritual experience of passing from the outside to inside, the familiar “clunk” of the door handle and “trying to sense like what the mood is” inside the office.

- A critique of the lettering and punctuation of the organisation's name and logo on the front panelling with a full stop being "a bit passive-aggressive" and "a bit kind of disingenuous".
- The appreciation and enjoyment of a strong bicycle-oriented organisational culture.
- How the office looks different and 'non-traditional' in comparison to its neighbours; "It doesn't give away what people do [...] are we scientists? ... is it a laboratory?"
- The reflections in the windows creating a sense of movement and "blurred lines"; "it speaks a lot about how like *Spaceworks* and the office can become like a lot of ... like a big part of your everyday [...] it becomes almost like a seamless transition from like ... home life ... to *Spaceworks*... like for good or bad [laughter]"; that the photograph is "like playing a trick [...] there's like a kind of seamlessness between like being at work and being outside of work"; how features in the neighbourhood become an extension of the office;
- How there is a mobile office app: "I have *Spaceworks* in my pocket as well [...] you choose to have it or not".
- The experience of entering the office: "what's my mood when I open this door? ... cos it tells me if it's worth it being there ... working ... my eight hours a day"; The transition from having been an observer of the workplace to now

becoming an employee; How “the handle is heavier when you don’t want to go to work”.

- Comments directed to the photographer that “your stance kind of suggests you are still an observer ... it’s quite like grounded ... there is no indication that you’re gonna walk towards the door”. In response to two matrix participants who say “a bit touristy”, another retorts “you’re not a tourist”.

Here, the matrix appeared to gain confidence to articulate organisational experience, surfacing aspects of the culture perceived to be positive, for example the commitment to bicycles and its unique visual identity, and possible areas of challenge or fissures such as the identification of a “passive aggressive” full stop on the shopfront, the “blurred lines” between the organisation and the outside world and the intimation, made by the taker of the second matrix photograph, that they have reached the front door of the office and not wanted to walk in.



Photograph 2.3: Inside the ground floor meeting room during the introductory briefing meeting.

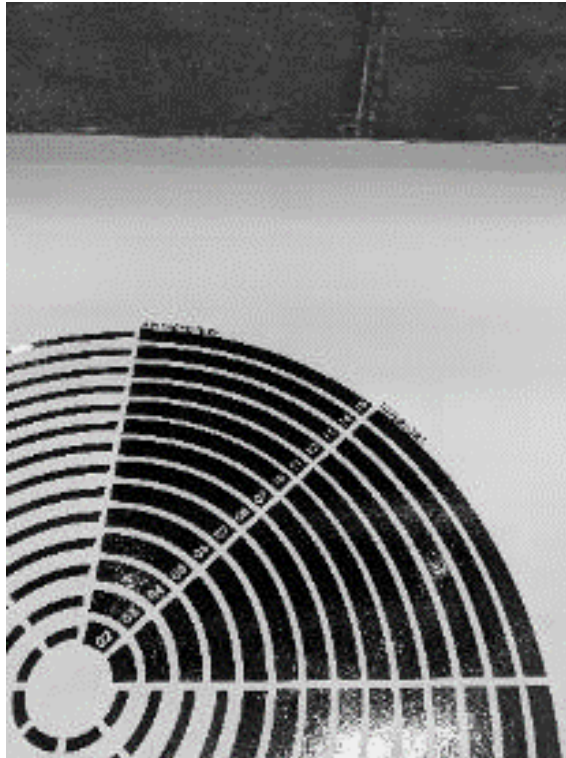
- The room having been the site for an organisational change process called ‘transitioning’, which involved a series of meetings out of which new way of working internally and with clients was developed; “people were sitting on the floor; we were writing on the boards; there were lots of ideas bouncing about”; “it was a long, sometimes a painful process which not many agreed to [...] er, I guess it was worth it”.
- A sense of possible uniqueness that pertains to the workplace and organisation: The photograph “captures a moment”; “I think there’s a lot to be said about the day-to-day kind of special moments that you experience at

work”; the possibility that *Spaceworks* creates “interactions [...] that might be unique to the office we work in.”

- A sense of homeliness and softness: “It’s very homey [...] it shows how unformal ... informal we are and it’s opposed to you sitting there very formally ... and we are not like that”; contrasting the tactility and softness of the surfaces in the photograph to the harshness of the first one; here, “everything kind of merges [...] everything is very warm and soft and almost like a big ... like a big hug [giggles]”
- “it’s interesting ... very interesting also [female voices, laughing] ... kind of daunting”.
- The meeting room as a place where secrets are told, confidences shared and relationships formed; “I feel that I kind of gravitate around it sometimes and that there is something significant ... like if my boss came over and was like ‘oh fuck!’ or ‘mmm’, like what’s going to happen?”.
- The two types of footwear in the photograph representing a grappling between being authentically yourself at work and where you may have to “pretend a little bit” in order to conform to organisational or corporate codes.
- How people who hold power in the practice gravitate to the most comfortable room, as opposed to the more formal boardroom; an intimidating place which junior staff try to avoid.

- A room where people may be seen to express their personality through the way they physically interact with the furnishings and surfaces; where formally dressed corporate, male clients sit on the low sofa to discuss their vision for their office, and who later arrive for meetings without wearing their ties.

The image of the feet and legs of a the casually dressed female photographer facing a formally dressed male figure (myself) produced a frisson of energy and excitement in the matrix and helped surface quite animated responses surfacing themes of power, secrecy, gender, desire and authenticity. Here, as a subject of the photograph I commented upon its sense of relationality but also incompleteness and anonymity, as if “in the informality ... in the clear comfort ...the kind of domestic situation ... there is also kind of something not being shown”. I also observed that from my perspective, the low sofa wasn’t particularly comfortable, to be told by the photographer, to laughter that “it is, if you lie on it!”



Photograph 2.4: A detail of an organisational infographic displayed on the inside wall next to the entrance.

- A strong dislike of the infographic as being reflective of an earlier team structure and as such being unrepresentative of *Spaceworks* as the more fluid organisation that it is now.
- The ways in which the organisation and its component parts might be more accurately depicted: as a series of “wedges” representative of different specialisations and how they interconnect, but arranged more fluidly; a “puzzle” where discrete elements fit together in a particular way; “the bulbs in a lava lamp” where “the lava lamp is *Spaceworks*”, and an “organic compound” where some elements remain constant while others migrate such that “it’s always growing and it’s always kind of developing.”

- The photograph shows a corner of the wall and ceiling, which would be a detail that a new visitor to the office might focus on: “the last thing you gonna do is like look around [...] you’d find a corner of a wall where the wall meets the ceiling and you’d like ... er, stare at it and think like I mean like a ‘thinking face’ kind of thing [pulls face, to laughter in the matrix]”
- For the photographer, the longest-serving member of staff at *Spaceworks*, the infographic as representative of “my sort of conflict with time [...] I feel a bit frozen in time”; “for me that’s kind of one of the only things that represents pre all the new faces ... all the new changes ... but [long silence] do I continue to step on the mat?”
- How small physical details and imperfections over time can stick in the mind and help define personal experience of the workplace; “if we came back in like two years ... we’d look at that stupid vinyl on the wall and go ‘oh yes, that’s the stupid vinyl!”; “I’m gonna think of [the photographer] every time I think of that”.

The matrix engaged enthusiastically and vociferously in a sustained critique of the displayed infographic and its perceived redundancy, and in reimagining how the now more fluid organisation might be better represented. However, for the photographer, the longest serving employee in the organisation and in their mid-thirties, it was its very redundancy that held personal significance. For such a relatively ‘young’ matrix group, both in terms of age and proportion of recent

employees, the statement about feeling 'frozen in time' from a clearly respected colleague carried a strong sense of gravity.



Photograph 2.5: The interior, taken from the ground floor, near the entrance.

- In contrast to the discussion about imperfections in the workplace, the photograph “looks as if its fresh off the website”; however, “everyone is different [laughter in matrix]” on account of the recent high level of staff turnover.
- While having initially been critical of the tag ‘creating space’, this is now felt to have a more positive resonance: “I interview people as part of my job and often what I’m trying to do is like sort of create space around like a certain topic so that they can kind of land wherever they want to land [...] but I don’t really think that was like the intention [laughing] when they put that tag there.”

- How the person who held the front of house role has just left “and no-one wants to sit there now ... they haven’t realised they can sit there”; how the front of desk person (‘Stubbs’) had had a “dark side” and now Langley is working to digitalise the role – “like opposite ... opposite the computer ... Dave’s teaching him like this is exactly like how you automate Stubbs [laughter]”.
- How a particularly extroverted colleague sits in one of the most exposed locations in the office; “that’s such a ‘Langley’ place to sit”.
- A feeling that *Spaceworks* can sometimes oversell or “evangelise” the benefits of ‘agile’ working: “you know every time we go to a client if you listen to Alex ... it’s like automatically trying to persuade them that agile working is ... can be beneficial for them without even knowing what ... anything about the organisation and what their needs are [...] I mean I don’t find it persuasive any more ... but I think it works well for us for the most part”.
- A love of the workplace for its “diversity and freedom” which “gives me courage to do anything throughout the day”; an “encouragement of being free of any kind of ... corporate rules and regulations”; despite a “massive turnaround” of staff at *Spaceworks*, “I always managed to keep fresh [...] “I step in and I see this freedom of choice and the light at the back ... it kind of reinforces me”.

Responses to the final photograph, taken by the most senior member of staff in the matrix, started by articulately surfacing a set of humorous and mildly subversive or dissenting accounts of organisational experience and ‘activity-based’ working. These contrasted markedly with the photographer’s associations to what they described as the “most boring picture” to stress a more orthodox, task-focussed but also emancipatory vision of an organisation activated and energised by its ‘agile’ design of workplace.

iii) The review session

This session started a few minutes later than planned due to the late arrival of participants to the room after lunch. It lasted fifty-five minutes, and was also attended by Sophie as ‘sponsor’, also arriving late, for the final thirty. Themes raised and explored included:

- How an independent but affiliated organisation co-located on the ground floor work in a quite different way to the *Spaceworks* team.
- Further discussion of the ‘transitioning’ meetings that had taken place and the changes that had occurred; the presence of a ‘culture corner’ noticeboard showing photographs of past work parties and people who had left the organisation.
- The presence of “digital memory” in the organisation and the recent phenomenon of “digital funerals” where the electronic documents belonging

to a dead person are formally and ceremoniously deleted; a story told by the longest-serving employee of how they had emailed a former colleague a photograph of a computer screen showing their personal folder in the trash folder and the notification “Annie has left the room”.

- How there exists a “blind spot” in the office layout, shielded by a pillar which affords the greatest level of privacy. A former colleague who was unhappy in their role and in the organisation would routinely work in this space behind what one attendee dubbed “the column of depression”.
- The “loss of unique and brilliant people” [silence]; how “it feels so significant when someone leaves [...] but then a week later [silence]”; “I try to forget that feeling”
- How the large stairwell and staircase was “constructed at great expense [...] no other building has this.”

As in the matrix, there appeared to be a sense of guardedness in the responses of the more senior members of staff present, as if they were working to hold onto and curate ‘formal’ organisational narratives, while more junior colleagues appeared to be more comfortable to explore alternative or more organisationally subversive accounts. This sense of tension appeared to increase twenty-five minutes into the matrix review when Sophie joined the then-silent meeting room to join the review meeting.

5.3.4 Exit, and reflections

After the matrix workshop, I sent the PDF document of the photographs that had been shared to those who attended, although I only received one response, from Sophie, who sent a brief reply stating “huge thanks” for running the session. The message continued “Thanks also for sending the doc through – a lovely ‘keeper’ from it!” Arriving at Spaceworks for the last time for our debrief meeting, I stumbled again on the way in, and Sophie who was walking towards me breezily commented “you’ve found the step! We met again in the ground floor meeting room and while outwardly complementary of the work that had been carried out, I sensed some element of reserve or defensiveness. For example, early on she said that she too wanted to get rid of the infographic that had been a target of such criticism at the meeting, however, stressed her thought that the social photo matrix method would be best suited as an investigative tool for smaller workplaces of “under seventy” employees. She also re-acknowledged that significant changes had taken place within the organisation recently and that many people had left, including the partner of one the matrix attendees.

Leaving the workplace and organisation for the last time I had mixed emotions. While pleased with the quality of data from of my engagement with *Spaceworks*, and both emotionally moved and almost enchanted with the apparent symbolic depth and technical quality of the photographs, I also felt a sense of attraction but also unease towards both the workplace and the organisational culture which was manifest. For example, while I very much enjoyed spending time in the near pristine and high-status and ‘aspirational’ workplace designed and

curated along contemporary principles of 'activity-based' working, I also felt a sense of caution that underlying the staged informality that was manifest, there also existed a highly observant and potentially criticising organisational culture which the matrix photographs and responses from participants served to reflect and embody. Noting the absence of response to my final email to participants when sending them the photographic results from the workshop, and bearing in mind the quite candid if coded comments expressed about the organisation and culture, I also did feel a sense of slight sadness in my departure, as if in some way as if I too had been 'transitioned' in my own right out of the workplace and organisation.

Since delivering the matrix workshop and negotiating exit I have had no further contact with *Spaceworks* although do understand that the company is still trading but that post-covid the activity-based workplace has been developed and relaunched to accommodate other paying organisational clients with which it is co-located. Accordingly, referring to the organisational metaphor of a lava lamp as a container for organisational flexibility and change discussed in relation to the fourth photograph of the matrix, *Spaceworks* has effectively become another 'bulb' within the lamp it originally created to house itself.

5.4 The headquarters of an English police force

5.4.1 Beginnings, and crossing the boundary

Engagement with the organisation was initiated via a professional contact who worked as a consultant in an architecture practice that had overseen the design

and construction of a new headquarters building for a police force in England. They introduced me via email to the Force's head of facilities, who subsequently referred me to a colleague, 'Jane' who was responsible for coordinating staff wellbeing. After an initial telephone discussion with Jane about the possibility of me hosting a social photo matrix, a long process then followed to secure approval from 'Mr. Smith' the Assistant Chief Officer and most senior civilian member of staff, responsible for finance, administration, human resources and infrastructure within the particular force. For a while I thought that the matrix would not proceed, as communications from Jane were intermittent and then stopped. However, after I sent a final email proposing to withdraw if I did not hear back, she responded to confirm that internal authorisation had been obtained, that she would act as sponsor for the project on behalf of 'Mr. Smith'. Shortly afterwards, I received a scheduled short telephone call from Mr Smith where I was asked to describe the remit of my research and it could extend to discussing parking arrangements (I answered affirmatively), and was formally referred back to Jane, with whom I arranged an in-person meeting.

The police force headquarters was situated in a semi-rural location on the edges of the force's main city, and required a long train journey from London followed by a twenty-minute taxi ride to reach. It was a large three-story building of 'contemporary-brutalist', concrete and plate-glass design, located in its own grounds, surrounded by grassed ramparts, access roads and car parking space, and with flag-posts at the entrance, one displaying the forces insignia, the other the Union Flag. Upon arrival, I initially failed to see the reception as it

was located to the immediate left of the building's main entrance, and it took me a few moments to realise where I needed to go to register my presence.

However, upon arriving at reception, I was not, as I had expected to be, asked to provide identification, but was instead greeted swiftly by Jane, who passed me straight through into the building into her office, located in the occupational health department several feet from the main entrance and exit. I was then taken through a quite large ground floor atrium and 'hot-desk' working area to a small café area at the very back of the building, where I was also introduced to her colleague 'Karen', the assistant head of facilities for the police force.

The discussion with Karen and Jane was enlightening about some of the organisational challenges which both face in their respective roles in relation to the workplace. The headquarters building was only completed a couple of years previously, replacing a much older headquarters and a number of additional buildings, in order to house the force's command, operational support and administrative functions, totalling around 1,200 staff, in a single location. This redevelopment, paid for by the force's own assets, was considered to be a national 'model' of excellence within the field of police facilities, and had also been part of an exercise led by the Chief Constable to 'reposition' the force in the eyes of public, making it more open and accessible. As a result, and situated on the outskirts of the county capital, the headquarters was expressly designed to be an integral part of the wider community, and recently had held an open day where several thousand people participating in a fun run had walked through the atrium to see and experience the new building.

However, since the new headquarters had been operational, a number of problems had been identified, and as the force's lead for staff welfare, Jane, a long-term civilian administrative employee of the force in her mid-fifties, had heard numerous accounts from staff about difficulties encountered in the workplace. This included stress caused by noise in the almost entirely open plan workplace across its three floors, difficulty in accessing suitable desk space, the inadequacy of the canteen and food preparation facilities (for some technical reason it was not possible in the new building for staff to make their own bacon rolls, and due to the lack of canteen space occupants also reported being forced to eat their lunch in their cars), the overall inadequacy of the car parking space available and concerns around the safety of reception staff, who were felt too exposed and open to risk of attack from members of the public on account of the lack of a protective counter-screen.

From a facilities management perspective, the creation and final negotiation of the design specification with the contracted architects and interior designers had been a fraught process, where due to financial constraints, specifications for design and equipment had to be repeatedly altered, leading to a lower quality of the final product. There had also been an ongoing dispute with the architects of the building around the operation of heating, lighting and ventilation, resulting in the air conditioning system becoming non-operational on account of staff being instructed by senior management to open the building's windows to access fresh air. Further, as a matter of consternation to the facilities team, senior management had also recently authorised and actioned over the course of a single weekend a redesign of the floorspace of the

communications centre on the first floor without prior consultation with staff or the facilities team.

I was given a tour of the building across the departments on all three floors, including the office of the Chief Constable on the top floor, and also that of the Police and Crime Commissioner the publicly elected official responsible for the oversight of the Force, whose office was (unusually in a policing context) co-located in the headquarters on the ground floor. It was agreed that I would visit the headquarters one further time to observe the workplace for a half-day, where I would have the freedom to locate myself anywhere except for 'secret' rooms containing information about ongoing police operations, and also the force's armoury. Jane would also work with colleagues to identify a group of users of the building to attend and participate in a social photo matrix workshop.

5.4.2 Experiencing the workplace

Having encountered numerous police settings in my professional work, the workplace appeared quite ordinary on account of its bustling, purposeful, hierarchical and masculine atmosphere, as well as its use of standard public-sector furnishings and fittings. However, a particular sense of visibility or exposure to others throughout the workplace was apparent, on account of the headquarters' dominant architectural feature, the large central corridor and atrium, to which the open plan workspaces on the first and second floors were open. On one side of the atrium on the ground floor was a large enclosed room housing civilian administrative staff, while on the other were doors leading to

extensive male and female changing and locker rooms. At the very back, opposite the cafe, was an archive room for paper records, and the central armoury for the police force. On the first floor, and partly overlooking the atrium was the force's operations centre, where emergency calls were taken and police responses organised, and was noticeable during the time I saw it by its drawn blinds, low-lighting and 'chilled' atmosphere. On the second floor was located criminal justice investigative and support staff, human resources, as well as the 'executive suite' where the Chief Constable, the Assistant Chief Officer and other senior staff had office space; here I had been informed by Jane that the Chief Constable, a charismatic and quite well-known figure in policing circles and in the media, did not originally wish to have a personal office and had to be persuaded to ultimately accept a very small one. Enclosed meeting rooms, labelled with the names of police officers in popular culture (the Chief Constable's office was named 'Clouseau') were located along the corridors of the open plan workplace. In place of a larger staff canteen, across the second and third floors were a number of food preparation and eating 'points' and the doors of the lifts connecting the three floors of the headquarters were designed to look like old-fashioned police boxes, or the TARDIS from the television series Doctor Who.

While I encountered it, the workplace was bustling with people and noisy, with a fair amount of volume being transmitted between the atrium and the first and second floors. About half of occupants were dressed in the all-black uniforms of warranted police officers or support staff, with the other half wore smart civilian business attire. Lined along the ground-floor walls of the atrium towards the rear

and next to the franchised food outlet where I had originally met Jane and Karen was a row of banners and posters displaying 'progressive' organisational messages and themes, for example in relation to mental health awareness, autism awareness, diversity and anti-racism initiatives, LGBT equality, and staff welfare and support.

During the time of my scheduled 'observation' of the workplace, on a number of occasions I was located by Jane and taken away to be introduced to further colleagues in different departments. Here, because of the high level of visibility within the workplace, sometimes I was able to see her searching for me and evade being 'found', on other occasions I was 'caught', and on others, I allowed myself to be 'caught'. It was clear that Jane took her role as sponsor for my research project seriously and she was keen for me to encounter the workplace in as many contexts as was possible.

Through these additional 'excursions' I was invited by Jane to briefly visit the Force's armoury which was on the ground floor towards the back of the atrium and opposite the food outlet. This was a sealed and normally off-limits part of the building staffed by specialist firearms officers and ballistics experts, uniformed sergeants seconded from a neighbouring police force seconded from a neighbouring police force. One of the two officers who were there talked about his his work environment as being "my man-cave", how he would hate to work in an open plan office, and also how they have their own small refrigerator for milk and food, so while "Mr. Smith won't like that, there's nothing he can do about it" (presumably because he did not hold jurisdiction over this part of the

building). In another instance I was taken by Jane to visit the human resources team, located in an enclosed office on the second floor, where disconcertingly, a member of staff provided a detailed, chilling account of how a small number of armed insurgents could “take” the building on account of its open plan design. I was also shown the occupational health department which was located close to a small museum of policing memorabilia in display panels, and the brass ‘roll of honour’ naming employees and officers who had died in both world wars or and in the line of duty, which had been conserved from the old headquarters and repositioned in its new location. Permanent and sessional staff here also expressed a number of concerns about the new workplace and their facilities, including the lack of privacy or confidentiality for employees waiting to be assessed or counselled and the lack of adequate space to conduct medical examinations.

5.4.3 The social photo matrix workshop

i) Staging

On account of its relatively remote geographic location, it was decided with the senior sponsor that the social photo matrix workshop would be held at the headquarters building. A meeting room, named ‘Dixon’ was made available on the third floor, adjacent to the police force’s ‘executive’ suite, where a large networked display screen was provided which enabled a flexible arrangement of seating in circular arrangement for the introductory meeting, in rows facing the screen during the matrix, and as a semi-circle around the screen in the review session. Six participants attended the workshop, five women and one man,

comprising three warranted police officers and three members of civilian staff, all working in different departments. Of note in relation to the photography session, I did notice some coordination taking place between a number of participants, who organised in a huddle as if to coordinate which departments and areas of the workplace they would focus upon (a point I will return to in section 5.4.4).

For the review session, Jane and Mr Smith were scheduled to join the group in their role as matrix sponsors, however on the day he gave apologies on account of being called away.

ii) The matrix

The six photographs that were shared in the matrix are presented in the order they were displayed along with short contextual descriptions, and a summary of themes, associations and dialogue as they occurred along with short descriptions of in-matrix dynamics.



Photograph 3.1: The first floor. On the left is the response centre, the right, administrative support. In between is a wide area of open space known as 'the catwalk'

- How the figures standing and watching could evidence the existence of support, or alternatively of being interrupted and unable to concentrate.
- A lack of individual control in this environment.
- How the presence of an analogue clock on the back wall contrasts with the high-tech equipment that is also visible
- How the space in the middle of the photograph is known as the "catwalk" which is widely perceived to be an intimidating space for the women who have to walk along it.
- A perceived lack of communication or integration between the people on the left and right-hand sides of the photographs: "there does appear to be slight

segregation because on the right you have support functions ... and the left is what we are supposed to be supporting ... and sat with their backs to them!"



Photograph 3.2: A 'hot-desk' on the ground floor.

- The presence of personal objects, including unofficial adjustments to support physical comfort.
- The desk is not big enough and more room is required.
- A space that doesn't allow for others to enter it.

- The themes of fairness and entitlement around access to the workplace: “it sends a message to me that some people are more entitled than others ... it’s not a fair workspace”.
- Not everyone can use hot desks - how certain roles require allocated desks and specific computer configurations.
- The experience of looking for a place to work at because other people have claimed permanent ownership of desks; that this is unfair in a hot-desking environment because “it’s not your desk”.
- How personalisation of the workplace is a human response to working in an impersonal environment: “I read that more as someone trying to build in some personal space into a fairly impersonal building and a fairly impersonal environment:

This photograph evoked some anger, centring around a dispute between permanently based office staff who have established a measure of personalisation in relation to the use of hot-desks, and even claim personal ownership of individual workstations, and less frequently visiting ‘nomad’ workers who feel they have less control over the territory.



Photograph 3.3: A 'hot-desk' in the communications department on the first floor.

- How thought has been taken to adjust the space ergonomically for comfort.
- A lack of clutter but a sense of loneliness and isolation; a “barren” workstation.
- How the photograph shows where you focus is going to be – there’s a lot going on behind and above the screen but this “cuts out”!
- How the image is a positive one as it shows everything needed to complete a shift in comfort; “that’s my bubble for twelve hours”
- The impermanence of the environment: Seating in this location is allocated on the day; “come the end of my shift ... the bits on the left-hand side all are picked up and there is no trace of [me] ever being there”.

This photograph evoked both positive and negative associations in the matrix: positive on account of the ergonomic care visible to ensure the comfort of the occupant, but negative on account of its evocation of personal isolation. The photographer, an emergency call-handler who worked twelve-hour shifts described the image in primarily positive terms.



Photograph 3.4: Inside the public reception on the ground floor.

- The contrast between the modern design and the clutter and mess on and around the desk

- The contrast between how the reception staff experience the space and what members of the public see: “post-it notes stuck to the other side in the hope that people won’t see them ... when they stand at the desk”.
- How small objects including post-it notes and wipes don’t have a “home”
- The openness, exposure and lack of personal back-up in this location which is “where the action’s gonna be” [...] in a confrontation with a member of the public”;
- How the bin in the corner resembles the figure of a person crouching down. It is placed behind the counter so members of the public can’t pick it up and throw at staff.
- The empty chair – there’s not always someone there.
- The absence of a safety screen and how members of the public approach the reception via the lowered wheelchair access counter, rather than the raised counter.



Photograph 3.5: The administrative space on the second floor

- How this particular area of the workplace is known as the “battery farm”; “they’re all in their little pens ... they’re all in lines ... it’s dark ... there’s no natural lights ... they got the blinds down ... it made me feel sorry for the poor little chickens”
- The contrast of experience in the workplace of it being too light, or not light enough, of extremes of heat and cold; a noisy environment; feeling “regimented”; inadequate personal storage trays like “little postie slots”
- Amid all the technology a tattered cardboard box is visible for holding valuable objects in transit

- A storage area for documents which doubles-up as a busy thoroughfare.



Photograph 3.6: A 'hot-desk' on the first floor.

- An initial association of “red for danger” [the screens being bright red].
- A workspace that is well organised; “not too busy or messy or confused”.
- Despite trying to become more paperless, physical documents are still required; not feeling comfortable with new technology and still being “quite fond of paper [...] I know we’re not supposed to be ... but it’s just age, I think”.

- The ubiquity of noise across the workplace: “I tend to be able to just switch off ... look at the screens and ... if it gets really quite tricky, I just take the hearing aids out”.

In the matrix, participants responded seriously, professionally and in a disciplined manner to the task. Possibly indicative of close familiarity with the task of policing and gathering evidence, they demonstrated a very high level of visual articulacy as well as an ability to collectively ‘hold’ a silence, which happened on a number of occasions of close to or over a whole minute. There was also a clear sense of unity and cohesion within the group; of sharing membership of a ‘community’ of policing, where particular deference toward the male participant, a uniformed police constable in his late fifties/early sixties who walked with a stick. Disconcertingly from my perspective as the researcher I was struck by the number of occasions where my interventions in the matrix, for example when seeking further associations or drawing attention to a particular detail in the photograph, for example the walking stick were effectively shunned or ignored. Here, it appears as if participants used the opportunity of the matrix to hold a focused and in-part coded discussion amongst themselves about their experience of the workplace irrespective of any intent on my part.

iii) The review session

The matrix review was also attended by Jane, but as already has been mentioned, not by Mr Smith who had been called away. Here, there was some discussion about how it was possible in the matrix to emphasise the ‘negatives’ about the workplace, while there were also ‘positives’, for example in relation to

the experience of disabled employees which was markedly better now than when working at the old headquarters, and the particular experience of a younger female call-handler who described her experience of the work as being far better than when she worked in a commercial call-centre. While there was some repetition of themes that had been raised in the matrix, for example the lack of breakout or meeting space, the experience of crowding when interviews or training takes place, the absence of working hot-desking policies, and the presence of noise and food smells across the workplace, a number of new themes were also raised, for example: while it might not be possible to hide the fact when you are upset by something, wider mental health issues at work could become “hidden” in the ‘open plan’ environment. Also mentioned was a perceived cultural expectation for ‘presenteeism’ within departments, despite staff being officially encouraged to work remotely.

5.4.4 Exit, and reflections

My final feedback and debrief meeting, involving Jane and Mr. Smith took place approximately two weeks after the matrix. It was held in an open meeting ‘zone’ on the second floor, just outside the entrance of the executive suite, and lasted one hour. For this I brought with me some A5 prints of the matrix photographs in order to elicit his responses to them. After recapping the process of the social photo matrix workshop, I showed each photograph in the order they were taken, noting responses and adding follow-up questions. During the meeting Mr. Smith’s persona was avuncular but flinty, and he spoke in a terse and commanding manner as befitting his seniority in the force, contrasting with the more facilitative stance in my role as a researcher, and Jane’s grounded and

contained presence as force wellbeing coordinator. While showing the photographs in turn, I was particularly struck by his quick, certain responses and close adherence to a vision of the workplace as a mechanism for encouraging or enforcing specific organisational and cultural change. Thus photograph 3:1 was credited for the fact that it “I didn’t want anything to divide the team [...] it’s absolutely what I wanted [...] it shows a culture of openness and transparency” - although countered this somewhat by also likening the “catwalk” to a DMZ (pronounced “D-M-Zee”), a ‘de-militarised zone’ separating opposing military forces. Similarly for photograph 3:2 showing one of the ‘hot desks’ on the atrium level, Greg warmly welcomed the ‘lean’ office ideal of there being “a lack of space for anything other than work” while acknowledging the presence of “a lot of coffee”. Photograph 3:3 showing the one of the call centre operator’s work-station was warmly praised as “a minimalist person, which is what I like [someone who is] new to face different expectations”, while in relation to photograph 3:6 “if you take out the stick ... that’s what I want [...] press and go” (although possibly missing the ‘analogue’ paper notebook observed in the matrix).

However, while largely seeing evidence in the matrix photographs for positive organisational and cultural change there was some element of recognition of complexity and challenge in the new workplace. For example, in relation to photograph 3:4, showing the inside of the reception space, Greg stated that it does worry him when the force calls an amnesty on knife or firearm ownership, due to the kinds of objects that can then be brought into the building by the public. Here, when I pushed him on how he thought reception staff might feel

working in this environment he acknowledged “threatened”. Also, in relation to the “battery farm” presented in photograph 3:5 Greg did state that the space “looks a bit clinical – I don’t like it”, while also commenting critically on the placing of miscellaneous objects, including a cardboard box on the top surface of the locker.

I left the meeting and my engagement with the organisation with a feeling of dissatisfaction about what I had been able to achieve, and confusion around the purpose for which I had been brought into the organisation to conduct a social photo matrix: On one level my contact with Jane appeared to evidence a wish for me to ‘bear witness’ to the new workplace as it is experienced by staff, and to help present this experience to senior management. Thus, I had been let in to the organisation in a way that was analogous to the thousands of fun-runners recently had, and without security clearance or check of identification, been given privileged access to secret places and discourses within the organisation, as well as the material and technological support to convene a social photo matrix workshop. However, in the workshop itself, while participants engaged energetically with the exercise it felt at times as if I was being played with as an organisational ‘outsider’, consistently ignored in the interventions I gave and only provided with a particular and selective narrative about what it was ‘like’ to work in this environment. Further, in my exit meeting with the Assistant Chief Officer, it seemed as if I was being called to ‘bear witness’ to the successful realisation of a new headquarters building, exactly the opposite of what Jane appeared to wish the exercise to demonstrate.

Nevertheless, engaging with the police headquarters also brought me back to a familiar form of organisational and institutional culture from my childhood. Here, I felt very much 'at home' as I encountered a uniformed and semi-military culture, with its atmosphere of relaxed and convivial masculinity and organised purpose, and felt both intrigued and also strangely comforted to be invited into the armoury (something that the architects for the building hadn't even been allowed to do). I also felt moved by the care and compassion by which Jane curated the police force's transplanted roll of honour and tended the new garden of remembrance. However, in spite of these positive experiences, I remained disconcerted: by the representations and accounts of a clearly dysfunctional or even ludic workplace environment; by the silences and sense of 'closed ranks' that I encountered in the social photo matrix workshop; and, by my exit meeting where the senior sponsor for the matrix appeared to recognise only advantage. Despite the ostensive openness in which I had been invited inside, I left the organisation with a sense of puzzlement about the status of the organisation itself and its iconic but frequently irrequisite 'flagship' headquarters building, and doubt about the force's ultimate viability as an autonomous entity.

5.5 A mental health charity

5.5.1 Beginnings, and crossing the boundary

The Agency is a small charity which specialises in policy and research in the field of mental health. I was already aware of the organisation on account of having been an employee over a decade earlier, and on leaving had carried out work on its behalf on a consultative basis. After my departure from *The Agency*,

it experienced the withdrawal of core funding from an influential philanthropist after which it had changed its original name, reduced its number of employees, scale of operations and also moved to smaller office premises. I already knew 'Sonia' the Chief Executive via academic and professional connections, and having raised the possibility with her at a conference of organising a social photo matrix workshop, and subsequent email correspondence, I was referred to her personal assistant to progress the work.

The premises of *The Agency* were situated in a business centre attached to a university campus in central London. Arriving at the main reception of the business centre, I was directed to the second floor, where outside the lifts I was met by 'Jake', a friendly and enthusiastic man in his mid-twenties. I was led along a long narrow corridor that twisted at right angles to form a kind of square 'doughnut' shape, along the sides of which were distributed doors leading to various other small organisations and start-up ventures, including to my surprise, the offices of another charity where I had also worked immediately before joining *The Agency*. I was first shown a medium sized room on the inside of the doughnut-shaped corridor and introduced to a half-dozen or so members of the team in the main working space who were seated at a number of workstations. I was then led to a smaller meeting room located a few steps back along the corridor on the opposite side, where we discussed arrangements for the matrix workshop across a large table.

Jake described himself as having two roles; as a personal assistant to "look after" the Chief Executive and as the organisation's "internal business lead". He

had started in post two years previously after the organisation had moved from its former location, and had assisted the team to establish working arrangements in their new space. He also said that he was particularly proud about the room that we were in as he had “designed it”, choosing its colour-scheme, a large whiteboard, tea and coffee making equipment, coasters and a vase with plastic flowers. He stated that the organisation now consisted of seventeen permanent staff (less than half the number of when I was an employee) plus a further number of people holding temporary or consultancy contracts.

Jake also described how in his role he was experiencing difficulties around the upkeep and hygiene of the communal kitchen space and was currently in dispute with both the University’s estates and cleaning teams. Because of the sensitivity of ongoing negotiations, he stressed that as a precondition for the matrix workshop to go ahead, photographs could only be able to be taken from inside the two rooms, and not show any of the shared areas, including corridor, kitchen, lobby or reception area. Additionally, on account of the terms of the lease contract, any logos or other identifying features linking photographs taken to the university would be required to be pixelated in any published findings. We also identified a date for me to spend a half-day at *The Agency* to observe its workplace.

5.5.2 Experiencing the workplace

I spent my scheduled observation of *The Agency* in the main room, sitting at a designated ‘hot-desk’ which was located immediately opposite the entrance.

The main room consisted of two large banks of desks, providing space for a maximum of twelve people at any time. Further along the corridor in an alcove was a small kitchenette and also access to toilet facilities, and opposite the lift lobby was a shared lounge, where users of the business centre could take food to eat or hold informal meetings. In all, it seemed a quite basic working environment, providing those who used it with a just-adequate space to work from a PC or hold a scheduled meeting, but without any 'frills' such as soft furnishings, individual offices, visual variety or choice. As such, it reminded me in its outward ordinariness and simplicity of the workplaces of other smaller and financially-pressed charities that I frequently work with in my professional consultancy work.

From my vantage point at a 'hot desk' behind the entrance to the room, I noticed that nearly everyone in the office were seated in locations which afforded a slight level of privacy, but that the more physically exposed 'hot-desks', closer to the door, remained largely unused. During the time that I was there, two managers entered the office and sat at these 'hot-desks' briefly before leaving, including one of only three people who still remained on the organisation's payroll from the time that I was an employee.

Jake took time to log me onto the computer at the desk where I was sitting. His desk, immediately opposite mine, was noticeable by being decorated by two plastic plants and other plastic objects, and appeared to 'hold court' from his desk, breaking periods of silence to occasionally make humorous or mildly risqué comments and drawing laughter from two female colleagues, also in their

mid-twenties who sat alongside him to his left. Finance staff sat at the second bank of desks on my left remained studiously focused on their screens. From his centrally located desk, Jake appeared to demonstrate a high level of attentiveness to the work environment and to his colleagues, and carried an observant and caring almost mother hen-like presence. Here, Jake appeared to be actively curating or regulating the working experience of his close colleagues, giving them time to focus on their usual work for a period of time, then breaking the silence with some further often quite funny intervention.

Having visited and observed *The Agency* in its new setting, I found that its location in doughnut-shaped corridor, and close to another organisation where I had previously been employed to be intriguing but also troubling. At a personal level, this knowledge of the shared environment made me mindful of how in my professional career I had effectively transitioned between organisations that were systemically interconnected both through shared or similar task, but also their dependence on limited, and possibly diminishing sources of funding as well as skilled personnel. Here, the corridor evoked for me strong associations to a particle accelerator, an image that I knew was integral in the design of Apple's headquarters in the early 2000s and the idea of the workplace being facilitated to generate kinetic 'serendipitous encounter' between colleagues, as exemplified by this quotation attributed Steve Jobs by Merson and Ross (2022):

“Creativity comes from spontaneous meetings, from random discussions. You run into someone; you ask what they're doing, you say 'wow', and

soon you're cooking up all sorts of ideas" (Myerson and Ross, 2022, p.44).

After my first visit I dreamed of walking around and then floating around the corridor, as if somehow 'accelerated'. However rather than generate energy or make connection, I felt somehow unable to find my way into the offices of either organisation, and held an image of both organisations as if orbiting around each other, or a dark star.

5.5.3 The social photo matrix workshop

i) Staging

The social photo matrix workshop took place on a single day over a period of approximately three and a half hours. The briefing session was held in *The Agency's* meeting room and was attended by five employees, three male and two female, all of whom were in their mid-to late twenties, who met around large table in the meeting room where I had first spoken with Jake. These included four members of the 'core' team who were in the workplace when I observed it: Jake, the charity's Business Development lead, Communications Officer and Campaigns Officer. Also attending was a Project Officer for military veterans' mental health project, who was based with a partner organisation but used the premises of *The Agency* on an occasional basis. The social photo matrix and the review session was held in a rented meeting room in a nearby location equipped with a large display screen, and moveable chairs which were placed non-linearly but facing the screen for the matrix, and in a semi-circle around the

screen for the feedback session. I had previously invited Sonia to attend the review session in their capacity as Chief Executive, but they were not present on the day.

ii) The matrix

The five photographs that were shared in the matrix which are presented in the order they were displayed along with short contextual descriptions, and a summary of themes, associations and dialogue as they occurred along with a short description of in-matrix dynamics.



Photograph 4.1: An 'island' of tables in the main office. To the left, a row of three allocated workstations; to the right, three 'hot-desks'.

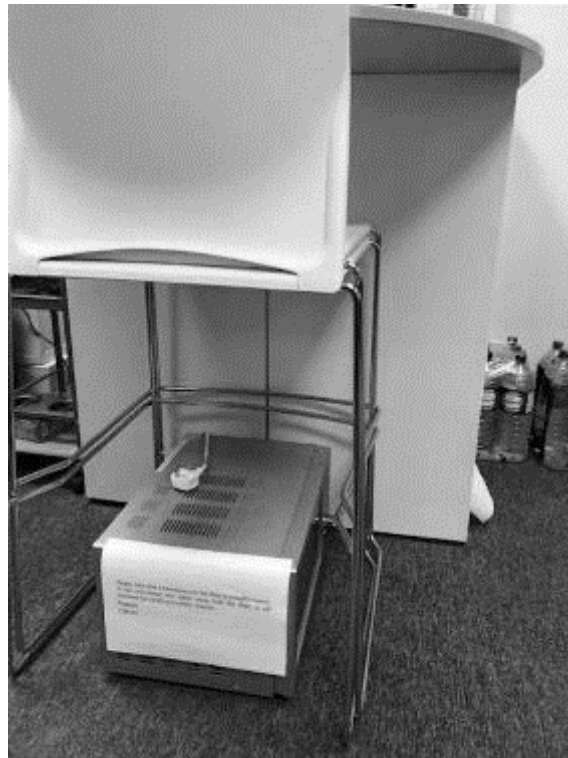
- The observable difference in working environment and character between the two sides of the 'island': The left where occupants personalise the

workstation and create “nice little finishing touches”; and on the right which is allocated for hot-desking and looks “empty”.

- The difference between this environment and “trendy coffeeshop-cum-offices” where employees work from laptops in different settings.
- How the ‘island’ also is used to hide “that terrible spaghetti junction” of cables and wires.
- How when you are busy “you need to get your head down [...] hide behind double monitors ... have a barrier ... put your earphones in”.
- The different experience of the workplace “a split ... a division between two different groups ... and two different ways of working ... so for one side you have comfort ... space ... order almost ... everyone has the space and the freedom to treat their workspace as they like ... and on the other side there is a more temporary space where people don’t necessarily have that freedom ... they don’t have the ability to own a space like the others do ... so therefore that group becomes more temporary in the office themselves ... because they don’t feel any attachment to it”

Significant silences occurred in relation to this photograph; for seventy-five seconds after it was first displayed, and seventy seconds after the photographer described their own associations, as presented in the final bullet point. A quite emotionally powerful intervention in the matrix from the photographer who spoke about the discomfort that they find in working from a hot desk among

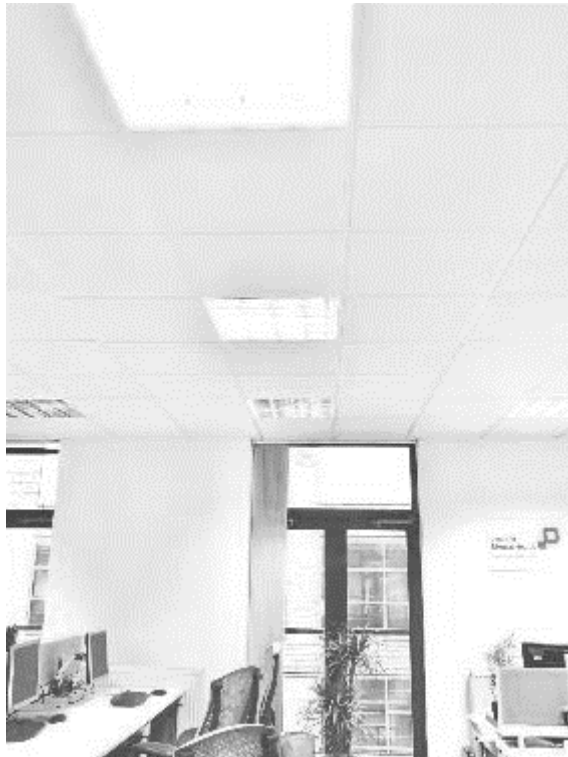
colleagues who enjoyed more personalised and enjoyable allocated workspaces. This individual was the programme officer for military veterans and seemed to project a slightly formal, aloof and socially awkward presence within the matrix, in contrast to the more relaxed and 'pallier' core team.



Photograph 4.2: A microwave oven placed under a chair and table. In the background are bottles of water and computer cables

- A questioning of the purpose of the space: “a random sort of disjointed feeling”; a “depressing” view and “not a place you’d want to be”; “what is it for?”

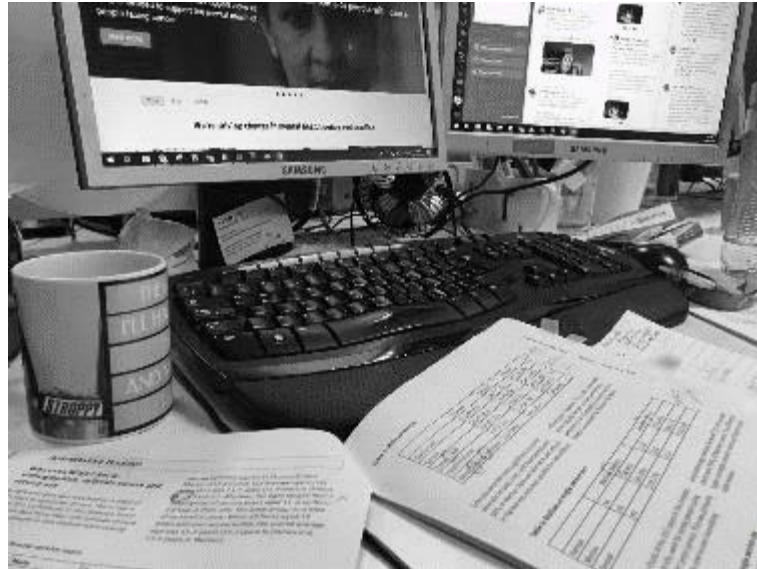
- The experience of irrequisite food preparation facilities: the “tragic” and “ridiculous” experience of heating up soup for lunch in the microwave on the floor; the ongoing dispute with the university around the cleaning of the kitchen that results in the microwave being “held hostage” in this location.
- The multiple uses of the workplace: “it’s a workplace, but it’s also a living space”; How the office acts as a “multi space”.
- How the photograph shows a human side and human needs in a difficult and restrictive environment; “you have to inhabit the space” but “it’s almost confining at times”



Photograph 4.3: Inside the office [identifying organisational logo blocked out]

- A very energetic response to the brightness of the photograph expressing a sense of visual violence: “you’ve broken my eyes!”; “there’s no filter!”
- The lack of control over the workplace environment experienced by occupants in terms of light and heat.
- The need for the environment to feel “more cosy ... a bit softer” in order to feel comfortable.
- A sense of alienation in the environment and how “you can’t even be with yourself”.
- Institutional images of school and hospital: “I feel like I’m on a gurney being wheeled off to the operating theatre.
- Despite the basic environment, a strong attachment to the organisation’s logo on the wall.
- Accepting the utilitarian and functional nature of the workplace; the distinction between the workplace and the organisation such that “I suppose that’s the room ... that’s not *The Agency*”;
- Recognising the workplace as “a relatively modest office space ... that’s not super classy” and imagining a more generous working environment so that

“you might celebrate the good work that you’re doing ... in a less austere way”.



Photograph 4.4: A desk, showing monitors, keyboard, paperwork and other objects, including a mug showing the word “stropky”.

- A sense of business, stress and pressure; lots of things are on the go
- A personal sense of humour shown by the mug; how it might appear that the photographer “is intolerant of mistakes, and if they happen, they’re gonna get stropky”.
- Valuing diverse personalities in the team signified by a “motley selection of mugs” rather than branded ones.

- The lack of places to store objects in the office, meaning that a lot of things have to be left on or under the desks.
- The perspective of the photograph being lower than eye level suggesting the need to “hunker down” and “cut out people talking around you”; how wearing earphones can put you “in a bubble” which is necessary to get the work done, but is also isolating.



Photograph 4.5: A desk

- A sense of colourfulness, Zen, paradise; “a place of calm and order within a space with a lot of chaos”.
- How the room and workplace can look so different from different directions.
- How the photographer loves their desk and their job and has “complete control” over this area, unlike the case with the communal kitchen.

- The fact that the desk in question as originally envisaged is in fact not officially assigned to any person and should be a 'hot-desk' like the ones opposite.
- Love of role and personal workspace: "I love my desk ... I love my job ... and I wouldn't want to work from home ... cos I see this as just a perfect ... easy way of working; "I wouldn't want to be hunched over a laptop in my bedroom".

Participants engaged enthusiastically and largely with a sense of 'fun' with the task of the matrix and the subsequent discussion, which surfaced quite serious themes around the adequacy of the working environment and the challenge of territoriality. Here, it was notable that those attending were primarily the relatively young, less senior, but also highly educated and personally effective members of the 'core' team.

iii) The review session

In the review session, participants continued to speak lucidly about their experience of the workplace, while also on occasion also displaying tact about the challenges they encounter. One theme that was raised on a number of occasions was the perceived low status of the workplace and the consequential lowered feeling of status of those who most frequently used it, and how this clashed with the higher level of prestige and esteem by which the organisation was felt to hold externally. Here, one participant described how they try not to

take visitors to the office because they would be embarrassed for people to see it. However, because of its insalubrious nature, it also was hardly ever full, making it a more comfortable, relaxed and intimate space for the core team that were required to use it on a daily basis. However, when “the boss” or other senior managers visit, it was observed that the office atmosphere does change.

The theme of territoriality and how it “evolves” in the workplace was also explored. Here, the matrix participant who less frequently used the space recalled an incident early in their employment where they had put their belongings down on what they thought as an empty ‘hot-desk’ only to be asked to move, after which they stopped using the workplace regularly. However, after having attended the matrix and hearing about the experience of others in the workplace, this person stated that they now intended to spend more time at it.

5.5.4 Exit, and reflections

Several months after the matrix workshop and following a number of cancellations that were communicated via Jake, I finally met with Sonia for a debrief meeting in the then-empty communal lounge for business park users, where I shared A5 prints of the matrix photographs as cues for the discussion. Here, she stated that by downsizing its office space and “moving from a glamorous to a not-so-glamorous environment”, while maintaining its previous operating level, *The Agency* had experienced a trauma from which “some people never recovered” and so had to leave. The organisation now operated a “hub” where core staff were located, and which managers used when necessary while primarily working remotely. In this context, the workplace now represented

“a site of compromise”, a limited and multi-functional space that required a coming to terms with the reality that and that “there isn’t anywhere else to go”.

Sonia described how in her role as Chief Executive she worked in multiple locations, including from home, a members’ club in London, and also the organisation’s office. She spoke of having concern for the wellbeing of ‘core’ team, for example when the communications officer had to manage a potentially reputationally damaging set of public announcements alone from the office. Sonia also described being cautious about spending too much time there because she knew staff might find her presence uncomfortable and also that “warmth [expressed in the workplace] doesn’t necessarily mean emotional intelligence”. Sonia also said that the most direct way that staff could keep in contact with her, and “know what I am thinking” was via social media and her posts on Twitter, although also acknowledged that some more junior core staff might feel envious of more senior colleagues who have the freedom to work remotely.

Being an organisation that in my earlier career I had been an employee of, I felt a clear sense of familiarity with *The Agency* and its very hard-working delivery culture, and feeling of ease in working with its employees in the preparation for and delivery of the matrix. However, I did also experience a sense of shock at its new workplace to be in such physically and materially reduced circumstances, and also to be located along the same ‘doughnut’ shaped corridor as another organisation I had previously worked with. However, this unanticipated pairing helped me to reflect upon the potentially compromised

bounded status of small charities operating in such precarious circumstances and the action of institutional osmosis that this can bring about. Here, I was moved to witness the accounts of a highly competent and ethically committed younger core team occupying an only-just requisite physical environment, who through dedication to their task and the 'idea' of the organisation and its mission helped to sustain its identity and existence. In this context, on reflection, I feel that the matrix workshop provided a beneficial mechanism for core staff to express their feelings about their shared workplace and also to enter into an organisationally-relevant discussion about the co-relation of permanent and occasional staff via the medium of place. Following the completion of the social photo matrix workshop and shortly before 'lockdown' started, I was approached by the *The Agency* to carry out a short piece of consultancy work. Since then, I have learned that the organisation's office has since moved to a new location; a single room co-located within the offices a high-status health policy charity, out of which historically it originated nearly three decades previously.

5.6 Reflections from engagement with the research sites

Having identified and negotiated contact with organisational sponsors, carried out social photo matrix workshops and then negotiated exit on four occasions to carry out the research, several key themes relating to the nature of the social photo matrix workshop and its ethical context have become manifest, which helped me negotiate a sense of 'relationality' with each site. Prior to moving on to an assessment of the research findings in Chapter Six, the following four common themes are identified from my engagement: Working with the inevitable power imbalances and power dynamics that were manifest; the

seeming intuitive ease with which participants took up their role in the matrix; the process by which organisational culture became reasserted in the feedback session and subsequent 'sign-off' meeting; and, the integral status of the social photo matrix workshop as an organisational intervention.

Encountering power dynamics

First, the very process of engaging with an organisation-level sponsor to progress a social photo matrix workshop inevitably and of necessity highlighted a power dynamic and a power imbalance between sponsor and matrix attendees, which across all sites required negotiation in order to carry out the research while also helping to provide a rich source of data relating to the particular division and relationship between task and sentient systems:

- At the co-working facility and underlying the collaborative and communitarian ethos of promoted by the owner the activities coordinator, the research served to highlight feelings of dependency held by users towards them.
- At the architecture practice an egalitarian and feminine surface ethos fostered by the activity-based workplace appeared to be overlaid by a more traditional, and male, hierarchy.
- At the police headquarters, there was a highly visible command and control-based management culture underpinned by a sense of 'family' or 'mission' held by staff

- At the mental health charity, the organisationally-junior 'core' team members who were required to work office hours in the basic offices, nevertheless expressed a clear mission-based and egalitarian ethos.

These themes are further explored and discussed in Chapter Six.

Taking the role of matrix participant

Across all four sites and social photo matrix workshops, participants appeared to implicitly understand the task required in the social photo matrix, and in the limits of the seventy-five to ninety minutes that were available, were able to generate rich and emotionally evocative associations and data about the felt experience of their shared workplace. Here, irrespective of their status in the organisation, participants across all four social photo matrix workshops appeared to articulate and demonstrate both 'mature' attachments to place and 'depressive' stances in relation to their engagement with the workplace, which is further explored and discussed in Chapter Six.

Post-matrix re-assertion of organisational culture

By ensuring that the workshop format contained a reflection session, followed by a final 'sign-off' meeting with the organisational sponsor, it was clearly possible to observe the particular ways in which following the 'disruption' caused by the social photo matrix itself, each organisation was able to 're-assert' its organisational culture. The particular ways that this took place at each

site, and what this might mean in an organisational context is further explored and discussed in Chapter Six.

The social photo matrix workshop as organisational intervention in itself

While this work was framed with organisational sponsors and social photo matrix workshop participants as a process of formally ethically approved research, from the organisation's and from participants' perspective, my engagement might more readily have been understood as being short interventions in themselves, and meaning that rather than there appearing to be a tension between research and consultancy with reference to the social photo matrix, the activities appear to go together. For example, across all the matrixes, I was struck by comments made by several participants across all sites, and also by organisational sponsors, that as well as enjoying participating in the process, they also now thought differently about their organisational context, meaning that the 'intervention' was also impactful. This finding from delivering the workshops is also reflective of the comment by Sievers (2008) about how one of the key functions of the social photo matrix is to "generate new thinking" (p.235). However, within the stated remit of my engagement with each of the organisations, it was not possible to formally assess for later or longer-term organisational or individual impact arising from the research. From an ethical perspective, while I could have no way of assuring the wellbeing, or the potential impact of participation, or at a wider organisational level, I was careful to build in the safeguards of working closely with an organisational sponsor to help to steer the engagement process, to bring with me to matrix workshops freely-available resources on wellbeing in the workplace, and also

conclude engagement in a staged way, starting with a matrix review session, then sending via email a PDF document of matrix photographs to all participants and then at a later date scheduling a dedicated 'sign off' meeting with the organisational sponsor.

Chapter Six: Analysis and findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a staged account of how the analysis progressed to address the primary research question *can an agile work environment facilitate emotional containment?* Section 6.2 describes how from an initial position of stuck-ness I worked reflexively with my experience of the research process, the data gathered and elements of theory to complete sets of 'axial' grounded theory codes which were reflective of the experience of place pertaining to each research site and workplace. Section 6.3 presents these codes, in order of analysis, starting with the architecture practice, then the police headquarters, the mental health charity, and finally the pilot site, the co-working facility. Section 6.4 provides a cross-case analysis which is derived from a working-through of my engagement with each of the four participating organisations and workplaces, the social photo matrix workshops, the in-case grounded theory analyses and my own reflexive work. This consists of twelve numbered working hypotheses about the felt significance of the 'agile' workplace in contemporary organisational life grouped across five sections to cover assessment of the workplace as: a site of meaning; a site of belonging; a stage for organisational life; a site of change and trauma; and a conclusion which respond directly to the primary research question for the investigation.

6.2 Processing and engaging with the data

To provide a foundation for grounded theory coding and analysis, I manually created detailed and numbered line-by-line transcripts of the audio recordings of

the four social photo matrices. For each recording, I transcribed to my best ability the verbatim dialogue of participants and also provided contextual detail including names of individual speakers, pauses in speech, moments of silence as well as other aspects of group activity, such as laughter, competing voices, background noise and the level of energy and volume in the matrix. The four audio recordings ran to a total of four hours fifty-three minutes, and resulted in a transcript text of over forty-eight thousand words.

However, having completed the transcripts, the in-case analysis started with a profound feeling of personal, methodological and epistemic stuck-ness. Having chosen to use the social photo matrix as my primary research method, I had not fully realised its full strength to surface powerful emotionally evocative data, which was almost terrifying to experience, and I initially felt unable to progress my analysis. For example, while I felt able to identify individual 'micro' instances of dialogue or dynamics recorded in the transcripts, which could form 'focussed' grounded theory codes, it seemed at first impossible or unimaginable to apply my thinking to a wider conceptual frame, in a way that might meaningfully or satisfyingly develop 'axial' grounded theory codes.

Further, it was only in retrospect that I came to identify a measure of unconscious design in relation to my particular choice of sites; in which context, the pilot site, the co-working facility effectively embodied the sense of precariousness frequently encountered as an independent organisational consultant and researcher as well as my particular personal valency for pairing in working relationships; the architecture practice, my ambition to engage with

the 'agile' environments and contemporary workplace design; the police headquarters, my continuing attachments to institutional spaces redolent of my childhood; and the mental health charity as an opportunity to re-engage with an organisation I had previously worked with in a new setting. Here, I felt a sense of embarrassment and exposure at having unknowingly crafted a selection of organisations and working environments which so closely and vicariously reflected my personal interests and preoccupations.

Across two walls of my office, a rented artist's studio in a re-purposed industrial building, I had arranged as a visual aide-memoire A4-size colour copies of the matrix photographs grouped by research site and in their chronological order in the matrix. However, rather than these being supportive of creative thought, I experienced these photographs, artefacts of organisational life on the near-brink of the covid crisis, as both saddening and unyielding to thought or analysis. In this context, and working under conditions of lockdown in the wider world, I struggled with what I described in an academic review session as a "crisis of coding" coupled with a sense of ephemerality which I felt could pertain to the experience of place in organisations and the concept of the contemporary or 'agile' workplace. Further, having from the outset advocated a strong reflexive research element referencing personal childhood experience of domestic and institutional environments as a military 'brat' and its possible coherence with the 'agile' workplace, I found my failure to make analytic progress contributory to, for a while, a sense of doubt in relation to the very epistemic validity of the project.

The paired reflexivity exercise was carried out in collaboration with 'Sarah' a fellow doctoral candidate at the same stage of their research, and who like me also was experiencing a sense of block in relation to progressing their analysis. This was conducted using the 'paired reflexivity' method for shared organisational ethnographic research articulated by Gilmore and Kenny (2015), which is purposively designed to surface themes of "emotion, intersubjectivity and the operation of power dynamics" occurring within respective research encounters that otherwise might be downplayed within 'mainstream' organisational ethnographic research. The exercise was conducted over a total of four meetings, alternately at my studio and Sarah's home office, and also discussion in a seminar group with our academic programme lead. Here, the first two meetings took the form of audio recorded interviews around our research undertaken, our motivations, and the particular challenges and experiences of 'block' that we had encountered. Drawing upon notes that we had respectively prepared and exchanged in relation to our interviews with each other, the second set of meetings further progressed the themes under discussion.

Our discussions touched on a range of subjects which have already been raised in Chapters Two (Motivation) and Five (Engagement with research sites), including: my personal childhood experience of place as a military 'brat'; my later experience of living as an adult in London, first peripatetically as if again living in a military context, then in a more stable domestic environment; my particular interest in the affective atmosphere of workplaces; details of my engagement at each of the four research sites; and, my thoughts and feelings

about my current working environment. In such circumstances, to invoke in mid-age memory of place and organisation from childhood as well as to articulate the sense of intellectual 'block' that I experienced was a sometimes painful but also an emotionally moving experience. Here, I talked about where I had felt somehow 'spooked' by my experience of place in childhood, growing up in a family context where my father's work was secret and where the very fabric of our domestic and institutional environment, despite my best imaginative efforts, somehow tangibly refused to render answers as to our identity. Here, it felt like this sense of 'block' or inaccessibility that I experienced in childhood was also in some way qualitatively similar and linked to my current experience of my research and in my working environment.

During our work together, Sarah made three particular comments or observations which helped instigate reflection and change: First, after our initial meeting which took place at my studio, she heard me state my current position in my research and in my working environment as being one where I was "living with ghosts". Second, during this same meeting she had observed me pace in a circle in the room as if as a prisoner in a cell. Third, at a later meeting, she used the expression "chink in the wall" to articulate the possibility of achieving progress in the research.

Although simple in their articulation, over a period of several months these observations helped instigate thought and change in relation to my theoretical frame and analysis. For example, for as long as I can remember, and as first presented in Chapter Two, I have struggled to fathom or make sense of an

aesthetic of uncanniness encountered in relation to my experiences of derelict or empty environments, and my repeated experience from childhood of entering new married quarters for the first time, which withheld trace of previous occupancy as if scenes of crime wiped of fingerprints - an image that on reflection might contain characteristics of 'screen memory'; thoughts and images created to simultaneously indicate and conceal trauma (Freud, 1898). In 'Ghosts in the Nursery', Fraiberg, Adelson and Shapiro (1975) deploy the metaphor of haunting to describe how "visitors from the unremembered past of the parents" (p.387) are experienced by the child as if a ghostly manifestation. However, in the context of my parents' then subordinate position within a totalising military organisation while raising a young family, I came to recognise that my personal sense of 'haunting' might originate not just in an intimate realm of the familial and parental but also through experience residing an organisational or institutional level, as well as the inevitable functional requirement of service personnel to suppress and withhold knowledge of the awful details and realities of warfare which the military is purposively established to engage with.

Writing about the interdependence between the aesthetic and the unconscious, Bollas (2018) refers to an 'aesthetic moment', a state of experience where it is possible to encounter an "uncanny fusion" (p.5) with an object that in some way re-evokes a feeling of relatedness originating in early development. Here, a "spirit of place" (p.19) may be evoked and understood spatially. Such experience need not necessarily be "beautiful or wonderful" and that "many are ugly and terrifying", but "nonetheless profoundly moving because of the

existential memory tapped” (p.14). However, while for Bollas this ‘aesthetic moment’ represents a re-evocation of an encounter with the maternal, in my particular context, I came to understand my feelings of attachment or affinity towards transient organisational contexts and the ‘empty’ space of the ‘agile’ workplace as being in-part reflective of a symbolic searching as if for a ‘lost object’ ceded by my parents in early childhood and then held institutionally – with resonances which have extended from the internal and personal to the external and professional aspects of my identity.

In the paired reflexivity exercise, Sarah’s observation of me pacing in my studio helped to bring into focus the physically and materially embodied nature of my research, and in a moment of conscious realisation, the recognition of a personal yearning for and anguished attachment towards the ‘spirit’ of a lost parental and institutional object held in domestic and organisational space. This accompanied a terribly sad realisation, heightened through the conditions of ‘lockdown’ taking place in the external world, that I could not reclaim or restore this institutional object, a particular challenge for the military ‘brat’ as an adult, captured in a nostalgia for the spaces and places of childhood, which Wertsch (1991) incisively observes:

“It is true that military bases are so similar in appearance, layout and routine that their predictability is comforting, particularly by contrast to the intimidatingly alien world of civilians. In that respect they may echo, to a slight degree, the feeling rooted civilians have about their hometowns. But this is only an illusion, and military people mine it for all its worth

because it is all they have [...] What military base retains any memory of the people who have served there? It cannot – not in the way a real town can – because there is absolutely no permanent community of inhabitants, no collective memory. Warrior families pass through them and leave not a trace of their passage” (p.420-421).

I came to recognise, all too late, how my enduring emotional and aesthetic interest in barren or unheimlich environments also surfaced something that I couldn't have imagined: the existence, through my encounter with place in childhood, of a beneficent defence existing at a personal, familial, domestic and systemic level against the unspoken dread underpinning military life.

The third comment that Sarah made in the paired reflexivity exercise, a near-throwaway comment about the possibility of finding a “chink in the wall” in relation to my experience of the research and sense of block had a profound impact in terms of helping consolidate my relationship with the data and understanding of the theory to progress the research. This expression resonated with my wish to find some way as if to ‘break through’ or ‘into’ the matrix photographs and my feelings of continuing entanglement with the four organisations and workplaces, which extended to the very walls of my own workplace. Recognising here a sense of bedazzlement by the matrix photographs in my studio, I made a conscious decision to cover these with corresponding text from the transcripts, at which point I found it possible to engage with them in the manner as originally framed – as points of access to unthought or unspoken organisational experience – in turn enabling the

transcript text, triangulated by detailed process notes to become the prime source for coding and analysis.

Reviewing text from my original research proposal, I revisited Freud's 'archaeological metaphor' presented in 'The Aetiology of Hysteria' (Freud 1896), where an analogy is drawn between the identification of a patient's originating unconscious trauma and the systematic investigation of stratified remains in an archaeological investigation, and was struck again by Freud's invocation of the Latin phrase *Saxa Loquuntur*, - or *the stones talk*. By association, this phrase led me to a dream that I had recorded in my process log early in my research (and which is also cited as an entry from my process log in Chapter Four):

"I visited [the married quarters at RAF] Hucknall to research the house where I had lived when I was five ... a lot had changed ... a row of the houses on Astral Grove [my street] had been turned into shops, some spectacular, some scruffy ... one of the houses had become an antiques shop with glittering objects in the windows ... my old house was a greengrocer's shop ... I went inside and told the man who worked there that I was investigating the stories told about these houses ... he looked up to the high ceiling and said "if walls could speak, this house would have something to say!"

By posing the rhetorical question *if walls could speak, what might they say?* I found myself freed to become re-connected to creative discovery with the data and approach the grounded theory coding abductively through the conceit of

'wallness' – itself a descriptor used by Cox (1995) within the field of forensic psychotherapy for the concept of 'murality'; the beneficial pairing of a bounded physical environment with an emotionally contained organisational and therapeutic culture.

From each matrix transcript, I had already formed a significant number of focussed codes on a line-by-line basis which were recorded in the following categories: i) in-matrix dialogue; ii) in-matrix dynamics; iii) contextual detail and comments based on my personal engagement with the organisation and workplace; d) personal associations to the data; and e) questions and emergent hypotheses relating to the data. For each workplace, I printed all my focus codes cut out each focus code and physically arranged these on my studio floor, at first randomly, and then more purposively into groups that in some way could respond to the dual questions *what is it like to work here?* and *if walls could speak, what might they say?* Here, I found that I was able to construct, or 'render', axial codes and working hypotheses to directly address the experience of work in each organisational setting, reflecting their inherent and particular 'wallness', even in the context of their adoption of aspects of 'agile' design. Across the four sites, twenty-two axial codes and associated indicative statements were able to form swiftly, and then seemed to 'lock' in place in terms of their wording and order. Here, the codes frequently held a playful and rough-hewn character, which drawing upon the experience of matrix participants and myself in the workshops, also 'abductively' incorporated the environmental characteristics and physical features of each workplace, providing a foundation for the analysis that followed.

6.3 In-case grounded theory axial codes

Axial grounded theory codes generated are presented in the organisational order of analysis, starting with the architecture practice, then the police headquarters, the mental health charity and ending with the co-working facility. For each site an overall summary of the collected codes is provided along with brief descriptions of each axial code as indicative statements about what it is like to work at each organisation and workplace.

6.3.1 Grounded theory axial codes: An architecture practice

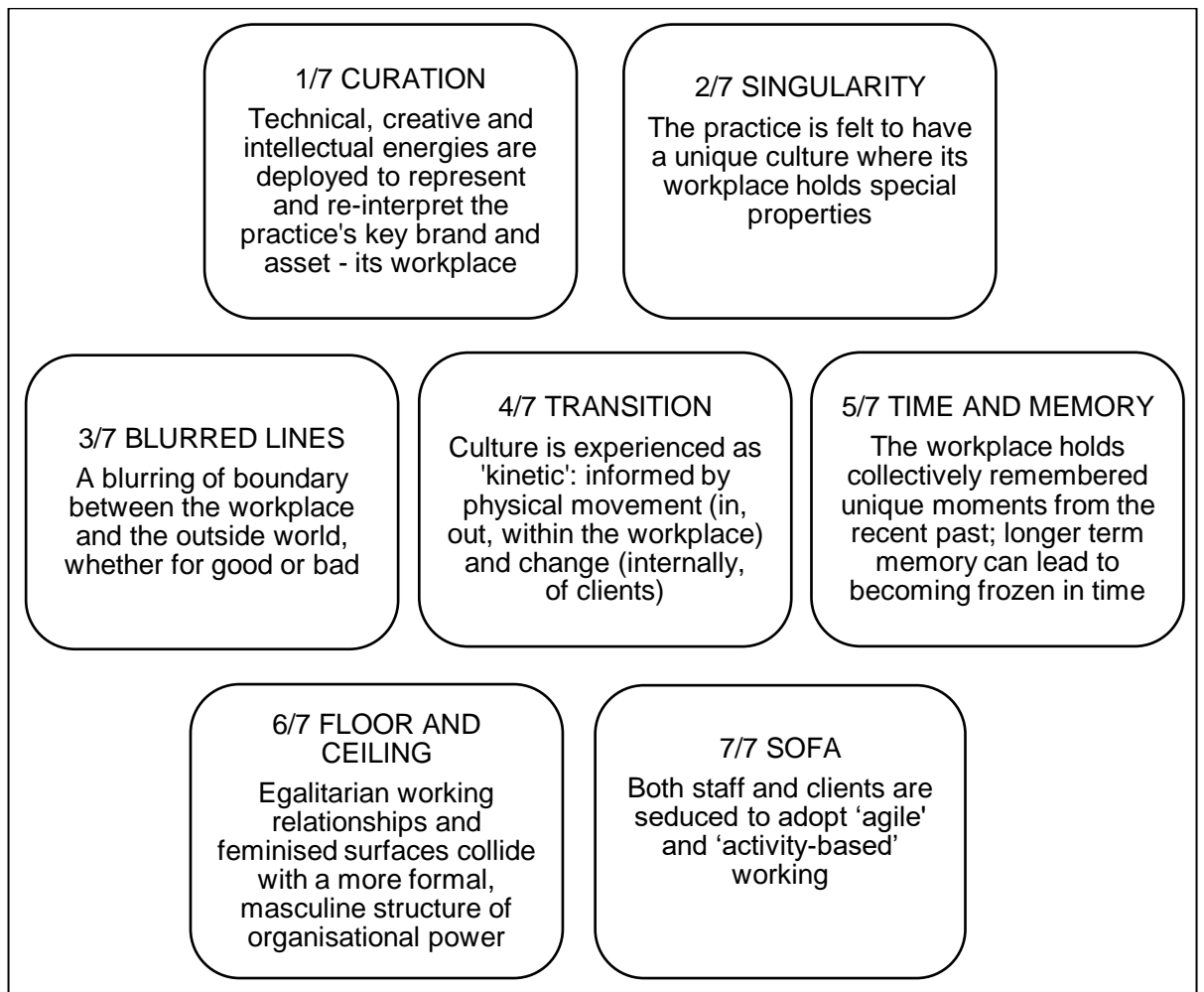


Diagram i: Collected grounded theory axial codes - an architecture practice

In the axial coding for the architecture practice, the most avowedly 'agile' research site with a fully implemented 'activity based' design which appeared to be wholly requisite for the performance of organisational task, the very physical presence of the workplace seemed to pervade the analysis. Here, the in-matrix accounts of young, highly visually articulate design professionals appeared to simultaneously provide an 'on-brand' account of the organisation and workplace, while also articulating tacit meanings and experiences derived from

associations relating to small visual detail in the matrix photographs. Seven 'axial' grounded theory codes were generated.

Architecture practice 1/7

CURATION

Technical, creative and intellectual energies are deployed to represent and re-interpret the practice's key brand and asset - its workplace

This code and statement reflect the centrality of the workplace itself to employees of *Spaceworks* as a locus of personal, professional and organisational identity. Here, the considerable technical, creative and visual talents of the largely younger workforce appeared as if continuously deployed in relation to the workplace itself, paradoxically lending itself characteristics of what Hirschhorn (2018) terms an internal 'boundary object'; a symbolic marker of collective purpose in 'developmental projects', organisations operating in chaotic or turbulent environments in conditions of high risk beyond conventionally established notions of boundary, authority, role or task. In this context, a conscious 'curation' of the workplace therefore to be a central task as well as emotional labour for organisation.

Architecture practice 2/7

SINGULARITY

The practice is felt to have a unique culture where its workplace holds special properties

Here, the word singularity carries two meanings. First, the feeling of organisational uniqueness, and second, within the concept of 'space-time singularity' in a scientific context: "a region in which space and time have become so locally distorted that the present laws of physics are no longer applicable" (Nature, 1972; Cited in OED Online). Further, while all matrix participants participated enthusiastically to discourse about Spaceworks' singularity, there were also a number of occasions where close focus upon particular physical detail or imperfection in the workplace were described as being emblematic of specific organisational dilemmas and tacit dynamics, for example the gap between the wall and ceiling in *photograph 2:4* which is imagined as a space where someone new to the office and lacking self-confidence might fix their sight.

Architecture practice 3/7

BLURRED LINES

A blurring of boundary
between the workplace
and the outside world,
whether for good or bad

The phrase “blurred lines [...] whether for good or bad” and the phenomenon of “blurring” was first raised in associations to *photograph 2:2*, which depicts the glass frontage of Spaceworks through which can be seen aspects of the interior, and onto which are projected reflections of external objects, including the photographer. Creating the code, I immediately associated it with the identically named and controversial popular song ‘Blurred Lines’ (Thicke, Williams, T.I, Gaye 2013) which while on not raised directly in the matrix, I imagine most participants would have been aware of. The song’s lyrics implicitly focus on blurred boundaries between consensual and non-consensual sex as an expression of what has been termed ‘rape culture’ (Stevens, 2021) and I hypothesise that the mention of this expression several times in the matrix may be indicative of unspoken or unthought anxiety among matrix participants in relation to the boundary between work and non-work and the ‘unconscious’ or ‘unthought’ intrusion or violation of the organisation into participants experience.

Architecture practice 4/7

TRANSITION

Culture is experienced as 'kinetic'; informed by physical movement (in, out, within the workplace) and change (internally, of clients)

Associations made by matrix participants to each of the photographs, and my own observation of the workplace indicate a workplace and organisational culture where physical movement and change are integral. Here, it is interesting to note the value that was given to the large 'cut-out' staircase as a signifier of organisational identity as well as of physical transition between floors. Further, the organisational change process which had recently taken place had been named 'transitioning', resulting in the actual departure of many long-established members of staff.

Architecture practice 5/7

TIME AND MEMORY

The workplace holds collectively remembered unique moments from the recent past; longer term memory can lead to becoming frozen in time

Matrix participants enthusiastically located particular shared moments from the recent past of the organisation to parts of the workplace. However, there were also instances where longer-term memory of place and organisation could be seen as being potentially problematic: for example the account of the younger member of staff who hated and tries to forget the feeling they get when someone leaves; and the long-serving member of staff who described feeling “frozen in time” on account of the scale of their organisational and visual memory linked to the workplace, and their story of a troubled former colleague who chose to sit in the least exposed part of the office, behind “the pillar of depression”.

Architecture practice 6/7

FLOOR AND CEILING

Egalitarian working relationships and feminised surfaces collide with a more formal, masculine structure of organisational power

This axial code incorporates two sets of contrasting aesthetics observed in the matrix and in particular *photograph 2:3*; the comfortable, tactile and containing qualities of much of the furnishing, in contrast with the functionality of concrete wall, exposed steel ducting and halogen lighting, and in turn emblematic of *Spaceworks'* status as a male-owned company employing a majority of women as employees. In-matrix discussion also surfaced a particular tension when working with clients between reflecting personal authenticity and complying with male-led corporate culture, and how a younger and largely female workforce can experience a sense of alienation in so doing.

Architecture practice 7/7

SOFA

Both staff and clients are seduced to adopt 'agile' and 'activity-based' working

In the matrix the enclosed ground floor meeting room was referred to in almost primal terms as a site of organisational generativity, where ideas were created; and also, of commercial seduction. Here, the sofa assumed a particular presence as an object which while not particularly comfortable to sit on was described as being comfortable if you lie on it; where clients were introduced to the principles of activity-based working and also where in the process of transitioning, the characters of staff were revealed through the way they interacted with it.

6.3.2 Grounded theory axial codes: The headquarters of an English police force

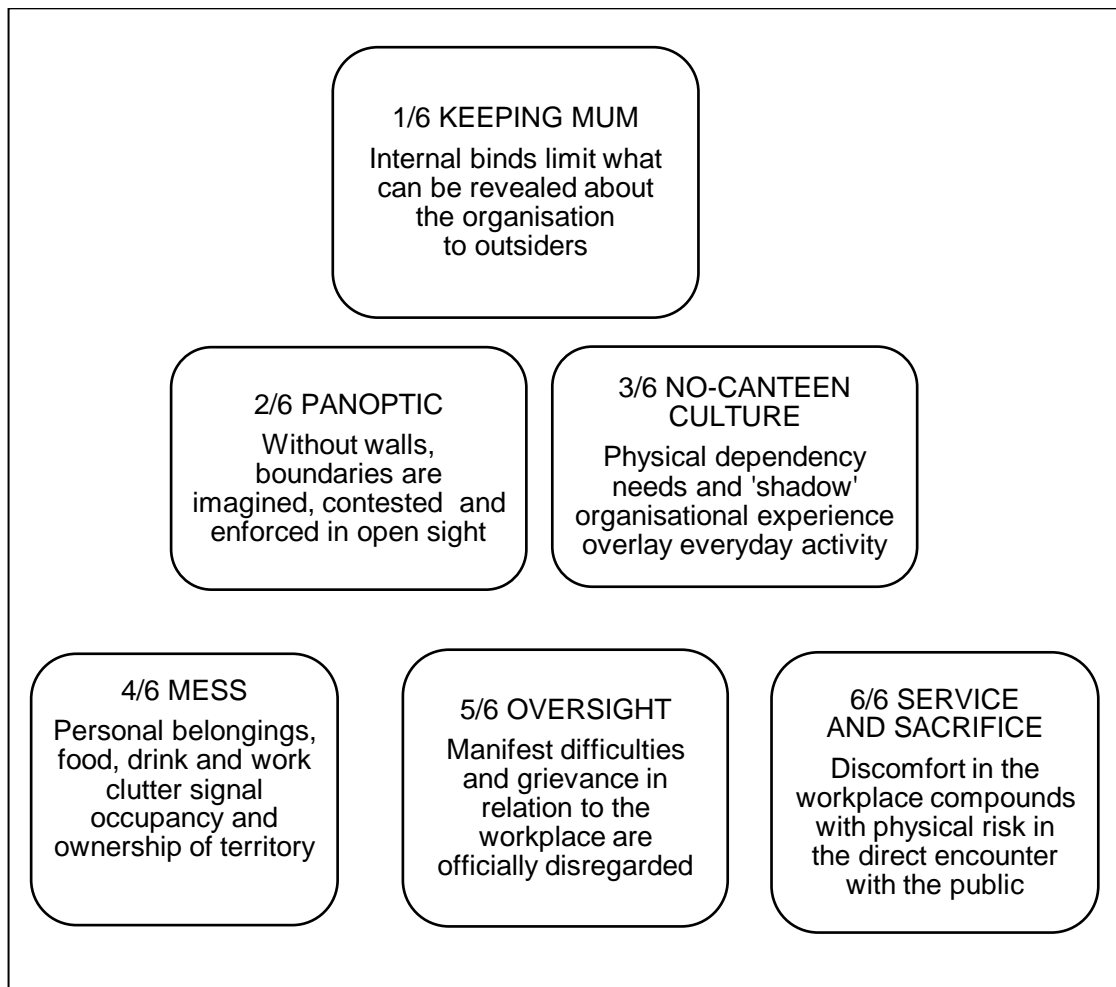


Diagram ii: Collected grounded theory axial codes – an English police force headquarters

Despite my professional familiarity with the world of policing, my efforts to conduct grounded theory coding of the transcript of the social photo matrix was initially frustrating, and possibly linked to the organisation's affinities to my military childhood which I was also exploring in my reflexive work.

However, a breakthrough in the coding occurred once I allowed myself to acknowledge the particularly challenging aspects of my engagement with the organisation, and the integral 'bind' that I had found myself to have been placed in: to be let 'into' an organisation; then, in the matrix to be told only a very limited account of what it was 'like' to work there; and, finally for the visual evidence of challenges in the workplace that were surfaced to be repudiated at a senior level. The codes developed then seemed to take on a 'ludic' character, and were indicative of the largely (though not entirely) irrequisite working environment presented in the matrix. From this process, six 'axial' grounded theory codes were generated.

Police headquarters 1/6

KEEPING MUM

Internal binds limit what can be revealed about the organisation to outsiders

While the workplace models visibility and transparency, matrix participants appeared as if caught in a particular organisational 'bind'; of intimating their experience of a shared workplace with each other while also limiting what was explicitly said to an 'outsider': of not 'grassing up' either colleagues or the organisation and keeping challenging or exposing issues and dynamics within the wider policing 'family'. In this context the moments of extended silence felt in themselves to be somehow 'articulate', reflective of a highly observational but also closed organisational culture. Here, the word "mum" derived not from the word *mother*, but rather the sound made with closed lips as an indication of the inability or unwillingness to speak and from which "to keep mum" is derived, [OED online] accordingly reflected both the themes of kinship within a policing 'family' and my own ludic encounter with the organisation.

Police headquarters 2/6

PANOPTIC

Without walls, boundaries
are imagined, contested
and enforced in open sight

One challenge and emotional labour of working at the headquarters clearly manifest in the matrix appeared linked to the enforcement of boundaries, itself a key symbolic function of policing, but within the context of a largely physically open and exposed workplace. In this context the imagination, contestation and enforcement of personal territoriality as evocatively manifest. Further, while some matrix participants expressed a sense of comfort or even containment in the “bubble” they occupied in their particular section of the workplace, for most participants, the experience of working in the reception area, near to the “catwalk” on the first floor (likened to being in a “goldfish bowl”), or in the “battery farm” on the second floor was described as personally exposing as if to a powerful organisational ‘gaze’.

Police headquarters 3/6
NO-CANTEEN CULTURE
Physical dependency
needs and 'shadow'
organisational experience
overlay everyday activity

One of the most striking and initially puzzling aspects of the police headquarters as an observer was the manifest inadequacy of catering facilities. As opposed to an oversight, this seemed to be a product of conscious organisational design, to create a workplace solely focussed upon the performance of task through the implementation of 'lean' working (for example through the adoption of an 'eight-to-ten' desk ratio), and an attempt to abolish a shadow or 'canteen' culture, quite literally by not having a canteen. Here, it is of interest to note the row of posters and banners espousing progressive and anti-discriminatory causes that was situated just outside the small eating area on the atrium – representing the very anathema of values that might be imagined to exist in an ingrained and retrograde 'shadow' or 'canteen' culture. However, counter to the corporate intention, both functions of a 'canteen' and a 'shadow-culture', rather than vanishing, may be seen to have effectively migrated to overlay activity in the open plan working space.

Police headquarters 4/6

MESS

Personal belongings, food,
drink and work clutter signal
occupancy and ownership
of territory

As a function of both the 'lean', physically exposed workplace, and inadequate catering and eating facilities in effect the routine workspace appeared to take on the function of a 'mess' in the military sense of the word: "a place where personnel especially of a similar rank eat or take recreation together" [OED online]. Further, in this environment, the non-digital and the analogue asserted itself, in spite of an organisational drive to work in a 'paperless manner. Through the presence of physical clutter and paper/analogue technology, a 'shadow' organisational life was manifest.

Police headquarters 5/6

OVERSIGHT

Manifest difficulties and grievance in relation to the workplace are officially disregarded

Through my engagement with my sponsor, observation of the workplace and in the social photo matrix workshop, difficulties around the physical comfort and functionality of the office were clearly apparent. Particularly noticeable here was discussion about the non-requisite aspects of two informally named parts of the workplace; the long and wide 'catwalk' in the communications centre on the first floor, shown in *photograph 2.1*, the multiple rows of uniform desks which formed the 'battery farm' on the second floor, shown in *photograph 2.5*, as well as the potentially physically exposing and unsafe reception area presented in *photograph 2.4*. Accordingly, in my exit meeting with the Assistant Chief Officer, my senior sponsor, and who led on the design and construction of the new headquarters, I was struck how this visual evidence of an irrequisite environment was effectively repudiated.

Police headquarters 6/6

SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

Discomfort in the workplace
compounds with physical
risk in the direct encounter
with the public

This final axial code reflects how participants in the matrix, both through shared silence and their expressed camaraderie appeared to reflect and represent shared sense identify as part of a policing 'family'. In this context it feels important to acknowledge that the articulated solidarity in the matrix appeared to particularly focus not so much upon the shared sense of generally difficult working conditions, but rather on the cramped and exposed public reception area shown in photograph 2:4, a site of actual risk of attack from a member of the public, which evoked the following in-matrix comment from a uniformed police officer: "the angle that it's taken at it's very focused on where the action's gonna be ... isn't it ... because you're gonna have somebody coming in at that angle [...] and that's actually saying "look we're here ... we're waiting for you to come in ... we're expecting something."

Linked to the theme of a powerful shared identify around 'sacrifice', I was also struck by the very long silence in the matrix relating to photograph 3:6 after I made an unfollowed observation about the significance of the walking stick, and also my memory of Margaret, my main sponsor speaking calmly but evocatively about her role in maintaining both the official 'roll of honour' of fallen colleagues and tending the headquarters' newly installed garden of remembrance.

6.3.3 Grounded theory axial codes: A mental health charity

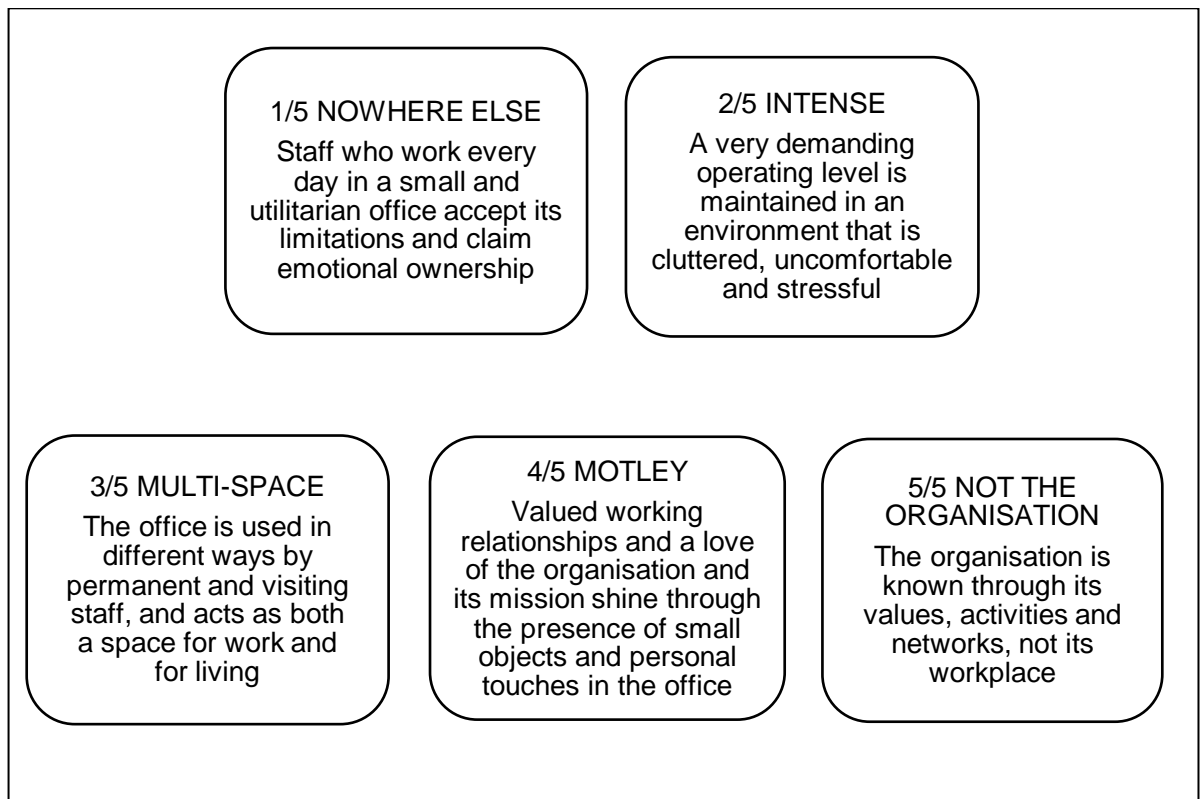


Diagram iii: Grounded theory axial codes – a mental health charity

As an organisation that I had previously worked with when it had operated in more lavish surroundings and prosperous financial circumstances, I was shocked to see *The Agency* occupying such an austere environment. I was further dismayed to discover that within the ‘doughnut’ shaped corridor along which its two rooms were located was another organisation where I had also worked, operating and competing in the same sector, and also seemingly now in a similarly diminished situation. Here, while there were aspects of the organisation and culture that I instantly recognised, for example its branding, the very challenging work undertaken and the strong value-based commitment to mental health research and policy, I struggled to identify with it in its new

setting. In this context I felt haunted by the image of the corridor. This helped me imagine the two rival organisations as if being bound in orbit in diminishing circles, but yet while holding fragile economic status, still maintaining a strong sense of identity and purpose even in the context of a barely requisite working environment. This dual sense of organisational frailty and strength helped spur the in-case analysis through which five 'axial' grounded theory codes were generated.

Mental health charity 1/5

NOWHERE ELSE

Staff who work every day in a small and utilitarian office accept its limitations and claim emotional ownership

One implicit requirement for 'core' staff of *The Agency* to carry out their roles was of acceptance of the effective 'finality' of their location in a relatively low-status and functional workplace, in the context where several matrix participants had worked in the previous more comfortable workplace. In this space, 'core' team members described how they made their best effort to emotionally 'own' the environment – for example 'allocating' seats to themselves, and personalising their desk space with small objects, even though technically they were understood to be occupying 'hot desks'.

However, in this environment, clear limitations to the workplace were articulated, for example: the 'outsider' status articulated by the occasional visitor to the office, who photographed the two contrasting rows of workstations in *photograph 4.1*, one adorned and the other bare; the quite abject description of one participant microwaving soup on the floor of the office, as precipitated by *photograph 4.2*; and the sense of exposure and visual discomfort presented in *photograph 4.3*.

Mental health charity 2/5

INTENSE

A very demanding operating level is maintained in an environment that is cluttered, uncomfortable and stressful

A very intense and demanding operating level, maintained by young, mainly highly educated and personally effective individuals was described in the matrix, most clearly represented in *photograph 4:4*. Here, an intensity of workload combined with a quite uncomfortable working environment offering low external 'locus of control' and where matrix attendees described having to "hunker down" and place themselves "in a bubble" in order to get their work done; while more senior staff held the license to work largely remotely.

Mental health charity 3/5

MULTI-SPACE

The office is used in different ways by permanent and visiting staff, and acts as both a space for work and for living

The axial code 'multi-space' reflects the multiple ways the relatively small, basically equipped office was used within the organisation, by the permanently located core team as well as occasional visitors, and managers who would use the IT facilities and meeting room for limited periods of time. Here, amid artefacts of hard work and commitment to role, a sense of homeliness was also maintained, largely through the office manager's almost 'maternal' oversight of the office environment, and noted by the presence of a "biccies tin" on his desk. In this context, the workplace may be considered to hold an inherently 'agile' identity.

Mental health charity 4/5

MOTLEY

Valued working relationships and a love of the organisation and its mission shine through the presence of small objects and personal touches in the office

Despite the challenges of working in the office, matrix participants demonstrated a close commitment, both to the organisation and to each other and articulated fond associations to a familial character of workplace culture. The term 'motley' was articulated as a descriptor for the diverse range of personalised mugs kept in the office, and of how the characters and contributions of colleagues were seen to be identifiable through small moveable objects. In this context, the picture on the office wall with the organisation's logo on it (evoking the comment "I love that sign on the wall" followed by laughter) had been taken from the organisation's original office.

Mental health charity 5/5

NOT THE ORGANISATION

The organisation is known through its values, activities and networks, not its workplace

The final 'axial' code derived from in-matrix discussion about a possible divergence or discordance between the workplace on one side and the organisation and its values on the other. For example, comparing the office to higher status workplaces like "fancy hipster spaces" one matrix participant diplomatically but archly observed "you might celebrate the good work that you're doing ... um ... in a in a less austere way", implying that the current choice of workplace for *The Agency* need not represent a truthful or representative artifact of its mission and values.

Another matrix participant articulated a substantive split between the workplace and the organisation itself with the comment "I suppose that's the room ... but that's not *The Agency*". These statements help surface what appears to be a particular psycho-spatial dynamic whereby the primary identification of people who used the office was the organisation's mission and values above the space it occupies, of the organisation, effectively pointing to its inherent high level of 'agility', and also of individual and organisational resilience in the context of work in a challenging environment.

6.3.4 Grounded theory axial codes: A co-working facility

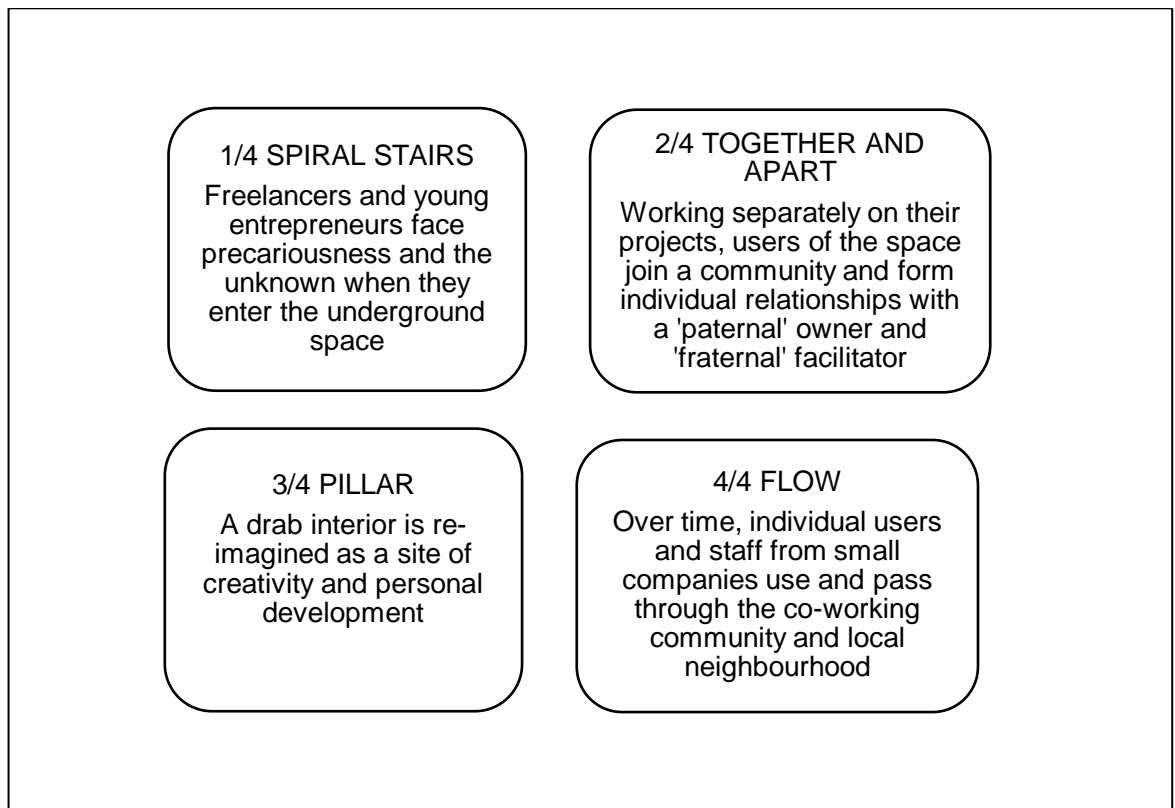


Diagram iv: Collected grounded theory axial codes – a co-working facility

I left the grounded theory coding for my pilot site the co-working facility to last as I felt my engagement with this organisation had been the most emotionally entangled, in part because of the looser and less rigorous nature of the staging arrangements applied in the social photo matrix workshop, in part for how I had directly participated in the life of the organisation. For example, as part of my initial engagement with *Synergy*, I attended four sessions of the weekly writing group where I had become effectively both an observer and member of the space. Also, as if as a shadow of my earlier experience of establishing a research and consulting business, I felt personally touched by with the sense of precariousness presented by the early-career freelance

workers. Further, I felt moved both by the visual power of the matrix photographs, and of the personal and collective attachments described towards the organisation and its' core staff, which appeared to be in its physical configuration wholly requisite for the task of supporting a community space for freelance workers, even in the context of a quite basic and spartan environment.

After many attempts and false starts to progress the in-case analysis, I generated four grounded theory 'axial' codes based on a re-imagination of users' own engagement with *Synergy* that also in-part invoked actual physical features of the environment. This started with a descent to the basement, followed by activities that took place and relationships formed, and ending with movement through and away from the space and neighbourhood, informed in part by my subsequent knowledge of its eventual closure.

Co-working facility 1/4

SPIRAL STAIRS

Freelancers and young entrepreneurs face precariousness and the unknown when they enter the underground space

The first 'axial' code is inspired by *Photograph 1:1* and how the representation of the view from the top of the spiral staircase leading downwards to the co-working space provides a visually powerful representation of vulnerability, insecurity and anxiety: "One small step for a freelancer"; leaving the "safe space" of home to embark on a journey onto an alien landscape; the staircase as a "precarious structure"; and, the intimation of a fight/flight response on encountering the staircase; and also, at a socio-economic level hedging of risk and responsibility upon young entrepreneurs, rather than upon organisations and systems.

The photograph and the in-matrix dialogue also invoked elements of mythic symbolism; exemplified by the '@' sign perched against the side of a ledge on the staircase and visually mirrored the shape of the staircase: the experience of descending into the space as "a revelation"; fairy tales and being caught up in a ludic narrative; having to repeat three cycles or actions in a fairy tale order to escape a spell or curse and return to the overworld.

While not directly raised in the matrix workshop, from my own experience of working in housing and support roles from earlier in my career, I further

observed that some participants in the matrix demonstrated signs that they may have experienced more severe levels of mental distress. In this context, the site of entry to the co-working facility could have held significance as a point of entry to a shared space where difficult life experiences could be processed or moved-away from.

Co-working facility 2/4

TOGETHER AND APART

Working separately on their projects, users of the space join a community and form individual relationships with a 'paternal' owner and 'fraternal' facilitator

In the matrix, participants articulated feelings of dependency upon Steve the owner and Eddie the activities facilitator in the functions of the management team for *Synergy*. Here, Steve was viewed as a parental or paternal figure: “You feel like you’re being supported – encouraging your creativity to come out”; “looks a bit like Jeremy Corbyn”; a person who is giving the message “I’m looking after you”. Eddie, by contrast was seen as a brother/friend: “he’s part of the space in a way even though he is a person; although one participant also described how they sometimes felt intimidated by him, even though he was a friend. Further, both Eddie and Steve were seen as being integral to, or part of the environment itself and inseparable from it.

One crucial dynamic evocatively expressed in the matrix related to pairing, particularly in the associations linked to *photograph 1:6* and *photograph 1:7* where a whole range of pairs of physical objects were observed, including tables, chairs, pictures and computer screens. This indicated the central importance of the co-working facility to individual freelancers as a site where familial relatedness to others could be established, also intimated in the following faltering piece of matrix dialogue: “there is a relationship between the

... the you know ... between something in ourselves ... isn't it ... we are not even aware how we make the relationships ... maybe in the family or with friends ... so I don't know ... something like that".

Co-working facility 3/4

PILLAR

A drab interior is re-imagined as a site of creativity and personal development

The exercise of personal creativity through writing, blogging, arts and crafts represented one core element of the culture and organised activity (and from earlier working experiences reminded me in some respects of an adult daycare facility). In this context *photograph 1:4* showing the pillar covered with artwork, much of which was assessed as by one participant as "not very good" represented for matrix participants a concrete manifestation of this culture: "excuse the pun ... it's like a 'pillar' of the *Synergy* community." In this context the visible poster with the message "why haven't you done it" was also largely perceived as a positive and relevant message for the freelancers using the space: a motivation to work on personal projects and realise ambitions.

Co-working facility 4/4

FLOW

Over time, individual users and staff from small companies use and pass through the co-working community and local neighbourhood

In the matrix, a number of references were made to the status of time in the co-working facility. For example, the shape of the spiral staircase in *photograph 1:1* was likened to a “prehistoric snail” or “ammonite” providing associations of geological-scale time. Further, in relation to photograph 1:6 which shows a wall on which three historic photographs of the neighbourhood (and with the @ sign representing *Synergy’s* brand subtly inserted in the images) an association was made about “the flow of community through time in a place”. Also, memories from the more recent past were shared, for example in relation to *photograph 1:5* of how Steve’s son used to work as the caretaker and would sit in a particular seat.

In the matrix dialogue, the theme of impermanence of location and of roles carried out, and by implication that of organisation itself was also explored: “even though I’ve got a permanent desk ... it doesn’t always feel permanent ... it feels like I’m here, but I might not be here forever”; “there’s a ... a ... sense that people are doing something which ultimately is going to be bigger than where they’re at now ... does that make sense?”

6.4 Cross-case analysis

6.4.1 Progressing the cross-case analysis

In line with the characterisation by Lansisalmi, Peiro and Klvimaki (2004) of grounded theory as an iterative interplay between “conceptual categories and their conceptual properties, and hypotheses about or generalized relations between these categories and their properties”, the cross-case analysis was carried out using a further process of thematic coding. This drew upon the twenty-two gathered ‘axial’ grounded theory codes generated across the four research sites, the visual data generated in the social photo matrix workshops, key theoretical concepts, including ‘containment’, ‘attachment’ and ‘murality’ and my personal process-log.

Firstly, and unsuccessfully, I attempted, to progress the cross-case analysis as a direct continuation of the grounded theory coding process deployed for the in-case analysis. Here, I sought exhaustively to explore whether it would be possible to re-form the gathered axial codes within a cross-case structure. However, to the best of my abilities and imagination found that I was not able to find a way to achieve this. However, by carrying out an alternative process of independently constructing possible categories for framing the experience of place in contemporary organisations and then iteratively (and exhaustively) testing these in relation to the theoretical concepts, and in-case grounded theory axial codes, and then ordering and ‘nesting’ these categories, I was able to identify four broad categories and eight findings/working hypotheses about the nature of the interrelation between person and place in the contemporary

workplace, as well as four further findings/working hypotheses which responded to the primary research question: can an 'agile' work environment facilitate emotional containment?

Here, the 'key' to constructing conceptual categories and establishing a structure for the cross-case analysis came about through reading Cardona (2000) and the idea of the workplace as representing both a "stage" as well as a "third party' in the relationship between client and consultant" (p.89), around which I structured three other key conceptual categories around which my data accumulated to create the following ordering:

- The workplace as a site for meaning
- The workplace as a site of belonging
- The workplace as a setting and stage for organisational dynamics
- The workplace as a site of change and trauma
- Can an agile work environment facilitate emotional containment?

These are now presented in order:

6.4.2 Presentation of themes and findings

i) The workplace as a site of meaning

Finding one: *Data across all four social photo matrix workshops validated the contemporary workplace as a site of powerful individual and shared organisational experience.*

One startling dynamic occurring across all four social photo matrix workshops was the intuitive ease by which matrix participants seemed able to engage with their task in making associations to the photographs, and by doing so articulate hitherto unspoken or unthought organisational experience. In this context, the particular nature of the 'lean', 'activity-based', 'agile' or networked characteristics for each workplace did not appear to adversely impede activity or discussion within matrixes, which uniformly surfaced powerful, heartfelt and emotionally evocative material relating to feelings of working at each organisation and experiencing the environmental and affective specificity of its workplace.

- For example, at the co-working facility, young freelancers lucidly and movingly articulated confronting personal and occupational precariousness, while participating in a community and expressing creativity in an otherwise relatively drab, utilitarian and low-cost open environment.

- Likewise, with the architecture practice, technically talented and visually articulate early-career professionals presented their enjoyment, but also the challenges and doubts which accompanied the collective curation of a high-status, high design quality activity-based workplace that acted integrally as a signifier of the organisation itself.
- With the police force headquarters, a particularly challenging experience was expressed where employees subject to a strong command and control culture in their performance of task described themselves as being drawn into conflict with a frequently irrequisite 'lean' workplace.
- Finally with the mental health charity, talented but extremely pressured young staff described how they claimed emotional and material ownership of a workplace which provided a barely requisite environment for the performance of task, but not a valid 'home' for the organisation itself.

Finding two: *In the social photo matrix workshops, physical objects and details visible on or within the surfaces of each 'agile' workplace represented points of access for identifying and articulating challenges, dilemmas and binds encountered in everyday working life.*

Across all four social photo matrix workshops, the workplace for each organisation was recreated visually through photographs and verbally through the associations and discourse of participants. Here, in the staged environment of the matrix, instances of coherence, imperfection, incongruity and abjection

visible in the photographs provided the stimulus for narratives of individual and shared experience of working life, including surfacing the experience of specific challenges to be articulated. Here, the experience of visually ‘jarring’ or incongruous encounters with place in organisations appear to expose a fault line between the sentient structure and task structure of organisations. By way of example:

- In the pilot social photo matrix at the co-working facility, the discovery of a coherence of paired physical objects visible in *photograph 1:7*, including chairs, tables, computer screens and pictures led to animated discussion how pairing and collaboration represented a core aspect of the organisation’s culture and identity.
- With the architecture practice, the physical imperfection visible between the smooth scree floor and the concrete seen from the central staircase in *photograph 2:1* facilitated dialogue about the tension between utility and authenticity in the design process, and by implication highlighting the challenge of the expression of authenticity more widely within the organisational culture.
- With the police headquarters, the visible incongruity in *photograph 3.4* of the cardboard box designed to hold ‘valuables in transit’ in a room full of banks of computer monitors, surfaced animated discussion about the difficulties staff experienced around finding a ‘home’ for personal items and effects in the ‘lean’ workplace.

- With the mental health charity, the abject representation of an unplugged microwave oven stowed under a stool in *photograph 4:2* surfaced dialogue about the “ridiculous” and “tragic” experience of occupying a basic and barely-requisite office that acted as a “multi-space” for a range of activity, including preparing food and eating.

In effect, visible instances of coherence, imperfection, incongruity and abjection in the matrix photographs represented ‘fissures’ through which it was possible to access to data about how organisational culture was manifest, the tension between how things were ‘meant to be’ and how they ‘are’, and the resultant tension experienced between its task-related and sentient structuration. In this context, on reviewing the matrix photographs and transcript text at a later stage, possibly darker themes relating to organisational experience of each workplace became apparent.

- At the co-working facility, the image of the spiral staircase leading to the co-working space in *photograph 1:1* is seen to be mirrored by the picture of an @ sign resting on a ledge, echoing the in-matrix narratives of entrapment within fairy tales, and as if somehow indicating some form of ludic or mythic challenge to be encountered in the underground space.
- At the architecture practice, the image of the shop front showing both interior and reflected exterior objects, including the photographer, stimulated a discussion of a blurring of boundary, or “blurred lines” between working life

and the outside world “whether for good or bad”, and by implication, the ‘harvesting’ of the talents of a largely young and committed workforce. This also might provide evidence of an organisation offering a ‘parasitic’ form of containment (Bion, 1970) to its employees through its workplace.

- At the police headquarters, the account of the response centre operator who happily provided an account of their allocated temporary workspace for twelve-hour shifts: “but for me come the end of my shift ... the bits on the left-hand side ... all are picked up and there is no trace of ever being there.” Here, while acknowledging the satisfaction articulated by the social photo matrix workshop participant about their working experience, I also felt and continue to feel chilled by this account and accompanying photograph of a workspace strictly organised according to ‘lean’ principles.
- At the mental health charity, the association to images of the basic working environment of “that’s the room ... but that’s not the agency” indicated a high level of commitment to the organisational task and mission, without this being materially or environmentally reciprocated. Here, the strength of attachment to the ‘idea’ of the organisation and its mission, and of an organisation ‘in the mind’, appeared to trump the physical limitations of the workplace, which nevertheless still existed as a locus of secure and healthy emotional attachment.

ii) The workplace as a site of belonging

Finding three: *Across the social photo matrix workshops, strong emotional bonds were manifest towards the organisation's task and mission, colleagues, and the workplace itself.*

Across the social photo matrix workshops, accounts of secure emotional attachments to, and identifications with place in organisations were identified or located in reference to the physical surfaces and artefacts of the workplace. Here, it seemed that irrespective of the design of the workplace or how requisite or irrequisite it appeared in relation to the performance of task, an essentially healthy sense of 'murity' appeared to pertain in relation to the accounts of matrix participants.

- For example, at the co-working facility the identification of pairs of objects 'touching' and matching in the co-working space, appeared indicative of beneficial pairing or dependency dynamics manifest within the organisational culture.
- With the architecture practice, the staircase, was singled out as a site for the "unique interactions that you get at *Spaceworks*"
- Even in the context of a 'lean' workplace which emphasised and reinforced the digital over the analogue, one matrix participant contentedly described their fondness and preference for paper-based writing and notebooks which were displayed in *photograph 3:6*;

- With the mental health charity, the individual characters of staff were observed to “shine” through small physical objects and personal affects that were openly on display in the intimate and small office.

Finding four: *Even where social photo matrix workshop participants described the experience of challenging, barely-requisite or irrequisite workplace environments, mature and stable expressions of attachment to colleagues, organisation and place were clearly manifest.*

Through my engagement with each organisation, strong and mature expressions of attachment appeared manifest in relation to each ‘agile’ workplace, interpersonally, between person and organisation, and also person and place. There was one notable exception, where on my initial visit to the police headquarters, a member of staff from the Human Resources team described to me how with minimal force it would be possible for a small group of armed terrorists to “take the building”. However, in the matrix workshops, even where barely requisite, irrequisite or physically uncomfortable working conditions were described, participants described commitment to task as well as a commitment to make the best of the environment they encountered. Here, it seems that rather than engaging with the workplace from a position of ‘avoidant’, ‘ambivalent’ or ‘disorganised’ forms of emotional attachment (Aissworth et al., 1978; Daniel, 2014), matrix participants largely approached their workplaces from a position of apparent secure adult attachment. In this context, as matrix host it was moving to witness the level of individual and interpersonal goodwill and maturity and commitment to task, and wish to make

the 'best' of the workplace which was manifest, despite the sometimes-challenging routine experiences relating to the workplace which were presented.

iii) The workplace as a setting and stage for organisational dynamics

Finding five: *While some workplaces appeared non-requisite or barely-requisite for the performance of task, all environments appeared to provide an expansive setting for the expression of 'shadow' organisational dynamics, even in circumstances where such phenomena was repudiated within the workplace design and the prevailing management culture.*

From my engagement as researcher, each site and 'agile' workplace could be seen to exist as a unique, even perfect, site or 'stage' for the expression and action of organisational dynamics – within which key psychoanalytic and systems-psychodynamic concepts relating to place, space and the workplace were clearly manifest - including basic assumption function, projective and introjective process, modes of emotional containment and systemic defence. Here, in order to relate the experience of participants in the social photo matrixes both to their workplaces, and to the action of these concepts *in* the workplace, the concept of 'murality' as developed by Cox (1995) as an experience of 'wallness' and Adshead (2019) as "the experience of being inside a space in such a way as to create an identity of the inside" (p.xviii) appears essential.

- The Co-working facility appeared to physically embody the action of pairing and dependency dynamics. Here the matrix participants and early-career freelancers appeared to view benignly the basic, low status and essentially 'lean' co-working environment, willingly participating in the culture of collaboration and pairing as a defence against precarity, and projecting their creativity onto its surfaces. They also articulated dependency feelings towards both the owner and activities coordinator, and in this context I was struck by the painting of the owner that was displayed on the internal pillar, along with the missive statement "why haven't you done it?". Here, from my observation, the surroundings and ambience held a 'studenty' feel which was completely in harmony with the organisation's task, which were also therefore indicative of symbiotic containment in the context of there being a clear power imbalance between the membership and the staff, but that this constituted a beneficial and creative relationship for both parties.
- In the strong expressed identification with the organisations' task and physical design, the architecture practice seemed to embody the expression of basic assumption oneness, developed after Bion by Turquet (1974) and defined by Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996) as embodying the wish within a group "to be at-one with God; to have no boundary between the human and what may be the divine." In this context matrix participants appeared broadly to 'take in' the perceived 'good' elements of the 'agile' workplace and its culture including its' "blurred lines" with the possible exception of the longest serving member of staff who described sometimes feeling "frozen in time" and actively considering leaving the organisation. Nevertheless, in the

clear power imbalance manifest in the practice between the owners and the largely younger staff and the potentially exploitative undertones manifest in the matrix workshop, there was some indication of a 'parasitic' containment being provided by the workplace.

- The Police headquarters in its new 'lean' workplace manifestation appeared as a material and human manifestation fight-flight. Here, matrix participants appeared largely to engage combatively and territorially within the 'lean' and 'open plan' workplace, repudiating the culture of collaboration and oneness that it had been designed to embody; with the exception of the youngest participant in the matrix who described feeling comfortably contained in their physically requisite allocated hot-desk. In this context the experience of ludic dynamics in my observation of the workplace and in the social photo matrix workshop may represent the challenge of running a police force, founded on the principle of imposing the boundary of law in a building with few physical boundaries. Here, again bearing in mind the clear power imbalances present in a command-and-control culture, and the 'lean' yet irrequisite working environment there existed clear indications of a 'parasitic' containment being provide by the workplace.
- With the Mental health charity, the expression of basic assumption dependency appeared activated in the workplace. While recognising the physical limitations of the small low-status cellular office combining allocated seating with 'hot desks', matrix participants positively identified with and willingly 'took in' the charities perceived beneficent culture, which in turn

appeared to serve as a compensation for the limitations experienced in the physical workplace. Here, despite the power imbalance demonstrated in the wider organisation, and the basic and barely requisite workplace, because of the very strong mission-oriented focus, there was evidence of this workplace actually providing a form of 'commensal' containment.

Finding six: The relative scarcity of physical objects in the contemporary workplace potentially strengthens their significance as cultural artefacts

It is important to note the strong symbolic significance which physical objects held in each environment, for example the pictures on the pillar of art in the co-working facility, the remembered story about the "twenty chicken McNuggets", the cardboard box containing 'valuables in transit' in the police headquarters, and the "motley selection of mugs" at the mental health charity. Here it may be speculated that in the more tightly curated environment of 'agile' workplace design, physical objects carry an enhanced level of emotional significance

iv) The workplace as a site of change and trauma

Finding seven: *Data from the social photo matrix workshops, gathered before the covid crisis but analysed during conditions of lockdown, evocatively surfaced themes that prefigured organisational challenges and traumas encountered during the covid crisis.*

Having conducted the matrixes in the pre-covid era and the transcribing and in-case analysis during periods of 'lockdown', it was a very challenging and uncomfortable experience to work with four sets of photographic artefacts depicting the world of work before the pandemic, which in my reflexive work strongly activated my own aesthetic memory of empty and abandoned domestic and institutional spaces. Here, it was interesting and moving from this temporal perspective to observe how themes raised in the matrix evocatively prefigured issues and challenges related to the experience of work and place during the covid crisis.

For example, with the architecture practice, the invocation of a workplace and culture informed by "blurred lines" between the personal and the organisational, and the existence of an organisational mobile phone app – "*Spaceworks in my pocket*" effectively highlighted the particular existential and spatial challenge faced by remote workers during the covid crisis, where many had to use their domestic space as a place of work, and site of organisational visibility. This made me mindful of the existential challenge and crisis that must have happened when an organisation which places its own workplace as a critical element of its identity was confronted with lockdown.

Further, with the mental health charity, despite relatively inhospitable conditions, there had existed a love of the organisation and of the 'motley' relationships which colleagues which were manifest in the physical workplace. This makes the statement "I love my desk ... I love my job ... and I wouldn't want to work

from home ... cos I see this as a perfect ... easy way of working” particularly moving.

Finding eight: *By instrumentally reinforcing the flexible formation and disillusion of boundaries over time, ‘activity-based’ and ‘agile’ workplace design may serve to defend against dynamics and experience relating to change and loss.*

While I had not included this criterion in my selection of sites, I came to realise over time that all four organisations/research sites had moved their workplaces within the preceding three years and also had materially conserved or symbolically recreated elements of their previous workplace and culture.

Further, from my contact with each site, small details about the previous workplace had been raised, as if to provide indicators of ‘clues’ about their past identity:

- In the matrix workshop for the co-working facility, there was a mention about a large wooden table at the original site, which had been the material inspiration for the ‘community table’ in the new setting.
- With the architecture practice, the mural next to the entrance, and which had been such an object of hostility for matrix participants, had been installed straight after the organisations move to new premises in order to visually ‘conserve’ its history, culture and structure at that point in time. However, in this context I was particularly struck by the account of the then longest

serving member of staff, a relatively young women in her mid-thirties who described feeling “frozen in time” and was actively thinking about whether to continue working at the practice.

- In my engagement with the police headquarters, there was significant mention of the “old headquarters”. Further the migration of the ‘roll of honour’ and the creation of a new garden of remembrance to the new building figured prominently in my engagement with my organisational sponsor.
- With the mental health charity, the organisational logo on the wall of the office had been transferred from its former, far more prestigious office.

Accordingly, I hypothesise that the workplace, as with domestic space exists as ‘living palimpsests’ - organisational texts on which later writing has been superimposed, or has erased earlier writing. I therefore wonder whether it might be harder to successfully mourn or learn from the past in working environments which seek to conserve a perpetual sense of the present or a sense of ‘permanent beta’ (O’Reilly, 2005) as strongly appeared to be the case with the architecture practice.

v) Conclusion: Can an ‘agile’ work environment facilitate emotional containment?

In this investigation, the primary research question can an ‘agile work environment has been posed heuristically to surface understanding about the nature of human experience in the contemporary workplace in its widest

manifestation as an amalgam of a range of design typologies and methodologies, including 'lean', 'activity-based' and various modes of online/electronic workplace organisation, with 'agile' perhaps representing the most dramatic departure in working environments and practices from the pre-digital 'cellular' office. In this context, the term 'containment' is significant as originating via Bion's concept of 'container and contained' (Bion, 1962) the question implies both a containing emotional presence, as might be implied by a particular management culture, and a commensurate physical/electronic presence – the workplace - which has some relationship to the culture. However, the term is also complicated by the potential presence of different forms of containment based upon the nature of power relationships or dynamics in an organisation: 'commensal' (Bion, 1962 and 1970), where there is an equivalent power status between container and contained; 'symbiotic', where there is a creative and functional power imbalance between container and contained, and 'parasitic' where either 'container' or 'contained' consume the other but to the creative or functional benefit of neither (Bion, 1970). In this context, it is important to observe that the cross-case analysis indicates evidence for all three forms of containment as potentially being manifest across the four research sites, further problematising the primary research question.

Finding nine: *An 'agile' workplace appears to represent neither an intrinsic facilitator nor inhibitor of emotional containment, but rather operates simultaneously as both artefact and agent of an existing organisational culture, which through its particular agency may afford a greater or lesser degree of containment – or facilitate a particular form of containment*

Of note across the four workplaces and research sites was the fact that regardless of the form of workplace design or the extent to which it was requisite to the tasks, participants in social photo matrix workshops appeared to demonstrate 'secure' attachments to their working environments, and also demonstrated a mature level of depressive functioning in relation to their workplaces, wanting to achieve the best outcomes from their engagement but also being realistic around limitations. This possibly provides some evidence that it is an organisational or management culture that holds the dominant role in facilitating emotional containment in contemporary organisations.

Finding ten: *Purposive configuration, and a focus on the quality of a workplace may contribute residually to facilitating emotional containment by providing a physical environment requisite for the performance of task.*

Across the research sites and social photo matrix workshops, a large amount of participant's focus appeared to be spent upon describing ways in which the design configuration and features contributed to, or alternatively impeded the performance of task or organisational mission. In this context, there may be a link between workplace design and a residual containment derived from the performance of task. Thus, for the architecture practice which employed the most radically 'agile' workplace, staff largely described feeling supported and sustained, even energised, in the high design quality activity-based environment which appeared to be wholly requisite for the performance of task. By contrast, a high level of user satisfaction was also seen at the co-working space which

deployed a mundane open plan workplace but which nonetheless appeared wholly requisite for the performance of task. Similarly, the mental health charity with its basic cellular office structure containing a combination of informally allocated desk spaces and 'hot-desks' also appeared to derive a strong sense of containment. However, by contrast, while the police headquarters, with its sometimes irrequisite 'lean' environment appeared to offer the lowest level or quality of working environment, there did nevertheless appear to exist a strong sense of community or being members of a police 'family' which appeared to counterbalance the sometimes 'parasitic' containment manifest.

Finding eleven: *Even in the context of a barely requisite or non-requisite 'agile' environment, residual emotional containment appears able to be derived in three interrelated ways: i) vicariously, through investment within individual task and organisational mission; ii) physically, through the construction of 'proxy' boundaries; and iii) imaginatively, through the visioning of the workplace as if it were a more physically bounded entity.*

Across the research sites, a clear measure of individual and collective ingenuity was demonstrated by social photo matrix workshop to in some way 'transcend' the boundaries, physical limitations and imperfections experienced within the workplace. Here, the focus upon the task and organisational mission appeared to universally provide a containing frame for participants that created a sense of beneficial containment. However, other strategies also appeared to be deployed, notably at the police headquarters, where the 'catwalk' of open space was intentionally actioned by senior management to create a boundary between

operational and administrative support functions in the 'response centre'. Further the imagining of boundaries was lucidly described at the architecture practice in relation to how a person new to the workplace or attending for an interview might fix their gaze upon the intersection between the concrete wall and ceiling. This was also demonstrated at the mental health charity by a description of how in the busy enclosed space it is important to 'hunker down' at the desk in order focus on the task, and how the desk of the office manager was described as an "oasis of calm" decked out with a plastic plant, biscuit tin and other small objects. In all of these cases there appears to be an assertion of the sense of an 'organisation in the mind' (Armstrong, 2005) that transcends the bounds of the physical workspace.

Finding twelve: *Because of the inherently fluid and boundaryless conditions of the 'agile' workplace, an ongoing conscious curation of space, resources and culture at managerial and facilities-management levels may represent one clear supportive factor for the oversight of environmental and organisational wellbeing.*

Across all of the social photo matrix workshops, as well as noticing how readily and easily participants took to their roles and participated energetically, I also noted how many participants said that they would "think differently" about their workplace. This led me both to realise the importance of conscious and active 'curation' of the workplace, as was particularly demonstrated at the co-working facility by the activities lead and at the mental health charity by the office manager. It also led me to recognise the potential significance of the social

photo matrix as an active enabler/facilitator of the curation of space, resources and culture. In this context, the social photo matrix might represent a beneficial means for providing a 'holding' function in organisations subject to turbulent environments, as recommended by Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski (2018), and as such actively facilitating emotional containment in 'agile' work environments.

Chapter Seven: If walls could speak – reflections on the social photo matrix as a method for evaluating the murality of contemporary organisations

In this investigation I have sought to introduce and invoke the ‘spatial turn’ in relation to theory, practice and research within the systems psychodynamic approach to organisations, and in doing make a contribution to the emergent and growing interest in the themes of place, space and the workplace in organisations. In this context while place represents one crucial element of organisational experience and organisational aesthetics, in some way perhaps because of its universal presence it perhaps remains difficult to describe and reflect upon, as is observed by Becker (1981):

“We usually take the obvious for granted. We store it in the backs of our minds until its existence is threatened or its use impaired [...] the very pervasiveness of our physical surroundings typically masks its importance” (Becker, 1981, p.1).

In this context, the disruptions to the experience of place and space in organisations caused by the rise of networked communications and latterly by covid, provide an element of change or disruption which makes new reflection and understandings possible. However, in some ways, the systems psychodynamic tradition may be understood to have effectively ‘inherited’ a contemporary landscape for work and the workplace that it has not actively contributed to creating, and which while critically and astutely noted by the

authors of the 'vanishing organisation' texts, has to date yet to be more fully integrated into theory and practice.

I therefore argue that the concept of 'murality' as initially developed in relation to theory and practice within the field of forensic psychotherapy, and inherently grounded in a psychoanalytic and systems psychodynamic sensibility represents one clear way in which the theme of place can be effectively grasped and worked with. Here, in a similarly generative manner to the expression 'working below the surface', murality in its dual meanings of a sense of beneficial 'wallness' derived from the combination of a bounded perimeter and an emotionally containing organisational culture, and as a sense of identity conferred on and by a space, by being in that space, provides us with a clear opportunity to deploy our own aesthetic and intellectual faculties to reach a closer understanding of the interrelation between place, emotion and culture. Further, there is also a clear opportunity to relate the theme and dynamics of murality with Bion's concepts of 'thoughts without a thinker' and O, as well as to re-invoke the ancient Roman concept of *genius loci* – the spirit of a place – but in a contemporary context.

Having carried out four social photo matrix workshops with organisations deploying different kinds of contemporary workplaces, it is clear that the method is both readily amenable to participants, integrally emotionally containing in its structure, and also readily amenable to the surfacing and exploration of murality. In organising the social photo matrix workshops, I was deeply moved by the capacity of the method to reveal a vast depth of organisational data –

literally gathered abductively from the representations of the physical surfaces of an organisation's workplace, making each site become in some way an ethical and emotional 'universe'. Also, I was struck by the particular visual and emotive power of the first photograph in each matrix which were all striking and to appear in practice to set in train a repeating dynamic of unfolding and overlaying meaning.

The social photo matrix workshop also provides a potentially therapeutic means for workers occupying and sharing a shared environment or workplace to articulate or lay claim to emotional ownership, which may be beneficial both from an individual perspective, but also at an organisational level in situations where organisations are facing turbulence and precariousness. Here, even in the context of an 'activity-based' or 'agile' workplace, or an environmentally irrequisite workplace, the action of the workshop effectively enables participants to imagine and create a 'boundary' through which further ideas and understandings and senses of belonging can develop. There are also exist number other potential and yet largely untested applications for the social photo matrix workshop in consulting theory and research, for example forming an opportunity to develop the 'critical faculties' of those commissioning and designing workplaces, and supporting actors to be more attuned to the subjective and non-empirical as they relate to the experience of place and culture in organisations. Additionally, with its focus on surfacing 'unthought known' experience, social photo workshop methodology represents a promising addition to established 360-degree senior management appraisals, and also as a method for evaluating potential risk within an organisational context.

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Appendix A: UREC approval letter

EXTERNAL AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

uel.ac.uk/qa

Quality Assurance and Enhancement



11 March 2016

Dear Robert

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Project Title: | Holding the vanishing organisation: Can an agile work environment facilitate emotional containment? |
| Principal Investigator: | Dr Judith Bell |
| Researcher: | Robert Fitzpatrick |
| Reference Number: | UREC 1516 50 |

I am writing to confirm the outcome of your application to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which was considered by UREC on **Wednesday 20th January 2016**.

The decision made by members of the Committee is **Approved**. The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation. Your study has received ethical approval from the date of this letter.

Should you wish to make any changes in connection with your research project, this must be reported immediately to UREC. A Notification of Amendment form should be submitted for approval, accompanied by any additional or amended documents:

<http://www.uel.ac.uk/wwwmedia/schools/graduate/documents/Notification-of-Amendment-to-Approved-Ethics-App-150115.doc>

Any adverse events that occur in connection with this research project must be reported immediately to UREC.

Approved Research Site

I am pleased to confirm that the approval of the proposed research applies to the following research site.

| Research Site | Principal Investigator / Local Collaborator |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Locations agreed with participants | Dr Judith Bell |

Approved Documents

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

Docklands Campus, University Way, London E16 2RD
Tel: +44 (0)20 8223 3322 Fax: +44 (0)20 8223 3394 MINICOM 020 8223 2853
Email: r.carter@uel.ac.uk



EXTERNAL AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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Quality Assurance and Enhancement



| Document | Version | Date |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| UREC application form | 2.0 | 04 March 2016 |
| Participant information sheet | 1.0 | 05 January 2016 |
| Consent form | 1.0 | 05 January 2016 |
| Photograph release form | 1.0 | 04 March 2016 |
| Interview topic guide | 1.0 | 05 January 2016 |

Approval is given on the understanding that the [UEL Code of Practice in Research](#) is adhered to.

The University will periodically audit a random sample of applications for ethical approval, to ensure that the research study is conducted in compliance with the consent given by the ethics Committee and to the highest standards of rigour and integrity.

Please note, it is your responsibility to retain this letter for your records.

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project.

Yours sincerely,

Rosalind Eccles
University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
UREC Servicing Officer
Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk

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Appendix B: Participant instructions for social photo matrix workshop: Police Headquarters

1. Introducing myself and my research aims

I work as an organisational consultant and am currently completing a professional doctorate in Consultation and the Organisation at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust – accredited via the University of East London. I am researching the subject of emotional attachment to place and emotional containment in agile work environments. The title of my investigation is “Holding the vanishing organisation: Can agile work environments facilitate emotional containment?” Here, the term ‘containment’ refers to the capacity of an organisation, through its culture and physical workplace, to provide an environment where difficult or intolerable experiences can be converted into constructive and useful thinking.

For my research I am conducting individual interviews with people who work in agile workplaces, and also a type of focus group called a ‘social photo matrix’. Durham Constabulary has kindly agreed for this workplace to be the site for a focus group, which is taking place with the personal authorization of Assistant Chief Officer Gary Ridley and is being supported by Margaret Toward in her role as welfare and wellbeing lead.

2. About the social photo matrix

The social photo matrix is a form of focus group designed to provide rich qualitative data about the experience of working within a shared organisational or institutional setting. In a matrix, participants share photographs of their particular environment, and explore in a facilitated setting the thoughts, associations and emotions that are generated by the images. By doing this, it may be possible to surface experiences and thoughts which are shared but unspoken – that exist on the ‘tip of the tongue’ but maybe haven’t yet found a place in language - and so enable a deeper understanding of an organisation and its culture to be reached.

One key rule of the social photo matrix is that the photographs taken hold precedence over the photographer - and exist as the ‘property’ of all participants. In this sense there is no such thing as a ‘good’ photograph or a ‘good’ association to a photograph in a matrix – every image that is explored holds equal value, as does every voice.

After you have provided written consent to participate in academic research, I will ask you to prepare for the matrix by using your mobile phone to take any number of photographs which reflect your personal experience of this workplace – and which speaks to the question “what is it like to work here?” When you are ready, select a single image and email to me at the address on the front page of the programme.

The matrix will be held in this room between 2.30 and 3.45 and will be sound recorded. The seating and lighting will be arranged differently to facilitate the task of the matrix, which is to use photographs to generate thoughts and associations which respond to the question “what is it like to work here?” Your task as members of the matrix will be to generate thoughts and associations to the images of your workplace.

3. Confidentiality, use of data and signed consent to participate in academic research

Data from the focus group will be used solely for the purposes of academic research. Individual participants will be anonymized and Durham Constabulary will not be named in my thesis and any academic presentations. Any force logos depicted in photographs will also be obscured. All research data will be securely stored and destroyed 2 years after my thesis has been completed.

After the matrix, I will share the portfolio of photographs that have been used with all participants. At a later date, I will also share them in a scheduled meeting with Assistant Chief Officer [Name], however without naming participants or attributing contributions.

Before we proceed further, please can you now check the documentation I have circulated, and sign and give me that you provide consent to participate in this research.

4. Taking photographs and the social photo matrix

I would now like to talk in more detail about the process for taking photographs and the social photo matrix.

As already stated task of the social photo matrix is to share photographs in order to generate thoughts and associations which respond to the question “what is it like to work here?” In the matrix, members personally decide, one by one, for the photograph that they took and selected to be displayed on a screen. There will be a short moment to view the image in silence. Then, in turn, the other members of the matrix will describe the associations and thoughts that it

generates. Finally, the person who took the photograph describes their own personal associations and thoughts. This process is repeated until all the photographs have been shared and explored.

Following a short comfort break there will be a facilitated review meeting in the same room that the matrix took place. This will be an opportunity to reflect upon the experience of the matrix as well as add further thoughts and reflections. Do you have any questions?

I will now ask you to start photographing your workplace. You can photograph anything you feel is appropriate to this exercise, either inside or outside the building. Annelise and I will stay in this room and will be available to respond to any questions that you have. We look forward to starting the Social Photo Matrix promptly at 2.30pm.

5. Briefing at the start of the social photo matrix

In my role as convenor, I would like to repeat the task of this social photo matrix and the process that we will be following.

The task in the matrix is to share photographs in order to generate thoughts, associations and emotions which respond to the question “what is it like to work here?” In the matrix, members personally decide, one by one, for the photograph that they took and selected to be displayed on a screen. There will be a short moment to view the image in silence. Then, in turn, the other members of the matrix will describe the associations and thoughts that it generates. Finally, the member of the matrix who took the photograph describes their own personal associations and thoughts. This process is repeated until all the photographs have been shared and explored. Laura, as note-taker, will then briefly summarise the associations made to each of the photographs and I will close the matrix

The matrix has now begun ...

Appendix C: Full transcript for social photo matrix workshop (Police headquarters) with accompanying grounded theory coding

Coding key:

Letters refer to the source of the data for each focused code

- a) In-matrix dialogue
- b) In-matrix dynamics
- c) Contextual detail and comments based on my personal engagement with the organisation and workplace
- d) Personal associations to the data
- e) Questions and emergent hypotheses

Numbers refer to the developed axial codes

- 1) KEEPING MUM Internal binds limit what can be revealed about the organisation to outsiders
- 2) PANOPTIC Without walls, boundaries are imagined, contested and enforced in open sight
- 3) NO-CANTEEN CULTURE - Physical dependency needs and 'shadow' organisational experience overlay everyday activity
- 4) MESS - Personal belongings, food, drink and work clutter signal occupancy and ownership of territory
- 5) OVERSIGHT - Manifest difficulties and grievance in relation to the workplace are officially disregarded
- 6) SERVICE AND SACRIFICE - Discomfort in the workplace compounds with physical risk in the direct encounter with the public

| Line | Transcript dialogue | Initial codes | Focused codes with axial coding |
|------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| 3001 | Photograph 3/1 | A view of the working environment on the first floor, showing the operations department. On the left is the 'response centre' and on the right is situated administrative support. In the middle, between these two functions is a large open space/corridor. | 2b: a personal sense of visceral shock at the opening image 6d: the mangled wreckage of a car pile-up |
| 3002 | [silence] | Silence in matrix on first photograph being displayed | |
| 3003 | Beth: <i>I think a lot's going on</i> | A lot's going on | 1e. hypothesis that what's going on is, in reality unsayable 2a: business and complexity |

| | | | |
|------|---|--|--|
| 3004 | <i>Suzanna or Kate: very bright ... very bright on one side and very dark on the other</i> | Very bright on one side, very dark on the other | 5a: Contrast between brightness and darkness in the same room |
| 3005 | <i>Suzanna or Kate: there's a lot of people standing over each other like as if they need to communicate [indiscernible] have to be at their desk like watching</i> | A lot of people standing over each other | 2a: observation and control 2d: Male figures in black standing and watching – what are they watching over/for? |
| 3006 | [silence] | | |
| 3007 | <i>Suzanna or Kate: there's paper files ... full of paper [indiscernible]</i> | Paper files ... full of paper | 4a: full of paper |
| 3008 | <i>Suzanna or Kate: screen at the top of the office ... everything being read ... it's on demand</i> | Screen at top of office Everything being read -on demand | 2a: A screen where information can be read and responded to 'on demand' |
| 3009 | <i>Suzanna or Kate: there's a big empty corridor down the middle as well</i> | Big empty corridor down the middle | 2a: "Big empty corridor down the middle"; a corridor of empty space 2c: Informed by facilities manager that 'corridor' not featured in the original spec and implemented over a weekend without Facilities or interior designer being informed beforehand |
| 3010 | <i>Dawn: quite cluttered</i> | Cluttered | 4a: Cluttered |
| 3011 | [silence] | | |
| 3012 | <i>Suzanna or Kate: coats on the back of the seats</i> | Coats on back of seats | 3a: Territoriality – coats on back of seats marking personal occupancy |
| 3013 | <i>Trevor: [coughs] where the partition goes ... sort of straight through the picture ... almost as if it creates a ... a barrier of ... or a shield ... er ... people on this side are kind of protected or kept away from whatever is on the ... you can't really see through the side ... but it does seem to be blocked off</i> | Partition acting as a barrier or shield People being protected from whatever is on the other side | 2a: Organisational boundary created out of empty space 2a: Space forming a barrier or a shield 2d: the expressions 'barrier', 'shield', 'blocked off' – all indicative of medieval defence |

| | | | |
|------|---|--|---|
| | | | 6d: the expression 'thin blue line' 2e: an expectation of physical defensiveness in the working culture, fulfilled in this instance through empty space |
| 3014 | Dawn: <i>the ceiling's really long ... it goes on</i> | Ceiling really long | 2a: A long ceiling |
| 3015 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>you don't seem to have a lot of working space ... there's a lot of equipment for them to deal with and it's all compact</i> | Don't have a lot of working space a lot of equipment to deal with | 5a: space for work irrequisite, too compact 5c: interior designer complained about the desk size being cut from 1.5 in the original specification to 1.2 m in the final design |
| 3016 | Beth: <i>bags on the floor as well</i> | Bags on the floor | 4a: The floor being used to keep personal items |
| 3017 | Dawn: <i>contrast of the natural light on the left-hand side to the artificial on the right ... it just looks like the two totally clash</i> | Natural light on the left; artificial light on the right, clashing | 6a: A clash of natural light and artificial light in the same room |
| 3018 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>very dark carpet as well ... the contrast with that very bright window area</i> | Contrast between dark carpet and bright windows | 6a: A contrast between dark carpet and bright light near the windows |
| 3019 | [silence] | | |
| 3020 | Researcher: what's it like to work here? | | 1e: felt the need to move matrix to a more 'emotive' space – "what is it like to work here" – but this may be an unanswerable question |
| 3021 | [silence] | | |
| 3022 | Dawn: <i>it feels a small area of a really big building</i> | a small area of a really big building | 2a: "a small area of a really big building" - micro verses macro 2c: the building experienced as really large, although it houses the headquarters of one of the smallest police forces 2d: "a small area of a really big building" - |

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| | | | but the area contained in the image is vast |
| 3023 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>there's multiple spaces so that suggests that there is a lot going on at once for one person person ... a lot to look at</i> | Multiple spaces A lot going on at once for one person A lot to look at | 3a: A complex organisation with a lot happening 2d: multiple spaces – spaces denoting physical presence; and absence (ie open space) |
| 3024 | Dawn: <i>from sitting on the side of that ... it'd be ... even though it looks a big long space ... you ... it feels like you're in a bubble ... and all your focus goes on that middle bit when the screens are ... and then back to the bubble</i> | Feeling of being in a bubble, even in a large space Personal focus returns to the bubble | 2a: Feeling of “being in a bubble”; returning to the focus of being in a “bubble” |
| 3025 | [silence] | | |
| 3026 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>um ... I don't think you'd have much control over your work area ... and it looks like in terms of light ... in terms of heat ... in terms of anything really [laughs]</i> | “I don't think you'd have much control over your work area ... and it looks like in terms of light ... in terms of heat ... in terms of anything really” Little control within work area over light and heat | 6a: Limited control – or locus of control – over physical environment – light, heat, anything 6e: the emotional labour of lacking a ‘locus of control’ over environment |
| 3027 | [silence] | | |
| 3028 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>and the people standing over others ... you could interpret it in two ways ... you could I say that it's a good sense of teamwork and you got um support from others ... or you could say that it's very difficult to concentrate because of interruptions that are going on when people are coming over and speaking to you or standing behind you</i> | Contrasting possible interpretations – good teamwork and support v it being difficult to work due to interruptions and distractions People standing behind you | 5a: Presenting two scenarios – one showing teamwork; another showing how difficult it is to work and concentrate due to distractions 5a: “people standing behind you” – an ominous or threatening image 2e: presenting of a site of control rather than teamwork; the organisation values teamwork |
| 3029 | [silence] | | |

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| 3030 | Beth: <i>I think if you were somebody coming into the department to try and find somebody in particular ... it would be very difficult in amongst all the heads down and all that technology and</i> | Difficult to find colleagues in this environment | 2a: Difficulty identifying individuals in the particular physical environment – everyone’s head is down and the lighting poor 2c: recall when I observed workplace, my organisational sponsor kept looking for me to introduce me to colleagues |
| 3031 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>quite intimidating isn’t it ... [indiscernible] someone coming in</i> | Intimidating | 2a: An intimidating scene |
| 3032 | Dawn: <i>I sometimes think it’s quite overwhelming when you’re walking down the middle bit ... and there’s a lot of people especially if you’re not sort of familiar with the department ... it can be quite ... it’s like a very long walk through</i> | Feeling of overwhelm when walking down the middle but A long walk | 2a: Emotionally overwhelming in the centre; a long walk through 2d: Association: running the gauntlet in the ‘catwalk’; a location of ‘male’ gaze 2d: association – cats and chickens - catwalk and battery farm – the contrast between an exposed and performative space and an enclosing and confining one |
| 3033 | [silence] | | |
| 3034 | Beth: <i>on the positive side you’re not segregated from the person next to you with barriers ... it’s just across from you</i> | Not segregated with physical barriers | 2a: not segregated with physical barriers |
| 3035 | [silence] | | |
| 3036 | Researcher: <i>what’s happening in the picture?</i> | | |
| 3037 | [silence] | | 1a: silence following contribution by researcher 1b: one of several interventions on my part that did not elicit a response in the matrix 1d. link to ‘me-search’ – my father’s silence |

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| | | | when I asked about his work 1e: hypothesis: matrix is unable to speak to what is 'really' going on |
| 3038 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>multiple people are performing different tasks in a busy environment ... a lot of communication going on</i> | "multiple people are performing different tasks in a busy environment" "a lot of communication" | 1b: a feeling as if the matrix member was "going through the motions" – describing the external circumstances without also providing an "internal" narrative 2a: "multiple people are performing different tasks in a busy environment" 2a: "a lot of communication" |
| 3039 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>a lot of complex work</i> | A lot of complex work | 2a: "a lot of complex work" 2b: but what "complex work" is being carried out 1e: participants subject to the official secrets act and therefore wonder if the 'tacit' but not 'secret' element of organisational life is felt as if it is? |
| 3040 | [silence] | | |
| 3041 | Dawn: <i>but everybody is together ... there's no ... even though there are the sort of dividers as such ... it doesn't appear that anybody's segregated from another ... everybody's really in one big department doing their task</i> | Everybody is together People not segregated from another Everyone in one department | 2a: "Everybody is together" 2c: ACOs wish to 'remove all barriers' separating staff 2d: the expression "everyone is together" sounds like a 'standard' organisation-level justification for adopting an open plan workplace |
| 3042 | [silence] | | |
| 3043 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>there's no clear supervisory face</i> | No clear supervisory face | 5a: "there's no clear supervisory face" |

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| | <i>... there's no sort of like hierarchical is there ... or it doesn't appear to be in the picture</i> | | 5c: Force led by charismatic chief constable [often not in his office] 5d: if there's no clear supervisory face, who or what is in charge? |
| 3044 | [silence] | | |
| 3045 | Trevor: <i>certainly, the foregrounded person seems to be quite isolated ... there are people [cough] around but no one is really near</i> | Person in foreground appears isolated | 2a: person in the foreground of the photograph appears to be 'isolated' 2b: one of a number of occasions in matrix where the theme of isolation, or not being isolated is considered |
| 3046 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>I think it's quite funny to see that analogue clock on the wall ... in contrast to all the technology</i> | Analogue clock in contrast to the digital technology | 4a: Contrast between the analogue and digital 4e. policing – an area of activity where the analogue and the digital have to interrelate |
| 3047 | Dawn: <i>despite the red board at the bottom ... which signifies er it's busy ... people all look fairly relaxed ... nobody looks from what you can see particularly pressured by that board ... [pause] ... nobody is looking at the board are they?</i> | People look fairly relaxed in the pressurised environment | 3a: busy, but people don't seem pressured 1d: Matrix participants adept at working with and interpreting visual evidence; and making hypotheses 2d: matrix participants accustomed to carrying out complex tasks in a crowded and pressurized environment |
| 3048 | [silence] | | |
| 3049 | Beth: <i>the screens are very small as well [pause]</i> | The screens are very small | |
| 3050 | Researcher: <i>and what are Pauline's associations?</i> | | |
| 3051 | Pauline: <i>er ... I took a picture to represent busyness ... er ... the desks are busy ... er ... and also the ... the brightness of the left hand side there is a ... huge</i> | Busyness People Bank of windows either too bright or too dark | 1e. it's easier to describe the environmental rather than the cultural in this environment |

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| | <p><i>bank of windows ... um ... where it's either too bright ... or too dark ... if you put shades down which we have access to its ... it's then too dark ... it makes it sometimes more often than not either too hot or too cold ... people are rarely comfortable ... the catwalk down the middle ... [laughs] ... as we call it</i></p> | <p>Temperature either too hot or too cold</p> <p>People are rarely comfortable</p> <p>"the catwalk down the middle"</p> | <p>2a: the photograph represents 'busyness'</p> <p>5a: lack of comfort in the environment</p> <p>6a: presence of extremes in the environment</p> <p>5a: Either too bright or dark, hot or cold</p> <p>2a: "The "catwalk down the middle;"</p> <p>2a: the informal naming of a space within a workplace</p> <p>2b: Felt excited to hear the informal naming of a part of the workplace</p> <p>2e: "Catwalk" the embodiment of an organisational-level, or 'male' gaze?</p> <p>2c: "catwalk" constructed over a single weekend without consultation with the facilities team or the architects/interior designers, and as such a subject of internal friction</p> |
| 3052 | [laughter] | | |
| 3053 | <p>Beth: <i>[indiscernible] ... its enormous in that er picture ... yeah ... it's huge isn't it?</i></p> | <p>The catwalk is enormous</p> | <p>2a: the 'catwalk' is enormous</p> |
| 3054 | <p>Pauline: <i>on the catwalk ... people are intimidated walking up and down it because you have to walk between obviously the whole of the department ... and if you're fairly new or if you're carrying something ... it's er ... it's a long way ... um ... it's also like living in a goldfish bowl with all of those</i></p> | <p>People feel intimidated on the catwalk</p> <p>Being visible to the whole department</p> <p>"it's a long way"</p> <p>Living in a goldfish bowl</p> | <p>2a: Enforced visibility to colleagues seen as exposing and dangerous</p> <p>2a: living in a "goldfish bowl" – animal reference</p> <p>2a: people appearing "out of nowhere"</p> |

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| | <p><i>people standing up ... there are always people standing ... and because people have their backs to that catwalk people kind of appear out of nowhere ... er so it's constantly ... there's a steady stream of people ... there's always somebody stood up ... there's always somebody wandering around ... it's a pressurised environment ... you can see by the red boards ... however that has become the norm ... nobody's affected by it ... the picture shows relaxation ... um nobody looking at the red boards because it's become the norm now ... for it to be that busy ... [pause] ... there does appear to be slight segregation because on the right you have support functions ... and the left is what we are supposed to be supporting ... and with sat with their backs to them!</i></p> | <p>People appear out of nowhere</p> <p>Always somebody wandering around</p> <p>Pressurised environment</p> <p>Picture shows relaxation as it is the norm to be busy</p> <p>Segregation between operational and support functions</p> <p>Support staff with their backs to colleagues</p> | <p>2a: "pressurised environment"</p> <p>2a: photograph shows people are used to being so busy</p> <p>5a: irony of support staff working with their backs to the people they are supposed to be supporting</p> <p>5a: People in a support function sat with their backs to the people they are supposed be supporting</p> <p>5b: The 'corridor' was not part of the original design spec - actioned over a weekend without the prior knowledge of the interior designers or the facilities team</p> <p>2d: An 'invisible barrier' that is also exposing – a ludic dynamic</p> <p>5e. sat with backs to colleagues – examples of a 'paradox' or 'rupture' evidenced in the representation of place, task and culture in the matrix</p> |
| 3055 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3056 | <p><i>Pauline: and then there's the ... the lights on the right-hand side ... because it's so bright on the left ... the artificial light on right hand side are so difficult to get ... right ... so it's usually very dark ... desks are busy ... it feels cluttered sometimes ... [pause] ... yeah ... it ... it ... working there you feel overlooked a lot of the time</i></p> | <p>Very bright or very dark</p> <p>Difficult to get the lights right</p> <p>Feels cluttered</p> <p>You feel overlooked a lot of the time</p> | <p>6a: Brightness and darkness</p> <p>6a difficult to get the lights right</p> <p>4a: Feeling cluttered</p> <p>5e: two meanings to "feeling overlooked": being ignored and being surveilled</p> |

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| 3057 | [silence] | | |
| 3058 | Researcher: <i>are there any more thoughts following on from what Pauline has just said?</i> | | |
| 3059 | [silence] | | |
| 3060 | Kate: <i>think that linear nature ... that ... it ... er ... it's not an integrated team ... sort of the environment like is there ... you've got ... half and half haven't you and they're all very linear...</i> | Linear nature of image shows that the team is not integrated Half and half | 5a: The divide shows that the team is "not an integrated team" |
| 3061 | [silence] | | |
| 3062 | Researcher: <i>OK ... who would like to go next?</i> | | |
| 3063 | Kate: <i>I'll go next</i> | | |
| 3064 | [photograph accessed] | | |
| 3065 | Photograph 3/2 | A view of a 'hotdesk' situated on the ground floor of the building with items spilling over onto the neighbouring desk. | |
| 3066 | [silence: 75 seconds] | Very long silence | 1a: Very long silence 2b: Very long silence following the display of photograph of an 'ordinary' hot desk 1c: Association – police operations require strong visual observation and listening skills when gathering evidence: Therefore, in the matrix, what might be the particular 'crime' or 'criminal' that is being observed? |
| 3067 | Researcher: <i>what's this saying?</i> | | |
| 3068 | Dawn: <i>it's personal ... it's ... you wouldn't mistake that desk for anybody else's ... it's got a lot of personal things there</i> | It's personal Wouldn't mistake desk for anyone else's A lot of personal things | 1a: "Its personal" 1b: my intervention after very long silence elicited a quick response 1e: "Its personal" possibly indicative that |

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| | | | the matrix participants do know the identity of the owner of the desk, but won't say. |
| 3069 | Pauline: <i>and it's almost cluttered with them</i> | Cluttered | 4a: clutter |
| 3070 | Dawn: <i>a quite trusted open workspace ... so there's keys on the side ... there's bits and bobs there that you know kinda shows a trust of those around you ... an open environment</i> | Bits and bobs Keys on desk reflects trust of colleagues | 4a: "Bits and bobs" on desk indicative of trust of colleagues 3d: the hot desk as a workplace 'microclimate' |
| 3071 | Pauline: <i>there's a USB fan on the desk I think which I know we haven't been issued with ... there's somebody ran out of their way to get it ... because they're uncomfortable in their working station</i> | USB fan hasn't been issued – it's been personally bought Uncomfortable in their working station | 3a: Bringing own fan to desk because they're feeling uncomfortable 3a: personalization of workstation |
| 3072 | Suzanna: <i>there's obviously amendments have been made workstation and that's an ergonomic keyboard ... it's one of those roller mouse things ... so somebody has had to have their workstation amended to suit needs ... [pause] ... it certainly looks friendlier than the picture before</i> | Amendments to workstation – ergonomic keyboard; roller-mouse Photograph looks "friendlier" than the last one | 3a: Ergonomic adaptations to workstation 3a: Photograph looks "friendlier" than the last one 3e: "friendlier" desk indicates sign of personalisation |
| 3073 | Dawn: <i>it looks like there's enough space to do what you want to do ... whereas you've still got that contact with somebody very close by to you ... so you've still got that contact with colleagues ... whereas you can still do your bit</i> | Enough space to do what you want to do Have close contact with colleagues | 3a: "enough space to do what you want to do" – requisite allocation 1a: closeness to colleagues |
| 3074 | Beth: <i>I think there's a bit of an element of ... it ... still looks ... a lot going on ... it still looks fairly organized ... and the coffee next to the water bottle next to the the mug and the banana ... with mine it would be the banana would be in my handbag ... the coffee would be on the floor ...</i> | A lot going on Looks fairly organised Food and drink on desk Would organize space differently | 3a: Desk also a space for food and drink 3a: Different ways of organising personal effects on a workstation 3a: narrative about the organisation of personal effects: "a lot going on ... it still |

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| | <p><i>so I think there's an element that it's ... there's some structure</i></p> | | <p>looks fairly organized ... and the coffee next to the water bottle next to the the mug and the banana ... with mine it would be the banana would be in my handbag ... the coffee would be on the floor"</p> <p>3e: the organisation of personal effects in the workplace is highlighted by open plan working and non-proprietary ownership of space</p> |
| 3075 | <p><i>Suzanna: it does ... does still look like ... as though the desk space possibly isn't big enough ... cos it's overhanging so there's work on the next desk ... there's ... there's coffee which I am assuming this person's is on the next desk on the right-hand side ... that work is overhanging the desk beyond as well ... so we just need a little bit more room</i></p> | <p>"we just need a little bit more room"</p> <p>Desk space not big enough</p> <p>Coffee jars overhanging</p> <p>Work overhanging onto neighbouring desk</p> | <p>5a: Complaint about the adequacy of the work environment - "we just need a little bit more room"</p> <p>3a: "coffee jars overhanging" to the neighbouring hot desk</p> <p>3a: Evidence of territoriality and competition for space in a physically limited shared environment</p> <p>5b: The interior designer I met stated that they had originally designed for larger desks, which were rejected on grounds of cost</p> <p>3c: "coffee jars overhanging" – sense of inadequate catering, food preparation and eating facilities: no single 'canteen' but a small café and several food and drink preparation points</p> <p>3e: an attempt to 'design out' a canteen</p> |

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| | | | culture by not having a canteen: the consequence is that the 'canteen' migrates to the desk-space |
| 3076 | Dawn: <i>that could also be perceived as a comfort to have ... to use each other's space and it not be segregated ... there's no strict rules to say you have to stay on this part and that person stay on the other</i> | Could be a comfort to be able to use each other's space No strict rules enforced re boundaries between desks | 5a: "there's no strict rules to say you have to stay on this part and that person stay on the other" 5a: No rules enforced around 'hot desks' being be cleared when not in use used 1b: sense that Dawn is seeking to present a conciliatory interpretation 5e: evidence of lack of enforcement of 'hot-desking' policy |
| 3077 | [silence: 37 seconds] | | 1b: a long period of silence 1e: a tension between talking about the workplace while not 'grassing up' colleagues 1e: matrix participants placed in a 'bind' of intimating, while also concealing their experience of the workplace |
| 3078 | Researcher: <i>and what are the associations for Kate?</i> | following long silence did not continue to wait for Trevor to respond | |
| 3079 | Kate: <i>this represents for me ownership ... of ... of ... a ... an area that doesn't allow for others to enter it ... doesn't allow for flexible working ... um ... there is expansion into other areas because there's ... there's a feel of a ... there's some entitlement to that space ... and that the ... the coffee and the pictures that are put up around that</i> | Ownership of area that others can't enter Expansion into other areas "there's some entitlement to that space" Comfortable flexibility for others not allowed | 2a: An area of the workplace that "doesn't allow for others to enter it"; doesn't allow for flexibility of use 2a: Territoriality – "expansion into other areas" 2b: sense of real emotion in this description of the |

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| | <p>area is 'mine' ... um ... and this is represented in a number of places for me across the open plan working environment that don't allow for comfortable flexibility for those people who don't have that ownership of environment ... that have to slot in whenever it suits ... um ... and whilst there may be some reasons in terms of specific need ... there should still be an ability to be flexible with that workstation when that person isn't there and to allow for everybody to feel comfortable when they walk in and and ... and sit at that area ... and for me [sigh] there is far too much ownership in this building with labels on seats ... and ... and personal to the point where you're told "oh, so and so's coming in to see that their seat so when you come in you then to move on when that individual arrives cos they ... that's their seat ... um ... and it ... [sigh] ... it's just not a 'clear your desk' policy that ... that person could go on holiday for two weeks ... and it was still look like that ... apart from maybe the paper would be put away ... but ... the ... the photos and cups and things would still be laid there ... and this is just one example ... I'm not picking up on this individual particularly ... it ... it sends a message to me that some people are more entitled than others ... it's not a fair workspace</p> | <p>Workstations should be used flexibly when main user is not there</p> <p>Too much ownership in this building</p> <p>Being asked to move when main user arrives</p> <p>Not a 'clear your desk' policy</p> <p>Objects there when main user is on holiday</p> <p>Some people are more entitled than others</p> | <p>workplace and the problems that the speaker encounters in relation to territoriality, and territory</p> <p>2b: energy in matrix through to the end of the discussion of photograph</p> <p>2a: Personal ownership: "there's some entitlement to that space"</p> <p>5a: Workstations should be used flexibly when main user is not there</p> <p>2a: "There is far too much ownership in this building"</p> <p>5a: critique of non-implementation of workplace facilities policy</p> <p>5a: "It sends a message to me that some people are more entitled than others"</p> <p>5e: "far too much ownership" of space a consequence of irrequisite physical resources</p> |
| 3080 | <p>Trevor: I read that ... I understand what you say ... but I read that more as someone trying to build in some personal space into</p> | <p>"I read that as someone trying to build in some personal space into a fairly impersonal building</p> | <p>2a: The legitimate need to personalize space trumps equity of access to a workstation</p> |

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| | <i>a fairly impersonal building and a fairly impersonal environment</i> | and a fairly impersonal environment” | 2b. expression of the counter view, that someone is “trying to build in some personal space into a fairly impersonal building” 2e: hypothesis that the ‘facilities culture’ as it is, leaves colleagues to ‘fight out’ over territory, indicated by the exchange in the matrix |
| 3081 | <i>Kate: but by doing that they’re not being fair to others who need to feel comfortable in a work environment too ... and when I walk in ... to an environment ... the only desks that I can find are often those that belong to somebody else ... you know ... and you ... you ... you find very great difficulty in the owner sitting at that desk even if that person’s not there</i> | Not being fair to people who need to feel too comfortable Desks always belonging to someone else Owner sitting at desk – even when not there | 2a: Lack of fairness in the allocation of/use of workstations 2a: The need to feel comfortable |
| 3082 | <i>Trevor: and yeah I understand that as well ... but it is a natural instinct I think in these sort of situations to try and ... if you’ve got an area ... you kind of make it yourself</i> | Natural instinct to personalise your immediate working environment | 2a: “Natural instinct” to make a space your own; to make claim to territory and personalise it 5e. “natural instinct” to claim a space verses the legitimate need to find a comfortable and accessible space to work |
| 3083 | <i>Kate: [interrupting] but that’s my point ... it’s not ... it’s not your area though is it? ... when I’m come into work in the atrium ... I think all my stuff on my bike ... and I have a locker ... in the toilets ... and then [laughs] I remove that so that the next time somebody comes in they can sit there ... and if somebody sat there ... I don’t look like “why are</i> | Bur desk is not your own area Manages personal objects from a locker and clears desk when not using it It’s not my seat | 2a: “It’s not your area though, is it?” Conflict between those who personally make claim to a workstation – and those who do not have the role or authority to do so; the wish for a hot-desking policy to be properly implemented 3a: “I have a locker in the toilets [followed by laughs] - where |

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| | <i>you sat in my seat?" ... er ... because it's not my seat</i> | | <p>personal belongings are stored – an abject image</p> <p>2a: "I don't look like 'why are you sat in my seat' [...] because its not my seat" – limited personal expectations around the use of territory</p> <p>5c: a sense of the physical and emotional impoverishment of the workplace</p> <p>5e: "it's not my seat": an expression of the desire for a more just facilities culture</p> |
| 3084 | <i>Suzanna or Pauline: um ... I suppose it depends on the role, doesn't it? ... some people enough to have to sit at a particular computer because of the configuration or the role that they do ... and in which case that personalisation wouldn't come across as being so stand-offish to other people ... cos you ... you can't sit there ... or they cannot sit elsewhere</i> | <p>Desk ownership granted according to role and the configuration of the computer</p> <p>Personalisation of workplace can be perceived as stand-offish</p> <p>You can't sit there because they can't work elsewhere</p> | |
| 3085 | <i>Kate: but there's very few people that solely do that role ... that wouldn't have somebody else who could alternate with them ... that would be sitting in that seat ... on another occasion</i> | Very few people couldn't swap seats with other people | |
| 3086 | <i>Suzanna or Pauline: yeah</i> | | |
| 3087 | <i>Kate: there's very few people that would be ... "that's my desk because that's the way it's configured"</i> | Being allocated a desk on account of the way it is configured | 2a: view that very few people do a role requiring their computer to be particularly configured |
| 3088 | <i>Suzanna or Pauline: er ... in ... in ... my environment we are all like that ... we all have just our own role ... and we have our computers configured for</i> | In my environment we are all like that – computers configured for specific role | 2a: "In my environment we are all like that" – computers configured for specific role |

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| | <p><i>the specific that you do ... so even just my ... my six desks have particular configuration on the computers so I couldn't sit at somebody else's seat knowing they were coming in ... so that ... that... that desk policy cannot cover some teams that just can't ... and if that person isn't like that ... then yeah ... it's ... it's ... it's personalised too much</i></p> | <p>Couldn't sit at somebody else's seat knowing they are coming in</p> <p>The hot desking policy cannot cover some teams</p> | <p>2a: Couldn't sit at somebody else's seat knowing they are coming in</p> <p>2a: The hot desking policy cannot cover some teams</p> <p>2b. conflict between someone who makes a claim to space and someone who wishes for a hot desk environment</p> <p>2e: hypothesis: the policing task and culture requires the construction and maintenance of boundaries – in this organisation the boundaries are invisible, creating a particular emotional labour</p> |
| 3089 | <p><i>Suzanna or Pauline: I can empathise with that position ... that photo could equally have been taken in the area that I work in ... and the ... the comments that Kate's made really ring true that ... it's a supposed hot desk policy but it's only limited to um certain individuals that don't have specific um setup on their desk ... or personalization ... um ... equally I know but it's a natural instinct that people feel more comfortable to have their own personal effects around them ... but if you can see somebody in your same working environment who is afforded the ability to do that ... and you're not ... then you feel less valuable as a member of the team ... and you get groups when they sit in the same seat every day with their</i></p> | <p>The hot desk policy is limited to certain individuals</p> <p>A natural instinct to feel comfortable by having personal effects around</p> <p>Feel a less valuable member of team if you can't have personal objects and others can</p> <p>Groups sitting in same seat every day, while others look for a chair</p> | <p>2a: The hot desk policy is limited to certain individuals</p> <p>3a: A natural instinct to feel comfortable by having personal effects around</p> <p>2a: Feel a less valuable member of team if you can't have personal objects and others can</p> <p>2a: Groups sitting in same seat every day, while others look for a chair/desk to work at</p> |

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| | <i>cups out every day ... and you walk in looking for a chair ... and every day you're the one looking</i> | | |
| 3090 | <i>Suzanna or Pauline: I think the issue is perhaps ... I mean I might be speaking out of turn ... everyone would like to be able to have that ... to be able to come in and have your own personal space</i> | Everyone would like to have personal space | 2c: settled teams verses 'nomads' searching for a home 2b: the enactment of a struggle or war of attrition in the workplace between nomads and permanent staff 5b: genuine upset and sense of unfairness at the working conditions experienced as a 'nomad' |
| 3091 | <i>Kate: it's just fairness ... that's all I would say ... cos if we've got an eight to ten ratio ... desk ratio ... we've got a clear desk policy ... then everybody should have the same opportunities ... and if there's configuration issues, well so be it ... but that doesn't mean you should still be able to personalise your space ... it's not your desk ... it's still not your desk ... somebody else can use that desk on another occasion if you're not there</i> | Eight to ten desk ratio and a clear desk policy Everybody should have the same opportunities "It's not your desk" - so you shouldn't personalise it | 5a: "eight to ten desk ratio" and "a clear desk policy" 5a: "everybody should have the same opportunities" 5a: "It's not your desk" – conflict between 'nomads' and staff who work permanently in office – around the allocation and personalization of desk space 2a: wish for the stated clear desk policy to be adhered to |
| 3092 | <i>Facilitator: we're going to need to move to the next picture but these are themes that we can bring up in the feedback session ... so I think hold some of this ... er ... who would like to go next</i> | | 5b: feel I ended this discussion too quickly – a critical exchange about equity and personalisation |
| 3093 | <i>Dawn: I'll go next</i> | | |
| 3094 | <i>[Photograph accessed]</i> | | |
| 3095 | Photograph 3/3 | A 'hot-desk' in the response centre on the first floor. | |
| 3096 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3097 | <i>Kate: to me that looks like good organised workspace</i> | Good organised workspace | 3a: "good organised workspace" |

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| 3098 | <i>[whisper]: tidy</i> | Tidy | |
| 3099 | <i>Kate: consideration taken of um ... comfort ... the chair looks comfortable ... the foot-rests there [indiscernible] if you're gonna be sat down for long periods of time ... ergonomically everything seems to be in the right place ... it's space not overly cluttered</i> | Comfortable, everything in the right place, ergonomic | 3a: Thought and attention has been paid he physical comfort of the person sitting at this desk/workstation; a requisite space |
| 3100 | <i>Beth: and drinks on hand</i> | drinks on hand | 3a: "drinks on hand" for person occupying workstation |
| 3101 | <i>Suzanna: [at same time]: it's very enclosed ... enclosed with the computers</i> | Enclosed with computers | |
| 3102 | <i>Pauline: yeah ... it looks very lonely ... I mean if you look in the background all the people got their heads down and then looking at their own work ... they've got headsets on ... so isolated ... with ... from that you would have nobody to interact with ... there's just your little workstation which looks pretty barren</i> | looks very lonely – people with headsets and heads down little workstation looks pretty barren | 6a: "looks very lonely" – loneliness and isolation inferred in ergonomic but otherwise 'barren' workstation |
| 3103 | <i>Suzanna or Kate: it's got a special chair ... that's not a normal chair</i> | Special chair | |
| 3104 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3105 | <i>Pauline: it's three screens to work with, so it's a lot going on for one person</i> | Three screens - a lot going on for one person | 2a: Three screens – a lot going on/data overload |
| 3106 | <i>Suzanna or Kate: it's a reflection ... quite a lot of reflection in that screen as well on the right</i> | Reflections in screen | |
| 3107 | <i>Pauline: it looks like a fairly old keyboard ... I don't know about wear and tear but from the look of it ... it just doesn't look very modern ... nor does the third screen</i> | Old keyboard – wear and tear | |
| 3108 | <i>Suzanna or Kate: the screens look very close as well</i> | Screens are close | |
| 3109 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3110 | <i>Beth: is that one of the ... the wavy desks rather</i> | Wavy desk | |

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| | <i>than just the tables? ... cos you sometimes feel when you're just at the tables ... and you're sitting at a table ... that looks look more like a workstation doesn't it?</i> | | |
| 3111 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3112 | Researcher: <i>I'm curious as to what's going on behind the screens</i> | | |
| 3113 | <i>[silence: 51 seconds]</i> | | 1a: very long silence 1b: a very long time – what was going on behind the screens? No response to my question - asking participants to 'betray' their relationships and experiences |
| 3114 | Researcher: <i>are there any thoughts?</i> | | |
| 3115 | Suzanna or Kate: <i>perhaps that the photo's been taken to show the isolation because there is a lot going on above ... but when the top of the photo is ... kind of cuts out ... there's obviously a lot going on elsewhere but the photo cuts that out</i> | Perhaps photo taken to show isolation | 1b: again, my intervention after a long silence evoked an immediate response 2a: "a lot going on above" 2d: think about the variety of meanings that "a lot going on" can convey |
| 3116 | Trevor: <i>could you say this is there because that's your work view as it were when you're in? ... there is lots of stuff going on over the board but your focus is gonna be on those two, three screens ... a lot of what's going on in that background ... you're not ... it ... you're not going to be terribly aware of ... [silence] ... when the screens are black like that ... it actually does seem to create quite a barrier</i> | that's your work view Black screens create a barrier | 1a: "that's your work view" – a 'literal' interpretation of 'what is it like to work here' – "your focus is on the screens" 2a: Screens forming a barrier or boundary in the workplace |
| 3117 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3118 | Researcher: <i>yeah, they're like black mirrors</i> | | |
| 3119 | Trevor: <i>sorry?</i> | | |

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| 3120 | Researcher: <i>they're like black mirrors</i> | | |
| 3121 | Voice: <i>mmmm</i> | | |
| 3122 | [<i>silence</i>] | | 1b: a sense of a slightly stilted exchange following my use of the phrase 'black mirror' 1d: 'black mirror' – what we see when a screen stops working |
| 3123 | Researcher: <i>what are Dawn's perspectives?</i> | | |
| 3124 | Dawn: <i>it's a mainly positive picture for me ... so that's my workspace ... but that's just my workspace today ... tomorrow I could be sat where any of those other three are ... but make that mine for the twelve hours that I'm here ... so ... the ... I can come to work ... grab a few little bits that I need ... bring a headset and my few papers ... sit down and I've made it my own ... put my drinks out ... it's ... my workspace is here ... and actually in this small area when we looked at the long picture within comms ... this to me shows that despite everything else going on my sole focus is what I'm doing and yet there is people close enough that I can still have that interaction with others and I don't feel isolated whatsoever in that space ... it doesn't feel busy ... it doesn't feel cluttered ... it therefore doesn't feel sort of a stressful environment to work in ... these screens that we have ... they do look very dark when they're off ... however when they're on there's no glare to them ... because of the technology that we've recently had put in ... however the</i> | Positive picture Just the workspace for today – for twelve hours grab a few little bits that I need I've made it my own Don't feel isolated, doesn't feel busy, doesn't feel cluttered, doesn't feel stressful One screen has glare – the only issue for me "there is a bit of a unspoken rule possibly about the chairs ... who has what ... and if you're so lucky enough to get one of the nicer chairs then you grab it" "Come the end of my shift [...] there is no trace of ever being there" "Nobody chooses where they sit" "That's my bubble for twelve hours and I feel really comfortable in that bubble" | 3a: Positive associations to the representation of workplace in the workplace, despite the negative associations of other matrix participants. 3a: "grab a few little bits that I need – I've made it my own"; a sense of homeliness in relation to an allocated hot desk 3a: not felt to be an isolated, busy, cluttered or stressful environment 2a: "unspoken rule" about the chairs – who gets to sit on a comfortable chair 3a: "Come the end of my shift [...] there is no trace of ever being there" – evidence of occupation of that space is erased 2a: "Nobody chooses where they sit" – seating is allocated at the start of a shift 3a: "That's my bubble for twelve hours and I feel really comfortable in that bubble" – |

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| | <p><i>screen that does have the glare ... that's probably the only issue of that work area for me because of the amount of light coming in from the side ... in terms of the chair there is a bit of a unspoken rule possibly about the chairs ... who has what ... and if you're so lucky enough to get one of the nicer chairs then you grab it ... and that has made my comfortable station for the day ... but for me come the end of my shift ... the bits on the left-hand side ... all are picked up and there is no trace of ever being there ... along comes the next shift ... and so the hot-desking ... nobody chooses where they sit ... they just ... it ... its where becomes free and there's no kind of er ... you know in total contradiction to the last picture I guess ... nobody ... it ... it ... I ... I ... would never walk in and say "that's where I usually sit" ... I can be sat there ... like I say I could be sat where the mail is to the right tomorrow and it wouldn't affect how I perform my job ... I'd do anything ... and to me it's just a real ... that's ... that's my bubble for twelve hours and I feel really comfortable in that bubble</i></p> | | <p>positive association with being in a bubble</p> <p>3c: In the feedback meeting, the photographer stated that they had previously worked in a call centre, and that the conditions they encountered in this role were far superior – unlike some other participants in the matrix who held higher expectations</p> <p>3d: Despite the positive account of the photographer, I found the description of the impermanence of their environment and the lack of choice chilling, with resonances to my childhood encounter with a totalising organisational environment</p> <p>3d: I needed to review this section of the matrix several times, eventually concluding that the photographer was articulating a mature relationship to place and task, where expectations around ownership or personalization are limited to the time that they occupy the space</p> <p>3b: in contrast to the preceding accounts of the workplace, which expressed some measure of complaint or frustration, the account of the photographer of their workstation is positive, even though it is the least personalised</p> |
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| 3125 | Pauline: <i>and you're still more specific though ... these are the green ... the colour indicates the role that can sit there ... so yeah while you've got a choice of desks ... you couldn't sit on ... at somebody ... somebody who should sit on an orange desk couldn't sit on your desk and do their job</i> | photographer limited to spaces with a certain colour | 2a: colour-coding of desks demarking internal boundaries: "somebody who should sit on an orange desk couldn't sit on your desk and do their job" |
| 3126 | Dawn: <i>there is a very much a ... er ... er ...like you say you're guided to where the green desks are ... however the plus with that I feel is that you are always going to be ... you ... you will remove yourself from that isolation unless you choose to ... cos ... you're always gonna be sat with people ... however looking at the longer picture there is a ... the green desks ... there's the red desks and although everybody on the left hand side of that longer picture before is meant to be one shift as it were ... there is still much a 'them and us' ... however for me the er what I wanted this picture to show is that although there's very much that one ... that ... that one area that we spend all day in ... but actually it feels quite positive area for me to be in</i> | a 'them and us' culture – between people sitting at red desks and green desks | 2a: colour of desk denoting internal boundary and creating a 'them and us' culture - a non-physical but visible boundary |
| 3127 | [silence] | | |
| 3128 | Researcher: <i>thank you ... [pause] who would like to</i> | | |
| 3129 | Beth: <i>I'll go next</i> | | |
| 3130 | [photograph accessed] | | |
| 3131 | Photograph 3/4 | A view from inside the public reception on the ground floor. | 6c: my first encounter with the organisation. I initially tried to get into the main building without seeing the front desk, which is located to the left of the main entrance |

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| 3132 | [silence: 43 seconds] | | 1b: another long silence |
| 3133 | Suzanna: <i>I think from the photo you could be forgiven for thinking that that glass is directly in front of that window and that your ... that you're sitting ... sorry ... in front of that desk ... and that you're sitting at the desk looking out of a window ... but I know from experience that that's our main reception ... and it's quite open and exposed in front of that desk ... it's um directly open to members of the public that come in through that sliding glass door that's on the left</i> | Reception desk is open and exposed Open to the public | 6a: openness, exposure, potential risk |
| 3134 | Kate: <i>I think it looks very dark there at the back ... for all there is are there is ... all that glass at the front ... that back area is very dark under the desk</i> | Areas of darkness | |
| 3135 | Dawn: <i>it looks like a work in progress to me ... it looks like it's missing something</i> | Its missing something | |
| 3136 | Beth: <i>it's missing me</i> | It's missing me | 2b: photographer joins the matrix |
| 3137 | Dawn: <i>I can't think</i> | | 2e: Person and place felt to inseparable |
| 3138 | [laughter] | | |
| 3139 | Dawn: <i>I can't really think about what it is but it just feels like there's something missing</i> | | |
| 3140 | Pauline: <i>it's very modern-looking but it's just missed the point ... like the exterior is so very modern ... and then everything on the desk is cluttered and ... messy for the most ... yeah ... stuff on the floor behind ... like that little tub of wipes that you can see popping out [indiscernible]</i> | "it's very modern-looking but it's just missed the point ... like the exterior is so very modern ... and then everything on the desk is cluttered" Modern-looking and cluttered at the same time little tub of wipes | 4a: "its very modern-looking but it's just missed the point" - the juxtaposition and co-presence of the modern with everyday human clutter 4a: "little tub of wipes" – object description 4e: another example of paradox – the co-presence of modernity and the object |
| 3141 | [laughter] | | |

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| 3142 | Pauline: <i>it's just stark comparison to the ... the modern exterior isn't it?</i> | Stark comparison between exterior and interior | |
| 3143 | Suzanna: <i>"like space but without everything having a home"</i> | "like space but without everything having a home" – no place to store everyday objects | 4a: "like space but without everything having a home" - everyday objects 'unhoused' in the modern environment – as if they were not considered in the design |
| 3144 | [laughter] | | |
| 3145 | Pauline: <i>post-it notes stuck to the other side in the hope that people won't see them ... when they stand at the desk</i> | post-it notes | 4a: post-it notes – small and abject items |
| 3146 | Kate: <i>it's almost as if it was designed so that it would look very plain and very clean lines ... but ... that ... that hasn't um incorporated any practicality as to where you put the essential items</i> | The design concept hasn't included the need to place essential items | 4a: Workplace objects don't have a place in the design 4a: difference between the 'vision' and the 'realisation' of the design 4c: when I met with the interior designer, they regretted the client's choice of a lower spec for the reception area – their intention in the design was for a 'paperless' environment 4d: the question of what to do with 'stuff' in the workplace 4e: the 'stuff' of everyday working life overlooked in the commissioning and realisation of the design |
| 3147 | Pauline: <i>you've got a lower desk area and a higher desk area ... and the higher desk area looks like it's probably hiding lots of sticky notes and things ... to do lists</i> | Higher desk area probably hiding miscellaneous objects – for example sticky notes | 4a: "Probably hiding lots of sticky notes and things" 4d: question: what do the small objects represent in the matrix? |

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| | | | 2c: lower desk area designed for wheelchair access |
| 3148 | Kate: <i>it must be a relatively big desk area because that computer looks tiny on it</i> | Must be large desk as computer looks small | |
| 3149 | [silence] | | |
| 3150 | Suzanna: <i>you've ... you've gotta move quite a distance to the phone ... the computer ... and to see people as well ... you must be wheeling along that little corridor [laughs]</i> | "wheeling along that little corridor" | 5a: "Wheeling along that little corridor" – comedic image |
| 3151 | [silence] | | |
| 3152 | Dawn: <i>given where the seat is ... and the computer ... it feels ... feels ... quite exposed as well ... I don't go down there a lot but the angle of the picture would tell one there's more of the open area than the higher part</i> | Exposed Don't go there a lot | 6a: Feeling of being exposed – euphemism for "danger" |
| 3153 | Kate: <i>I don't know how safe you would feel if you were faced with a member of the public that was maybe not quite what you wanted</i> | Would feel unsafe if faced by a member of the public "that was maybe not quite what you wanted" | 6a: Would feel unsafe if faced by a member of the public "that was maybe not quite what you wanted" – euphemism for a member of the public being abusive or violent |
| 3154 | [silence] | | 6b: sense of matrix participants coming together and focusing on a known danger; in the 'silence' a sense of matrix participants being representative of a wider police 'family' 6c. was shown by my sponsor the 'roll of honour' and garden of remembrance for fallen colleagues, re-located to new headquarters |
| 3155 | Suzanna: <i>given that the rest of the building seems to have everybody in big teams so they feel like they've got somebody</i> | Rest of building has big teams – this is isolated | 6a: Very isolated location in reception |

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| | <i>beside them ... this looks very isolated</i> | | |
| 3156 | <i>Dawn: possibly in contrast to the other areas as well ... its very white ... there's ... there's just white and then there's just black ... there's no kind of colour to anywhere ... in there</i> | Just black and white – no colour | |
| 3157 | <i>Suzanna: and there's the very low-tech sign-in register [laughing] of ... 'do it by hand'</i> | Visitors are asked to sign a "low tech" register – no electronic booking-in process | 4a: Visitors' book in manually – "do it by hand" |
| 3158 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3159 | <i>Trevor: the angle that it's taken at it's very focused on where the action's gonna be ... isn't it ... because you're gonna have somebody coming in at that angle [indiscernible] rather than having the picture taken at one hundred and eighty degrees it would have shown you the glass vista across ... and that's actually saying "look we're here ... we're waiting for you to come in ... we're expecting something"</i> | The angle of the photograph focused on "where the action's gonna be" "look we're here ... we're waiting for you to come in ... we're expecting something" Expectation of people coming in and something happening | 6a: "Where the action's gonna be" – where some form of confrontation is likely to take place 6a: "we're waiting for you to come in ... we're expecting something" – the expectation of a serious incident |
| 3160 | <i>Kate: it feels like working here would be busy ... you know there's enough on the table ... on the desk to indicate busyness ... possibly so busy that they haven't been able to finish what they're doing ... like that parcel ... should it be put away? ... there's lots of little things all the desk ... you just wonder whether halfway through doing each of those things ... and while people are walking in so they can't do it</i> | Working here would be busy busyness Unfinished work on desk | 4a: "busyness" 4a: multi-tasking and half-completed tasks |
| 3161 | <i>Pauline: I don't know what that shadow is to the left either ... you know I know there's the wipes packet</i> | Shadow Wipes-packet | 6a: "shadow" linked to "wipes packet" 6d: indicators of danger and the object combined in the image of bin |
| 3162 | <i>Beth it's a bin</i> | it's a bin | |

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| 3163 | Pauline [at same time]: <i>a bin!</i> | A bin! | 4a: "a bin!" – abject image |
| 3164 | Beth: <i>it's like somebody crouching down ... isn't it?</i> | "it's like somebody crouching down ... isn't it?" bin looks like s shadow - somebody crouching down | 6a: implicit danger in the environment – association that there could be someone crouching down in the photograph 6a: the bin looks like it could be a person crouching down 6e: Indicators of danger and the abject combined 6e: a genuine sense of risk in the physical environment |
| 3165 | Pauline: <i>it's quite close for a bin isn't it ... Is it a lidded bin?</i> | | |
| 3166 | Beth: <i>yeah ... because we can't have it in reception out on the other side</i> | | |
| 3167 | Pauline: <i>is that in case it gets thrown at you?</i> | Risk of bin being thrown at receptionist – has to be kept behind the desk | |
| 3168 | Beth: <i>yeah ... mmmm</i> | | |
| 3169 | Voices together: <i>in case things get put in ... deposited</i> | Things getting deposited | 6a: things getting deposited euphemism for knives and firearms |
| 3170 | Researcher: <i>I see the light coming from two sources ... but also a lot of shadow</i> | Light from two sources plus a lot of shadow | 1b: researcher's interpretation overlooked 5a: light and shadow combined |
| 3171 | Kate: <i>does the empty chair depict that there's not always somebody available to sit there to as well to welcome people into the building?</i> | Empty chair representing someone is not always there to welcome visitors | |
| 3172 | Dawn: <i>it looks very open to the outside ... that you could ... you've got a few ... you can see even just from a small part that you can see right out ... and that you've got eyes for everything that's coming towards the building</i> | Open to the outside you've got 'eyes for everything that's coming towards the building | 6a: "eyes for everything" required in this location |

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| 3173 | Suzanna: <i>again ... now it's like the picture before ... there's ... there's ... nothing private about that in there? it's like living in a goldfish bowl</i> | Nothing private – like living in a goldfish bowl | 2a: no privacy – “like living in a goldfish bowl” |
| 3174 | Kate: <i>you definitely couldn't personalise that space</i> | Couldn't personalise | 3a: no capacity to personalise |
| 3175 | [silence] | | |
| 3176 | Researcher: <i>so what are Beth's perspectives?</i> | | |
| 3177 | Beth: <i>I think this represents the absolute frustrations of main reception ... it should be an area that is clean ... bright ... welcoming ... and instead its cluttered ... when I went down and took that photo a courier driver had just left that ... hadn't pressed the bell to tell anybody there was a parcel ... so that parcel could go missing because there's no security ... strangely you have actually got ... um its an obstructed view you've got cos if you've got people in front of you ... you can't see out to see what's happening outside ... when people are coming in ... because we haven't got anything on that wall where the security doors are ... you can't see if people have gone beyond reception ... they think they're going to the glass doors to get in ... they don't think to come in here all the time ... and we do have instances where staff let them in without having been signed in and checked ... um ... its a very low desk ... you do feel quite threatened at times ... and it's a conscious decision that that desk was built that way I believe ... um it might get rectified in that we've had a couple of</i> | <p>Frustrations</p> <p>Should be clean, bright, welcoming – but instead is cluttered</p> <p>No security</p> <p>Obstructed view – can't see outside</p> <p>People go beyond reception to try to get in building</p> <p>Low desk – feel threatened at times</p> <p>“we've had a couple of near misses recently” – moments of danger when people have visited the reception</p> <p>So much going on – it's always cluttered</p> <p>Doesn't look professional</p> <p>Uncomfortable: bang knees on desk and a pole where you would want to sit</p> <p>Awful light and cold in winter</p> | <p>5a: frustration with the workplace</p> <p>5a: objects deposited on reception without notice or explanation</p> <p>5a: frustration at the contrast between the vision for the reception space and its realization</p> <p>6a: “no security”</p> <p>5a: “poor visibility”</p> <p>5a: people don't use the reception, can't see it's there</p> <p>6a: low desk means staff feel threatened in reception</p> <p>6a: risk of danger - “we've had a couple of near misses recently”</p> <p>4a: cluttered and unprofessional looking space</p> <p>6a: physical discomfort in the workplace - bang knees on desk and a pole where you would want to sit</p> <p>6a: “awful” light, and cold in winter</p> <p>5c: in feedback meeting, the assistant</p> |

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| | <p><i>near misses recently that have had to be flagged up ... so we might end up with glass screens ... um ... but you do feel quite low-down ... um ... most people tend to stand at the lower point rather than the raised bit of the desks ... and also members of the public ... um its always very cluttered because there's just so much going on out there and it just doesn't look professional most of the time ... and it's the staff find it quite frustrating ... you bang your knees on the desk ... there's a pole which you can't actually see but by that ... right where we ... you would want to sit ... there's a pole which you keep knocking ... um ... its very ... the light in there can be awful sometimes ... and in the winter it is so cold you sit with your coats on ... when the doors are opening</i></p> | | <p>chief officer expressed their sense of pride that the front desk was open to the public and not shielded</p> <p>5c: in first visit to the building, I couldn't tell where the reception was</p> <p>5b. a litany of discomfort and frustration with the workplace</p> <p>5e. a strong sense that the experiences of discomfort and dysfunction in the workplace carry cultural weight – a sense of difficult experiences not being heard</p> |
| 3178 | [silence] | | 5b. sense of having experienced a highly disciplined presentation of the difficulties experienced in relation to the reception, without disagreement or dispute |
| 3179 | <p>Researcher: <i>thank you ... I'm sure we can talk some more in the ... in the next series about some of these themes</i></p> | | |
| 3180 | [silence] | | |
| 3181 | <p>Researcher: <i>so who next?</i></p> | | |
| 3182 | <p>Suzanna: <i>I think I'm going to go next</i></p> | | |
| 3183 | [photograph accessed] | | |
| 3184 | Photograph 3/5 | <p>A view of the office space on the second floor. Cardboard box for valuable items in transit and a tray with</p> | |

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| | | personal objects and files have been placed on top of a bank of filing cabinets. | |
| 3185 | <i>[silence: 51 seconds]</i> | | 1a: long silence – 51 seconds |
| 3186 | <i>Kate: it looks really large area with lots of desks ... quite imposing</i> | Large, imposing area | 1b. long silence of 51 seconds followed with lucid and engaged discussion in matrix |
| 3187 | <i>Dawn: it looks quite uninviting ... there's a lot of people put into a space and it's very sort of structured lines of people ... like a call centre kind of setting</i> | structured lines, like a call centre | 2a: Structured lines of people, like a call centre |
| 3188 | <i>Pauline: I think part of it reminded me of a battery farm for chickens</i> | "a battery farm for chickens" | 2a: "a battery farm of chickens"; likening the workplace to a battery farm, an inhumane place |
| 3189 | <i>[laughter]</i> | | 2b. energy and enjoyment in matrix in the discussion of this photograph of the 'battery farm' |
| 3190 | <i>Pauline: they're all in their little pens ... they're all in lines ... it's dark ... there's no natural lights ... they've got the blinds down ... it made me feel sorry for the poor little chickens</i> | In lines, dark, no natural lights, blinds down "it made me sorry for the poor little chickens" | 5a: "they're all in their little pens ... they're all in lines ... it's dark ... there's no natural lights ... they've got the blinds down ... it made me feel sorry for the poor little chickens" 5a: Warehousing of workers - analogous to chickens in a battery farm 5a: "feel sorry" for the staff who work in this environment |
| 3191 | <i>Kate: the light's awful isn't it ... you got this little chink of light to the left ... that you think that there's your ray of hope that you will escape</i> | the light's awful you got this little chink of light to the left ... that you think that there's your ray of hope that you will escape | 5a: "the light's awful" 5a: Dream of escape to the outside - "you got this little chink of light to the left ... that you think that there's your ray of hope that you will escape" |
| 3192 | <i>[laughter]</i> | | |
| 3193 | <i>Kate: very regimental ... isn't it</i> | very regimental | 5a: "very regimental" |

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| 3194 | Pauline: <i>you've got your personal little locker spaces to the front haven't you ... little postie slots</i> | Individual storage spaces – “postie slots” | 5a: Sense of ridicule in the working conditions described – personal locker spaces are described as “little postie slots” |
| 3195 | Beth: <i>which seem tiny in comparison to the huge vastness of the floor ... you've got that ... this much personal space</i> | | 5a: “little postie slots” placed in contrast to the “huge vastness of the floor” – indicative of both an absurd and an irrequisite arrangement of space |
| 3196 | Kate: <i>yet there's still a cardboard box on the top</i> | Imposing and regimented office and a cardboard box | 4a: absurd juxtaposition of cardboard box within imposing office 4d. an egg box represents the end of the line at a battery farm |
| 3197 | [laughter] | | |
| 3198 | Kate: <i>and you're like “why ... why have we got a cardboard box on the top?” ... it's all battered and bruised</i> | Why is the cardboard box there? | 4a: “battered and bruised” cardboard box – an abject, absurd, disconsolate image |
| 3199 | Pauline: <i>is it a VIT box?</i> | | |
| 3200 | [laughter] | | |
| 3201 | Kate: <i>so ... with that modern technology, we've got a cardboard box</i> | “so, with that modern technology, we've got a cardboard box” | 4a: “so, with that modern technology, we've got a cardboard box”; Juxtaposition/co-presence of the digital with the abject 5a: Criticism of the organisation for allowing this co-presence of the digital and the abjectly physical – as if the high tech doesn't work properly and needs propping up with mundane physical objects such as cardboard boxes |
| 3202 | Pauline: <i>and some other random things to the side of it ... I mean should they be there? ... do they belong to somebody? ... they're just left</i> | random things just left | 4a: “random things”, “do they belong to somebody”, “they're just left” |
| 3203 | Kate: <i>it reminds me of the train station almost ... so</i> | like a train station | 2a: like they're waiting for a train |

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| | <i>you ... you said a battery farm ... or it's like they're waiting for a train or something</i> | like they're waiting for a train | |
| 3204 | [silence] | | |
| 3205 | <i>Dawn: again and it's got that kind of divide that ... from the previous sort of long shot ... you can see in the middle it's sectioned off and everybody else is doing the same again over that side</i> | Two separate sides, sectioned off | |
| 3206 | <i>Kate: yeah, it looks like there might even be lockers dividing them ... and it really might be a wall between them</i> | Lockers forming a wall and dividing the two sections | 2a: physical boundary constructed by lockers |
| 3207 | <i>Dawn: but it doesn't look ... although it looks like there's a divide ... it ... again it's a total opposite for the other side where there is that big overwhelming walk ... you can't win [laughs] ... the clock at the end it's like ... it's like they're sat on an exam or something</i> | Contrast between this divide and the photograph with "that big overwhelming walk" "you can't win" Clock – setting an exam | 2a: Contrast between this divide and the photograph with "that big overwhelming walk" – 2a: "you can't win" because you either have the 'catwalk' or the 'battery farm'; 2a: Clock associated with being in an exam |
| 3208 | [laughter] | | |
| 3209 | <i>Dawn: you have until five o'clock and then you can go</i> | | |
| 3210 | [laughter] | | |
| 3211 | [silence] | | |
| 3212 | <i>Kate: it seems in this bit that there's a lot going on above as well ... those ... those lights are really regimented ... and the ones on the other side ... there's ... there's lots of them ... but it's just not light enough</i> | Lights are regimented – but not light enough | 5a: 'regimented' lines of lights, "but its just not light enough" that regimentation and the exercise of command and control still produce an irrequisite outcome for staff |
| 3213 | Voice: <i>mmm</i> | | |
| 3214 | <i>Dawn: and all the blinds are down</i> | all the blinds are down | 5a: "all the blinds are down" 5a: darkness and light 1e: in the absence of open dialogue about actual and concrete organisational |

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| | | | experience, 'hidden' meaning is projected onto abstract concepts such as darkness/light; heat/warmth |
| 3215 | Beth: <i>because there must be glare ... then you've got bits of paper stuck on the boards as well ... little green notes on there ... stuck and yet there's nobody sitting at that desk ... [pause] ... so how long are they there for?</i> | "How long are they there for" | 5a: paradoxical discomfort - blinds are down because of the glare but the electric lighting is not bright enough 5c: was told in my initial meeting that the air conditioning system for the building does not work as people open the windows to let in fresh air |
| 3216 | Pauline: <i>it looks light at the end doesn't it with all the windows ... it's almost like a ... a light at the end of the tunnel type of thing</i> | "a light at the end of the tunnel type of thing" | 5a: Yearning for escape from the workplace |
| 3217 | [giggles] | | |
| 3218 | [silence] | | |
| 3219 | Kate: <i>I think it's my eyes ... but it looks like there's somebody there with a sign like saying "homeless - please feed me" or something on the right-hand side</i> | Looks like someone with a sign saying "homeless, please feed me" | 5a: image of homelessness, or being 'unhoused' |
| 3220 | [laughter] | | |
| 3221 | Kate: <i>I don't know what it is ... [cats?]</i> | | |
| 3222 | Pauline: <i>posts look more imposing on this one ... I haven't noticed them in any of the others ... but the the round ... the big red round</i> | posts look imposing | |
| 3223 | Beth: <i>there's a lot of them in here isn't there</i> | | |
| 3224 | Pauline: <i>yeah</i> | | |
| 3225 | Dawn: <i>I think from what you can see though ... I think it looks quite a clean building ... it doesn't look ... I mean I know it is quite a new building ... but ... doesn't look worn ... it doesn't look tired ... just</i> | a clean building, quite a new building, doesn't look worn, doesn't look tired | 2a: "I think it looks quite a clean building ... it doesn't look ... I mean I know it is quite a new building ... but ... doesn't look worn ... it doesn't look tired ... just looks a busy |

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| | <i>looks a busy building ... I don't think I have other thoughts</i> | | building ... I don't think I have other thoughts" 2c: my sponsor spoke of the old headquarters – lots of rooms and heavy wooden tables and paneling |
| 3226 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3227 | Researcher: <i>it's a long way to the light</i> | | |
| 3228 | Beth: <i>I thought you were going to say "it's a long way to the loo!"</i> | a long way to the loo! | 3b: interesting exchange: "I thought you were going to say 'it's a long way to the loo'" informally mocking of the researcher, but also indicative of a serious point around the requisite comfort of in the workplace; contrast with comment on line 3083 about 'nomad' worker having a locker in the toilets where they keep their things. |
| 3229 | <i>[laughter]</i> | | |
| 3230 | <i>I just don't know where the loo is over there</i> | Don't know where the loo is over there | |
| 3231 | Researcher: <i>and what are Suzanna's thoughts?</i> | | |
| 3232 | <i>Suzanna: I took the photo to try and incorporate as many of the er things that impact on me and my colleagues er on a day-to-day basis ... I tried to incorporate the glass screen on the left-hand side which um goes onto the atrium ... because despite there being ... twelve desks that are supposedly hot desk seats ... and as you've already mentioned one of them ... well particularly the top two are ones always used by an inspector and the other one is specifically for somebody that works within custody which is why they've got the um ...</i> | Things that impact day on a day-to-day basis Twelve desks supposedly hot desks – but two allocated People won't work/sit next to the atrium Hot desks unusable – as close to atrium Thoroughfare to the executive suite is also a storage area for files – a busy thoroughfare Draws kept open and spend day closing them | 5a: Photograph represents/incorporates "things that impact on me and my colleagues on a day-to-day basis 5a: desks unuseable as facing onto atrium – people "have issues" and won't use them 2a: Workplace is both a busy thoroughfare and storage area - a space used for multiple purposes |

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| | <p><i>the tags there ... numerous people won't sit next to the glass onto the atrium because they've got issues with being that close to the atrium ... so that renders a number of hot desks ... supposed hot desks unusual ... unusable ... on the other side of things um again I wanted to move the photo across ... but I couldn't to try and accurately reflect the ... the corridor that is just alongside that um ... if you mention like the wall of um of lockers there ... but I also wanted to get the blinds in as well ... so you can't quite see ... but that is actually the thoroughfare to the exec ... well it's between HR and exec ... so it's quite a busy thoroughfare and that's also a storage area for the files that we use all day every day ... so those drawers that are on the thoroughfare are wide um ... like filing cabinets and they're often left ajar or wide-open ... I spent all of my time when I go backwards and forwards shutting them ... um ... it's quite a narrow thoroughfare unlike the one that we saw in um comms ... we don't have quite a um catwalk</i></p> | <p>A narrow thoroughfare – not quite a “catwalk”</p> | |
| 3233 | [laughter] | | |
| 3234 | <p><i>Suzanna: but um ... even on taking the photos ... when I walked back to come back to this room ... I ended up in amongst a group that were getting a tour around headquarters ... and the person at the front of the group went to speak to the rest of the group and couldn't cos I was in the middle ... and I had to say to the rest of them “do you want me to</i></p> | <p>Ended up in a group getting a tour</p> <p>A very noisy environment</p> <p>Difficult to concentrate</p> <p>We do refer to it as the battery farm</p> <p>Feeling regimented</p> | <p>5a: noise in the open plan space making it difficult to concentrate</p> <p>5a: “we do refer to it as the battery farm” – the naming of a part of the workplace associated with confinement and crowding</p> <p>5a: feeling ‘very regimented’</p> |

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| | <p><i>relay the rest of that information to the back of the group?" ... um ... it's a very er noisy environment which obviously you can't um depict on a photo ... but it's a difficult area to concentrate in ... and we do refer to it as 'the battery farm' as somebody else has already alluded to ... because sometimes you just feel like you're sitting there surrounded by noise in your little er workspace ... and feeling very regimented ... the issue to do with the light is a constant source of some people want it brighter ... some people want it darker ... and there's no way of isolating any one particular area ... so some people will want it dark ... some want it light ... and we can't get a happy medium ... it's on the top floor so it is quite hot ... and when I was walking back along here again somebody said to me "my, it's warm up here"</i></p> | <p>Conflict around lighting – can't get a happy medium</p> <p>Top floor – quite hot</p> | <p>5a: conflict in office around the use of lighting; "we can't get a happy medium"</p> |
| 3235 | <p>Kate: <i>that was me</i></p> | | |
| 3236 | <p>Suzanna: <i>oh ... that's one of the other issues ... so the blinds come down not just because of the um ... the light ... but people complain about the ... the temperature on the top floor ... and the smells come up from the atrium as well ... which again you can't depict in a photo ... I took my tray out of my locker to put on there for the photograph because that's what I'm supposed to work with every day ... that's where I'm supposed to keep everything that I'm gonna need for my entire day ... so in order to fit with the working ... with the hot desk policy ... everything that I need's</i></p> | <p>People complain about the light and the temperature</p> <p>Smells come up from the atrium</p> <p>"I took my tray out of my locker to put on there for the photograph because that's what I'm supposed to work with every day"</p> <p>Tray is inadequate for storing requirements for work during a day</p> <p>Cardboard box a permanent fixture – VIT means "valuables in transit"</p> | <p>5a: Discomfort – heat and light</p> <p>3a: Porosity/intrusion between work and the need to eat</p> <p>5a: the storage tray provided is inadequate/irrequisite for storage requirements</p> <p>4a: Paradox of 'valuables in transit' being left in a cardboard box</p> <p>5b: mood of pathos in the matrix: of shared sadness, tenderness,</p> |

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| | <i>supposed to be able to fit in there ... um ... the ... that goes into the locker which is at the front here ... which is like [Tetrus?] in my case ... and um the VIT box ... that's a permanent fixture on the top there ... that's our valuables in transit</i> | | pity in the experience of the workplace 5e: Q: why would a facilities policy provide inadequate personal storage space? |
| 3237 | <i>[laughter]</i> | | |
| 3238 | <i>Suzanna: that sit in there for people to rake through to pick out anything that might be theirs that's been sent up to headquarters for them ... there can be things that sit in there for days ... or if somebody is um on annual leave ... weeks ... er</i> | | |
| 3239 | <i>Kate: how can you have a 'valuables in transit' box that just stuff left in it? ... it's not 'valuables' is it?</i> | It's not "valuables" is it | 5a: another 'paradox' – the valuables in transit box renders the valuables un-valuable |
| 3240 | <i>[laughter]</i> | | |
| 3241 | <i>Suzanna: um and in there ... we've got a number of different departments er at different areas of the department ... um performing different functions ... and the noise levels can get quite high</i> | Different departments performing different functions The noise can get high | 2a: Different departments performing different functions in a large space – the noise can get high |
| 3242 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3243 | <i>Suzanna: I tried to show as much of that in the photo as I could</i> | | |
| 3244 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3245 | <i>Researcher: thank you</i> | | |
| 3246 | <i>Suzanna: and I've put my tray away</i> | | |
| 3247 | <i>[laughter]</i> | | |
| 3248 | <i>[photograph accessed]</i> | | |
| 3249 | Photograph | the view of a 'hot-desk' situated on the first floor. | |
| 3250 | <i>Suzanna: its dark in here isn't it</i> | | |
| 3251 | <i>Trevor: it is</i> | | |
| 3252 | <i>Beth: [to researcher]: do you want to turn the light on</i> | | |
| 3253 | <i>Researcher: er ... keep it like it is for the moment ... when the matrix is over</i> | | 5b: asked if the room was too dark and whether we should |

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| | <i>we can turn everything back on</i> | | turn the lights on – declined offer as felt it important to maintain the staging conditions throughout |
| 3254 | Dawn: <i>red for danger</i> | “red for danger” | 2a: The danger of close proximity to senior staff 2c: This particular area is situated next to the Executive suite |
| 3255 | <i>[long silence]</i> | | |
| 3256 | Dawn: <i>I’m looking at this and kind of comparing to the other pictures ... and they kinda show you could be anywhere in the building and it makes no difference as to what your kind of desk area ... area looks like ... it doesn’t identify itself to be a particular department or role</i> | Could be anywhere in the building – no indication of a particular department or role | 2c: understand that the photograph was taken by someone who holds a portfolio of roles 2d: “could be anywhere in the building” – indicative of a ‘non-place’ |
| 3257 | Pauline: <i>there’s a lot of stuff out on the desk but it’s tidy ... it doesn’t ... it doesn’t ... it’s not too busy or messy or confused like some of the other photos are ... it looks like there’s enough room for everything this person needs</i> | Lot of stuff on desk, but tidy Enough room for everything this person needs | 3a: Requisite space for the needs of the person using the space |
| 3258 | Kate: <i>I think that the stick being on there is quite telling in that where do you put that? ... you haven’t got anywhere to put any special ... You you’d have to lie it on the floor ... or put it on your chair ... or lie it on the desk ... or whatever you’d put that</i> | where do you put a walking stick? | 5a: space potentially irrequisite as nowhere to put the walking stick |
| 3259 | Dawn: <i>the desk behind I ... I don’t ... I can’t tell properly but it looks like it kinda breaks away from that sort of ‘everyone in a line’ ... and that seems to be ... I can’t tell properly whether it’s on a side or whether it’s a more open ... er I’m not sure ... but it</i> | Not everyone in a line | |

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| | <i>kinda breaks away from that</i> | | |
| 3260 | Pauline: <i>it isn't quite as regimented ... does it ... as the others</i> | Isn't quite as regimented | 2a: another use of term 'regimented' as a descriptor |
| 3261 | Dawn: <i>bit more relaxed</i> | | 1b: the matrix participant was an older uniformed police constable who was clearly very well respected by colleagues, and carried significant personal status and authority (despite his low rank) |
| 3262 | Suzanna: <i>it looks very clean ... it looks very modern ... organised</i> | Clean, modern, organised | 3a: the personal workstation described as "very clean [...] modern ... organised" |
| 3263 | Beth: <i>the light levels look quite consistent</i> | Consistent light | 3a: consistent light levels 3e: immediate environment of respected colleague described in positive terms – as if in some way they make it so by their presence |
| 3264 | [<i>silence: 26 seconds</i>] | | 1b: a long silence - no immediate sense of why this was so long. As if there was thought in the matrix which for some reason was withheld |
| 3265 | Researcher: <i>I'm struck by the redness</i> | | 1b: again, the comment I make in the matrix is not responded to |
| 3266 | Pauline: <i>mmm ... I think it's very bright in there isn't it</i> | Very bright | 5a: brightness |
| 3267 | Suzanna: <i>I think the dual screens as well ... is a theme that ... that seems to follow a lot of areas ... whether that's the best way of working I don't know ... some have got three screens ... in modern day do ... do you actually need multiple screens? ... should there not be more of a wrap-</i> | Dual screens Should there be a 'wrap around' screen? | 2a: dual and triple screens - a theme in a lot of areas 5a: imagining a different configuration of IT equipment |

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| | <i>around screen? ... what it would be</i> | | |
| 3268 | <i>Dawn: I think the good thing with where they are though ... it gives you the ability to move them and put them as you wish ... so some people might like them back ... up ... down ... you've got that flexibility with your desk to make it how you want it quite quick ... it doesn't take a lot to move things about</i> | Flexibility to move/adjust screens as you wish | 3a: the capacity to adjust a workstation for personal comfort |
| 3269 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3270 | <i>Suzanna: if we tried to look at why there's two screens ... I mean ... we are trying to work digitally more and more ... but the paper on the desk shows that in spite of trying to become more and more paperless, there's a necessity to have various references that are ... are physical documents</i> | <p>"in spite of trying to become more and more paperless, there's a necessity to have various references that [...] are physical documents"</p> <p>Physical documents present – as well as digital technology</p> | <p>4a: the necessity to have physical documents, even in a digital environment</p> <p>4c: note that the Assistant Chief Officer, on viewing the photograph said "I don't think we'll get to the paperless malarkey" – official recognition that the paper-based and non-digital is an essential part of policing</p> <p>4d: association - the organisational discourse/ fantasy of the 'paperless office'</p> |
| 3271 | <i>Beth: there's the plug points on the top as well that show what the expectation is ... you would plug into them</i> | | |
| 3272 | <i>[silence]</i> | | |
| 3273 | <i>[indiscernible comment]</i> | | |
| 3274 | <i>Researcher: the stick feels very important</i> | | |
| 3275 | <i>[silence: 60 seconds]</i> | | 1b: no response and 60 second silence following my comment about the stick. I wonder if the meaning of the stick actually was important, but also 'unspeakable' in the matrix |

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| | | | 6c: How was the injury requiring the stick sustained; association to being shown the 'roll of honour' and memorial garden at the headquarters by my sponsor |
| 3276 | Researcher: <i>so what's Trevor's associations?</i> | | |
| 3277 | Trevor: <i>well ... the stick is actually inadvertent ... er ... it's just going back to how I take pictures ... it's not meant to be there ... normally it's tucked in the right-hand corner ... I've got a bag I bring in and the stick just falls on top of that ... it sort of doesn't actually get in anybody's way ... er it's not generally there ... er ... I took a number of pictures of the workstation but also of meeting rooms because that's kind of like my experiences of this building ... I'm in one of these rooms having a meeting ... or I'm sat there ... and I chose that one because ... mostly I'm sat there ... so my experience of this building is on that chair ... those two screens on ... not blank ... working on different pieces of work which generally require work across the two screens ... quite a lot of paperwork on the desk because yeah cos the nature of the other roles I have ... you know ... organisationally that I do have some paperwork kicking about ... um ... it also means I'm actually not terribly good with new technology ... I'm still quite fond of paper ... I know we're not supposed to be ... but it's just age, I think</i> | Stick is inadvertent – not meant to be there Experience of this building is of workstations and meeting rooms Working on different pieces of work A lot of paperwork on desk I'm actually not terribly good with new technology ... I'm still quite fond of paper ... I know we're not supposed to be ... but it's just age, I think | 1b: participant countering my interpretations – “the stick is actually inadvertent” 2a: working on different pieces of work – portfolio role 4a: “I'm actually not terribly good with new technology ... I'm still quite fond of paper ... I know we're not supposed to be ... but it's just age, I think” - Enduring attachment to paper-based working, even though this is not welcomed within the facilities culture; age and preference in relation to technology |
| 3278 | Beth: <i>eyesight sometimes</i> | | |
| 3279 | Trevor: <i>sorry?</i> | | |

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| 3280 | Beth: <i>eyesight, I find sometimes</i> | | |
| 3281 | Trevor: <i>well, there's that as well ... yeah ... they are quite glary ... and it can be quite noisy ... er cos er I'm on the edge ... there's it is ... there's ... there's ... the catwalk goes down the side and ... the building's quite echoey I find ... so if someone's having a good time in comms ... and they're laughing ... someone's telling a funny story ... the ... the sound of that comes straight across to us on the other side of the building ... that makes a difference ... it's just interesting ... the building's acoustics are like that ... it doesn't actually affect me at all because ... I tend to be able to just switch off ... look at the screens and ... If it gets really quite tricky I just think the hearing aids out</i> | glary noisy "if someone's having a good time in comms ... and they're laughing ... someone's telling a funny story ... the ... the sound of that comes straight across to us on the other side of the building" "the building's acoustics are like that" Take hearing aids out if workplace gets too noisy | 1b: sense of an organisational 'family' in exchanges involving Trevor; a respected, older colleague who elicits kind and familial responses 2a: Porosity of sound and glare in open plan office 2a: "someone's having a good time in comms" - euphemism for being distracted by someone who doesn't do a proper job? 2a: "the building's acoustics are like that" 2a: ability to silence noise in workplace by taking hearing aids out |
| 3282 | [laughter] | | |
| 3283 | Trevor: <i>it doesn't affect me or disturb me at all ... but that is ... I suppose that's ... that picture there is how I generally relate this organisation</i> | "that picture there is how I generally relate this organisation" | 1a: "that picture there is how I generally relate this organisation" |
| 3284 | Kate: <i>isn't it interesting that we all put technology and the work areas ... isn't it interesting that we've all got the work areas in the buildings ... and then in touch rather than the colleagues and other people ... the social sort of interaction</i> | "isn't it interesting that we've all got the work areas in the buildings ... and then in touch rather than the colleagues and other people ... the social sort of interaction" | 1a: focus on the technology and space rather than individuals: "isn't it interesting that we've all got the work areas in the buildings ... and then in touch rather than the colleagues and other people ... the social sort of interaction" |
| 3285 | Trevor: <i>I tried to avoid putting anyone in to be honest ... but do you know actually our ... our ... I don't know ... but our quadrant of the building is actually often quite empty ... cos quite a lot of</i> | avoided putting people in the photograph space is often empty a lot of senior officers use the space when | 2a: space utilized by senior staff is often empty - implicit criticism of senior staff for not being seen at allocated workspaces" |

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| | <i>computers behind us which are used by senior officers and staff when they come in ... they're not always in ... so we tend to be quite isolated in some ways ... although it's quite useful cos ... in my last experience ... the new technology in this place ... but ... we frequently find that those screens don't work ... so we are scrambling around trying to find another ... not ... not ... that's the IO4 system ... we are trying to go to an IO3 computer cos that actually works ... it closes down quite a lot of the time</i> | they come in – they're not always in frequent IT failures | |
| 3286 | <i>Suzanna: well you're on the right floor with information technology right at the end</i> | | |
| 3287 | <i>[laughter]</i> | | |
| 3288 | <i>Trevor: I only know that because it fails so much ... and I ring IT and they say that's the IO4 machines you know</i> | | |
| 3289 | <i>Suzanna: you ring them ... even though you're on the floor</i> | | 2a: ring IT even though on the same floor |
| 3290 | <i>[laughter]</i> | | |
| 3291 | <i>Trevor: well actually I'm lucky ... I ... I ... I come here very early and I'm on the same aisle as them so ... I know you're not supposed to ... but I grab em ... it could be like half past seven [indiscernible] sort it out for me</i> | Grab IT department when there is a problem – know you're not supposed to | 2a: physical proximity to IT helps solve problems when they occur – even though you're not supposed to talk to them |
| 3292 | <i>Researcher: I'm going to close the matrix.</i> | | |