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# The modern workplace as a Third Place

## Abstract

As the pandemic has closed all the offices and workplaces and has left most people to work from home, we have lost touch with many of our colleagues and friends. Besides these, our third places - the restaurants, bars, gyms, church and other places we frequently go to that are neither work nor home, were also closed for a period of time. Overall, the past two years have challenged our social health and made us lose our sense of community and have affected our productivity.

Our collective loneliness during the pandemic exposed how dependent we are on one another and how interconnected we really are. It has also proven to be the catalyst that created profound changes in the way we live our lives, how we think of our workplace and how our workplace environment is designed.

Healthy societies depend on continuing interaction among people who are different in a multiplicity of ways. Third places are prime venues for such interactions between different individuals because of our shared enjoyment of its services – having coffee, playing some table-tennis on our breaks or just a space to lay back in our home away from home and have a conversation with colleagues in a relaxed, informal environment. These ‘third places’ enrich social interaction, sense of community, and belonging outside of the home and workplace.

The idea of working outside of the office/workplace or in-between it has been around for a long time, but Ray Oldenburg<sup>14</sup> coined the term ‘Third Place’ in his book ‘The Great Good Place’ and defined a ‘third place’ as a place that is neither home (the first place) nor is the office/workplace (the second place).

By looking into the history of the office, and Third Place theory, we will demonstrate, through our case studies and their themes, how the modern and future corporate workspace should be designed by also showing, through detailed research and data evidence, the benefits that such corporate design can have for both the employees and the organisation.

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<sup>14</sup> Oldenburg, R. (1989). The great good place: Cafés, coffee shops, community centers, beauty parlors, general stores, bars, hangouts, and how they get you through the day. New York: Paragon House.

## **Introduction**

Our views and ideas for the traditional office are changing and thus the demand and need for a work environment which is more relaxed, not so formal and more vibrant. Employees are in need for an environment where they can communicate with different departments and socialise as well as be productive, feel at home while being at work, and feel connected with their colleagues and nature whilst being inside.

Only a half from some 200,000 employees interviewed by Tim Oldman of the Leesman Index stated that their offices and the way they were designed and organised, in terms of their interior, supported their productivity. This is a sign that architects and employers need to pay a lot more attention to workplace design<sup>15</sup>.

For employers to be able to attract and accommodate current and potential new employees, and support their productivity, they will need to create an environment to meet their needs for the comfort of the home or having third place elements into the office. Creating such comfortable environments for the workers can be essential for the growth of the company as well for the productivity and efficiency of the employees, their retention, engagement and satisfaction, especially in this post-pandemic period.

"Post Covid lockdown, I think this 'third workspace' will be greatly important, now more than ever, as it will prepare people with a familiar setting that will assist in integrating staff thought process of being away from the home environment and back in the office, without actually being there", said Lee Birchall from DV8 Designs<sup>16</sup>.

An enhanced need for a change is born, for the employees and so for the employers too, for more flexible, less formal and more inspiring workspaces. According to Oldenburg<sup>17</sup> places such as coffee shops, bars, hotel lounges etc. that are neither work, nor home, are places where people can be themselves, where a variety of individuals and characters gather to unwind and discuss a broad range of topics. Such places are also essential to the well-being of a city's life.

"The concept of the third workspace is no doubt the future of work. Working from home for most part of 18-months has only accelerated the move away from the traditional fixed office space where one desk per worker was the key focus", says Katrina Larking, the co-founder and chief creative officer of Fora<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Osel, N. (2017). *An environmental psychology perspective on workplace design*. [online] Workplace Insight. Available at: <https://workplaceinsight.net/an-environmental-psychologists-perspective-on-workplace-design/> [Accessed 18 Oct. 2021].

<sup>16</sup> Connelly, L., 2021. *'Third workspaces': More important than ever?*. [online] Material Source. Available at: <https://www.materialsource.co.uk/third-workspaces-more-important-than-ever/> [Accessed 3 November 2021].

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

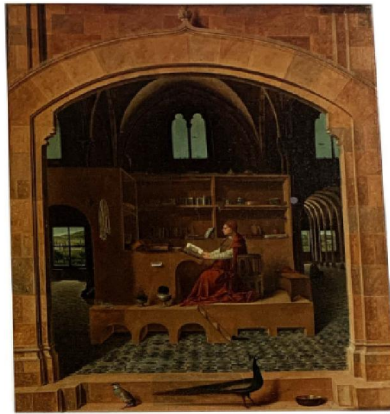
<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

In relation to the above, this essay will look into the history of traditional office, the future of the workspace and the emerging importance of having third place elements installed within the modern work environment. It will explore how third place elements can provide many benefits for the workers as well as the company. We will analyse three companies that have incorporated such elements into their work environment through different themes and these are Google (PLAY), London's Mindspace (COLLABORATION) and Kvadrat's HQ (HOME) offices, and use them and their themes to showcase their importance for modern workplace design and use them as templates for what we think the modern corporate third workplace should look like.

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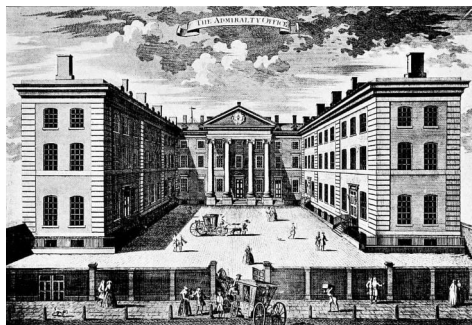
## History of the office and the workplace

**1475 - The earliest painting of an ‘office’** showing a man working on a desk is a Renaissance portrait of Saint Jerome by Antonello de Messina, circa 1475.



*Fig. 1: Saint Jerome by Antonello de Messina, circa 1475, 2021. Available at: <http://www.travelingintuscany.com/art/antonellodamessina/saintjerome.htm>*

**1726 - The first office** was the British Empire’s ‘Old Admiralty Office’ built in London.



*Fig. 2: The Old Admiralty Office*

**Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century - Open-plan industrial offices**, based on the principles of Frank Taylor - ‘Taylorism’.



*Fig. 3: A Taylorist workspace, 2018. Available at: <https://medium.com/@danshaoc/workplace-evolution-a-retrospective-on-office-design-from-the-industrial-revolution-to-the-7fdaaea408ae>*

**1930s - Open-plan working** - Offices were now becoming more spacious, having private and open-plan workstations.



Fig. 4: The Great Workroom, 2017. Available at: <https://www.scjohnson.com/en-gb/a-family-company/architecture-and-tours/frank-lloyd-wright/designed-to-inspire-sc-johnsons-frank-lloyd-wright-designed-administration-building>

**Late 1960s - The Action Office** - This office design offered alternative work settings for the employees, more freedom of movement, openness and larger individual workstations.

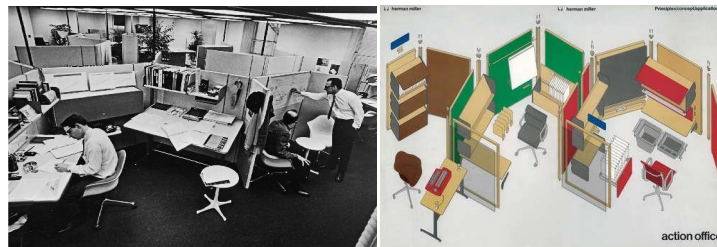


Fig. 5: The Action Office, 2018. Available at: <https://medium.com/@danshaoc/workplace-evolution-a-retrospective-on-office-design-from-the-industrial-revolution-to-the-7fdaaea408ae>

**1960s – Burolandschaft** – the focus here was more on the socially democratic office layout and on promoting greater interaction between employees.



Fig. 6: A Burolandschaft period office, 2021. Available at: <https://hubblehq.com/blog/the-history-of-the-office>

**Mid 70s to 90s - The Cubicle Farm** - This often ridiculed office design was built using usually cheap modular walls which resulted in poor working conditions for the employees.



Fig. 7: The Cubicles

**Late 90s - Office Design and Technology - The arrival of the internet** allowed for more flexible working from anywhere. People started working from outside the office in cafes, coffee shops and even from home, and thus office design changed forever.



Fig. 8: A late 90s office space, 2020. Available at: <https://bluespaceltd.co.uk/the-importance-of-an-office-break-out-area/>

**The Office Today** - Today's office design pays more attention to the well being of the employees and involves more domestic elements in the way it uses warm colours, light and domestic furniture and biophilic elements.



Fig. 9: A modern office space with domestic and biophilic elements.

**Co-Working** - Companies like WeWork and Mindspace are only the few of many companies who have in recent office design history started to be developed and known as co-working spaces – hosting and providing shared working spaces for workers with flexible conditions.



Fig. 10: A modern co-working multifunctional space, 2019. Available at: <https://smallbiztrends.com/2019/06/coworking-trends.html>

## Context - Bringing the Third Place into the modern workspace



As the nature of work constantly changes<sup>19</sup>, so does the change in work design and technology<sup>20</sup>. And as geographical boundaries are erased with the new technological changes<sup>21</sup>, it provides us with new ways of conducting our work processes<sup>22</sup> and gives us the opportunity of virtual work from any chosen location<sup>23</sup>.

If a company wants to be successful and have employees that are happy and productive, they will need to incorporate a variety of workspaces in their offices to allow people to work from whichever environment suits them best, depending on their task at hand. Such act can carry many benefits for an organisation as it reduces the company's overhead, it makes employees happier, it improves employee health and well-being, and it helps the company attract and retain top talent<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Howard, A. (Ed.). (1995). *The CHANGING NATURE of work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; Cappelli, P., Bassi, L., Katz, H., Knoke, D., Osterman, P., & Useem, M. (1997). *CHANGE AT work*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>20</sup> Adler, P. S. (1992). Introduction. In P. S. Adler (Ed.), *Technology AND the future of work*. New York: Oxford University Press; Tenner, E. (1996). *Why things bite BACK: Technology AND the revenge of unintended consequences*. New York: Knopf.

<sup>21</sup> Schick, A. G., Gordon, L. A., & Haka, S. (1990). Information overload: A temporal approach. *Accounting, ORGANIZATION AND Society*, 15, 199–220.

<sup>22</sup> Barley, S. R., & Orr, J. E. (1997). *Between CRAFT AND science: TECHNICAL work in U.S. settings*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press; Luff, P., Hindmarsh, J., & Heath, C. (2000). *WORKPLACE studies: Recovering work PRACTICE AND inform- ing system design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>23</sup> Apgar, M. (1998). The alternative workplace: Changing where and how people work. *HARVARD Business Review*, 62, 121–136.

<sup>24</sup> Zenbooth (2019). *Flexible Workplace Design: Trends, Examples, and Benefits*. [online] Zenbooth. Available at: <https://zenbooth.net/blogs/zenbooth-blog/flexible-workplace-design-trends-examples-and-benefits> [Accessed 25 Nov. 2021].



And while third places can provide workers with much comfort and the less formal environment, they are not very technologically ready in terms of power outlets and fast internet connection; they can sometimes be too full with customers who can create much noise and disruption which can affect productivity. And these are some of the reasons why now companies and architects are trying to bring those third place elements into the modern workplace. However, creating an effective corporate third place is not as simple as it may sound as it requires special need of attention to details and to the needs and well-being of the employees.

The following companies, our case studies, are a great example of how major successful companies have incorporated third place elements in their workplace design.

Google – PLAY – this company is well known for their colourful and playful offices all around the world. Play is an important factor in Google’s workplace culture and they are making sure that it is carefully and thoughtfully involved in every aspect of their workplace design through the use of third place elements. Google understands very well that the office is a place which brings different individuals and professionals together to form a type of community, where more attention and appreciation is given to the people as individuals as well as a group. They’ve also gathered that it is important to involve third space design elements into their campuses and offices, which will enable and promote formal and informal interaction between colleagues and different departments, which will essentially result in better productivity, efficiency, happier and more creative employees and the building of a sense of community in the workplace.

Mindspace – COLLABORATION - is a co-working provider founded in 2013 that offers stylish flexible working spaces for the modern professionals and their organisations. Their London offices in Shoreditch provide workspaces with fully equipped kitchens, cosy lounges, meeting rooms, hot desks, phone booths and private meeting rooms with 24/7 access. This 4,100 square meters location spreads across two floors in a boutique hospitality style reflecting third spaces in the surrounding area of the City<sup>25</sup>.

Before they opened their first venue in 2013, Mindspace understood that ‘‘creating a highly effective corporate third place involves more than access to good coffee and Wi-Fi—it’s about integrating work and life. It’s about creating an environment that supports the wellbeing of people physically, cognitively and emotionally’’<sup>26</sup>. So they decided to attract new members and companies by involving third space elements in the design of their newly opened co-working spaces so that professionals can collaborate, share knowledge and socialise in the same environment.

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<sup>25</sup> Mix Interiors (2020). *JRA designs Mindspace’s second coworking space in London*. [online] Mix Interiors. Available at: <https://www.mixinteriors.com/project/jra-designs-mindspace-coworking-shoreditch/> [Accessed 10 Jan. 2022].

<sup>26</sup> Steelcase. 2021. *Merging Third Places to Create a Positive Work Environment - Steelcase*. [online] Available at: <https://www.steelcase.com/research/articles/real-work/> [Accessed 2 November 2021].

Kvadrat – HOME – is a producer of high quality textiles and textile products for various public and private clients globally<sup>27</sup>. They have a spacious open plan head office in Denmark that offers domestic atmosphere through its use of third space elements. Their office provides employees with a transparent and flexible workspace in which they can move around and work from wherever they feel more comfortable in completing the task at hand. By having created a domestic atmosphere through their use of elements from the kitchen and living room inside the workspace, and by merging the inside with the outside landscape, Kvadrat has created a home-away-from-home for their family of employees and a workplace environment that was designed with their well-being in mind.

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<sup>27</sup> Kvadrat (2021). *Kvadrat - The global design textile company*. [online] [www.kvadrat.dk](http://www.kvadrat.dk). Available at: <https://www.kvadrat.dk/en> [Accessed 12 Jan. 2022].

## GOOGLE – PLAY

Unlike the office of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, where every office, meeting room, corridor and all the cubicles were identical and collaboration and interaction was difficult or non-existent, the new modern corporate third place should be a venue that inspires collaborations and spontaneous interactions and knowledge sharing. In the words of Laurie Coocots, Chief marketing officer at Chiat/Day: ‘we cannot make people creative, but we can create the conditions that encourage creativity<sup>28</sup>.’

So how does Google play?

In Dublin, Ireland, Googlers are offered an authentic jungle interior, a pub with a pool table, a music room and a putting green on their campus<sup>29</sup>.



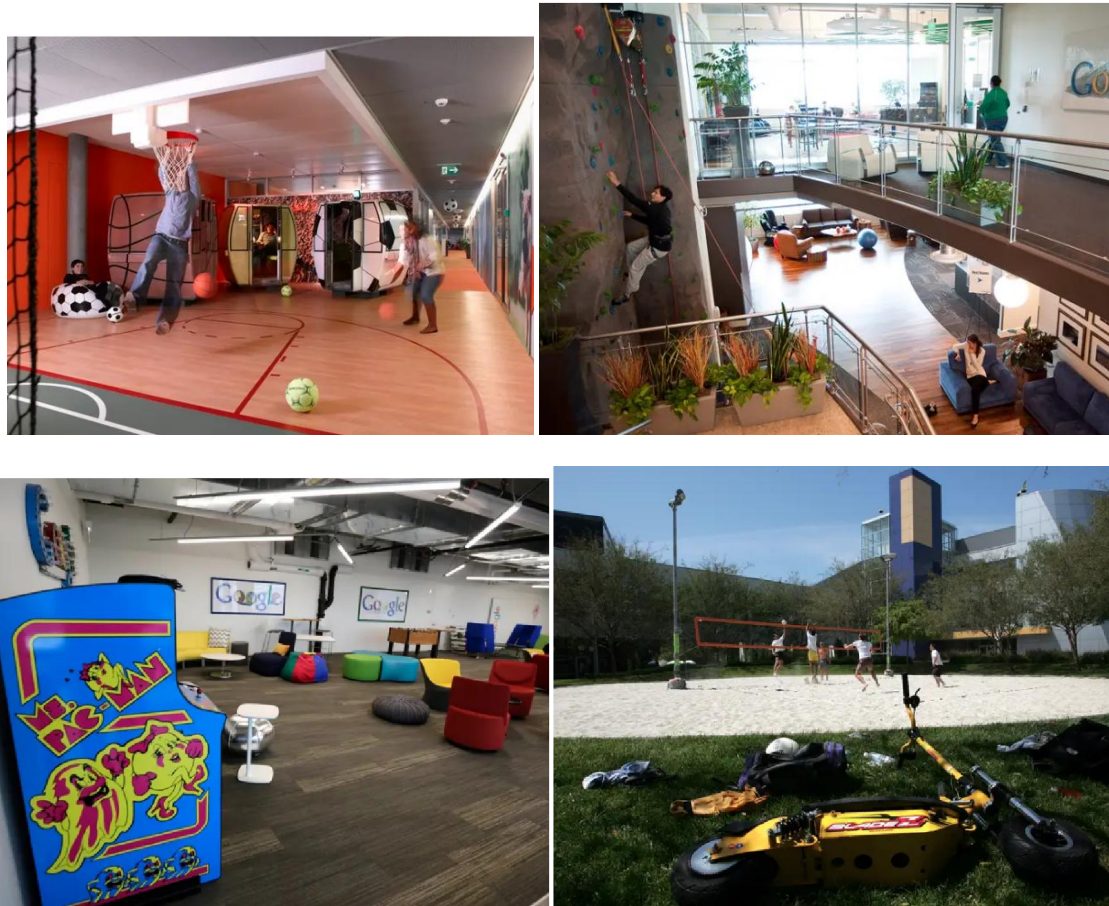
Fig. 11: Google's Dublin offices, 2013. Available at: <https://officesnapshots.com/2013/06/10/google-dublin-office-design-headquarters/>

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<sup>28</sup> Clive, Wilkinson (2019). *The theatre of work*. Amsterdam: Frame Publishers.

<sup>29</sup> Office Snapshots (2013). *Office Tour: Inside The Epic Google Dublin Campus*. [online] Office Snapshots. Available at: <https://officesnapshots.com/2013/06/10/google-dublin-office-design-headquarters/> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2022].

In their offices in Zurich employees can actually play soccer and basketball inside their offices, while in Washington and Ontario, Canada, there is an entire climbing wall. In Chicago's Google offices there is a gaming floor for employees to enjoy some arcade games and foosball on their break and the Mountain View campus has its own sand beach volleyball court<sup>30</sup>.



*Fig. 12: Google's offices in Zurich, Ontario, Chicago and Mountain View, 2016. Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/google-offices-around-the-world-photos-2016-9?r=US&IR=T#and-the-best-part-behind-one-of-the-bookshelves-theres-a-hidden-room-23>*

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<sup>30</sup> Hartmans, A. (2016). *These 23 photos prove Google has the coolest offices around the world.* [online] Business Insider. Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/google-offices-around-the-world-photos-2016-9?r=US&IR=T#and-the-best-part-behind-one-of-the-bookshelves-theres-a-hidden-room-23> [Accessed 10 Jan. 2022].

There is a slide that connects different floors in Google’s Tel Aviv HQ<sup>31</sup>, and there are beach huts as well as the classic red telephone booths as work stations in their London offices<sup>32</sup>. Additionally, their campus in Mountainview, California, opened their on-site cafe - the Coffee Lab<sup>33</sup>.



Fig. 13: Google’s offices in Tel Aviv and London

Google’s intention with such playful themes and break out spaces is to create vibrant and creative environments that will essentially result in more inspired, happy and productive employees. A study conducted by Hubble London has shown that 60% of the hundreds of employees interviewed responded that break out spaces were crucial for an office environment. The same employees ranked these ‘third spaces’ as the third most important design element after meeting rooms and fast WiFi connection<sup>34</sup>.

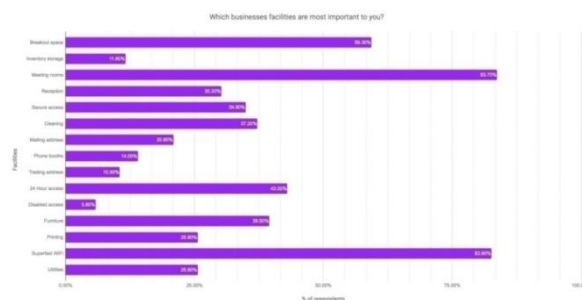


Fig. 14: The importance of Third Spaces, 2018. Available at: <https://iconicoffices.ie/what-is-a-third-space-and-why-every-office-should-have-one/>

<sup>31</sup> Frearson, A. (2013). *Google Tel Aviv by Camenzind Evolution*. [online] Dezeen. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2013/02/15/google-tel-aviv-by-camenzind-evolution/> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2022].

<sup>32</sup> Warmann, C. (2011). *Google office by Scott Brownrigg*. [online] Dezeen. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2011/01/28/google-office-by-scott-brownrigg/> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2022].

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Iconic Offices (2018). *What is a “Third Space” and Why Every Office Should Have One*. [online] Iconic Offices. Available at: <https://iconicoffices.ie/what-is-a-third-space-and-why-every-office-should-have-one/> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2021].

Including break out or third space elements into the office design can help with employee productivity and creativity, and offices can have productive, collaborative and social third place spaces around their workplace. These will provide employees with a quiet space to work and be productive, a space to collaborate and interact with other colleagues and brainstorm, and a space to unwind and relax in a home away from home area<sup>35</sup>.

Google's offices, through their theme and inclusion of third place elements, have been designed to increase the chances of spontaneous encounters and to encourage interactions as well as idea exchange<sup>36</sup>. Such playful work atmosphere and environment will benefit the company by having happier employees that are more engaged, and it will allow Google to attract new and retain their best workers.

A global study found that disengaged employees are more likely to leave their company and are less efficient. Thus, much importance needs to be given to workspace design and enhancing the employee experience in order to create better employee engagement by giving them more freedom of where and how they wish to work so that they are more productive<sup>37</sup>.

However, this way of operating can also be hurting another organisation if they try to implement the same strategy but have a much different organisational culture than Google. Jeremy Myerson considers that "one of the things the Google effect has had is the idea that work is somehow a playground and you can infantilise your staff". He added that "it's actually a very bad idea" and that work should not be confused with play. Myerson thinks that other companies should not implement the exact strategy of Google before considering their company culture and whether this approach would actually benefit their employee's productivity or hurt them as it may distract them from their actual duties and shift their focus towards actual 'play' instead of work<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> WorkSpace (2016). *What can we learn from Google's offices about workplace design?* [online] Workspace Design & Build. Available at: <https://www.workspacedesign.co.uk/what-can-we-learn-from-googles-offices-about-workplace-design/> [Accessed 5 Jan. 2022].

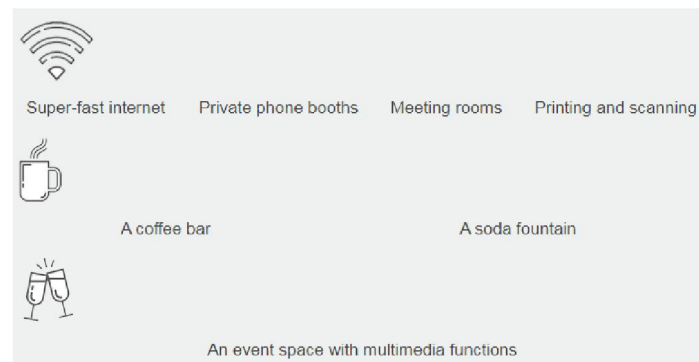
<sup>37</sup> Borghero, S., 2019. *The role of workplace design in employee engagement - Workplace Insight*. [online] Workplace Insight. Available at: <https://workplaceinsight.net/employee-engagement-role-workplace-design/> [Accessed 24 October 2021].

<sup>38</sup> Fairs, M. (2016). *Google has had negative effect on office design says Jeremy Myerson*. [online] Dezeen. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2016/03/22/google-office-design-negative-effect-interiors-jeremy-myerson/> [Accessed 3 Jan. 2022].

## **MINDSPACE – COLLABORATION**

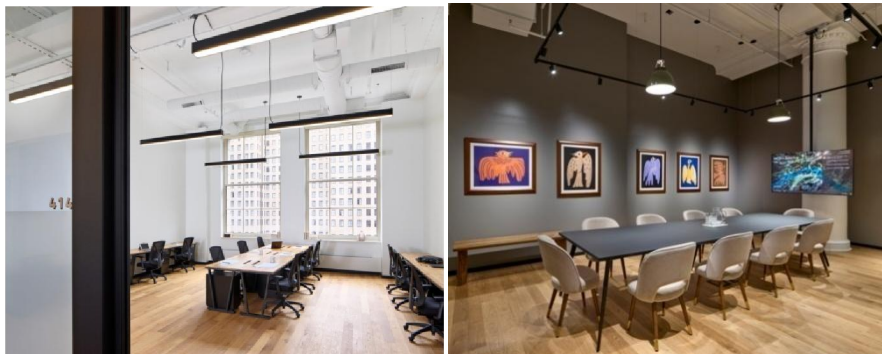
Creating the modern office means putting people first and designing for an environment that will be able to attract and retain top talent. For the modern office and the needs of the modern workforce, it means creating a work environment such as the one of Mindspace that can blur the lines between an office and a third place.

Mindspace is offering great technology solutions for their members by offering convenient and available ultra-fast internet and power charging outlets to enable better and more effective performance. Printers, information sharing technology and software which analyses how space is being used are also available for the pool of professionals<sup>39</sup>.



*Fig. 15: Some of the perks offered by Mindspace, 2021. Available at: <https://startups.co.uk/premises/offices/mindspace/>*

The interior of Mindspace offers a mixed-use space with both private and open office spaces and quiet meeting rooms for collaborative brainstorming.

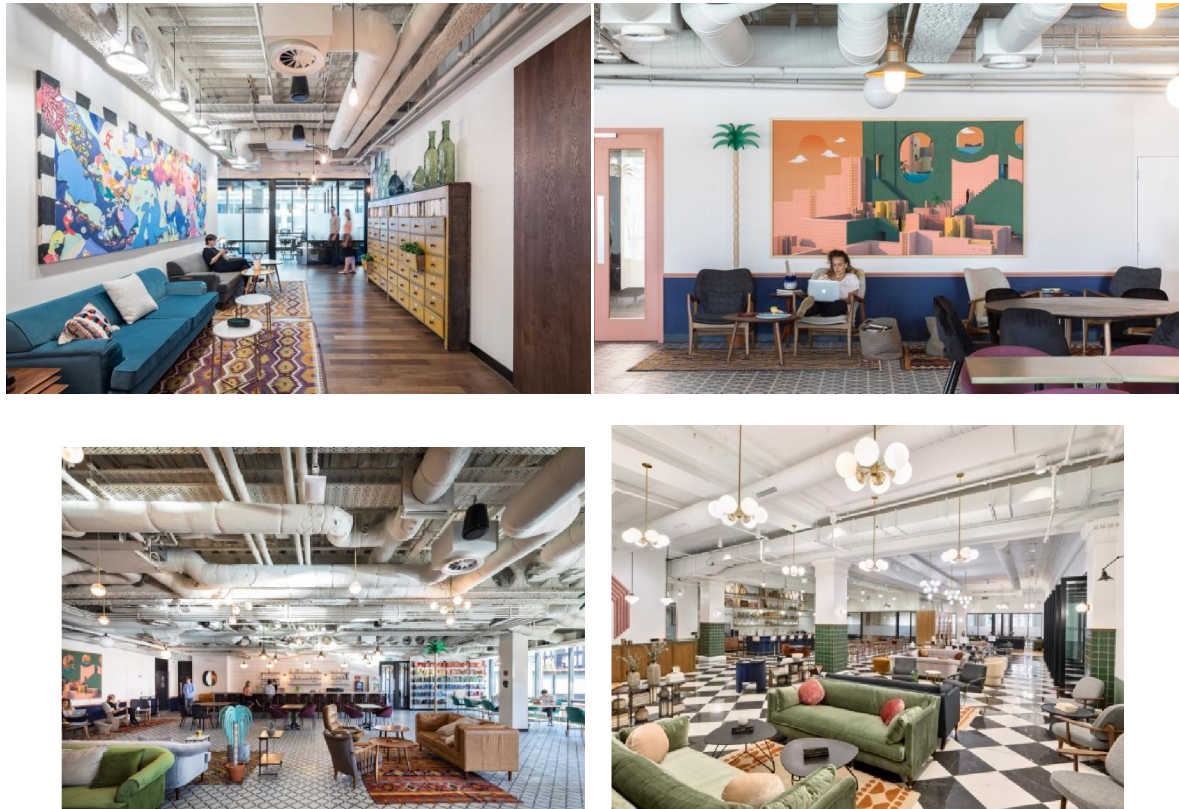


*Fig. 16: Private offices and quiet meeting rooms in Mindspace, 2021. Available at: <https://www.thefurniturepractice.com/projects/mindspace>*

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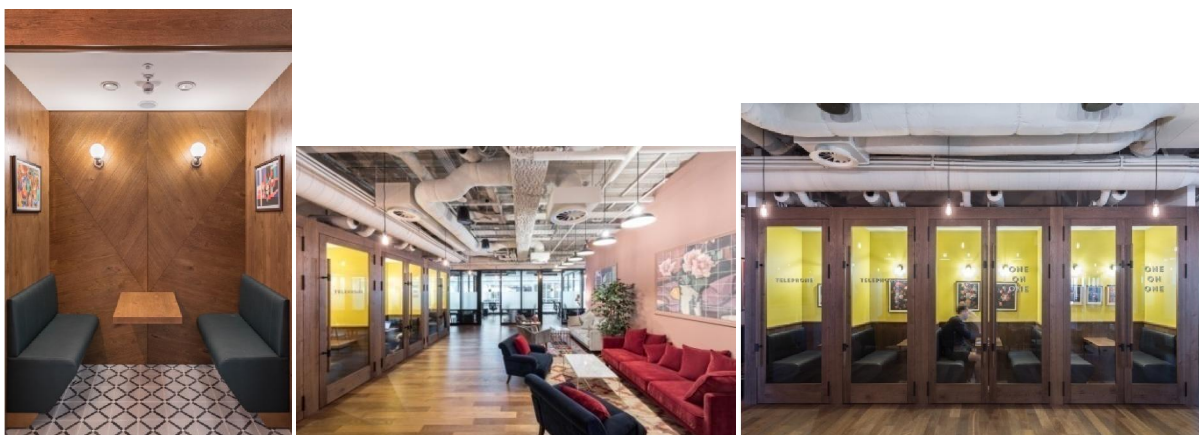
<sup>39</sup> Watts, J. (2021). *Mindspace London: Everything you need to know about coworking there*. [online] Startups.co.uk. Available at: <https://startups.co.uk/premises/offices/mindspace/> [Accessed 12 Jan. 2022].

Multipurpose workspaces such as break out spaces as well as unassigned workstation seating and lounges, which all carry third space boutique hospitality vibes, are available for use.



*Fig. 17: Break out spaces and lounge at Mindspace, 2019, 2021. Available at: <https://www.officelovin.com/2019/11/a-tour-of-mindspaces-new-london-coworking-space/>; <https://www.thefurniturepractice.com/projects/mindspace>.*

Private phone booths resembling old train carriages, which provide privacy and focus in this open office space, can also be very useful for one-on-one meetings.



*Fig. 18: Private phone boots for one on one meetings, 2019. Available at: <https://www.officelovin.com/2019/11/a-tour-of-mindspaces-new-london-coworking-space/>.*



A cafeteria and a bar are also available in Mindspace, and these are the third places where most of the spontaneous encounters and interactions between professionals can occur.



Fig. 19: A cafeteria and a bar area in Mindspace, 2019, 2021. Available at: <https://www.officelovin.com/2019/11/a-tour-of-mindspace-new-london-coworking-space/>; <https://www.thefurniturepractice.com/projects/mindspace>.

With collaboration focused transparent design in mind and by having third place elements such as break out spaces, lounges, cafeteria and a bar area, Mindspace is creating an environment that encourages communication and chance encounters between individuals, leading to collaborations, ideas exchange and discussions between professionals from different companies and sectors.

By offering a variety of open workspaces available for members to choose from and move around, which all carry third space elements, productivity and employee efficiency can be improved as each space can support the different tasks, working style and personality of each of the members. With no boundaries between members, the bigger are the chances of interaction and collective intelligence<sup>40</sup>.

This shared space, by including third space elements into its design, has created an opportunity to build a community where members have the freedom to decide with who and where they choose to work in the space. A big benefit of such environment is being around like minded talented people all willing to collaborate and share knowledge. This can result in better effectiveness and productivity of the members. In 2014, 72% of co-working space users predicted increase in their income<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Lévy P.1997*Collective intelligence*. New York, NY: Plenum/Harper Collins.

<sup>41</sup> Waber, B., Magnolfi, J. and Lindsay, G., 2014. *Workspaces That Move People*. [online] Harvard Business Review. Available at: <<https://hbr.org/2014/10/workspaces-that-move-people>> [Accessed 10 November 2021].

What is worth mentioning here is that besides this transparent co-working space design bringing many benefits to its members, studies have shown that such open workspaces can also have a negative effect on employee's focus<sup>42</sup>, their privacy<sup>43</sup>, and their overall satisfaction<sup>44</sup> as members might feel more exposed and as if their privacy has been taken away.

All of these negative effects of an open co-working place could actually lead to less collaboration, ideas exchange and socialisation between professionals, besides the design's initial idea to increase and encourage such activities<sup>45</sup>. This all depends on the types and characters of professionals working in such co-working spaces, hence why this is debatable. On the other hand, I can also add that in cases where some employees feel that they need more privacy, less noise and less crowd, so they can be more focused and productive with their task at hand, Mindspace has privacy pods, quiet areas, smaller rooms for meetings and presentations etc. to cater for those who feel more exposed, uneasy and less collaborative or efficient within such open space.

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<sup>42</sup> Brookes MJ, Kaplan A. 1972The office environment: space planning and affective behavior. *Hum. Factors* **14**, 373–391; Smith-Jackson TL, Klein KW. 2009 Open-plan offices: task performance and mental workload. *J. Environ. Psychol.* **29**, 279–289; Sundstrom E, Herbert RK, Brown DW. 1982Privacy and communication in an open-plan office: a case study. *Environ. Behav.* **14**, 379–392; Sundstrom E, Town JP, Brown DW, Forman A, Mcgee C. 1982Physical enclosure, type of job, and privacy in the office. *Environ. Behav.* **14**, 543–559.

<sup>43</sup> Sundstrom E, Burt RE, Kamp D. 1980Privacy at work: architectural correlates of job satisfaction and job performance. *Acad. Manag. J.* **23**, 101–117; Hundert AT, Greenfield N. 1969Physical space and organizational behavior: a study of an office landscape. In Proc. 77th Ann. Convention American Psychological Association, vol. 1, pp. 601–602. Washington, DC: APA.

<sup>44</sup> Becker FD, Gield B, Gaylin K, Sayer S. 1983Office design in a community college: effect on work and communication patterns. *Environ. Behav.* **15**, 699–726; Oldham GR, Brass DJ. 1979Employee reactions to an open-plan office: a naturally occurring quasi-experiment. *Admin. Sci. Q.* **24**, 267–284.

<sup>45</sup> Hatch MJ. 1987Physical barriers, task characteristics, and interaction activity in research and development firms. *Admin. Sci. Q.* **32**, 387–399.

## **KVADRAT HQ – HOME**

Modern offices have changed the way office space is organised and went from closed up personalised spaces to more open workspaces which allow for greater traffic of employees and encounters as well as better communication between sectors. Refurbished by SevilPeach architects, Kvadrat's head office in Ebeltoft, Denmark, has been transformed to an open space office to enable better communication and collaboration between departments. Extended with a new library, a textile showroom and social spaces, the space also consists of a canteen whose communal space has been turned into a library where a long table has been placed, along with seating areas and quiet workspaces with views onto the landscapes in front<sup>46</sup>.



*Fig. 20: Kvadrat's interior and sketches of the HQ workplace design, 2021. Available at: <https://www.architonic.com/en/project/sevil-peach-kvadrat-hq-refurbished/5105599>*

<sup>46</sup> ArchiTonic (2021). *Kvadrat HQ Refurbished by Sevil Peach | Office facilities*. [online] Architonic. Available at: <https://www.architonic.com/en/project/sevil-peach-kvadrat-hq-refurbished/5105599> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2022].

Kvadrat's new open office space was installed to create physical connections and to encourage more collaborations and better communication between employees and departments. With transparent windows used as walls, visual connections were established between the inside and the outside. Sevil Peach have said that their intention is for Kvadrat's family spirit and culture to be felt and experienced through their design instead of it being represented solely in a visual way<sup>47</sup>.

Kvadrat takes elements from the kitchen/dining room and the living room to create a domestic ambiance in a corporate third place. Domestic details around the office such as the use of curtains, their use of soft colours throughout the building, the fireplace which adds to the homely character, the wood smoke scent which can be felt as soon as someone enters the building, wooden vitrines are some of the design elements that create this domestic atmosphere and feeling in Kvadrat's HQ.

Having a long dining table in the canteen which can also be used as a workstation where employees can be all working or dining together as a family in their own home should increase the communication between employees<sup>48</sup>, and it could result in greater information exchange as well as collaboration and bonding between employees<sup>49</sup>, and the organisation, including the space itself.

Biophilia and a connection to nature and the landscapes can also be picked up in Kvadrat as it makes the space more homely. As Kvadrat is merging their office with the surrounding landscapes it is bringing the nature from outside inside with the help of its floor to ceiling glass windows and its use of natural soft earthly colours. This can be positively correlated to their employees' mental health, concentration, productivity as well as creativity when working in biophilic environments and when exposed to natural light, greenery and landscape views<sup>50</sup>.

The refurbished offices of Kvadrat were designed with the well being of their employees in mind. The new domestic design is meant to provide a second home to the employees, a high quality working and living environment that will help enrich their well being as well as their daily experiences and creativity for many years<sup>51</sup>. This way of designing could essentially help the company attract and retain their top talent, and help the organisation grow.

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<sup>47</sup> Frame (2021). *Kvadrat Headquarters*. [online] [www.frameweb.com](http://www.frameweb.com). Available at: <https://www.frameweb.com/project/kvadrat-headquarters> [Accessed 10 Jan. 2022].

<sup>48</sup> Festinger L, Schachter S, Back K. 1950 *Social pressures in informal groups: a study of human factors in housing*. Oxford, UK: Harper.

<sup>49</sup> DiMaggio P, Garip F. 2012 Network effects and social inequality. *Ann. Rev. Sociol.* **38**, 93–118; Burt RS. 2004 Structural holes and good ideas. *Am. J. Sociol.* **110**, 349–399.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

This feeling of home can create happier employees and encourage them to work harder and make them stay on site for longer in their home-away-from-home work environment, which can translate in a bigger sense of community, a family as we said.

However, this may also be seen as a negative as it might be a cynical attempt from Kvadrat to have their employees stay in the office longer hours and to keep them on site instead of their actual first place. Apple has been criticized for the same issue as their new 2017 \$5 billion 175 acres Apple Park headquarters in Cupertino, California<sup>52</sup> is said to offer everything their employees need, a family-oriented community and a domestic environment, so that they almost never have to leave the campus.



Fig. 21: Apple Park, 2017. Available at: <https://www.fosterandpartners.com/projects/apple-park/>

The same matter has indirectly been criticized in Dave Eggers' novel *The Circle*<sup>53</sup>, followed with a Tom Hanks movie based on Eggers' novel called *The Circle*, portraying an imaginary campus from the book almost identical to Apple Park.



Fig. 22: A picture from *The Circle*, the movie, 2017. Available at: <https://archive.curbed.com/2017/5/26/15700828/apple-campus-wired-the-circle-dave-eggers>

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<sup>52</sup> Murphy, M. (2017). *Apple's new \$5 billion campus has a 100,000-square-foot gym and no daycare*. [online] Quartz. Available at: <https://qz.com/984785/apples-new-5-billion-apple-park-campus-has-a-100000-square-foot-gym-and-no-daycare-aapl/> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2022].

<sup>53</sup> Docx, E. (2013). *The Circle by Dave Eggers – review*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/09/circle-dave-eggers-review> [Accessed 7 Jan. 2022].

Maybe Kvadrat's HQ and offices, by offering similar setting as Apple Park and the Circle, have the same intention of keeping the employees longer hours in their second home.



*Fig. 23: An areal photo from Kvadrat's HQ, similar to The Circle and Apple Park, 2017. Available at: <https://thamesandhudson.com/news/your-glacial-expectations-olafur-eliassons-response-to-a-unique-danish-landscape/>*

## Conclusion

People have been spending more time at home and in third places, especially over the past two years during the pandemic, and have been doing their work from a more relaxed, less formal and warm environment. It is now very critical that companies create work environments that provide third space elements to the returning modern workforce: a venue where employees can still enjoy their coffee and food and meet others to interact, a venue that will offer connection, a sense of community, and a space that is less formal, more playful and with a domestic feel; a corporate third place blurring the lines between the home, work and a social venue and putting them all into one<sup>54</sup>.

The office has evolved from being closed and less spacious as in the cubicle office day to a more open and playful, vibrant environment with free flow of employees and a greater opportunity for communication, collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Google has created such fun corporate third place offices where their employees can work, take a break to recharge, socialise, collaborate and exchange ideas. Their offices provide employees with the necessary conditions, break out spaces and environments on site so that the employees can feel connected to the organisation, to be efficient and also be able to engage in variety of other informal activities. By bringing third space elements back into the workspace, Google will also be able to attract more bright talent as well as retain their existing one.

Co-working offers professionals a space to work and network as well as exchange knowledge and encourage collaboration opportunities. Mindspace has created a magnet workspace to attract employees that are searching for a place which can provide them the comfort of their home and the not so formal setting of a familiar social venue where they can do work.

As Tonia Welter, the co-founder of the co-working space in Berlin ‘betahaus’, mentioned: “The co-working concept is perfect for the daily working life of our generation”. By involving third space elements into their people-focused design, companies such as Mindspace, WeWork and betahaus are what Welter calls “the small frontiers between work and life<sup>55</sup>.”

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<sup>54</sup> Debenedetti, Alain, Oppewal, Harmen, Arsel, Zeynep (2014) “Place Attachment in Commercial Settings: A Gift Economy Perspective,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (51), 904–923; Rosenbaum, Mark S. (2006), “Exploring the Social Supportive Role of Third Places in Consumers’ Lives,” *Journal of Service Research*, 9 (1), 59–72.

<sup>55</sup> Business Interiors (2012). *Flexible Working & The Third Place - R.I.P. The Traditional Workplace*. [online] Business Interiors. Available at: <https://www.businessinteriors.co.uk/flexible-working-third-place-collaborative-work-transforms-traditional-workplace/> [Accessed 8 Jan. 2022].

Companies such as WeWork have gone a step further and their other branch, WeLive, have started opening co-living spaces, in addition to their co-working spaces, where they offer housing to members and like-minded professionals<sup>56</sup>.

As many companies are trying to attract new talent and retain their existing brightest workforce, they can achieve this simply by providing comfortable vibrant environments that puts the health and well being of their employees first by having biophilic elements throughout their workspace, that have also created a domestic atmosphere and flexible working with the help of third space elements. Such is the work environment at Kvadrat. According to them, creating a homely atmosphere in their corporate space is not entirely up to the aesthetic - physical or visual elements, but it is more about the feeling of a home; by having certain third space elements in and around their offices that will satisfy all the needs of their employees for a first and second place.

By looking at our case studies and their themes, and by showing various data from surveys and journals, we have seen that such lively workplace environments that involve third place elements, which are far from the traditional office, offer better communication between people, employees feel more engaged, socialized, energized, more effective and inspired.

I think that there is no perfect office space environment and I also think that each company should consider their organisation's culture and the needs of its employees before they start designing the 'perfect' corporate workplace, if they want to expect good results. If I was designing the modern office, I would make sure that my design would involve third space elements in the way that Google, Mindspace and Kvadrat have in their own workplace environments.

I would design a supportive space where employees have freedom of movement and can choose from where and how they want to complete their tasks at hand. This will help me capture those feelings and emotions of the employees mentioned above as they are crucial for the productivity, effectiveness and their wellbeing and very important in attracting and retaining the best employees. This will overall create a great success for any organisation and it will also help it grow and be ahead of its competition.

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<sup>56</sup> Mortice, Z. (2016). *The Sociology of Coliving: How WeLive Creates a "Third Place."* [online] ArchDaily. Available at: <https://www.archdaily.com/795620/the-sociology-of-coliving-how-welive-creates-a-third-place> [Accessed 5 Jan. 2022].



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