

# Rethinking Office Development

## Reading Review

Book: *The Commercial Offices Handbook* (T.Battle)  
Chapter 1: **The Global Office** (F.Duffy)

4.181- Workshop

Lecture 2

# Personal perspective on global office

- Four fundamental questions:
  - *What is the impact of office design on organizational success?*
  - Should office design be more consistent or more diverse?
  - Who can/should procure office space? Developers, owners, others?
  - *Is the office a stable building type as businesses and information technology change?*
- Conflict of interests between developers/financing institutions and demand side representatives governs answers to all questions:
  - Developers see office space as a commodity
  - Demand side reps see it as a business tool

Question: What is the value chain of office as a product?

# Important steps in office development

- Relatively new building type
  - Palaces (somerset) → mill (oriel chambers) → college-like (inns of court) → high rise (post Civil war Chicago)
- Contributing factors to high-rise/skyscraper building type:
  - New forms of organizational culture
  - New methods of real estate procurement, ie developer as intermediary between users and suppliers

Question: What about California?

# 1960's: office as communications system

- Office as cybernetic system →
  - Office interior as an informational device designed to enhance communication within business
  - Office layout forms (burolandschaft) & office furniture systems intended to respond to office as a dynamic network
  - Differing life span of different office components
    - Furniture = short, environmental/informational infrastructure= longer → space planner & tenant
    - Skin & building structure= longest → architect/landlord/developer

Question: Isn't this an idea that is very much in vogue today?

# 1970's: office as a social system

- In US, migration of functional problem solving from long term to short term building dimension  
→ division of labor architects vs. space planners
- In Europe, low developer strength + end-user power → different environments (privacy, acoustic control, individual office rooms etc.)
- Divergent paths
  - European offices, “bottom up”: narrow, articulated plan form, particular, environmental, social democratic
  - American offices, “top down”: deep, simpler plan, generic design, non-environmental, corporate

Question:  
Other factors  
that contributed  
to divergence?

# 1980's: FM and distributed intelligence

- PC introduction strained building systems & building management systems → CRE/FM departments (in house & outsourced) for procurement and day-to-day office mgt
- Industry globalization → demand for consistent space worldwide
- Financial services, IT, media, pharma all imported US office design practices to compete globally
- “intelligent buildings” introduced = robust infrastructure, IT-enabled

Question:  
Why contributed to growth of CRE/FM dpts and how have they evolved in the past 20 years?

# 1990's: New ways of working

- “Information Technology (IT) has the power to challenge and transform all the conventions-social, cultural, technological, constructional, that have shaped office culture and design for 100 years.”
- The creation of virtual organizations
- The end of *synchrony*, i.e. the ability of people to collaborate without being co-located or on the same timetable
- Increasing pressure to drive down office occupancy costs
- Growth of retail service providers, e.g. Kinko's, responding to needs of increasing numbers of home based, mobile workers
- Role of office stronger as means of fostering and supporting interactive and collective activities

Question:  
What metrics show  
that new ways to work→  
are also *better* ways to work?

# CRE practice

- Tension between cost-cutting driven CRE practices and increasingly empowered end-users
- Mechanistic view of organizational culture → all American offices look the same. CRE practices propagate such practice in the name of “standardization”
- CRE is detached from strategic intent w/outsourcing, formulaic space standards, cost cutting while it is becoming evident that workplace design is helpful in change mgt and the motivation of knowledge workers

Question:  
What is the skill-set and knowledge a modern CRE professional must have?

# Development practice

- While new ideas exist (REITs, serviced offices), there is little innovation in how office developers promote, finance, construct, manage and exchange buildings
- Separations exist- between building development & use, between landlord and tenant, between LT architectural and ST interior design
- Scandinavia office, world's best, is the result of continuing tradition of intelligent and directed pressure from users on suppliers
- North American office has: elementary/deep office space, minimal circulation, noisy & unzonable air conditioning, undersized and underducted core, relatively complicated office furniture

Question:  
What is the skill-set and knowledge a modern developer must have?

# Factors of Change

- Efficiency: New ways of working
- Effectiveness: Routine measurement of contribution of office design to productivity
- Expression: Office space as a “message-beamer”

Question:  
What is the current  
“best practice” for each of  
these factors of change?