3edges

What matters to people about workspace?
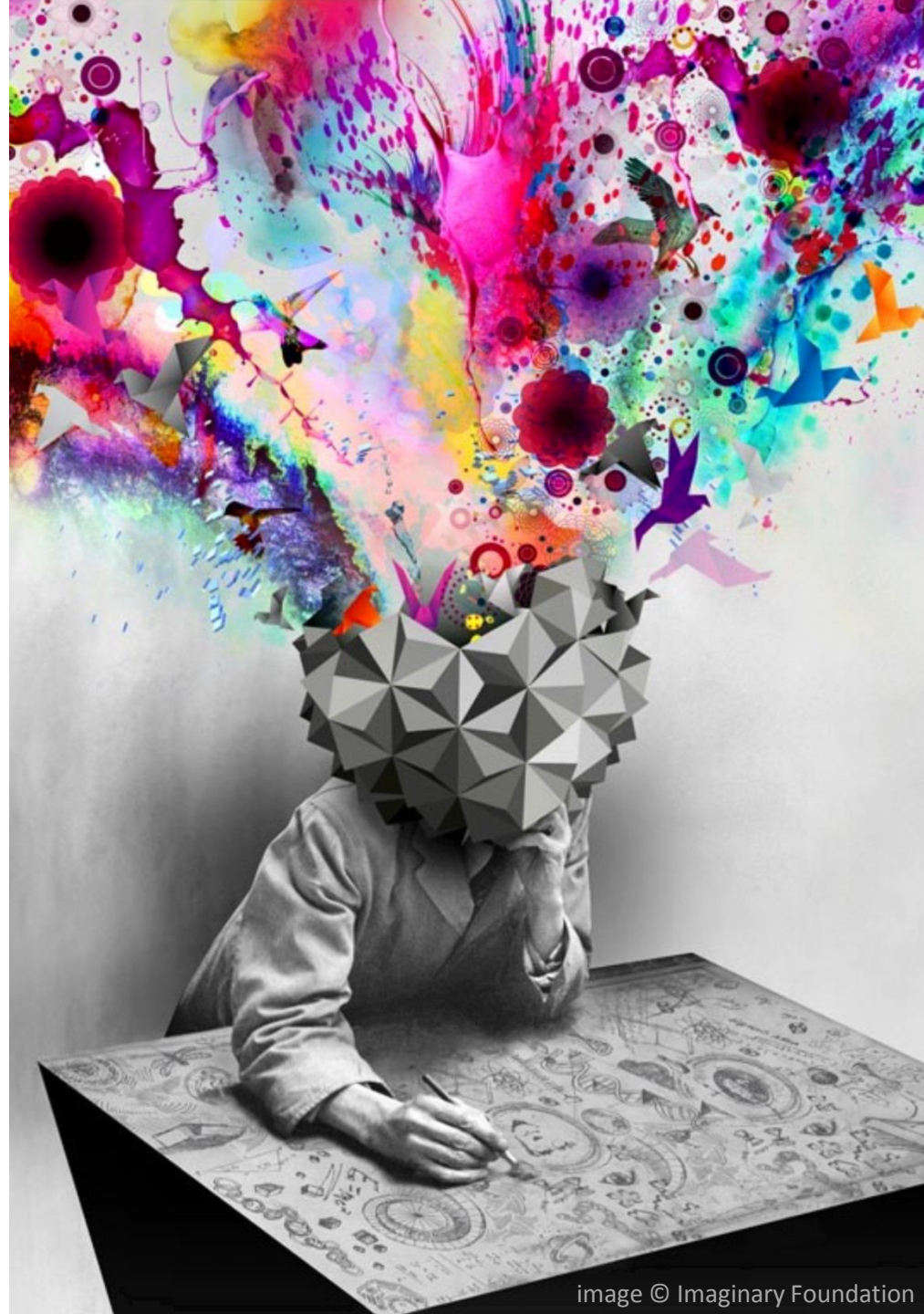
@ianellison
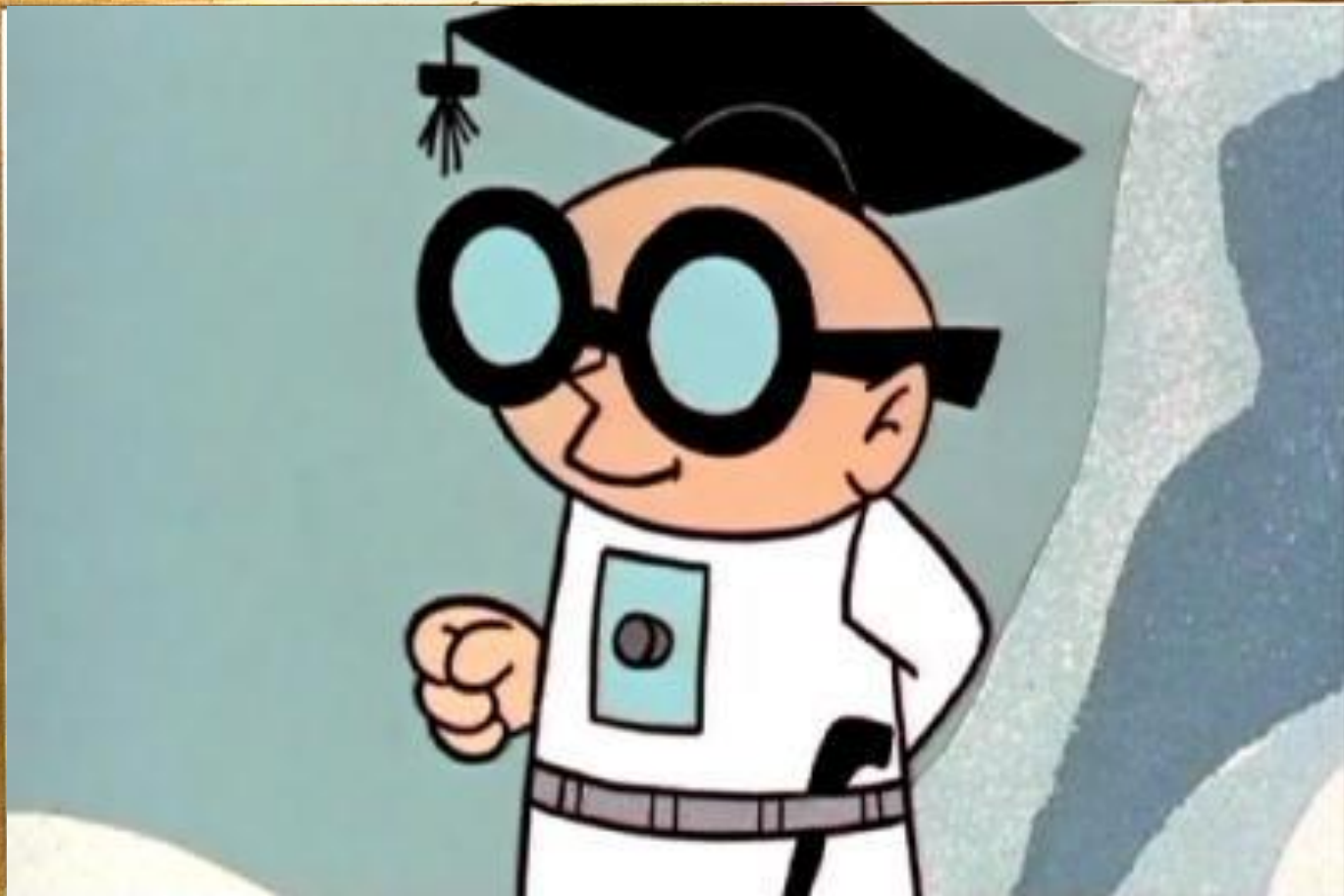
26 January 2017

Worth a listen...?!

Natural scientist | social scientist | sociologist

Accidental FM for ≈ 10 years | in house/outsourced

Thought leader| researcher | facilitator | enabler

3edges

Loughborough University

Sheffield Hallam University

3edges

- **Organisational and workplace betterment**

- Diverse, **independent** multi-disciplinary collective

- **Action-led** research, consultancy and education

- **www.3edges.co.uk**
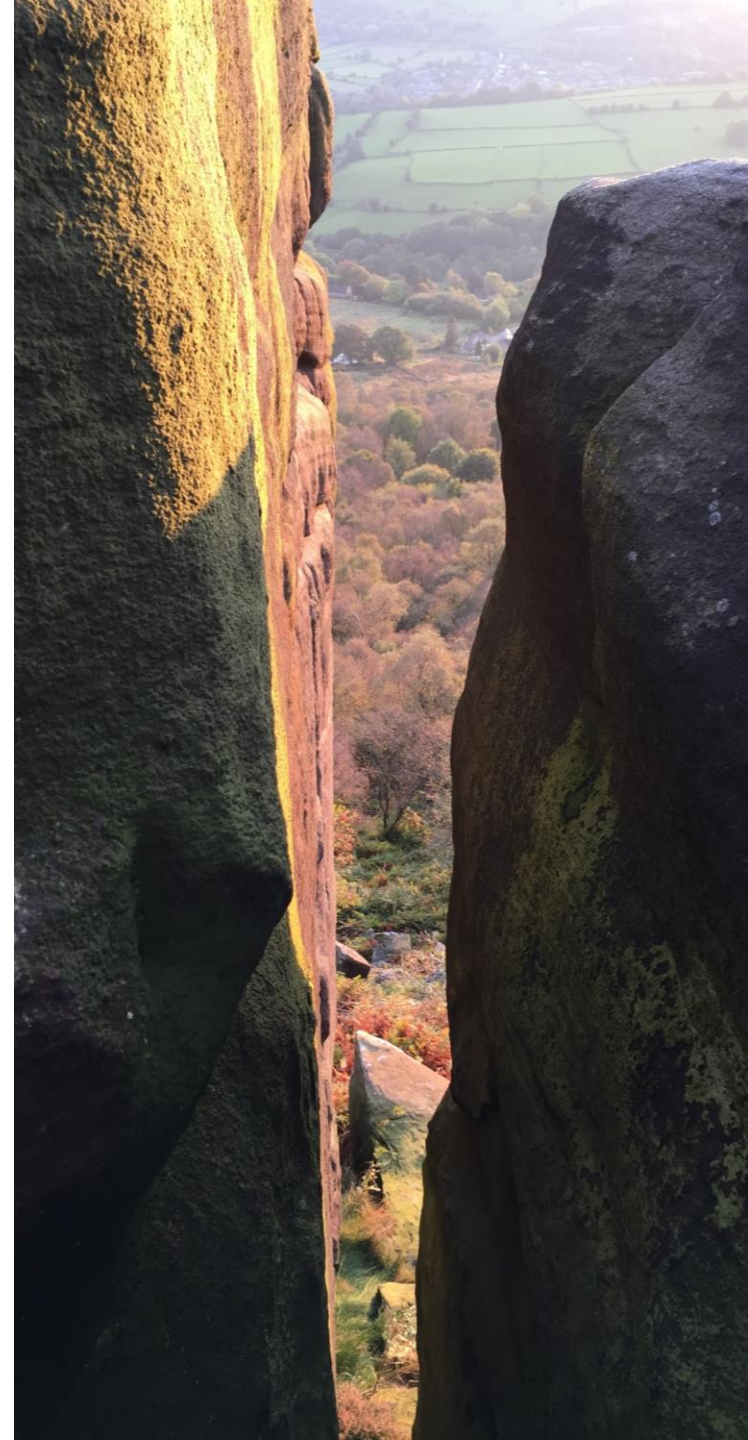
#WorkplaceMatters

iTunes | Acast | **@WpMpodcast**

http://stoddartreview.com

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THE
STODDART
REVIEW

workforce ≈ workspace

"What matters to people about workspace?"

1. Context

2. Approach

3. Findings

4. Implications?

1. Context

"We shape our dwellings, and thereafter they shape us"
(Churchill, 1941)

image © afp.com

Space matters!

Workspace matters

- Industry, organisations, academics, media

- Oliver Burkeman

- (Satan)

- Jeremy Paxman

- Nigel Oseland

- *Everyone…*

Open-plan offices were devised by Satan in the deepest caverns of hell

They're bad for concentration, motivation, stress – and they don't even make it easier for employees to communicate, new research indicates

Oliver Burkeman
Follow @oliverburkeman   Follow @GuardianUS
theguardian.com, Monday 18 November 2013 15.00 GMT
Jump to comments (258)

9 'Bright Satanic Offices': Intensification, Control and Team Taylorism

Chris Baldry, Peter B... ...il Taylor

Introduction: Office W...

From the outside, the conten...
of smoked or reflective g...
atrium with luxuriant plant...

UK world politics sport football opinion culture business lifestyle fash...
home › opinion   columnists
Jeremy Paxman Comment is free
If I were king for a day, I would ban open-plan offices
Jeremy Paxman
Such offices tell us what our bosses think of us – that we are employed to fulfil a mechanical task and we are interchangeable...

Will demonising "open plan" lead to its demise?

There is a witch hunt c...
workplace. "Open plan...
word (okay phrase) ar...
leading the mob in vili...
on workplace society.

But space *is not* place...

(work)space

+ culture

= (work)place

Reflection or catalyst?
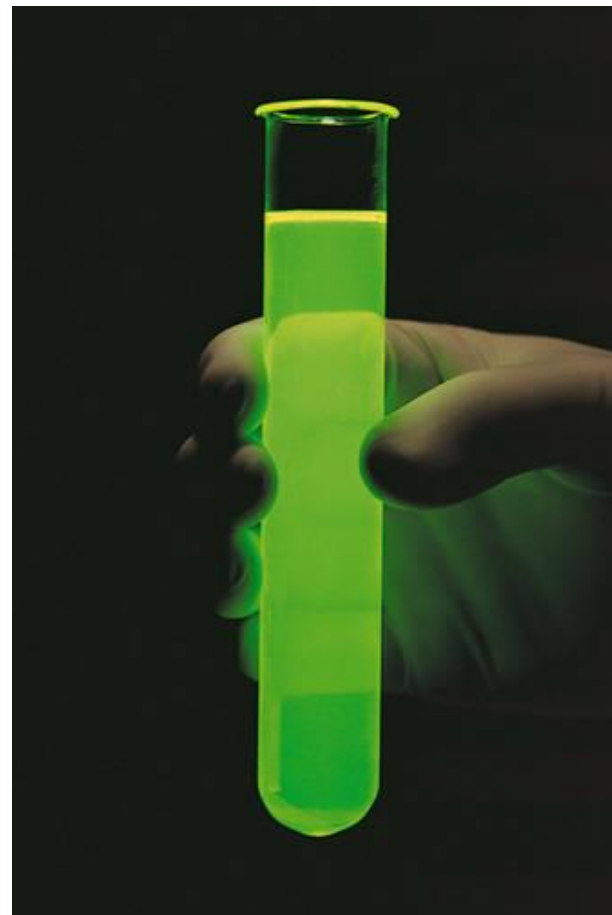
What are we designing to achieve?

- **Control**
  - → Visibility
- **Commodity**
  - → Resource, brand
- **Change**
  - → Flexibility, empowerment
- **Community**
  - → Serendipity, participation

"I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing, and that is that I know nothing...."

The Death of Socrates by Jacques-Louis David, 1787

Open scope

Widely informed

...Leap into the unknown?

image © Jørgen Schyberg

2. Research approach

"What matters to people about workspace?"

images © 'PropCo/D&BCo' / 'ShareCo'

What matters...?

- Helps, hinders...

- Delights, disgusts...

- Within workspace...

- Beyond workspace...

- Tangible, functional...

- Symbolic, meaningful...

What I need you to do...

1. Ponder

2. Capture

3. Discuss
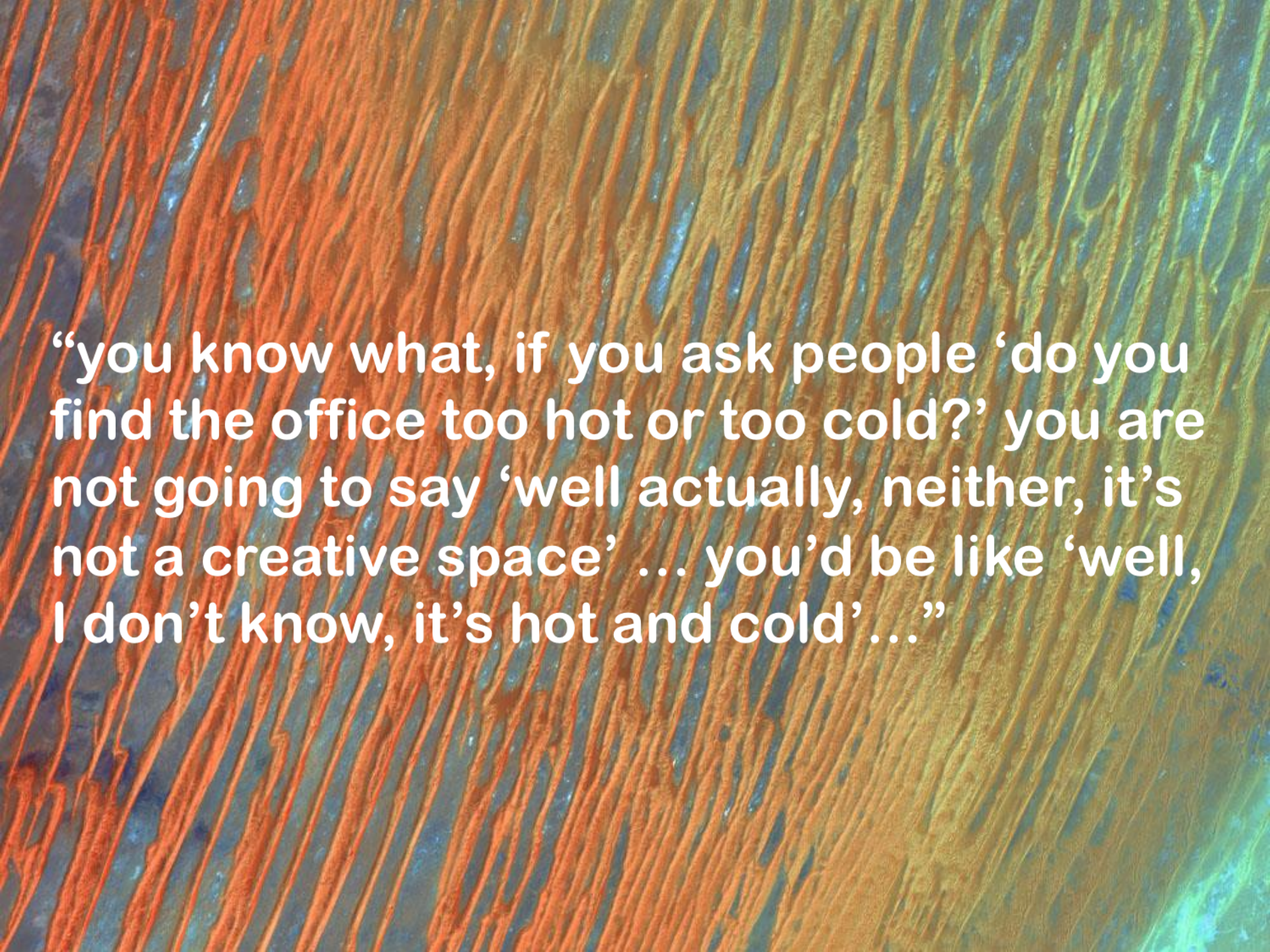
4. Confirm

Approach

- 2 work-settings:
  sole-occupancy / collaborative

- 17 participant volunteers:
  providers and *users* of workspace

- An open brief:
  "what matters to you about workspace?"

- Camera phones:
  participant-led photography

- Recorded research *conversations*:
  loosely prompted, went anywhere (and everywhere)... *toward what 'matters'*

- *Anonymised*: PropCo, D&BCo, ShareCo, ArcCo

"you know what, if you ask people 'do you find the office too hot or too cold?' you are not going to say 'well actually, neither, it's not a creative space' … you'd be like 'well, I don't know, it's hot and cold'…"

From the case-settings, **narratives about…**

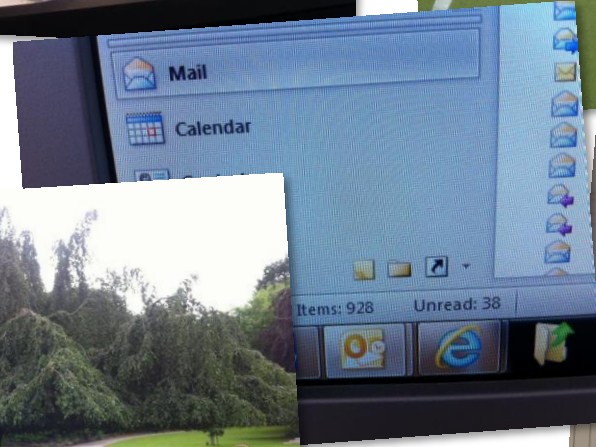|	**Provider**	**both**	**User**
Sole-occupancy	…how workspace gets done, should be done, and needs to be conceived to achieve organisational outcomes …the challenges and issues from this [systemic?] perspective	…brand and organisational affinity …the importance and value of team and client socialising …the links between org hierarchy, spatial arrangement and activity …workspace change consultation …hot-desking and agile working pros, cons and protocols	…how users act in and respond to their given workspace to achieve collective and individual identities, behaviourally and symbolically
both	…the importance of brand, location and the building entrance sequence for user experience …compromises, tensions and trade-offs with management & workspace in-use …the value in spatial generosity and spatial permissiveness	…work/self reasons for location choices & the role of autonomy …the social affordances of food & drink, including their locations …the importance of health and nature for personal wellbeing …negotiating the work/life boundary & workload demands …making a difference through CSR	…how users (mis)perceive workspace intentions and suggest (and enact?) alternatives …how locker storage solutions are functionally utilised and symbolically apprehended
Co-working	…conceiving workspace holistically, experientially, tolerantly & progressively, to learn …conceiving nudges to suggest and afford user behaviours and actions	…achieving and belonging to a community …working within a collective, selfless rhetoric and negotiating personal needs and wants	…how users perceive opportunity and inspiration in a dynamic of connectivity …the importance of visual tools for work aims and community …the actual(?) and symbolic value of knowledge facilities

From the case-settings, **narratives about…**

	Provider	both	User
Sole-occupancy	conventional workspace wisdom & its challenges	brand affinity team & client socialising hierarchy spatial arrangement change consultation agile working pros, cons & protocols	responses to achieve collective & individual identities
both	location, entrance sequence & brand for user experience tensions and trade-offs with workspace in-use spatial generosity and permissiveness	location choice & autonomy social affordances of food & drink health, nature & wellbeing work-life boundary social responsibility	(mis)perceived workspace intentions & alternatives storage solution use & symbolism
Co-working	holistic socio-spatial design tolerance, experimentation & learning behavioural nudges	achieving & belonging to a community selfless versus selfish behaviour	opportunity & inspiration through connectivity visual tools knowledge facilities

Seeing the wood for the trees…

- This approach elicited ***experiential, subjective responses***…
we are ***all*** workspace users, after all

- Providers talk about how they conceive workspaces (and why) more than users, but it isn't mutually exclusive…

- Likewise, users talk about the experienced, lived reality of their workspaces more than providers, but ditto…

- **Three general response categories:**

  1. Workspace approach as **conceived principle**

  2. Workspace approach as **experienced, lived reality**

  3. Notions **beyond the workspace** approach

3. Three key findings for today

1(a) How we *conceive* space (as providers)

1(b) …isn't quite how we *(all) live* it
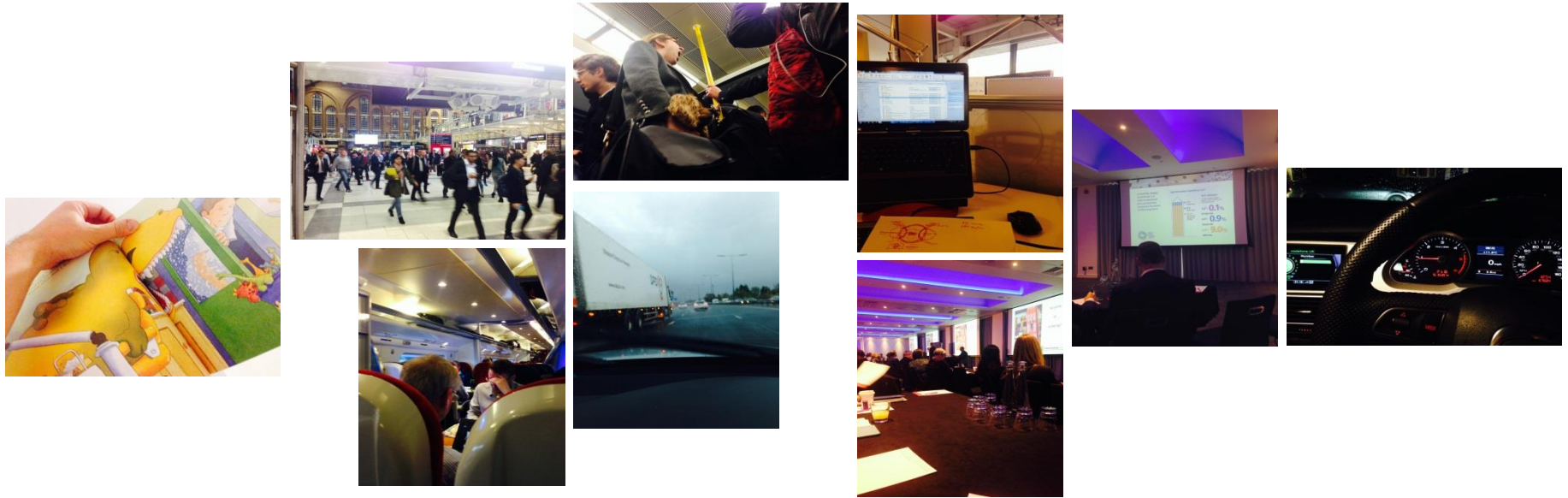
"trying to almost capture a day in the life … one that caught, effectively the facets of work and life … it's life exaggerated"

"this immersive experience that we try and create … actually touches my life, and most people's lives, for moments"

Henri Lefebvre
A Critical Introduction
ANDY MERRIFIELD
Foreword by Herbert Muschamp
image © Routledge
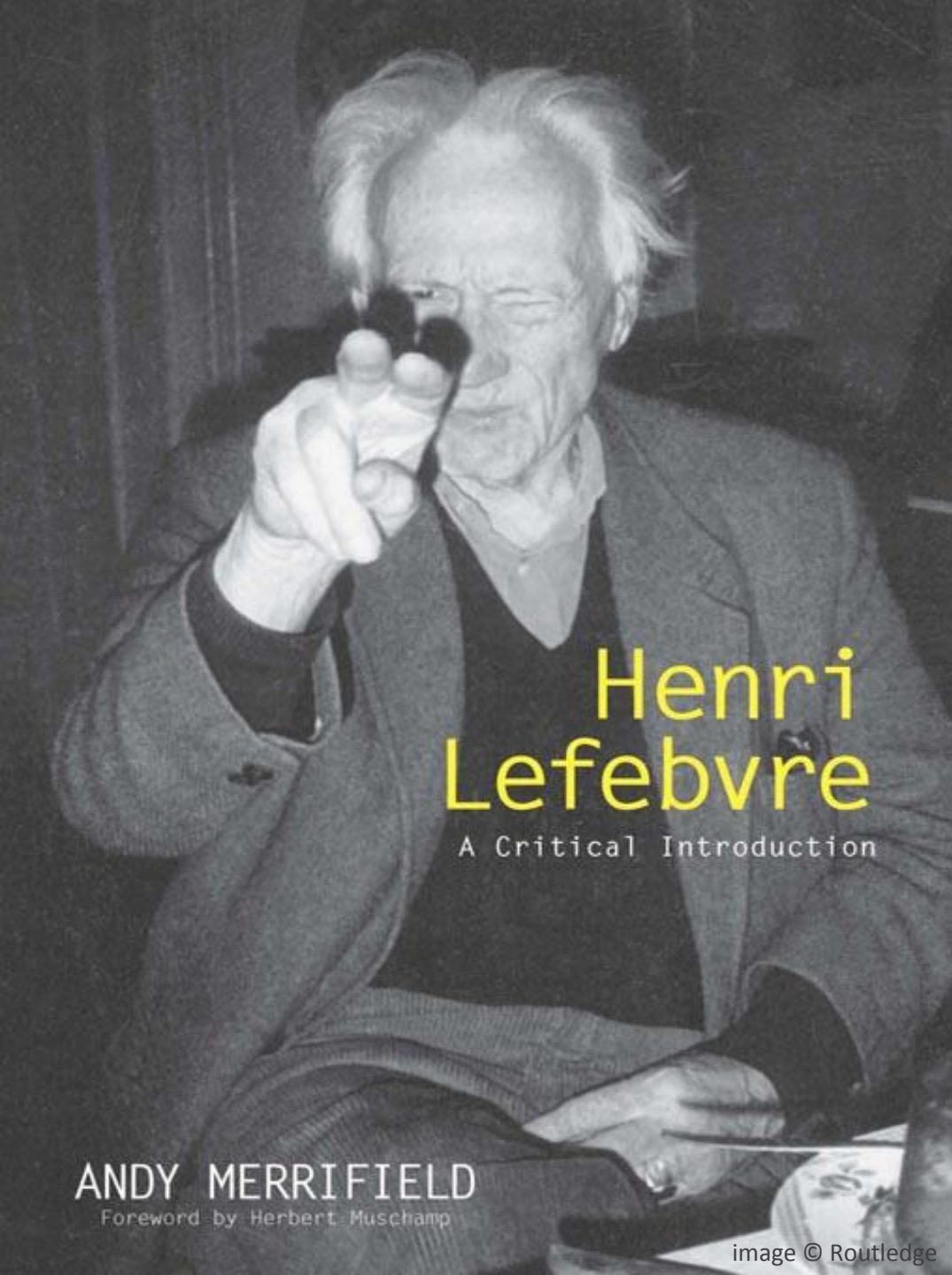
2. Different ways to 'do workspace'

- *'Space-making'* versus *'Place-making'*

- See **Work&Place issue #7** for more about this...

Could a comparatively obscure French Marxist philosopher prove to be the key that unlocks the great puzzle of workplace design and management

Ian Ellison

The missing piece of the workplace conundrum?

Work&Place

What are we designing to achieve?

- **Control**
  - → Visibility
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  - → Resource, brand
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- **Community**
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"*What matters to people about workspace?*"

images © 'PropCo/D&BCo' / 'ShareCo'

PropCo: systemic *'space-making'?*

	Provider	both	User
Sole-occupancy	**conventional workspace wisdom & its challenges**	brand affinity team & client socialising **hierarchy, spatial arrangement and activity change consultation** **agile working pros, cons & protocols**	**responses to achieve collective & individual identities**
both	location, entrance sequence & brand for user experience tensions and trade-offs with workspace in-use spatial generosity and permissiveness	location choice & autonomy social affordances of food & drink health, nature & wellbeing work-life boundary social responsibility	(mis)perceive workspace intentions & alternatives storage solution use & symbolism
Co-working	holistic socio-spatial design tolerance, experimentation & learning behavioural nudges	achieving & belonging to a community selfless versus selfish behaviour	opportunity & inspiration through connectivity visual tools knowledge facilities

ShareCo: systemic *'place-making'*?

	Provider	**both**	**User**
Sole-occupancy	conventional workspace wisdom & its challenges	brand affinity team & client socialising hierarchy spatial arrangement change consultation agile working pros, cons & protocols	responses to achieve collective & individual identities
both	location, entrance sequence & brand for user experience tensions and trade-offs with workspace in-use spatial generosity and permissiveness	location choice & autonomy social affordances of food & drink health, nature & wellbeing work-life boundary social responsibility	(mis)perceive workspace intentions & alternatives storage solution use & symbolism
Co-working	**holistic socio-spatial design** **tolerance, experimentation & learning** **behavioural nudges**	**achieving & belonging to a community** **selfless versus selfish behaviour**	**opportunity & inspiration through connectivity** visual tools knowledge facilities

Ellison (2017, in prep)

'Space-making':
managing facilities

or

'Place-making':
enabling communities

image © National Geographic

3. What does everyone talk about…?

	Provider	both	User
Sole-occupancy	conventional workspace wisdom & its challenges	brand affinity team & client socialising hierarchy spatial arrangement change consultation agile working pros, cons & protocols	responses to achieve collective & individual identities
both	location, entrance sequence & brand for user experience tensions and trade-offs with workspace in-use spatial generosity and permissiveness	**location choice & autonomy** **social affordances of food & drink** **health, nature & wellbeing** **work-life boundary** **social responsibility**	(mis)perceive workspace intentions & alternatives storage solution use & symbolism
Co-working	holistic socio-spatial design tolerance, experimentation & learning behavioural nudges	achieving & belonging to a community selfless versus selfish behaviour	opportunity & inspiration through connectivity visual tools knowledge facilities

Comfortable, healthy, happy?

> Choice of location + autonomy to choose

> The social affordances of food and drink

>> The importance of health and nature for individual and collective well-being

>>> Negotiating the work-life boundary

>>> Engaging in socially responsible activity

4. Implications?

image © USGS

Within
workspace:
essential

"For me, it's about making sure that when we go into a workplace we don't become drones. That we still retain our thinking, feeling sides as human beings, and we're connected to the external community"

Beyond workspace:
aspirational

"Workspace is just not the office at all ... I don't do any of my genuine work here ... I guess I consider real work when I am solving problems or using my brain, and here I'm not, I am problably writing up what I have already thought"

image © wallfon.com

'Workscapes' (Felstead et al, 2005)

- Working in 'collective' offices
- Working from home
- Working on the move
- ...and various others

- Unique, bespoke, *meaningful* networks
- more than 'mobility'

PROPERTY AGENTS

DESIGN & BUILD

ARCHITECTS

WORKPLACE CONSULTANTS

There is a whole industry built around the provision of workplaces

FURNITURE SUPPLIERS

BUILDING ENGINEERS

INTERIOR DESIGNERS

CHARTERED SURVEYORS

FACILITIES PROFESSIONALS

FM SERVICE PROVIDERS
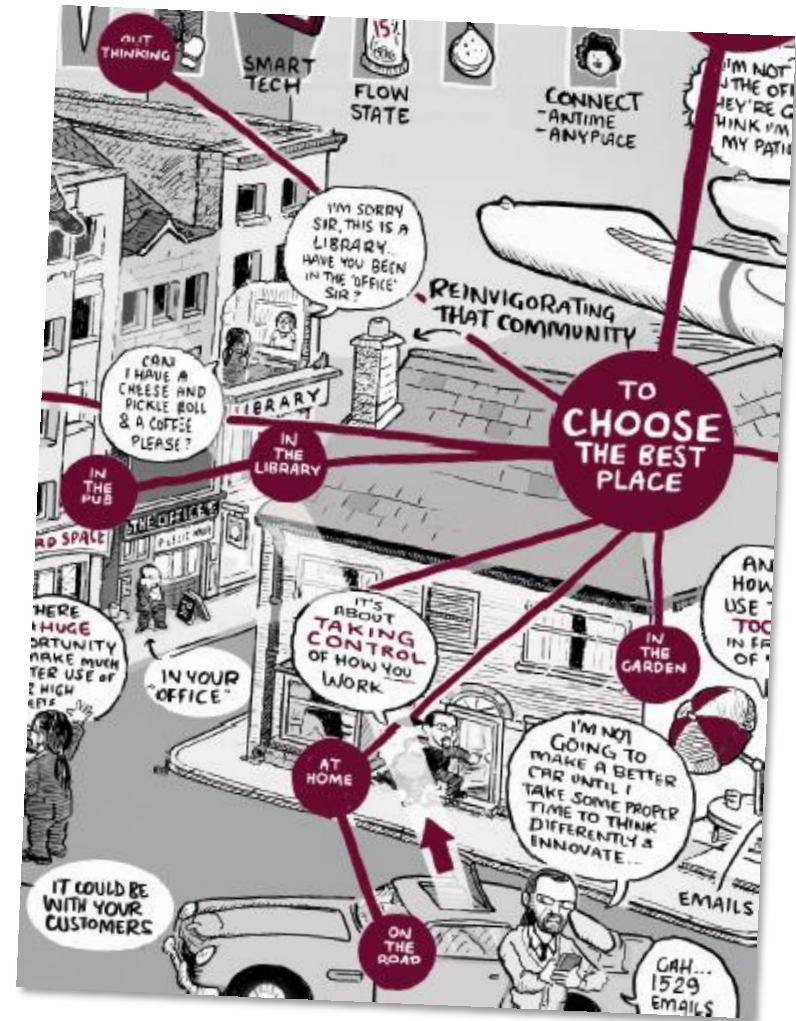
We need to do far *better*…

LITTLE MISS TIDY
Roger Hargreaves

'Managing facilities'

or

'Enabling communities'

MR. MESSY
by Roger Hargreaves

One last thought

"The first revolution is when you change your mind about how you look at things, and see there might be another way to look at it that you have not been shown. What you see later on is the results of that..."

Gil Scott-Heron (1982) from
The Revolution Will Not Be Televised (live)

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Shelf development

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Thank you :)

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