

**A SOCIOLOGICAL JOURNEY INTO SPACE:
ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN A CHANGING
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION**

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Abstract

The relationship between the physical work environment and the social practices associated with it has until recently been neglected in studies of organisation and public management. Although there is now growing interest in organisational space, the area is characterised by competing definitions and fragmented contributions. There are still relatively few empirical studies, and no ethnographic studies which have analysed the relationship between organisational space and organisational social processes over time and in depth.

A sociological analysis of the interrelationship between the material environment of an organisation and organisational social structures and processes is undertaken, using a case study of a UK local authority which undertook a spatial reconfiguration of all its staff over a period of four years. During this time, successive groups of staff were moved into new or refurbished buildings which were designed to support 'new ways of working', a term which stood for fluid networking across structural boundaries, in particular, directorates and hierarchical levels. In these new offices, all staff were based in open plan space and no employees had official 'ownership' of a particular desk. The new spatial configuration grouped 'strategic' managers in a central headquarters building, 'back office' employees in an adjacent building, and relocated 'locality' staff in 'Public Service Villages' which integrated staff across directorates. Senior managers expressed ambitious intentions for the way in which this new configuration could reshape what they presented as an outdated bureaucracy into an outward-looking, inspirational organisation based on a networked form. The study focuses chiefly on the strategic centre and back office buildings and compares officially stated intentions with the social processes and structures that actually emerged over time in both buildings.

The case study is ethnographically-oriented and works within Pragmatist criteria of truth and validity. The analysis uses Lefebvre's conceptualisation of the social production of space to integrate social and spatial dimensions, and link the configuration of space with the social structures of capitalism. To compensate for Lefebvre's relative neglect of agency in the production of space, use is made of Berger and Luckmann's analysis of the social construction of reality. Thus, the thesis applies what Harvey terms the 'geographical imagination', which relates everyday spatial processes to the wider sociospatial configuration of the society of which they are a part.

The first two contributions link the spatial structure of organisation with the degree of autonomy given to employees. In the strategic centre, new networked structures emerged to an extent, but the transformation to a network form was limited by a hierarchical sociospatial structure, which the study conceptualises as the 'invisible office'. In the back office building, the official priorities appeared to have shifted towards the cost-efficient use of space and the capacity to flex the organisation structure rapidly. This resulted in a sociospatial structure in which the key distinctions were between the top managers and all other staff, and between employees who established unofficial ownership over particular desks and those who could not. In this building, the use of space mapped closely onto the non-inclusive roles which Kallinikos argues are the basic units from which modern organisation is composed. The exchangeable use of space can therefore be understood as a shift in which the efficiency and rationality of bureaucratic organisation is increased. In both buildings, the group of employees at the top of the organisational hierarchy (in what was officially suggested should be an entirely non-hierarchical environment) maintained a semi-private space. While both office environments had the same material capacity for exchangeability, the more powerful organisational members appeared to take root and from this position of spatial stability planned the flexible reconfiguration of other employees.

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List of abbreviations

PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PSV	Public Service Village
SCC	Southern County Council
StF	Securing the Future

Chapter 1

Sociology, spatiality and change in local government

1 Research aim and rationale

This thesis presents a sociological analysis of the interrelationship between the material environment of an organisation and organisational social structures and processes. It is based on a case study of a UK local authority which undertook a spatial reconfiguration of all of its staff between 2004 and 2008. During this period, successive groups of staff were moved into new or refurbished buildings which were designed to support 'new ways of working', a term which stood for fluid networking across structural boundaries, in particular, directorates and hierarchical levels. All of the office buildings into which staff were moved shared particular features which were designed to facilitate this shift in work processes. All the offices were open plan, and all staff, regardless of their role or hierarchical position, occupied the same amount of desk space. No members of staff had official 'ownership' of a particular desk, but were expected to use any available desk.

The relationship between the physical work environment and the social practices associated with it has until recently been neglected in organisation studies (Keenoy 2005) and as Ramo and Skalen (2006) point out, consideration of time and space in studies of public management has so far been largely absent. However, growing interest in space is evidenced by the publication of several books (Clegg and Kornberger 2006, Dale and Burrell 2008, Gagliardi 1990, Hernes 2004) and review articles (Halford 2008, Taylor and Spicer 2007) addressing the topic. There is also literature on related topics such as organisational artefacts (Rafaeli and Pratt 2006) and the sociology of place (Gieryn 2000). In the organisation studies literature, however, the role of discourse has been privileged over the sociomaterial, spatial and embodied dimensions of organisation (Dale and Burrell 2008; Watson 2008a), an emphasis which demonstrates that 'the Cartesian influence is alive and well, despite a great deal of rhetoric to the contrary', according to Dale and Burrell (2008:108). And, as Taylor and Spicer (2007) observe, the study of organisational spaces is

an area characterised by competing definitions and fragmented contributions. There are still relatively few empirical studies, and no ethnographic studies which have analysed the relationship between organisational space and organisational social processes over time and in depth. This project seeks to contribute to the literature by providing an analysis based on an ethnographically-oriented, longitudinal study.

The designs of the new offices investigated in this research aligned closely with those advocated by the influential architect and writer Frank Duffy (1997) in his book 'The New Office'. As Taylor and Spicer (2007) point out, the argument that 'creating more flexible spaces through the use of open plan space, hot-desking and bright and airy design facilitates information sharing and creativity' (p.328) has become central to contemporary office design. However, Cairns (2002) identifies a dichotomy between freedom and control in the literature considering how office design shapes organisational processes. On one hand, these workplaces are claimed to be empowering, flexible, diverse, and 'supportive of a move towards a unifying organisational democracy for the benefit of all, both management and workers' (Cairns 2002:806-7). On the other hand they are viewed as controlling (Baldry et al 1998) or commodified and rationalised (Rosen et al 1990). As Cairns (2002) suggests, neither of these views can be assumed to be 'correct' but can be regarded as differences that are 'framed by different contexts of thought and action and ... result in very different forms of socially constructed reality' (p.808). Accordingly, the buildings in this study are assumed to be both enabling and constraining in relation to different contexts of thought and action, and the research investigates the roles they play in the social construction of reality in the case study organisation.

In order to do this, I used an ethnographically-oriented approach to analyse the relationships between office buildings and other artefacts, and emergent social processes and structures. Fieldwork was undertaken between 2004 and 2007, with two periods of intensive participant-observation and interviews in spring and summer 2004, and between spring and autumn 2007. The first phase of fieldwork in 2004 focused mainly on the people involved in the design and commissioning of the strategic centre, including the architect and the Chief Executive. The second phase of fieldwork in 2007 included the specialist unit which had been created to deal with the acquisition and use of new offices, the Workspace Improvement Team (WIT). I have termed these staff 'organisation designers' to refer to their roles in manipulating the spatial structure of the organisation with the expressed intention of reshaping its social structure. Both phases of fieldwork also included managers

and staff members using and occupying the new buildings. The inclusion of these two groups enabled a comparison to be made between the changes that senior managers suggested the new offices were intended to bring about, and actual organisational processes and structures as they emerged over time.

Organisations cannot be understood separately from the societies in which they are located. As Watson (2008a) observes, '[e]ven the smallest utterance or mundane piece of dialogue can be linked back to the wider culture, social structure and processes of the society in which it takes place' (p.42). Throughout the project, I sought to deploy the 'sociological imagination' (Mills 2000/1959) and relate experiences, events observed and conversations held back to wider social structures. For the local authority organisation in which the research was based, key social structures concerned the demands placed on local government by central government to become more responsive to the needs of service users and tax payers. During the period of the fieldwork, all UK local authorities were requested to become more flexible, more cost-efficient, and better able to provide services which 'joined up' or integrated provision from different professional specialisms and directorates. The official emphasis for local authorities at the time was therefore on developing new practices of networking across organisational structural boundaries, both within and beyond the organisation. These influential social structures are considered in the project under the rubric of New Public Management (NPM), an umbrella term for the various ways in which successive governments have attempted to make public sector organisations more flexible, responsive and cost-effective, and less 'bureaucratic'. (NPM is discussed in chapter 2).

In line with Mills' (2000/1959) thinking, a sociological conceptual framework has been used in the analysis. The new offices are understood as managerial attempts to reshape organisational structures and processes, as well as attempts to shift the balance of efforts and rewards in the employment relationship with individual employees, in line with the requirements of NPM. As is the case for all managerial interventions, the control attempts made through the new buildings are assumed to give rise to both intended and unintended consequences (Gouldner 1954). The organisation is conceptualised as a negotiated order (Strauss 1978, Watson 2001) in which the order is socially constructed by the interactions of individuals and groups, both the official 'designers' of the organisation and other staff members with their own professional, managerial, and occupational interests and identities, as well as interests drawn from wider society and culture outside the workplace. At the

individual level, the new buildings shift the ongoing exchange of material and symbolic efforts and rewards in the implicit contract between the organisation and employees. And the implicit contract includes the ongoing negotiation of individual identities, in which the individual carries out 'identity work' (Watson 2008b) by drawing on social identities made available in the organisation and in the wider culture. Attempts to shape employee identities in ways that fit with organisational purposes have become an increasing focus of managerial attention (Alvesson and Willmott 2002), and Dale and Burrell (2008) argue that this is regarded as particularly significant in contexts where greater spatial mobility is required of employees, so that they carry their identification with the organisation with them as they move around (p.102). The analysis aims to satisfy Pragmatist criteria of truth and validity. Accordingly, it aims to effectively guide practice in this, or a similar setting (Joas 1993, Watson 2000).

As mentioned earlier, however, consideration of space and materiality has often been left out of organisation studies. Therefore, as well as undertaking a sociological analysis, I also sought to apply what Harvey (1973, 2005) terms the 'geographical imagination' or 'spatial consciousness'. While being 'deeply impressed' by Mills' sociological imagination, Harvey (2005) suggests that his emphasis on history and society 'at the expense of space, place, region, territory or environment' constituted a serious omission (p.212). Harvey's (1973) parallel, although analytically diffuse, concept of 'spatial consciousness' or 'geographical imagination':

.. enables the individual to recognize the role of space and place in his own biography, to relate to the spaces he sees around him, and to recognize how transactions between individuals and between organizations are affected by the space that separates them. (p.x).

Harvey (2005) goes on to suggest that the geographical imagination is manifest in many disciplines, including architecture, anthropology and sociology, although in general it has been over-reliant on intuition and consequently has lacked the analytical rigour of Mills' work (p.212). In this project, in order to build in both spatial and sociological understandings of the relationships between social and spatial structures and processes, I draw on literature from architecture, anthropology and geography as well as sociology and organisation studies. I make particular use of Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualisation of the social production of space, because in Lefebvre's work, social and spatial dimensions are understood as fully integrated. For Lefebvre, space is produced by social action and is also

the matrix through which social action takes place. Space can therefore be understood as an ensemble of social relationships and hierarchies. Further, Lefebvre proposes that capitalist processes are the primary structuring principle of the whole of modern space, including the space of state institutions (Brenner 1997). Consequently, changing modes of production within capitalism provoke corresponding reconfigurations and transformations of space, or 'spatial fixes' (Harvey 1985). Changing requirements of capitalism in favour of flexibility and globalisation therefore link with changed, 'post-Fordist' configurations of social space (Brenner 2000, Gupta and Ferguson 1992, Harvey 2004). While the case study organisation is a state institution, it can nonetheless be understood as an integral part of the current spatial fix. As Brenner (1997) argues, in neoliberal economies such as the UK, the space of the state is interlocked with the space of capitalism, since it must both support capitalist development, and at the same time attempt to repair the fragmentation to social relationships which capitalist processes cause. Using Lefebvre's thinking, a spatial dimension can be included in the conceptual framework outlined above. The new offices in the case study organisation can be understood as spatial attempts to shape organisational processes and relationships in line with current demands made through NPM for cost-effectiveness, flexibility and networking. And, using the geographical imagination, everyday spatial and embodied relationships, such as routine ways of moving around a building, gestures, or ways of organising work materials on a desk, can be understood by relating them to the wider culture and social structures of NPM and wider society.

Before going on to summarise the role of buildings in the case study organisation as it unfolded between 2004 and 2007, I will set out some key concepts dealing with space, place and material objects.

2 Space, place and material artefacts: key concepts

This project considers buildings, the spaces they create and the material objects associated with them. As Lefebvre (1991) observes, in modern societies, the taken for granted meaning of the term 'space' is an empty volume which can be measured geometrically and can contain material objects. However, there is significant variety in the way that space has been conceptualised and in the terms used to refer to it in research into space in organisation studies (Taylor and Spicer 2007). The term 'space' is also often used metaphorically (for example, the 'space of cognition and learning' discussed by Hernes et al

2006). The literature on space includes consideration of artefacts, but these have also been dealt with in a separate strand of literature, for instance in Schein's (1990) understanding of artefacts as the most superficial 'layer' of organisational culture (Rafaeli and Pratt 2006).

In this thesis I use Lefebvre's (1991) concept of social space. In Lefebvre's conceptualisation, space is understood as socially constructed and as the product of three analytic dimensions. The most significant of these dimensions, in Lefebvre's view, is the way in which space is configured to align with the requirements of capitalism. Space is simultaneously produced through two other dimensions, the physical routines and habits adopted by people occupying and using space, and the meanings they attach to it. I will use a similar understanding of buildings and other artefacts as 'social objects' (Harré 2002) that have particular physical properties which both open up and limit their use, but whose actual meaning and use are socially constructed. Therefore, as Rafaeli and Pratt (2006) recognise, artefacts are neither superficial nor just symbolic, but are implicated in many social processes. These assumptions are elaborated in chapter 2.

I use both the terms 'space' and 'place' in the thesis, and have tended to follow the usage made in the literature being drawn upon at each point. However, the concepts of space and place are not precisely interchangeable and are in tension in parts of the literature. 'Place' is generally considered equivalent to space that has acquired familiarity and meaningfulness. For example, Tuan (1977) links this distinction with movement, so that space is what allows movement, but each pause in movement allows for a location to acquire meaning and be transformed into a place. In Gieryn's (2000) useful definition of place, three dimensions are bundled together. A place must, first, occupy a unique spot in the universe. Place is therefore particular (such as a particular town, or building, or office area) not a category (such as 'urban', 'workplace' or 'office'). Second, place has material form. This material form provides the context for social processes and can be changed by them. Third, place is invested with meaning and value. However, the meanings and values people hold about a place vary in relation to the social processes unfolding in it, so that 'in spite of its relatively enduring and imposing materiality, the meaning or value of the same place is labile' (p.465). And because of the shifting meanings that people attach to particular places, place contributes to identity in the same way that class and gender do (Gieryn 2000). (The concept of 'place identity' is discussed in chapter 2). In a twist in the debate on space and place, Augé (1995) draws attention to the curious category of the 'non-place' characteristic of modern urban development. Because of the global sameness of places such as airports,

motorways and supermarkets, these places fail to elicit much personal meaning (Augé 1995). However, having sketched out the suggested difference between space and place, I agree with Massey (2005), who argues that since no space can be meaning/less, it is unhelpful to assume a sharp distinction between space and place. Lefebvre's (1991) concept of social space has meaning inherent in it, and accords with this view. Therefore, in the project, both terms 'space' and 'place' are used as umbrella concepts to refer to the buildings and other material artefacts associated with them, and the spaces they create.

In the thesis, I focus on two new office buildings which were first occupied by employees in the case study organisation in 2004 and 2005. So that these buildings can be understood as part of their wider spatial and organisational context, I shall now summarise how the role of buildings changed in the case study organisation over the period of the fieldwork.

3 The unfolding story of buildings in Southern County Council

3.1 Before 2004: the 'old campus'

The case study organisation is a UK local authority, Southern County Council (SCC)¹. The wider place of Southern County is predominantly rural and its economy is based mainly on agriculture. The County also has several Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, charming towns and villages and an attractive coastline which has become a popular destination for middle class tourists, but it also has areas of significant urban and rural deprivation. The county town, Easton, has a population of about 130,000. It is situated on the coast and is a working port. I became involved with the Council in the late 1990s, when I worked as a management lecturer in a university situated in a neighbouring region. Part of my job role was to collaborate with external organisations to develop and deliver accredited management development programmes which were tailored to organisational requirements. Between 1998 and 2006, I worked collaboratively with the Learning and Development team in SCC to design and deliver a series of postgraduate awards in management. Through this work, I regularly visited the organisation, and through the relationships I formed with the staff in Learning and Development and the managers undertaking the programmes, I became a quasi-insider to the organisation.

¹ All names are pseudonyms

Prior to 2004, work buildings did not feature prominently in the official agenda of the organisation or in everyday conversation. The central collection of office buildings accommodating SCC staff was situated around St. Mary Court and Ship Street, in a rather tired and run down area a short walk from Easton's town centre. This group of six buildings (which later were referred to in the organisation as 'the old campus') housed staff in the seven directorates (Social Care, Education, Environment and Transport, Libraries and Heritage, Fire and Rescue, Democratic Services and Economic Development). The spatial structure of the organisation therefore matched the directorate structure, with each directorate having its own separate 'headquarters' building on the old campus, as well as a variety of buildings in localities spread across the County. (The exception to this was St Agnes House which was the 'headquarters' for both the Economic Development and Democratic Services directorates). Each of these buildings housed the senior managers in its particular directorate, together with the middle managers who reported directly to them, supporting HR, Finance and IT staff who provided services for that directorate, as well as some managers and staff providing services to the public in the Easton locality. These 'headquarters' buildings were of various vintages. For instance, St Agnes House was a stone-built Victorian building with a heavy and imposing, but slightly decaying, appearance, whereas Environment and Transport occupied a boxy, 1970s low-rise tower block.

The approach to the management of property adopted in County had been criticised by central government in its Best Value inspection of 2000. The inspection report referred to a lack of focus and integration in the way property was managed. It also criticised the absence of any systematic review of property holdings or measurement of their performance, and the limited involvement by councillors in property decisions. Despite these criticisms, however, other matters appeared to be afforded higher priority by senior managers. At the time, joint venture companies were regarded by central government as an important way in which private sector involvement could improve public services through the provision of expertise in IT and business process re-engineering (BPR). In 2003, the senior managers in SCC were working on a proposal that aligned with this new government requirement, which would place the support or 'back office' services of Finance, HR and IT in a new joint venture company configured as a Public-Private Partnership (PPP). It was argued that the new company would be able to extend the provision of these services to a wider group of councils, thus enabling them to be provided more cost-effectively.

3.2 2004: the purchase and occupation of Enterprise House

In November 2003, a part-completed office building on the outskirts of Easton became available for sale at a cheap price. The building had been commissioned by X-En, an energy supplier, to accommodate call centre staff together with senior managers. According to the architect who led the design team, the new building was designed to stimulate a less hierarchical and more flexible, networked organisational culture in X-En. But due to unforeseen fluctuations in the price of energy, X-En went into administration in autumn 2003 and the building was put on the market. It was purchased by SCC in January 2004 to accommodate 'strategic' employees, supporting staff and councillors and was renamed Enterprise House (see Appendix 1, photographs 1 and 2 for photographs of the external view of Enterprise House). The design specification was modified to include a council chamber and Enterprise House was occupied by the first 'wave' of staff in spring 2004. What was termed the '*principle of occupation*' of Enterprise House was determined by the geographical spread of responsibility of particular job roles. People whose responsibilities covered the whole of the County were defined as 'strategic' staff and moved to Enterprise House, whereas those whose roles covered only part of the County were defined as 'operational' and were excluded. This can be understood as a new spatial division of labour (Massey 1995) in which 'strategic' roles were grouped together and separated from 'operational' roles (rather than a spatial division between directorates, as had been the case on the old campus).

Enterprise House contrasted greatly with all the other buildings in SCC. It is constructed predominantly from reinforced glass and is almost entirely transparent. The building has a vast atrium and in daylight hours is filled with natural light. All the office areas (termed 'floorplates') are open plan, and desks are arranged in blocks of eight (called 'benches'). All employees, including the Chief Executive and Councillors, have the same amount of desk space. Although teams were allocated to specific benches, individuals had only nominal ownership of a particular desk. The official office etiquette introduced at the start of the occupancy specified that at the end of each work session, all staff should log off their computer and phone, and remove all work and personal possessions and place them in storage, before logging on (possibly elsewhere) at the start of the next work session. Breakout areas and other communal spaces permitted unplanned, informal communication. According to the people involved in designing and commissioning the building, these

features were intended to encourage 'new ways of working' which were less 'bureaucratic' and involved more face to face communication. This was spoken of as encouraging networking across directorate boundaries to erode organisational 'silos' and across hierarchical levels.

3.3 Further changes stemming from the move to Enterprise House

Very soon after the occupation of Enterprise House, there appeared to be widespread agreement about the success of the initiative, both in official documentation and anecdotally. A report submitted to the Corporate Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee on 13 October 2004 stated that *'[a]ssessment against the original targets for the [Enterprise House] programme demonstrates exceptional successful delivery of the programme'*. Several other changes appeared to result directly from the creation of the new strategic centre. As Massey (1995) observes, the existence of an organisational centre then defines a periphery; in this case, the buildings comprising the periphery (both those remaining on the old campus and those spread across the County in localities) immediately appeared shabby in comparison with Enterprise House. These peripheral buildings dated from the nineteenth century to the 1960s, and whereas some of them were purpose-built civic buildings, others were originally designed for other purposes altogether and had subsequently been adapted and 'retrofitted' over time to support office-based work. They included, for example, a children's home based in a converted residential house, a training centre based in a converted children's home, several locality offices based in portakabins and a warehouse for storing archived paperwork based in a dilapidated business park unit. The Council agreed that the organisation should move to a situation in which all Council office accommodation supported the model of 'new ways of working' encouraged in Enterprise House, and in October 2004 a new Property Strategy specifying how this would be achieved was issued. A new department called the Workspace Improvement Team (WIT) was created to implement the strategy, with a remit to review all Council property, commission new buildings or refurbish existing ones, move staff into the new accommodation and induct them into the new offices and appropriate ways of working. All these subsequent changes can be seen as attempts to bring about a shift in institutional logic (Thornton and Ocasio 2008) where the initial investment of resources in Enterprise House had committed the organisation to the new logic.

3.4 FirstService and Troy House

In the meantime, plans for the new Public-Private Partnership to enable the cost-effective provision of 'back office' services had also been implemented. FirstService Limited was one of a small number of PPPs established to test the effectiveness of a separation between 'front office' and 'back office' services in UK local government. Its formal structure reflected the model specified for the national pilots, where 'front offices' were defined as the parts of the organisation providing services directly to the public (such as Libraries or Highways) and 'back office' services (HR, IT and Finance functions) were those which had no direct contact with the public, but supported the provision of frontline services.

FirstService was formed through a collaboration between a privatised telecommunications company, Telecom, Southern County Council and a local District Council. Its role was to supply Finance, HR and IT services to both Councils in the partnership, as well as a call centre offering a single point of contact for the public. The staff who provided these 'back office' services had previously been working within specific directorates, where they worked as specialists (for example, organising the recruitment of child protection staff). When FirstService was formally set up, the staff were seconded to the new organisation. Their work was evaluated in terms of the business processes involved, and then new processes were developed which enabled the staff to provide generic, 'shared' services to any team or directorate. To accommodate FirstService, the Council bought a disused electricity generating building across the road from Enterprise House. The building, named Troy House, was structured simply as an open, brick-built shell designed to accommodate industrial machinery (see Appendix 1, photographs 3 and 4). After it was purchased by SCC, it was refurbished as an office, again with the stated intention to support 'new ways of working'. Accordingly, the refurbished office had large open plan floorplates furnished with the same exchangeable desks that were used in Enterprise House, and while the external walls were brick-built with rather small windows, there was a high degree of internal visibility across the floorplates and into the transparent meeting rooms. The office etiquette that stated the behaviour required in Enterprise House was also used in Troy House.

3.5 Further into the periphery: Public Service Villages (PSVs)

In 2007, when the second phase of fieldwork in the research was being undertaken, further spatial reorganisations were planned in SCC. The locality offices scattered across the County were officially criticised as being ad hoc and dilapidated, and, because most of these offices housed single services, it was argued that they reinforced organisational 'silos'. To overcome these problems, two new 'Public Services Villages' (PSVs) had been commissioned, each of which would provide '*a single integrated public sector building*' in which '*by co-locating staff within a single building there are increased opportunities to work across organisational silos towards an integrated service provision*'². At the time that I concluded the fieldwork, the architectural plans for the new PSVs and a programme of closure for the locality offices had been approved.

As well as changes which dealt explicitly with buildings, a further initiative termed 'Securing the Future' was ongoing in 2007. Although this initiative primarily concerned organisational structural change, the new buildings were presented as a key element which could facilitate the change proposed.

3.6 The proposed 'flexible firm' structure in SCC: 'Securing the Future'

In the 2005-2006 financial year there had been a £5m budget deficit in SCC, which the Council's majority party predicted would accumulate year-on-year unless preventative action was taken. The Council commissioned ABCD consultants to investigate ways in which the ongoing costs of running the Council could be reduced, and the consultancy report, called 'Securing the Future' (StF) was produced in February 2007. In the report, ABCD recommended that, where possible, the delivery of services should be contracted out to the independent sector, provided that a 'mature market' existed for that area of provision. This programme of contracting out would result in a new organisation structure with a small 'corporate centre' of about 700 staff working in strategic commissioning roles and the several thousand remaining employees working in independent delivery agencies. This recommendation was accepted by the majority party in the Council, who presented it as the only way to prevent the budget shortfall mounting. The StF project work then turned to

² Cabinet Report, 15 January 2008, point 26

analysing the business processes in operation throughout the organisation, to assess and improve their suitability for outsourcing. However, Securing the Future was strongly contested. The ABCD report was leaked to the local paper in full prior to its official release in the organisation. The topic frequently arose in conversation and was often introduced by interview respondents. An indication of the sensitivity of the project in the organisation is given by the fact that senior managers issued instructions that it could only be referred to by its official title or initials (StF) and not by other phrases which had begun to be used (such as 'the ABCD report' or 'the mass privatisation programme'). The relevance of StF to the research I conducted was that the new buildings were argued to be a vital component enabling this restructuring exercise. Because all the desks were exchangeable rather than belonging to individual staff members, the new offices provided a very high degree of flexibility in terms of reconfiguring the occupancy of staff. The old campus and other conventional office buildings would have presented significant obstacles to this type of spatial reconfiguration.

StF was not implemented during the period of the fieldwork. It was placed on hold because other events made more urgent demands on senior managers' attention (including a bid made by Easton Borough Council to become a unitary authority, and a proposed reorganisation of the County boundary proposed in the Local Government Review of 2008). For most of the duration of the project, I therefore tended to think of StF as something that had once been a possibility but had then been shelved. However, just as I was finalising the thesis in September 2010, there was an announcement on national news that Councillors at SCC had approved a proposal to outsource all of its services to social enterprises or companies and become what was termed a 'virtual Council'. This was reported as the first time a local authority has considered not providing any services at all itself. It appears, then, that something very much like the original StF proposals will be implemented. While all local authorities are now being subjected to large cuts in funding, different authorities appear to be choosing different ways of responding to their new financial circumstances. In the case of SCC, it seems reasonable to speculate that there is an association between the exchangeable space the organisation had previously adopted throughout its office accommodation and the 'virtual council' approach to controlling costs which was subsequently agreed upon.

4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature dealing with concepts and evidence from two largely separate streams of literature, organisation studies and space. In order to examine the possible role of the new offices in encouraging a shift towards more fluid, networked structures, in the first part of the chapter I review claims that this type of shift is a widespread and inevitable trend. I therefore consider arguments in which 'the putative demise of bureaucracy, and the emergence of the post-bureaucratic or network organization, is an axiomatic component' (Courpasson and Reed 2004:5) together with counter-arguments which suggest that we are seeing variants of bureaucracy rather than the emergence of a new form. This supposed shift is also alleged to have been accompanied by concomitant shifts in the employment relationship, represented in a new implicit contract emphasising dynamism and commitment. Such organisational efforts to elicit commitment and manipulate meanings also have implications for employees' identities, as they make ongoing choices about how to position themselves in relation to these meanings. I conclude this part of the chapter with a brief review of the implementation of NPM in the UK, in order to show how this and previous waves of reform have attempted to reshape public bureaucracies, and the outcomes of these attempts. In the second part of the chapter I consider space as something which both produces social life and is produced by it. I use Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualisation of the social production of space to examine the processes through which space is produced and the relationship between modern space and capitalism. I then consider analyses of the configuration of contemporary space, in particular Castells' (1996) argument that the network form of organisation has produced a new configuration which he calls the 'space of flows' (p.378). The next part of the chapter examines claims that the 'new office' (Duffy 1997) can enable a shift from hierarchical modes of organisation to ones ceding autonomy to employees. I then review empirical evidence relating to the case study. Finally I set out the conceptual framework which will be used in the analysis and which brings together concepts from both streams of literature to account for the processes through which organisational space is produced, maintained and transformed.

In Chapter 3 I describe and justify the methods of investigation, analysis and interpretation I used. I begin by setting out the epistemological assumptions on which the research is based. Given the many possible meanings attached to the word 'ethnography', I then explain what I mean by an 'ethnographically-oriented' approach and outline its appropriateness to this

investigation. Following a chronological overview of the fieldwork, I highlight particular issues that arose when undertaking fieldwork: the way I presented myself as a researcher, and insights gained from conducting participant-observation and interviews which contributed to the analysis. I conclude this chapter by summarising how I analysed and interpreted the empirical materials.

Chapter 4, 'Taking up Space', is the first empirical chapter. It analyses the changing intentions for new offices in SCC stated by organisation designers in both phases of fieldwork in 2004 and 2007. The chapter serves two purposes. First, it analyses the situation before the purchase of Enterprise House and shows how the original organisation designers portrayed the old campus and the County itself as places which had made SCC managers static and insular, so that the organisation as a whole had fallen 'behind' other authorities. Second, it analyses the expanding ambitions expressed for the contribution of buildings to organisational strategy, which led ultimately to the comprehensive spatial reconfiguration of the organisation's office accommodation. The phrase in the chapter's title, 'taking up space' is used in two senses. 'Taking up space' means to physically occupy (new) space, as SCC did. The phrase is also used to imply the 'taking up' of a new idea or tool, grasping its significance and putting it to use. This helps to convey the way in which the organisation designers appeared to notice and seize new opportunities for organisational change which the flexible, exchangeable office space presented to them.

The second empirical chapter, 'Grand Designs', focuses on Enterprise House and analyses the arguments expressed by the organisation designers for how it could reshape the functioning of the strategic centre and the organisation as a whole. This title is meant to convey the sense of optimism and confidence they put across when speaking of the ways in which the new building could transform the entire organisation. The analysis draws on Lefebvre's (1991) concept of 'conceived space' (p.42), in which space is understood as both a material structure and a project designed to engineer enduring sets of relations. I analyse the way in which the organisation designers related the material structure of the building and the new sets of relations they aspired to, in which the hierarchy would be levelled, the formation of networks would be catalysed and work would be performed with enhanced energy and speed. The organisation designers suggested, however, that Enterprise House was a catalyst and could only reshape the organisational culture if it was supported by other managerial interventions. In the last part of the chapter, I analyse what appeared to be the main supporting intervention, the clear desk policy.

Chapter 6, 'The Invisible Hierarchy', moves forward in time to 2007 and analyses the enduring sets of relations that actually emerged in the new strategic centre building. As the title implies, despite the absence of materially implied hierarchy in Enterprise House, complex sets of social hierarchies were enacted within the building, reproduced through routine patterns of movement and location. This analysis draws on Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) concept of 'inequality of spaces' which links patterns of movement and hierarchical relationships, and the 'invisible lines' which Muetzelfeldt (2006) suggests are drawn through the conduct of organisational relationships in which hierarchy and authority are appropriately recognised. This environment appeared to support different types of work to different extents and I identify four types of activity (networking, doing specialist work, being a team member and managing) for which the building appeared to offer distinct sets of opportunities and constraints.

In Chapter 7 I go across the road to Troy House, the building accommodating 'back office' employees in FirstService, known colloquially as 'The Dark Side'. I begin by analysing the official intentions for this building as stated by members of the WIT, the new organisation designers charged with implementing the organisation's property strategy. Rather than focusing on employees' freedom to move and network, as was the case for the strategic centre, in Troy House the emphasis was on the control of the exchangeable space by senior managers to facilitate cost-reduction and the spatial reconfiguration of employees to meet changing requirements. I conceptualise this use of flexibility as the spatial dimension of what Kallinikos (2004) calls the 'non-inclusive' employment relationship, which he argues is the fundamental component from which modern organisation is composed. Seen this way, the sociospatial structure in Troy House appears as a more precise, pure and 'ideal' instance of bureaucratic organisation than would have been possible in conventional, non-exchangeable office space. Within this sociospatial structure, employees fell into one of two categories: those who were able to settle at particular desks, and those who were obliged to hot-desk. The experiences of the hot-deskers are of particular interest because they fulfilled official intentions that employees should not have ownership over a desk. The analysis indicates, however, that this enforced mobility gave rise to specific practical and emotional disadvantages.

In the final chapter, I summarise the analysis of the spatial reorganisation of SCC throughout the period of the fieldwork, consider it in the context of wider social and spatial structures,

and identify the contributions made by the project. These contributions relate to both individual buildings and to the spatial reconfiguration of the whole organisation. The analysis of the strategic centre, Enterprise House, adds contributions in three areas: the sociospatial structure of the 'invisible hierarchy', the relative ease or difficulty with which different types of work could be performed within the building, and the remarkable significance of paperwork. The study of Troy House adds a an understanding of the practical difficulties of hot-desking, but perhaps more significantly, relates the flexible use of space to the configuration of bureaucratic organisations, so that this type of space can be seen as an 'advance' in terms of the ability of abstract space to support the flexible abstract labour require by capitalism. In both buildings, the group of employees at the 'top' of the organisational hierarchy maintained a private space, and from this analysis it is possible to add to Gupta and Ferguson's (2002) concept of 'inequality of spaces' by illustrating the purpose of such private space. Both buildings were also highly visual, and drawing on the experience of employees experiencing extremes of pleasure and pain resulting from looking and being looked at, I analyse the embodied experience of what Lefebvre (1991) terms the 'visual formant' of abstract space.

Finally, I consider the new spatial configuration of the organisation as a whole. Since I began the fieldwork in 2004, SCC has been spatially transformed. The organisation has adopted a spatial division of labour which is common in the private sector (Massey 1995), with a powerful 'centre' sitting above and encompassing peripheral organisational units. As well as the hierarchies of line management and degree of autonomy identified by Massey (1995), a hierarchy of the extent of ownership or firm purchase on space also appears to run through this new configuration, with those at the centre apparently able to take root and achieve a sturdy foundation from which to articulate movement and change for other employees in the periphery. I conclude the thesis by indicating the limitations of the research and outlining avenues for further investigation.

Chapter 2

Organisation studies, public sector management and spatiality: current thinking

1 Introduction to the chapter

The purposes of this chapter are to review relevant studies dealing with organisation and space, and to assemble the conceptual framework that will be used in the analysis of the case study. In order to facilitate the analysis, the conceptual framework must enable an understanding of the way in which organisational sociospatial reality is produced, maintained and transformed. This has presented a challenge, because the literatures on organisation and space have remained mostly separate. As Dale and Burrell (2008) point out, 'the material, the spatial and embodied tend to be leached out of social research' (p.205), with the result that discourse, culture and identity are usually analysed at an ideational level. The task of reviewing literature has, therefore, been addressed by organising the chapter in three parts. The first part deals with relevant concepts and studies from the organisation studies literature, and the second part covers literature relating space, organisation, and social life generally. Each of these begins by setting out the basic assumptions that will be used, before explaining useful concepts and reviewing empirical evidence relevant to this analysis. In the final part of the chapter I draw together concepts from both of these streams of literature into the conceptual framework.

Turning to the first part of the chapter, after setting out some basic assumptions about social reality, I consider Berger and Luckmann's (1966) account of institutionalisation. Although Berger and Luckmann (1966) state that the spatial structure of everyday reality is 'quite peripheral' (p.40) to their analysis, it can nonetheless articulate with spatiality, and in the thesis I use Berger and Luckmann's (1966) understanding of the processes through which social structures are created, reproduced and changed to consider how the workspace can facilitate the formation of changed organisational social structures. I then introduce three concepts which I also use in the analysis, in each case highlighting key debates relevant to the case study rather than providing a comprehensive review of

the literature relating to each concept. The first of these concepts is bureaucracy. The aims of the new offices were spoken of as the encouragement of increased networking and reduced hierarchy, organisational changes that are presented in the discourse of NPM as reducing 'bureaucracy'. In the context of this project, it is therefore important to understand both bureaucracy and the models of the network (Castells 1996) or 'post-bureaucratic' (Heckscher 1994) form, which are alleged to be superseding it. The second key concept discussed is the implicit contract. Parallel to the debate about the shift to the network organisational form, it is argued that the pressures of the globalised environment have also produced a shift to a new form of employment relationship, in which innovation and flexibility are exchanged for autonomy and involvement (Hiltrop 1995). Third, I discuss the ways in which individuals 'work on' their identities through their engagement with society, including organisations. Finally, in this first part of the chapter I consider the specific changes made to public sector organisations made as part of New Public Management (NPM), focusing on what attempts have been made to reshape organisational structures and processes, and empirical evidence of the consequences of these changes.

In the second part of the chapter I review literature analysing the spatial dimension of social life. Although space has generally been neglected in organisation studies, several strands of literature within organisation theory have focused on the material and spatial, and insights from these literatures are used in the thesis. These include organisational symbolism (e.g. Gagliardi 1990, Yanow 1995, 1998, 2006) in which buildings are regarded as vehicles through which meanings and values are expressed, and can be 'read from'. In Actor-Network Theory (e.g. Law and Hassard 1999) the presumption of difference between social life and materiality is rejected, so that people, objects, and techniques are regarded as heterogeneous 'actants'. Although ANT gives us the useful insight that the material world provides enablements and constraints to social processes, I do not assume that material objects themselves have the capacity for agency, or even subjectivity as Bruni (2005) implies. The built environment has also been examined using labour process theory (e.g. Baldry 1999, Rosen 1990). This illuminates the role of the workplace as a structure of control, but tends to neglect the negotiation of social structures that takes place in the context of control attempts made through buildings.

Having mentioned these strands of literature, the principal understanding of space and social life that I adopt in the thesis is Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualisation of the social production of space. Lefebvre regards space as an ensemble of social relationships and hierarchies, in which capitalism is the primary structuring principle. This is helpful in

relation to the sociological aspirations of the project, because space is understood as an integral dimension of social structures, so that, as Prior (1988) puts it, 'space and society are not ... two separate realms of existence but are intertwined in a single order of existence' (p.93). However, Lefebvre's insistence that 'capital remains the dominant structuring principle of modern spatial practices' (Brenner 1997:158) means that he pays little attention to the role of agency in the production of space. I therefore draw on related concepts which enable a more complete understanding of way in which social actors contribute to the ongoing configuration of space.

Having explained Lefebvre's conceptualisation of the processes through which space is produced, I then consider the configuration of contemporary space. As mentioned earlier, it is widely argued that radical shifts in the mode of production have provoked fundamental changes to organisation structures and employment relationships. Similarly, in the literature on space, some commentators claim that shifts in the processes of capital accumulation have produced a profound reconfiguration of space. These two debates are linked by Castells (1996) who argues that the new logic of the network organisation has produced a new spatial logic, the 'space of flows' (p.378), in which space is configured to enable movement and interaction. I then focus on studies dealing specifically with space and organisation, beginning with Duffy's (1997) advice on the alignment of office design with organisational strategy. Following this, I review empirical evidence relating the configuration of the workspace with organisational functioning.

In the final part of the chapter, I bring together a set of concepts from both of these streams of literature for use in the analysis. In the conceptual framework, the new offices are seen as part of wider changing spatial configurations aligning with attempts to shift organisations towards a more networked form. These wider social and spatial structures are interpreted by organisation designers (architects and managers) as material designs for the offices, which are the same time ways of seeking changed forms of organisational control over work processes and structures, and the employment relationship with individuals. Employees occupying and using the buildings interpret and act on this material design in ways that partly fulfil these official purposes, but also fulfil their own purposes, so that there will be unintended as well as intended consequences associated with the new buildings.

I shall now turn to the organisation studies literature, beginning with some basic assumptions which inform the project.

2 The social construction of reality, bureaucracy and 'post-bureaucracy'

2.1 Basic assumptions about society and individuals

The assumption made throughout this project is that reality is constituted by the ongoing interaction of socio-material processes. These processes may coalesce into recognisable and enduring patterns which resemble stable entities or social structures (involving such things as 'organisations', 'cultures', 'social classes' or 'genders'). However, these apparently firm entities are nonetheless continually being made and remade by interacting processes and would cease to exist if the processes shifted or discontinued. Harré (2002), for example, adopts this view when he defines a 'social world' as 'an ephemeral attribute of a flow of symbolic interactions among active people competent in the conventions of a certain cultural milieu' (p.12). Similarly, Berger and Luckmann (1966) recognise that although the social world may appear as something other than a human product, it has no ontological status apart from the human activity that produces it. Thus, social order is:

.. an ongoing human production. .. Both in its genesis (social order is the result of past human activity) and its existence in any instant in time (social order exists only and in so far as human activity continues to produce it) it is a human product. (p.69-70).

At the same time as human activity produces society, humans are also shaped by society. In this process of 'structuration' (Giddens 1984), '[t]he constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality' (p.25). Society is structured by previous human activity and these pre-existing structures provide both enablements and constraints for the exercise of individual choice. As Rosen et al (1990) put it, 'people create the world through actions they largely choose, but such choices are constrained by the previous outcomes of previous choices' (p.70-71). And, as Watson (2009) points out, these choices relate both to what to do and who to be. Questions of self-identity – 'the individual's own notion of who and what they are' (Watson 2009:431) are dealt with in an ongoing process of 'identity work'. Social structure is not therefore external to individuals, but is something that 'reaches down into the deepest recesses of the individual's existence' (Eldridge 1983:24). In making these choices about what to do and who to be, each person also shapes society.

As Mills (1959/2000) observes, '[b]y the fact of his living, [the individual] contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove' (p.6).

Chia (1996, 2002) refers to the assumption that reality is continuously constituted through interacting processes as an 'ontology of becoming'. This type of understanding has also been labelled 'relational' (e.g. Watson 2002:473) because both social institutions and human individuality are understood as the outcomes of ongoing human relationships and interactions. Dachler and Hosking's (1995) use of the term 'relational' refers both to the relational processes that construct organisational and managerial realities and to processes of knowledge production. As Dachler and Hosking (1995) point out, with a relational perspective, the boundary between epistemological issues and 'content' issues becomes blurred, because '[i]t is on the basis of epistemological processes that individual and social phenomena obtain ontology, that is, are interpreted as real or as having a particular meaning' (p.1). This point is taken up later in the discussion of methodological assumptions (chapter 3).

Although, as Dachler and Hosking (1995) indicate, a relational understanding has been adopted to varying degrees in areas of philosophy, sociology and psychology, it has been less well represented in the management and organisational literatures. These literatures have, rather, been dominated by a perspective that has been variously characterised as 'entitative' (Hosking and Morley 1991), 'possessive individualism' (Sampson 1988), 'realist ontology' (Dachler 1988) or a 'being' ontology (Chia 1996, 2002). As Dachler and Hosking (1995) point out, this perspective is based on the Cartesian assumption of a thinking observer who is separate from the reality being investigated, which enables reality to appear as if it is 'composed of discrete, permanent, and identifiable 'things', 'entities' and 'events'' (Chia 1996:26). Accordingly, commonsense notions such as 'the organization', its 'goals', 'culture', 'environment', 'strategies', etc. are assumed to have an independent existence and causal relationships between them can be identified. While 'entities' may exhibit processes of change, these are regarded as secondary properties of their primary stable social states, rather than the reverse. This dominant perspective is worth mentioning because it informs much of the popular literature on organisational space, arguing, for example, that the degree of social interaction between employees is a function of their proximity to one another.

Having set out the relational assumptions that will be adopted, I will now consider Berger and Luckmann's (1966) account of the social processes through which structured social reality is created, maintained and transformed. This is used alongside Lefebvre's model

in the conceptual framework to enable a fuller account of agency in the production of social space.

2.2 The production of social order and change

Berger and Luckmann (1966) identify the basic processes through which 'a taken-for-granted reality 'congeals' for the man in the street' (p.15). (For a summary, see Watson 2008, SCR). These processes are, first, *externalisation*, which occurs when people act on the world by creating an object or devising a practice. Second, *objectification* takes place when such objects or practices are shared and understood as 'normal'. Third, *internalisation* occurs when the objectified arrangement is regarded by subsequent generations as something which simply exists in the social world, as opposed to something that particular people devised for particular purposes.

Everyday knowledge, i.e. 'knowledge that guides conduct in everyday life' (p.33) is integral to these processes. This knowledge consists mainly of *typifications* (p.43), ways of attributing meaning which recognise actions, people, places and so on, as similar to previous occurrences. An important element within typified knowledge is *recipe knowledge* (Berger and Luckmann 1966:57), practical knowledge which enables 'mastery of routine problems and the performance of roles' (p.83). The totality of typificatory schemes adds up to form 'the social stock of knowledge' (p.56). This stock of knowledge constitutes structured reality:

Social structure is the sum total of these typifications and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by them. As such, social structure is an essential element of the reality of everyday life. (p.46).

The stock of knowledge is not fixed, however, but is contradictory and ambiguous, and there are many possible meanings that can be attached to any particular situation. Drawing on Schutz (1967), Auburn and Barnes (2006) suggest that:

[t]he stock of knowledge is subservient to the person's purpose: what we know at a particular point in our engagement with the world is fitted to or selected as relevant to the project we are pursuing. (p.42).

Everyday knowledge therefore enables both the orderly structuring of reality and the initiation of change, or externalisation. When new ideas or practices are externalised and repeated, they become routines or *habitualizations* (Berger and Luckmann 1966:71)

which can be reproduced with economy of effort. Any habitualization, Berger and Luckmann note, constitutes incipient institutionalisation, but social institutions come fully into being only when 'reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors' (p.72) takes place over the course of shared history. When this institutionalised world is passed onto others it is *objectified*, because it appears to exist over and above the particular individuals enacting it. The institution is now experienced as 'possessing a reality of [its] own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact' (p.76). The institutional order is an implicit form of social control, as Berger and Luckmann state:

Institutions ... by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible. (p.72).

Social order can, therefore, be achieved without explicit attempts on the part of managers or other individuals to control the actions of others. At the same time, however, institutional order also enables change. This is because, first, the economising property of habitualizations releases effort for new projects. As Berger and Luckmann put it, 'the background of habitualized activity opens up a foreground for deliberation and innovation' (p.71). Second, as Berger and Luckmann also point out, people tend to resist institutional typifications of their situation and substitute their own redefinitions. Therefore, the existence of institutional order (social structure) facilitates both the reproduction of order and deviation from it (agency).

When the objectivated social world is passed onto a new generation, it is *internalised* by its members in the course of their socialisation. At this point, Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue, the social world comes fully into existence because it comes to the new generation as a tradition, rather than an arrangement that was created by particular people to deal with particular circumstances. *Reification* is 'an extreme step in the process of objectivation' which occurs when 'the objectivated world loses its comprehensibility as a human enterprise and becomes fixated as a non-human, non-humanizable, inert facticity' (p.106). Even reified institutions can be changed, however, and Berger and Luckmann suggest that change is more likely conditions which favour redefinition, such as the collapse of institutional orders, contact between previously segregated societies, and the phenomenon of social marginality.

2.3 Organisations as 'negotiated orders'

As I will indicate shortly, bureaucracy is the taken for granted approach to seeking productive co-operation in organisations, and has an 'official dimension' comprised of rules, roles, procedures, and indeed material environments, all of which are designed to shape activities in ways that align with official purposes. However, in line with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) understanding, organisational order can exist 'only and in so far as human activity continues to produce it' (p.69-70). This processual understanding of organisation is elaborated in Strauss's (1978) negotiated order perspective, in which, as Joas (1993) puts it, '[f]or their existence, organizations are dependent on their continuous reconstitution in action' (p.40-41). The negotiated order on any particular day is, as Strauss (1978) defines it, 'the sum total of the organisation's rules and policies, along with whatever agreements, understandings, pacts, contracts and other working arrangements currently obtained' (p.5). Organisations can then be understood as having both an official dimension and an unofficial dimension which work together, so that 'only a continuous process of tacit agreements, unofficial arrangements and official decisions makes organizational functioning possible' (Joas 1993:41). As Watson (2001) recognises, a key insight given by this perspective is that organisational actors, both those charged with administrative design and other employees, will always act in the light of their own interests, understandings, loyalties, knowledge, occupational standing and social origins, so that official intentions will be fulfilled to a certain extent, but there will always be unintended consequences of attempts to control organisational activities.

In this thesis, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) focus on the role of social actors in initiating and maintaining change from pre-existing social, and Strauss's (1978) conceptualisation of the negotiated order are used to balance Lefebvre's emphasis on powerful social structures in the production of social space (which I will discuss later on p.46). Next, I consider both bureaucracy and the models of organisation that are alleged to be supplanting it, which articulate with the designs of the new offices I analyse.

2.4 Organisational design: bureaucracy and 'post-bureaucracy'

2.4.1 *Bureaucracy understood as the 'ideal type', direct and indirect control*

Bureaucracy has become the taken for granted means of attempting to secure organisational control and cooperation. It is nonetheless a socially produced institution, and, as Watson (2008) and Reed (2005) recognise, part of a wider historical process in which more and more aspects of life have been subjected to rational thinking. Kallinikos

(2003) argues that bureaucracy is embedded in a societal context based on particular ‘axial principles’, namely, ‘legal-rational type of authority, separation of office duties from personal life, meritocracy and universalism’ (p.602). It is usually understood using the Weberian ‘ideal type’, an analytic device showing a ‘pure’ instance of bureaucratic organisation. This is shown below in Table 2.1.

	Characteristics of bureaucracy
	The function of the office relates to a fixed and official jurisdictional area, ordered by rules and procedures
	Rules and procedures are calculated to provide the most appropriate means of achieving specified ends
	Activities are controlled by officials organised in a hierarchy of authority, with superior and subordinate relationships
	Communications and commands pass up or down the hierarchy without missing any steps
	Management of the office relies on written files; decisions are inscribed in an official record
	Tasks are divided up and allocated to people with relevant expertise and training
	Posts are filled and promotions achieved by the best qualified people on the basis of a transparent set of requirements
	Posts are employees’ sole or major occupations; and employment provides a career structure
	Employees are compensated according to their level in the hierarchy
	Posts cannot become the private property of the office holder; the office-holder’s authority derives from their appointed office and not the person
	All decisions and judgements are made impartially, without emotion, personal prejudice or preference

Table 2.1 Characteristics of bureaucracy

(adapted from: Meier and Hill 2005:52, Pollitt 2009, Watson 2008).

In practice, managers can choose a loose or tight bureaucratic structure and culture, by varying the form of control attempted (Watson 2002, 2008). Control is sought through procedures, rules, roles, strategies and performance management systems, collectively termed the ‘official dimension’ of organisation (Watson 2003). A tight bureaucratic structure and culture is associated with ‘direct’ (Watson 2002, 2008) or ‘rational’ (Barley and Kunda 1992) control, and a loose bureaucratic structure with ‘indirect’ (Watson 2002, 2008) or ‘normative’ control (Barley and Kunda 1992). Control attempts may also be ‘coercive’, taking the form of harsh discipline and threats of violence (Barley and

Kunda 1992:363), or threats of job losses (Jermier 1998). The form of control of attempted tends to vary according to the status of employees, with high status groups being given more autonomy than those lower in the hierarchy. And because employees always bring their own purposes and understandings to bear at work, there will always be unintended consequences of managerial interventions, whichever form of control is attempted. Emergent structures and processes within bureaucracies are explored in the literature in which unintended consequences are framed as 'dysfunctions' of bureaucracy (e.g. Gouldner 1954, Merton).

With direct or rational control, people are hired and rewarded for doing closely specified tasks. As Barley and Kunda (1992) argue, this approach assumes that employees are 'calculative actors with instrumental orientations to work ... [who] would either understand the economic advantages of an efficient system or be powerless to resist a well-designed structure' (p.384), and therefore, their compliance with organisational control can be seen as unproblematic. In contrast, with indirect or normative control, employees are given discretion over how they undertake tasks, and are encouraged to use creativity as a means of contributing to organisational survival. As Barley and Kunda (1992) point out, the most recent 'surge' of normative control has been strongly influenced by the culture management literature (Deal and Kennedy 1982, Kanter 1983, Ouchi 1981, Peters and Waterman 1982), which argued that if employees hold beliefs and values congruent with official organisational purposes, they can then be trusted to act in the organisation's best interest, without direct supervision or carefully designed incentives. And, when employees are freed from the restrictions of hierarchical control, the organisation will then be better able to respond to changing demands, so that success and profit will follow. Normative control therefore focuses on shaping employees' thoughts and emotions in ways that align with organisational purposes, in order to blur the boundaries between managers and workers, work and non-work, and produce 'employees who make no distinction between their own welfare and the welfare of the firm' (p.382). Ceding power to employees in this way can therefore be used to achieve what Watson (2003) terms 'flexibility for long term adaptability' (p.111) because committed employees will be able to identify and respond to changing requirements over time.

Attempts to 'manage' culture have been widely criticised, however. As Wright (1994) argues, this type of initiative shifts the understanding of culture 'from being something an organization *is* into something an organization *has*, and from a process embedded in context to an objectified tool of management control' (p.4). Further, as Jermier (1998)

points out, people in democratic societies tend to view direct control negatively, and consequently, 'empowerment' and other manifestations of normative control are often used to disguise managerial changes which intensify direct control (e.g. Clegg 1979, Deetz 1995, Salaman 1979, Sturdy, Knights and Willmott 1992).

Having considered bureaucracy using the device of the ideal type, I shall now turn to a conceptualisation of bureaucracy in which it is regarded as configurations of roles. This understanding is helpful in understanding how organisational flexibility can also be achieved using direct control, and is used in the analysis of the spatial flexibility adopted in Troy House.

2.4.2 *Bureaucracy understood as a configuration of roles*

While acknowledging that the Weberian ideal type is widely assumed to represent the bureaucratic form, Kallinikos (2003, 2004) argues that its features are better understood as secondary phenomena produced by the application of the 'axial principles' (2003:602) of modern society to the organisation of work, and that it is more helpful to focus attention on the principles themselves. He argues that the core social innovation that enabled the development of bureaucracy is the separation of the work role from the person in the employment relationship. Within the 'non-inclusive' employment relationship, job roles specify the particular tasks to be performed and the skills required, and systematically exclude other aspects of persons 'in their full-blown cognitive, emotional and social complexity' (Kallinikos 2004:21). The contract with roles rather than persons, he argues, is part and parcel of the social order of modernity, and not something peculiar to the workplace (Kallinikos 2003:607). It follows that:

The role, not the person, constitutes the fundamental structural and behavioural element of modern formal organizing. Organizations are not made of individuals distributed over a complex landscape of job positions but of patterns built by those abstract operational requirements we call roles. Roles are enacted by the intrinsically modern capacity of contemporary humans *to systematically and consistently suspend* all other personal or organizational aspects that do not bear upon the role and to undertake action ... along delimited and well-specified paths. The living energy and the general communicative capacity of humans are essential resources for organizations (as for all social life) but this should not lead

one to assume that formal organizations are made up of individuals qua persons. (Kallinikos 2004:21; italics original).

According to Kallinikos (2004), modern roles have three characteristics. First, as described above, they are *selective*, because they divide the role (the well-specified and delimited set of criteria that constitute the job) from the person. Second, modern roles are *mobile*: because a role is 'an abstract set of functional requirements' (p.24) it can be unleashed from the circumstances in which it was derived and replicated across various organizational contexts. Third, roles are *reversible*, because they can be redesigned or withdrawn. These characteristics have important implications for the understanding of flexibility in bureaucratic organisations. Bureaucracy is widely presumed to be inflexible, because rules and procedures enforced through centralised hierarchical control impede adaptation to changing markets. It is then argued that flexibility can only be achieved through the relaxation of hierarchical control – an argument strongly advanced in the case for 'post-bureaucratic' or 'network' organisations (discussed later, p.30). However, if bureaucracy is understood as a configuration of selective, mobile, reversible job roles, it can be seen as intrinsically flexible because 'roles can be adapted, modified, redesigned, abandoned or reshuffled to address the emerging technical, social and economic demands the organization is facing' (Kallinikos 2004:23). Further, bringing about organisational change through centralised redesign can be quicker and more straightforward than attempting to shape values and demanding initiative from employees, because the former process is freed from 'the indolence of the human body' (p.13) and 'the languid process of personal or psychological reorientation' (p.27). This ability to make rapid, centralised change on the basis of the ability to reconfigure job roles is termed 'flexibility for short term adaptability' by Watson (2003:111).

Kallinikos's argument does not align in an obvious way with the view of organisation as a 'negotiated order' (Strauss 1978) in which organisational order is assumed to be permeable to the influences that employees, as 'individuals qua persons' bring in from the non-work parts of their lives. Indeed, Kallinikos (2004) acknowledges that the extent to which the person can be separated from the role is 'a delicate issue' (p.26). However, Kallinikos's insight is useful in drawing attention to the place of the non-inclusive role within the official design of organisations. Kallinikos (2004) stresses that all modern organisations are predicated on the non-inclusive relationship, regardless of whether they are construed as 'tight' or 'loose', 'networked', 'post-bureaucratic' (and so on) – as he argues, '[t]hese terms form the very foundation of the bureaucratic organization' (p.30).

I shall now consider the argument that bureaucracy must be, and is being, replaced by a radically different organisational form.

2.4.3 The 'network' or 'post-bureaucratic' organisational form

Having argued that bureaucratic organisations are capable of different approaches to flexibility, it is still the case that in the popular literature, bureaucracy is framed as being intrinsically inflexible and incapable of adapting adequately to the rapidly changing, global environment. This view has also been enshrined in various New Public Management reforms which have targeted bureaucracy (and are discussed later, p.36). In the case for 'post-bureaucratic' (Heckscher and Donnellon 1994) or 'network' (Castells 1996) organisations, it is argued that in order to cope with an increasingly fragmented, networked environment, there must be a complete abandonment of vertically integrated bureaucratic structures, and organisations must become fluid, project-based networks themselves. In order to do this, direct control exercised through the managerial hierarchy should be eliminated and replaced by indirect control or 'empowerment' of staff, enabling the organisational structure to flex in response to emerging market needs. Organisational boundaries which impede responsiveness, both those segmenting the organisation and boundaries dividing it from the external environment, must also be blurred or collapsed (Castells 1996). Conscious attempts to bring about a shift to a 'post-bureaucratic' model therefore involve 'increasing the flexibility of social structures and making them amenable to new forms of indirect and internalized control, including cultural and ideological control' (Heydebrand 1989:345).

As Salaman (2005) points out, the case for the network organisation goes beyond the critique of bureaucracy made by Gouldner (1954) and others who identified the 'dysfunctions' of bureaucracy. Thus, Castells (1996) argues:

For the first time in history, the basic unit of economic organisation is not a subject, be it individual .. or collective. .. the unit is the network, made up of a variety of subjects and organisations, relentlessly modified as networks adapt to supportive environments and market structures. (p.198).

The contrast between this new organisational form and bureaucracy is drawn by Heckscher (1994), who proposes a new post-bureaucratic ideal type, summarised in Table 2.2.

Bureaucracy	Post-bureaucracy
Expectation of stability	Expectation of change
Emphasis on rules and procedures	Emphasis on organisational mission and the customer
Influence based on hierarchical position	Influence based on project-based expertise
Fixed decision-making processes linked to hierarchical level	Decisions made by fluid, flexible project groups
Strategic information monopolised at the top of the hierarchy	Strategic information shared
Communal spirit and friendship groupings	Network of specialised functional relationships
Fixed, impermeable boundaries	Boundaries between teams and between organisations should be open, permeable and changing

Table 2.2 Comparison of bureaucratic and ‘post-bureaucratic’ ideal types

Source: adapted from Heckscher (1994).

Castells (1996) argues that this form can adapt rapidly to changing circumstances because it is structured in a ‘variable geometry’ in which boundary-crossing structures form networks that are able to ‘innovate and adapt relentlessly’ (p.165). The network organisation is also defined as virtuous and moral, since the focus is on the needs of the customer rather than the provider. Drawing on chaos theory (Gleick 1987), the network organisation is proposed to have properties of self-organisation, learning, creativity and innovation, because order can arise spontaneously from networks of actors rather than from the exercise of control (Farazmand 2003, Kiel 1994). Network organisations are argued to create environments that are conducive to knowledge management and learning (Agranoff 2007, Choi and Heinrich 2006, Koppenjahn and Klijn 2004). And, according to Castells (1996), the variable geometry of continually changing networks creates a kaleidoscopic culture emerging from the many values, projects and cultures brought into it by its members:

It is ... a culture of the ephemeral, a culture of each strategic decision, a patchwork of experiences and interests, rather than a charter of rights and obligations. It is a *multi-faceted, virtual culture*, as in the visual experiences created by computers in cyberspace by rearranging reality. (p.199; italics original).

As Reed (2004) acknowledges, Castells' (1996) argument is internally coherent and links societal, organisational and individual levels. The suggestion of freedom from hierarchical control offered by the network/post-bureaucratic organisation and its associations with creativity and learning align with the prevailing distaste for overt control and preference for 'empowerment' in contemporary consumer society (Jermier 1998). The evidence relating to actual shifts towards networked or post-bureaucratic organisational forms is considered later as part of the discussion of NPM (p.36).

However, an important theoretical criticism argues that the very idea of 'post-bureaucracy' is flawed because it does not challenge the basic principles on which bureaucracy is founded. As Barley and Kunda (2001) point out, any organisation can be depicted as a network and 'a hierarchy is a property of a network's structure, not something a network replaces' (p.77-78). Therefore, although the model of the network organisational form describes new patterns of interaction among spatio-temporally scattered actors, it is a variant of bureaucracy rather than an alternative to it (Kallinikos 2003). And we can return to Kallinikos's (2003, 2004) argument that bureaucracy is better defined using its axial principles rather than the secondary phenomena represented in 'ideal types'. Network or post-bureaucratic organisations are still predicated on the non-inclusive employment relationship on which bureaucracy and its wider societal context are founded, and so cannot be considered to be 'post' bureaucracy. And as Kallinikos (2004) shows, it is mistaken to assume that bureaucracy is inflexible, because centralised control can also produce a 'variable geometry' (Castells 1996:165) through redesigning the configuration of roles.

I will now turn to the individual level and consider the exchange between employer and employee in the employment relationship. As Kallinikos (2003, 2004) argues, this relationship is central to the design and functioning of organisations. It is also argued that a fundamental shift in the relationship is taking place relating to changing socioeconomic conditions.

2.4.4 A shift to a new employment relationship?

The employment relationship is considered in the literature dealing with the 'psychological' (e.g. Argyris 1960, Schein 1978, Rousseau 1989, 1995, 2001) or 'implicit' contract (e.g. Watson 2003) (for reviews, see d'Art and Turner (2006), Cullinane and Dundon (2006)). Although the term 'psychological contract' is more commonly used,

Muetzelfeldt (2006) argues that it is a misnomer because it underplays the sociological dimension of the employment relationship, in which trust is based on implicit shared understandings of social categories (for example, manager, professional, or manual worker). I will discuss the efforts and rewards exchanged and the fundamental shift that is proposed to have taken place, to an exchange required in conditions of flexibility and change.

The employment relationship consists of an agreement about what the employee is expected to put in, in return for particular rewards and benefits. The written contract specifies the exchange of work and pay, but most of the expectations about what inputs and rewards are to be exchanged between the employer and employee are 'implicit, covertly held and only infrequently discussed' (Anderson and Schalk 1998:637). Inputs include physical and mental effort, initiative, responsibility, impairment and compliance with managerial control, whereas rewards include money, job satisfaction, personal 'growth', social reward, security, power, status and career potential (Watson 2003:191). As Watson (2003) points out, meanings about the identity of employees are implied in all these elements. Contracts differ between different groups of workers. High status workers given autonomy tend to have 'diffuse' (Fox 1974) or 'relational' (Rousseau 1990) contracts, representing high trust relationships in which reciprocity is achieved over time. Lower status workers whose work is more closely prescribed have 'restricted' (Fox 1974) or 'transactional' (Rousseau 1990) contracts which focus on pay and promotion and in which there is strict reciprocity. As Watson (2003) argues, managers will often attempt to manipulate workers' perceptions of implicit contracts to persuade them that the balance of efforts and rewards is favourable to the employee.

In a debate similar to the argument surrounding 'post-bureaucratic' organisations, some commentators argue that in the context of volatile markets and fragmented organisational structures, traditional forms of contract, in which stability, job security, career prospects and fairness are exchanged for loyalty, attendance, compliance and satisfactory performance, are no longer viable (e.g. Hiltrop 1995, Thompson 2003). The emerging contract is presented as a variant of the relational contract, pervaded by a new 'self-reliance' (Hiltrop 1995:290) where employees are expected to be more flexible, innovative, and willing to contribute to the organisation above and beyond the letter of their formal contracts or job descriptions (Hartley et al 1995). In return they can expect interesting work, the autonomy required to perform it, fair pay, and experience and training needed to enhance their employability.

	inputs	rewards
'traditional' contract	loyalty	stability
	attendance	job security
	compliance	career prospects
	satisfactory performance	fairness
'emergent' contract	flexibility	training and development
	entrepreneurship, innovation	enhanced employability
	adding value	involvement in decision-making
	autonomy and responsibility	interesting work
	excellent performance	fair pay

Table 2.3 Comparison between ‘traditional’ and ‘emergent’ psychological contract
(adapted from Hiltrop (1995) and d’Art and Turner (2006)).

This argument for the new contract is criticised on the basis that it reifies claims that the past was stable and the present is constantly changing (Cullinane and Dundon 2006). D’Art and Turner (2006) argue that the new employment relationship paradigm is ‘ambiguous, ahistorical and confused’ (p.535) because while these accounts purport to detect a fundamental change in the nature of the employment relationship, ‘[i]ncreased autonomy and involvement in decision-making does not change the core of the exchange in which labour is bought and sold’ (p.535).

I shall now discuss identity. As Watson (2003) points out, identity is part of the implicit contract, and the relationship between organisation and identity has become a significant focus of attention in the organisation studies literature.

2.4.5 ‘Identity work’ at work

The growing interest in the way that identities are constituted through work may arise, Zanoni and Jansens (2006) suggest, from ‘post-Fordist’ conditions in which organisational hierarchies are weakened, and employees expect work to be meaningful and to provide meaning about who they are (p.99). And Dale and Burrell (2008) argue that the situation in which work is increasingly undertaken outside the formal workplace (Felstead et al 2003) may lead to organisational attempts to secure ‘an identity that [employees] then

ideally carry with them 'outside' the entity of the organisation, even external to the formal time and place of work' (Dale and Burrell 2008:101). Giddens (1991:53) defines a sense of self, or 'self-identity', as something which arises from a process of reflexive self-understanding, and gives a sense of coherence and continuity across time and space to the social actor. The regulation of identity may, then, be seen as a means of harnessing the continuity across time and space associated with self-identity (Giddens 1991) while at the same time, reaping the benefits of discontinuity (flexibility).

In the organisation studies literature, work has focused mainly on discourses and/or narratives as cultural sources of meaning which are drawn upon by employees in the ongoing creation of a sense of self. As Watson (2008) puts it, self-identity is 'the individual's own notion of who and what they are' (p.131), and, as Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) also add, who and what they are not. This sense of self is achieved by relating to 'social identities', 'cultural, discursive or institutional notions of who or what any individual might be' (p.131) and which include discursively located 'personas' (p.127). As Jenkins (2000) and Webb (2006) note, these social identities can be material as well as discursive. Identity is not achieved once and for all, but is an ongoing 'project' that has continually to be worked at (Knights and Vurdubakis 1994) and is improvised in relation to changing contexts (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). As part of the process of structuration (Giddens 1981) people engage in a continuous process of 'identity work' (Rose 1999, Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Watson 1991), reflecting and acting on questions of who they are and who they might become through ongoing engagement with the social world.

Organisations figure among the many social contexts in which identity work takes place. As Watson (2008) points out, organisations are particularly interesting sites for the study of identity because employees are often required to present themselves in different ways for different audiences and purposes – people cannot simply 'be themselves' at work. Interest has grown in the ways that organisations attempt to shape employees' identities in ways that are congruent with official objectives (e.g. Casey 1995, du Gay 1996, Kunda 2003, Salaman 2004). Alvesson and Willmott (2002) term such attempts 'identity regulation', the process in which 'employees are enjoined to develop self-images and work orientations that are deemed congruent with managerially defined objectives' (p.619). This type of intervention draws on the capacity for reflexive identity work through 'the self-positioning of employees within managerially inspired discourses about work and organization with which they may become more or less identified and committed' (p.620) in order to produce 'the appropriately autonomous individual'

(p.620). Employees' commitment is sought by infusing rewards, leadership, division of labour, hierarchies, (etc.) with positive meanings such as leadership or sport, in order to align them with individuals' quest for self-definitions. Since, however, 'organisational involvement is only one source of identity' (Watson 2009:427), employees are not 'reducible to passive consumers of managerially designed and designated identities' (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:621). Identities are made reflexively by drawing on a variety of sources, and it should not be assumed that organisations can construct 'managerial' or other types of organisational identity (Watson 2008, 2009). Given the pressure on organisational actors to present themselves differently in different contexts, it is also useful to draw an analytical distinction between 'inward facing' identity work, involving an internal dialogue dealing with the question of 'who I want to be', and 'outward facing' identity work or 'presentation of self' (Goffman 1957), involving how the person behaves, presents themselves to others, and accounts for their identity and life history to others (Watson 2008). Similarly, Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) suggest that (inward) self-identity refers to something 'deeper' and less accessible than (outward) identity, which is of 'a somewhat more linguistic and social nature' (p.1168).

Thus far, I have considered a set of concepts that I will use in the analysis, as well as the fundamental shift which is proposed to have taken place (from bureaucracy to the network organisation, the traditional to the emergent implicit contract, and towards attempts to produce 'the appropriately autonomous individual' (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:620). To conclude this part of the review, I will now focus on the way in which such shifts have affected public sector organisations, in particular by considering attempts to reform the public sector via New Public Management.

2.5 The context of New Public Management: against 'bureaucracy'

In this thesis, I treat the new offices in SCC as attempts to shape organisational processes and structures in line with the changing requirements of NPM. Reviewing NPM is not a straightforward task, however, because it is conceptualised differently by different commentators, and is strongly contested (Hood 2005). In this part of the literature review, I will therefore focus on the ways in which the public sector has historically been shaped by NPM, as well as newer attempts to reshape public organisations as networks.

2.5.1 The meaning of 'bureaucracy' in public management

In the public administration literature, the term 'bureaucracy' refers to the form of governance in which the state exerts direct control over policy development and implementation through managerial hierarchies. State organisations such as local authorities are typically structured as separate departments, each containing a particular professional/ functional specialism, and co-ordinated through a hierarchy (Painter and Isaacs 2000). These organisations are recognisable as bureaucracies as described in the 'ideal type'. The extent to which bureaucracy is suited to the provision of public services is strongly contested. Hood (1991:11) argues that public organisations have a distinctive purpose, to allocate scarce resources fairly and reliably, and that this leads to a requirement for particular 'core values' in public organisations. Organisations should be:

- lean and purposeful: frugal in their use of resources, closely matching resources to tasks, and avoiding waste
- honest and fair: achieving fairness and transparency in the discharge of duties, and avoiding unfairness, bias and abuse of office
- robust and resilient: achieving reliability, endurance, adaptivity and robustness, and avoiding risk, breakdown or collapse.

While these values overlap, they are also in tension, so that it is hard to realise all three values fully in a single organisation design. For example, 'robustness' requires a degree of redundancy in organisational design, a feature which would not satisfy the requirement for 'leanness' in the first value cluster. du Gay (2000) focuses on the value of impartiality, arguing that this provides a stable, orderly environment in which citizens can be dealt with equitably, and is therefore an important resource in democratic society. And Hoggett (2005) suggests that public bureaucracies can function as sites for the contestation of moral ambivalence, and therefore have the potential to have a substantive rather than merely instrumental rationality. Uniquely in these organisations, he argues, 'questions of technique ('what works') and questions of value stand a chance of being integrated' (p.170). As well as dealing fairly with the needs of citizens, the core values of honesty and resilience in state bureaucracies also provide the necessary stability and normative framework for the operation of capitalism (Gurvitch 1964, Stinchcombe 1997). As Dingwall and Strangleman (2005) put it, '[b]ureaucracy was never an enemy of capitalism, but its essential partner, working with an eye to permanence rather than the transience of markets' (p.483).

As Newman (2001, 2005) recognises, however, in managerial discourse, the term 'bureaucracy' has become symbolic of waste, inefficiency, rules and red tape, and

inflexibility. Governance through bureaucratic hierarchies has become 'much discredited' (Newman 2001:33) because it is presumed to be incapable of responding to changing public requirements. Although there is little empirical evidence for the criticisms of bureaucracy (Meier and Hill 2005), as Jreisat (2002) says, '[c]onventional wisdom has it that bureaucracy is conformist, seeks standardization and routinization of work, and therefore causes inflexibility and resistance to change in managing public organizations' (p.38). The bureaucratic culture of public sector organisations is similarly framed by its critics as 'the institutionalisation of waste, sloth and producer control' (Dingwall and Strangleman 2005:478). In contrast, NPM reforms have been presented as means to reduce or eliminate bureaucracy and so increase the efficiency, flexibility and responsiveness of public organisations. A particularly influential statement of this argument was made by Osborne and Gaebler (1992), who suggest that the contemporary environment demands an entrepreneurial government which is flexible; cost-effective; offers customers choice and provides personalised services; leads by persuasion rather than command; empowers citizens; and gives employees a sense of meaning and ownership. Thus, they argued for a complete transformation in the conduct of government to an entrepreneurial model, presented as the antithesis of bureaucracy.

In the UK, two waves of NPM reforms with different emphases can be distinguished, corresponding to the Conservative (1979-1997) and New Labour (1997-2010) governments (Clarke and Newman 1997; Newman 2001). Both are summarised below, because as Newman (2001) argues, the second wave overlaid rather than supplanted the first, so that the outcomes of both were present together, overlapping and in tension.

2.5.2 *The first wave of NPM: minimisation, marketisation and managerialism*

Radical reforms to the public sector in the UK were introduced by the Thatcher government from 1979 onwards, based on the presumption, as Dingwall and Strangleman (2005) note, that the public sector was 'inherently inefficient simply because it was not in the private sector' (p.479). The emphasis of these reforms was to 'minimise' and 'marketise' the public sector (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000), by contracting out services to the private sector wherever possible, minimising the size of the public sector, and applying outcome targets and benchmarking across all services.

Minimisation: division between conception and execution

The discipline of the market was introduced either by straightforward privatisation of services or by introducing a split between 'purchaser' and 'provider' parts of the service, using models derived from Total Quality Management (TQM) (Skelcher 2005). This separation was subsequently endorsed in Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) advice that the purpose of government should be 'steering not rowing'. According to Hoggett (2005), the division is usually implemented as a three-way split between policy (determined by central government), strategy (made by public executives and governing bodies) and detail (delegated to local managers and professional staff). Empirical studies of public sector organisations which made such structural divisions indicate that it leads to the centralisation of power with policy-makers, who 'pass on intractable [policy] conflicts for resolution (or continued irresolution) at the administrative level (Lipsky 1980:41). Unresolved value conflicts are enacted most sharply at the level of practice, but, as Hoggett (2005) argues, these questions of value are suppressed by the over-riding need to avoid failure and demonstrate short-term performativity. Thus, 't]he 'autonomy' of public organisations becomes reconfigured as devising their own means of implementing government policies by acting strategically within their own quasi-markets' (p.177). In their study of a policy/ practice division in an Australian government agency, Stokes and Clegg (2002) suggested that it produced 'ethical erosion at the apex and practical confusion at the base' (p.241).

Performance targets: the rational goal model

This phase was also marked by the introduction of performance measures which enabled organisations' performance to be compared in a 'marketplace'. Central government specified performance outcomes, and managers could choose how these outcomes were to be achieved. Organisations' performance could then be distilled into abstract measures such as 'star ratings' and compared in league tables. The use of targets to control performance is termed the 'rational goal model' by Newman (2001:34-35) because it is assumed that organisations will behave as rational actors by responding to incentives and sanctions associated with the targets. Salaman (2005) suggests that the substitution of outcome-based controls for the rules characteristic of bureaucracy is a key feature of what he terms 'anti-bureaucracy':

.. the various structural, cultural and process-based ways in which hierarchical and rule-based controls are replaced by control exercised through market-type

transactions ... benchmarking, targets, levels of contribution, profit margins, service level agreements, etc. (p.144).

With the 'rational goal' approach, although control is exercised over what must be achieved, it does not specify in detail what employees should do from day to day, and staff can be framed as autonomous agents (Salaman 2005). As du Gay (2004) argues, however, although this approach gives managers freedom over the means by which they can secure outcomes, they are at the same time 'steered from the centre, at a distance, through a whole array of governmental apparatus which shapes their actions at the same time as attesting their independence' (p.40-41). Therefore, the shift from rules-based to outcomes-based forms of control involves a corresponding shift from obedience to commitment, but neither liberates people from centralised control (Salaman 2005). Rather, the shift in the locus of control causes a shift in the psychological contract and proposes a new identity with an 'ethic of personhood which stresses autonomy, responsibility and the freedom (and obligation) of individuals to actively make choices for themselves' (Salaman 2005:145).

Attempts to create private sector culture

This phase saw the introduction of a variety of private sector management practices, including performance management, business planning and culture management (Hoggett 1994). Culture management was an important element in this repertoire because, it was argued, the changes sought would be problematic or unsustainable unless the underlying values and belief systems of organisational members underwent a similar change (Ferlie et al 1996; Reed 1996 in Driscoll). Culture management initiatives sought to establish the sovereignty of the customer, either through the direct pressures of the market, re-education, or by recruiting business people and consultants to 'show public servants "how it is done"' (Dingwall and Strangleman 2005:481), thus developing attitudes appropriate to the notion of public service as 'enterprise' (du Gay 2004).

As Warhurst and Thompson (1998) advise, however, 'engaging with employees' feelings and values is likely to be the most fragile of all managerial activities' (p.11). Evaluations of attempts to foster new cultures show that they had limited impact apart from at the senior management level (Driscoll and Morris 2001, Ferlie et al 1996) and that change was impeded by institutionalised national, organisational, sectoral and occupational sub-cultures (Bovaird 2007, Bovaird and Russell 2007). Two recent studies explicitly consider

the spatial and embodied dimensions of organisational culture in the context of attempts to create a market-oriented culture in the public sector. McDonough (2006) suggests that the practice of front line service work socialises workers as public servants through the development of a tacit, embodied habitus (Bourdieu 1996). This reproduces a traditional vision of the public good, which workers defend when attempts to impose market-based understandings of service are made. Ramo and Skalen (2006) point out that, because NPM has its origins in the private sector where it is generally desirable for resources to yield a return in the shortest possible time, speed is 'the imperative in virtually every NPM idea' (p.516). Consequently, a common denominator of NPM reforms is their constant focus on cutting time in ventures. In contrast, the 'time-space logic' in caring professions is 'closeness' – 'a close, intimate and trusting relationship between personnel and patient' (p.522) in which carers and members of the public interact at a given time and in a given location. 'Closeness' is not compatible with the 'speed' logic in NPM – a difference in logics which the authors suggest is problematic, but poorly understood by managers.

As Hood (1991) points out, the reforms in this period focused only on making public organisations more 'lean and purposeful', taking for granted the other core values of honesty and resilience. This wave of reform did not lead, however, to the wholesale adoption of the new model, but an 'unstable settlement' between bureau-professional power and new managerialism (Clarke and Newman 1997: chapter 8, Hood 1995). Further, marketisation led to the fragmentation and dispersal of the public sector, and increased institutional complexity (Dunleavy et al 2006). This in particular appeared to influence the approach to public sector reform taken by the incoming Labour government in 1997.

2.5.3 The second wave of NPM: network governance

In the second wave, termed 'Public Service Networks' (Pollitt 2009), 'network governance' (Newman 2005:192) or often referred to simply as 'governance', power was partially ceded from central government and the upper levels of managerial hierarchies to networks of local managers undertaking inter-agency collaboration. Managers had already begun to collaborate across the more dispersed field of organisations, so that, as Rhodes (1997) argues, 'self-organising' networks were an unintended consequence of marketisation' (p.23). Consequently, forms of lateral co-ordination such as partnership

working, 'joined up' and 'cross-cutting' working which spanned functional specialisms and directorates, were key themes.

Partnership working also included inter-agency collaboration between public and private sector organisations in Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), defined as 'complex organizations' variously assembling 'for-profit companies, private non-profit organizations ... as well as public sector nonprofit organizations' (Lindner and Rosenau 2000:6-7). In the UK, Business Process Reengineering (BPR) was introduced by many private partners in order to redesign work processes around the requirements of the customer (Marchington et al 2005). Since reengineered workflows frequently cross former functional boundaries, it can be argued that BPR creates a system-wide shift to a lateral approach to organising (Hammer and Champy 1993). The introduction of BPR can therefore be seen to align with the aim to decentralise power expressed in network governance, as well as being 'presented as the antidote to dysfunctional segmentation' (Ferlie and McNulty 2004:1391). There is a substantial literature evaluating PPPs (for reviews, see Skelcher 2005; Wettenhall 2003, 2007) most of which show that partnerships yield cost reductions (Skelcher 2005). However, a key issue that emerges from these evaluations is the potential for imbalance between the partners. Grimshaw et al (2002) suggest that those advocating PPPs tend to overlook the power relations between partners, assuming that these are neutralised or made irrelevant by the new model. This draws attention away from the possibility of opportunistic behaviours by one partner, as well as 'systematic, institutionalised domination' (p.11).

Does network governance enable a post-bureaucratic public service?

The shift to network governance is presented by many commentators as a fundamental decentralisation of power and a shift to lateral modes of organising. Consequently, NPM has been pronounced 'dead' (Dunleavy et al 2006) and superseded by 'post-NPM' styles of governance (e.g. Drechsler 2005, McNulty and Ferlie 2004, Pollitt 2009). And Newman (2005) argues that in this networked context, a post-bureaucratic public service is possible, for three reasons: first, policy is formed continuously through networks (Marsh 1998); second, the emphasis on collaboration and involvement means that decision-makers are embedded in a social and cultural context, rather than isolated within their offices; and third, management is now a co-ordinating device in a dispersed field (p.194). Others argue, however, that the dispersal of power through networks has been more pronounced in government rhetoric than in practice (Fairclough 2000, Wettenhall 2003).

Performance measurement was intensified under the Labour government (Gray and Jenkins 2000, Newman 2001), so that the 'rational goal' (Newman 2001) model of governance was still dominant. The tension between these two overlapping modes of governance is illustrated by Newman (2005), who suggests that while many policy initiatives emphasise the importance of the local, as the place where government can collaborate with 'communities' to find solutions to problems, the wishes of the spatial locality are frequently subordinated in the government's attempts to make sure that national standards are met.

As discussed earlier, one criticism of the concept of 'post-bureaucracy' is that the new model retains the 'axial principles' (Kallinikos 2003) on which bureaucracy is based, and is therefore better considered as a variant of bureaucracy rather than an alternative to it. It is also helpful to consider the empirical evidence for the emergence of the new organisational form, in particular in the public sector. There is plenty of empirical evidence of *attempts* at organisational change inspired by the post-bureaucratic model, based, as Marchington et al (2005) say, on disordering of managerial hierarchies and disrupting organisational boundaries by outsourcing services. However, there is little evidence for the existence of organisations which meet post-bureaucratic criteria, and considerable evidence for bureaucratic intensification during the period in which the reverse is alleged to have happened (du Gay 2004, McSweeney 2006, Salaman 2005, Warhurst and Thompson 1998). For example, Morris and Farrell's (2007) study of ten UK public sector organisations which had undergone delayering showed that the consequence of the change was increased workloads for the remaining managers – suggesting that indirect control and self-organising networks had not substituted for the managerial hierarchy. The second major trend observed was that lateral forms of co-ordination were superimposed upon, but did not replace, more traditional vertical divisions of labour and control structures (Harrison and Smith 2003, Newman 2005) so that '[m]ethods of co-ordination and accountability ... become more complex, but vertical structures remain the backbone of organisations' (Warhurst and Thompson 1998:17). Third, as Pollitt (2009) observes, the commitment to continuous radical change in organisations seeking to move towards a post-bureaucratic model results in features such as high staff turnover and lack of consistent record-keeping, which tend to erase organisational memory. This is ironic, as Pollitt (2009) suggests, since the pro-network literature is strongly linked with notions of knowledge management and the knowledge economy. Fourth, although there is much rhetoric about the empowerment of employees, empirical evidence from both public and private sectors suggests a trend towards the intensification of both direct and indirect control attempts. Organisations

which vigorously seek to cultivate commitment at the same time as exercising centralised control have been labelled 'hybrids' (Courpasson and Reed 2004). The growth in hybrid organisations is explained by Courpasson and Clegg (2006) as an unintended consequence of more networked forms of organisation, in which the pressure to perform may be intense, but relationships and groupings are only temporary. Leaders therefore have to shape emerging flexible structures, and do so by drawing on the resources of bureaucratic power systems as 'underlying authoritarian mechanisms' (p.323). Thus,

[t]he key bureaucratic characteristic of the new hybrid organizations is that they retain a need for the iron fist of strong and centralized control mechanisms, wrapped up in the velvet glove of consent. (p.324).

In these organisations, there is more reliance on technologies (such as culture management, project management or business processes) which substitute for weakened hierarchies, in tandem with attempts to inculcate emotions, values and worldviews congruent with the interests of the more powerful constituents (Jermier 1998). As Marchington et al (2005) conclude, the evidence points to contradictory arrangements that 'decompose bureaucracy without being, in any meaningful sense, 'post bureaucratic'' (p.3). Given these criticisms, the significance of the post-bureaucracy idea may be, as Warhurst and Thompson (1998) suggest, that descriptions of it 'define what is attempted' (p.11).

Having discussed relevant concepts and evidence from the organisation studies literature relating to the changes sought in SCC through the new offices, I will now turn to consider the spatial dimension of social and organisational life.

3 Journey into space: space as a dimension of social life

3.1 Basic assumptions about space

As before in the discussion of relevant concepts in organisation studies, in this discussion of space, I will begin by stating the assumptions adopted in the thesis. As Lefebvre (1991) points out, in modern society it is commonplace to conceptualise space in geometric terms, as a pre-given, empty area containing all other phenomena. This way of thinking, Lefebvre argues, creates a Cartesian division between 'mathematical' space and social life, which unfolds *in* space. Space can then be regarded as an inert setting for

something that is the focus of sociological attention (Dale 2005, Dale and Burrell 2008, Gieryn 2000) – ‘a mere locus of social relations’ (Lefebvre 1991:11). This assumption has political implications, as Lefebvre points out, because it conceals the way in which space is used to achieve the social relations of production. In this project, space is regarded as a dimension of social life that both shapes, and is an outcome of, ongoing human relationships and interactions. In this relational understanding of space, ‘space appears no longer as a neutral container within which temporal development unfolds, but, rather, as a constitutive, historically produced dimension of social practices’ (Brenner 1997:137). The integration of social and spatial dimensions extends across scales, so that space is understood as ‘the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny’ (Massey 2005:9). Consequently, space is an integral dimension of all social structures, and inequality and difference are produced and enacted through space (Gieryn 2000).

The way in which social relations produce space and material objects is illuminated by Harre’s (2002) discussion of ‘social objects’. Spaces and material objects have physical properties which open up and limit their use (for example, glass enables visibility, but not privacy). However, these properties do not determine the meanings attributed to them, or the uses which people make of them. Rather, the function of an object is socially defined as an ‘affordance’, a cultural agreement about what the object will allow people to do (Gibson 1979). These conventional understandings of the functions of particular spaces and objects become reified so that their uses appear to be determined by their ‘natural’ properties (Hofbauer 2000). As Harré (2002) argues, social objects are simultaneously part of what he terms the ‘practical order’ (the arrangements needed to maintain life in an environment) and the ‘expressive order’, and material things can only be understood in their full human significance if their roles in both these orders are identified. The symbolic order has priority over the material, so that objects (an example might be a turnstile at the entrance to a building) can acquire ‘magic powers’ (Harré 2002:25), effects beyond their material properties such as shape, texture or chemical composition. Further, there are often multiple meanings and functions attributed to the same object. In Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) terms, spaces/ objects are typified in multiple ways, and the typification used in any particular circumstances depends on the project at hand (Auburn and Barnes 2006). Harvey (2005, 2006) makes this point when he argues that ‘space is a socially contested cultural configuration’ (2005:213) which is dependent on human practice; different human practices make use of different conceptualisations of space.

The integration of social structures with space also has consequences for the understanding of identity. As was indicated earlier, individual identity and society are not separate but a duality (Giddens 1984) and social structures are woven into individuals' self identity through their ongoing identity work. Then, because social structures are embedded in space, people's everyday occupation and use of space entails engagement with social structures and this forms a spatial dimension of identity work. As Massey (2005) puts it, 'identities/ entities, the relations between 'them' and the spatiality which is part of them, are all co-constitutive' (p.10). Identity is therefore located, not disembodied, so that 'questions of 'who we are' are often related to questions of 'where we are'' (Dixon and Durrheim 2000:27, Soja 1989). Thus, as Gieryn (2000) argues, space/ place contributes to identity in the same way that class and gender do, and loss of place leads, as well as material displacement, to loss of self.

I will now turn to Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualisation of space. As well as understanding space as an integral dimension of social relations, Lefebvre helpfully illustrates the association between the configuration of space and the social relations of capitalism.

3.2 Lefebvre's contribution to the understanding of social space

Lefebvre (1991), whose understanding I draw on substantially in the thesis, presents his work as aiming to reconnect the previously separated fields of 'mental space' (logical abstractions as well as imagination, symbols, utopias) and social practice. He also adds a third dimension of space, termed 'conceived space', referring to the social control sought through particular configurations of space, aligned with the needs of capitalism¹.

Lefebvre regards capitalism as dominant, so that for him, the production of space refers to the general 'structuration and rationalization of social relations according to the abstract spatiotemporal logic of capital accumulation' (Brenner 1997:141).

Lefebvre's work is criticised, however, because it underplays the role of agency in the production of space. In Lefebvre's work, 'capitalism' is reified as if it is a malevolent 'macro-subject' (Joas 1993: 175) that transforms space all by itself, rather than understanding spatial organisation as produced through social and conflictual processes involving capitalists, politicians, managers and workers (Harvey 2006, Massey 1995). Further, while Lefebvre acknowledges that the control sought through space is

¹ Harvey (2005; 2006) suggests that Cassirer's (1944) formulation of perceptual, symbolic and organic modes of human spatial experience was 'almost certainly' (2006:129) used by Lefebvre.

imperfectly realised, he does not elaborate the ways in which individuals and groups actively shape it (Manzo 2003). As Taylor and Spicer (2007) argue, this emphasis risks 'a systematic disregard of the ways that space may actually be the product of inhabitants' ongoing experience and understandings' (p.333). This point is illustrated by Kingma (2008) who observes that people are not 'spatial dopes' (p.46), and just as road systems and traffic signs do not enforce correct behaviour in traffic, space configured to align with capitalism does not straightforwardly enforce a particular normative order. Following Watson's (2003:46) advice for the application of Marxian sociology generally, I use concepts from other strands of sociology alongside Lefebvre's conceptualisation of social space in order to account for these aspects of agency. This leads to an understanding in which the production of space can be seen as a recursive (Hernes et al 2006) or iterative process in which 'social processes produce spatial forms which affect social processes' (Harvey 2005:213). And, because space is produced through social relations, 'it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished, never closed' (Massey 2005:9). As Hernes et al (2006) point out, space enables both stability and renewal because 'once produced, the space forms a context that previously did not exist, hence new understandings and insights will emerge' (p.44).

In the discussion of Lefebvre's work that follows, I begin with the triadic model which Lefebvre proposes is the means by which social space is produced, and can be analysed. I shall then discuss 'abstract space', the particular configuration of space designed to support production. Finally, I consider the argument that a shift in the mode of capitalist production has produced a corresponding transformation in social space, to what Castells (1996) terms the 'space of flows'.

3.2.1 The production of social space: Lefebvre's triadic model

For Lefebvre (1991), space is a crucial dimension of social relations under capitalism, and emerges as 'a materialization of certain relations of power that ensure the circulation and reproduction of capital' (Taylor and Spicer 2007:332). Space is therefore continually reconstituted, reconfigured and transformed in line with changing requirements of production and consumption. Lefebvre (1991:38-39) conceptualises space as a triad of overlapping dimensions, which are separated for the purpose of analysis. Lefebvre's triad comprises, first, representations of space (or *conceived space*), which deals with how space is planned to meet the needs of production. Since, as Brenner (1997) points out, Lefebvre (1991) insists that 'capital remains the dominant structuring principle of

modern spatial practices' (p.158), conceived space dominates the other two dimensions in the triad. The second dimension, *spatial practice* (or perceived space), refers to the daily embodied routines and activities associated with particular spaces. Third, representational space (or *lived space*) refers to the interpretations and meanings attached by actors to particular spaces. In the discussion that follows, I use the terms spatial practice, lived space and conceived space, italicised above, rather than their alternatives.

Representations of space (or conceived space)

Conceived spaces are those created by planners, architects and managers to align with the relations of production. They embody what Lefebvre terms the 'imposed order', i.e. the knowledge and 'frontal' relations which form the dominant space in society, and are 'shot through with 'savoir'' (p.41) - a continually changing mixture of understanding and ideology. While conceived spaces are always material constructions of some kind, they are at the same time:

.. conceived of not just as structures but as projects embedded in a spatial context which set up enduring sets of relations. (p.42).

As Hofbauer (2000) recognises, in workplace design there is 'a sophisticated calculus on how to shape perception and conduct' (p.170) based on particular managerial assumptions about how social life and space interrelate. Although the built environment cannot impose the desired social relationships, as Harvey (2005, 2006) argues, the 'sheer materiality of construction' (2006:147) implies weight and authority, so that 'once space is defined, created or produced, it can have long-lasting implications for how social action can proceed' (Harvey 2005:214). Lefebvre (1991) acknowledges, however, that the social control sought through space is never fully realised:

.. in addition to being a means of production [space] is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet ... it escapes in part from those who would make use of it. (p.26).

Consequently, as Gieryn (2002) says, buildings are 'structures structuring agency but never beyond potential restructuring by human agents' (p.41).

Historical studies such as Carmona et al's (2002) study of a tobacco factory built in 1750 and Guillèn's (1997) analysis of early modernist architecture show that seeking

organisational control through the design of the workplace is by no means a new phenomenon. As Dale and Burrell (2008) point out, however, the work of influential architects such as Duffy (1997) has stimulated a renewed interest in the use of office architecture to shape organisational cultures and practices. Duffy (1997) makes a series of explicit claims about the capacity of particular designs to influence particular behaviours, which I consider later (p.61).

Spatial practice

Spatial practice refers to the physical, embodied habits and routines of individuals who are members of a particular space. It implies a degree of spatial competence and performance necessary for everyday functioning and membership. Harvey (2006) defines it as 'the world of tactile and sensual interaction with matter, experience open to physical touch and sensation' (p.131) and Dale and Burrell (2008) use a similar concept of 'enactment' (p.66) to refer to the way in which people, as simultaneously social and embodied actors, process and experience space through everyday routines. As Giddens (1984) observes, routines generate expectations, and therefore tend to create social stability over time. Similarly, Lefebvre (1991) states that 'spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of social cohesion' (p.33). Because spatial practices are often taken for granted, they can conceal spatially embedded social hierarchies. As Harvey (2006) points out, 'we may not even notice the material qualities of spatial orderings because we adhere to unexamined routines' (p.132).

Examples of organisational spatial practice include where employees sit, the routes they take through a building, the arrangement of items on their desks, and personal dress and manner. Spicer and Taylor (forthcoming) argue that spatial practice is:

.. the most intimate, embodied and everyday aspect of our spatial inhabitation. It includes how we move our body within space, our minute perceptions of space, the way we configure intimate objects such as our clothing, the decorations around our workplace and other 'personal effects'.

The concept of spatial practice therefore links to the 'small rituals' which Larsen and Schultz (1990:289) suggest provide guidelines for appropriate behaviour, to 'aesthetic discipline' (Witkin 1990), routines concerning dress, personal presentation, modes of address and office manners, Goffman's (1959) notion of 'presentation of self', and to Watson's (2008, 2009) concept of 'outward facing' identity work. And because

embodied daily routines are a source of meaning (Gieryn 2000, Harvey 2006) spatial practice is therefore also an element within 'inward facing' identity construction.

In the first part of this review, I discussed the dominant conceptualisation of identity in the organisation studies literature, where self-identity is understood to be constituted through engagement with discourses and narratives made available in the cultural world. However, as Dale and Burrell (2008) point out, the social actor is '*a spatial and embodied actor*, not just a discursive construction' (p.108; italics original). The physical occupation of spaces entails an engagement with the social structures and hierarchies built into them, so that:

Individuals develop a sense of their identities in articulation with the 'normal' behaviours of the places they frequent. Thus it is that in 'living through' a certain set of spaces, social and cultural power is incorporated and embodied in the then taken-for-granted notions of these spaces. (p.68).

Thus, 'living through' space embeds social actors into particular social relationships and the routinised practices they engage in contribute to their sense of self, as McDonough's (2006) study of front line service workers indicates (see p.41). These relationships involve rules governing how the spaces should be used. As Augé (1995) observes, explicit rules stating which behaviours are permitted and prohibited are characteristic of modern 'non-places'. However, most rules are implicit, so that, as Gieryn (2000) suggests, places are 'normative landscapes ... imbricated with moral judgements and deviant practices' (p.479). Spatial rules includes prescriptions over who is allowed where, meaning that being 'out of place' can be a serious transgression (Dixon and Durrheim 2000). Duncan's (2005/1982) ethnography of the way that tramps use urban space illustrates the key distinction between 'public' and 'private' spaces and shows that it is especially critical for marginal social actors to be aware of, and not to transgress, spatial rules. And, as Goffman (1959) shows, there are different rules for front stage and backstage, in which conduct allowed backstage is prohibited out front. Such place-based spatial etiquettes are often taken for granted and become regarded as an 'inherently correct' (p.165) part of the moral order, as Duncan (2005/1982) recognises. Therefore, particular spaces have 'contracts', unstated agreements about how people should relate to the space and to others occupying it. And these agreements are based on social categories, exactly like Muetzelfeldt's (2006) understanding of the psychological contract, in which the agreement between employer and employee is formed on the basis of social identities.

Representational space (or lived space)

Lived space refers to the ways in which spaces are construed, interpreted and imagined by people occupying and using them. Harvey (2006) defines it as the 'lived space of sensations, the imagination, emotions and meanings incorporated into how we live day by day' (p.131). Dale and Burrell (2008) use the term 'enchantment' (p.47) to refer to the linking together of matter and meaning to produce various power effects. And, as Yanow (2006) puts it, 'physical artefacts are a form of deed: a non-verbal enactment of underlying values, beliefs and/or feelings, which they represent' (p.42). Lefebvre sees lived space as being dominated by the meanings imposed by conceived space, so that it is pushed into the clandestine side of social life, reliant upon 'less coherent' systems of verbal symbols and signs. It is:

... space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users' ... This is the dominated - and hence passively experienced - space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. (p.39).

While '[r]epresentational space is alive .. [with] an affective kernel or centre' (p.42) and is 'essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic' (p.42), for Lefebvre it can only produce ephemeral, symbolic effects:

The *representation of space*, in thrall to both knowledge and power, leaves only the narrowest leeway to *representational spaces*, which are limited to works, images and memories whose content, whether sensory, sensual or sexual, is so far displaced that it barely achieves symbolic force. (p.50; italics original).

By implication, users and inhabitants are unlikely to be able to exercise influence on the emergence of sociospatial relations. This aspect of Lefebvre's work is criticised by several authors (e.g. Gieryn 2000, Kingma 2008, Manzo 2003). As Manzo (2003) puts it, 'what is sorely missing in Lefebvre's perspective is an appreciation of the role that individuals play as active participants in, and shapers of, their environments' (p.56). It is therefore worth giving closer consideration to the meanings 'built into' spaces and those attributed to them.

In Lefebvre's view, lived space is an attempt to retrieve personal meaning from the onslaught of capitalism. But the meaning of space can also relate to everyday practical

purposes. As Jansen (2008) and Auburn and Barnes (2006) point out, places are constructed as typifications in the course of people's practical engagement with space, and these typifications frame the spatial practices routinely used there. The meaning of space is partly made up of 'recipe knowledge' (Berger and Luckmann 1966:57) which tells us whether we are allowed in the space, who to be in it and how to act. This meaning accounts for the orderliness of people's interactions with the environment. It is culturally specific: for example, as Gieryn (2002) points out, "a 'house' is only recognised as such if it is filtered through frames of reference that orient conduct to 'house'" (p.38).

Typifications of space are deployed in the design of work buildings, in which physical features such as materials, scale, proportion and relationships with other buildings can be understood as a design 'vocabulary' intending to convey particular meanings (Yanow 2003, Pederson 2006). Such intentional symbolism is termed 'authored meaning' by Yanow (1998, 2006) or 'ostensive symbolism' (Hofbauer 2000), defined as 'the conscious and knowing use of design to make a particular impression on occupants and clients' (p.173). Authored meaning is culturally situated, and, as Yanow (1998) points out, does not 'depend on [the building's] physical features, contrasts, or similarities alone, but it reflects the social issues, problems, and concerns of the place and time' (p.419). Despite the preponderance of linguistic metaphors, the symbolism of space should not, however, be thought of as a 'text' that is interpreted within the mind but not experienced through the body (Halford 2008, Watkins 2005). Yanow's (1998) comparison of the meanings constructed by visitors and employees of museums indicates that 'constructed' meanings may not be congruent with 'authored' meanings, and that:

.. when these attributed (constructed) meanings of spatial texts are at odds with intended (authored) meanings, it may be difficult for organizations to realise their desired and intended programmatic objectives. (p.217).

'Constructed' meanings are therefore not powerless, as Lefebvre (1991) suggests, but rather have a tangible effect on the emergence of social life. Yanow's distinction between 'authored' and 'constructed' meanings is a useful one in the context of this project in which I set out to compare intended meanings expressed by organisation designers with the meanings attributed by occupants. (At the same time it is worth remembering that 'authored' meanings are also constructed, by the designers of the space).

The ways in which meanings attributed to space/ place relate to identity have been analysed in the environmental psychology literature (for reviews, see Dixon and

Durrheim 2000, Manzo 2003). The meanings which are 'designed into' places include the meanings about who one should be when occupying that particular space. For instance, hospitals process people to behave as patients (Dale and Burrell 2008:53) and civic buildings imply the identity and status of the polity (Yanow 1997, 2003). To put this in Berger and Luckmann's (1966) terms, places incorporate typifications of identity, in a similar manner to the discursively located 'personas' suggested by Watson (2008). In their study of empty spaces, Kostera and Kociatkewicz (1998) visit abandoned, forgotten spaces which appear to have lost all meaning. Since there seems to be no residual vocabulary typifying these spaces, they say nothing about the identity of the visitor, and accordingly, identity appears to vanish. Similarly, Halford (2008) suggests that 'spatial discourse shapes the production of working selves – who we are at work and how we understand our working identities' (p.932).

According to Lefebvre, conceived space is designed to shape 'enduring sets of relations' (p.42) aligned with capitalism, and accomplishes this by shaping particular spatial practices and lived spaces. Lefebvre then argues that this has led to the transformation of space to a particular configuration, termed 'abstract space', which I will turn to now.

3.2.2 *Abstract space*

The emergence of modern capitalism transformed pre-capitalist 'absolute space' (Lefebvre 1991:32) into abstract space, in which 'social relations are rationalised, partitioned, and territorialized within an abstract, objectified grid' (Brenner 1997:142). Lefebvre (1991) argues that with the shift to capitalism, 'labour fell prey to abstraction, whence abstract social labour – and *abstract space*' (Lefebvre 1991: 49; italics original). As Kallinikos (2003, 2004) and Rosen et al (1990) recognise, abstract labour is based on an exchange in which organisations contract with people not as *persons* (members of family or community) but as *roles*. Consideration of abstract labour can then be related to the earlier discussion of the constitution of modern organisation as sets of roles. Since abstract space is concerned with the role and not the person, it is 'formal and quantitative ... erases distinctions which derive from nature and history and the body (age, sex, ethnicity)' (Lefebvre 1991:49). And since roles can easily be interchanged, abstract space is 'endowed with exchange value and integral to the circulation of capital' (Brenner 1997:141-2).

Abstract space has three essential characteristics or 'formants' (Lefebvre 1991: 285-287), which Lefebvre argues aggregate to facilitate social control. First, the *geometric* formant refers to the rectilinear, gridded configuration of abstract space. Second, the *optical* (or *visual*) formant refers to the dominance of sight over all the other senses. This, for Lefebvre, has dramatic consequences, because visualisation renders things passive, so that 'space has no social existence independent of an intense, aggressive and repressive visualisation' (p.286). Although people and objects are made visible, this 'does not, however, imply decipherability of the inherent social relations. On the contrary, the analysis of these relations has become harder and more paradoxical' (p.83). Third, the *phallic* formant refers to the material form of geometric/ optical space, which symbolises male fertility and masculine violence. In summary, abstract space is graph-like space in which individuals can readily be seen and their position plotted, and having at least the symbolic presence of force and authority.

Although it is a spatial formation that is peculiar to modern capitalism, abstract space has become a ubiquitous and taken for granted aspect of everyday life. Studies by Brocklehurst (2006) and Guillèn (1997) illustrate two ways in which abstract space has contributed to the spread of rationality in modern social relations. While Brocklehurst (2006) does not refer specifically to abstract space, he suggests that the gridded space created as part of the process of colonisation of North America (discussed by Linklater 2002) helped to naturalise rationality as an everyday mode of thinking. The gridded, exchangeable landscape enabled rational processes to become a taken-for-granted feature of everyday life, and consequently the diffusion of rationality (in particular, scientific management) was facilitated. In general:

.. the way space is constructed and regulated as part of everyday practice plays a strong influence on how ideas develop and become adopted. (p.80).

The imagery implied in the process of 'turning ... space into a piece of graph paper' (Brocklehurst 2006:83) suggests that abstract space must be devoid of aesthetic content. Guillèn (1997), however, considers the case of modernist architecture and argues that, as an architectural reinterpretation of scientific management, it has an aesthetic of functionality. As Barr (1995) says, modernist architecture is characterised by:

Emphasis upon volume - space enclosed by thin planes or surfaces as opposed to the suggestion of mass and solidity; regularity as opposed to symmetry or other kinds of obvious balance; and, lastly, dependence on the intrinsic elegance of

materials, technical perfection, and fine proportions, as opposed to applied ornament. (p.29).

Far from having no aesthetic meaning, Guillèn (1997) argues that rectilinear, unadorned architecture has a 'machine aesthetic' of functionality, which emphasises 'regularity, continuity and speed at the expense of symmetry, ornamentation and solidity. ... monotony and standardisation had become beautiful' (p.11). Like Brocklehurst (2006), Guillèn (1997) suggests that as a result of its ubiquity, modernist architecture helped to naturalise the ideology of scientific management and facilitated its widespread adoption.

Thus, through various historical processes, abstract space has become internalised (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and is a largely unnoticed part of everyday existence. And, since space shapes social life as well as being shaped by it, abstract space shapes social relations, which may also be taken for granted. For example, Augé (1995) observes the signs, beeps and various spatial cues which inform users of modern 'non-places' of the relevant rules, and suggests that these spaces position users in contractual relations with the space and each other, through the 'shared identity of passengers, customers or drivers' (p.101) that they create. This is perhaps the sort of phenomenon to which Brenner (1997) refers when he argues that abstract space results in 'the homogenisation and pulverisation of everyday life' (p.143).

Abstract space therefore produces institutionalised social relations in which people are shaped as roles. However, since the mode of production changes periodically, so must the configuration of space, or 'spatial fix', as Harvey (2005) calls it. I shall now consider debates about the current configuration of space.

3.3 The current spatial fix: 'the space of flows'

The spatial fix (Harvey 2005) is the particular configuration of space adopted to align with the requirements of capitalism, and refers not just to the spatial organisation of the workplace, but to the whole of social space, including the home. Prior to the advent of industrial capitalism, the spaces of work and family life, in most cases, overlapped considerably. The introduction of capitalism was facilitated by a process of 'enclosure', in which work was moved from the home into spaces designed for specific functions, as a means for instilling order and discipline (Carmona et al 2002, Kallinikos 2003, Marglin 1974/1982).

As Harvey (2005) recognises, 'capital accumulation ... creates not only spaces but different forms of spatiality' (p.77). Castells (1996) claims that globalised, flexible modes of production, which he terms 'informationalism', have brought about a new 'spatial logic' (p.378) built upon movement, or *flows* of capital, information, technology, organisational interaction, images, sounds and symbols. Therefore, the dominant space in society is the material support for these flows, or simply 'the space of flows' (p.376), a complex, changing network which is linked up via both physical and virtual connections. (As was discussed earlier, Castells argues that this richly networked environment is the reason why organisations themselves must be configured as networks). While the space of flows is the dominant spatial logic of contemporary society, it coexists with emplaced resources, developed around the interests and practices of élites, to form relatively fixed, hierarchically organised 'nodes and hubs' (Castells 1996:413). In Lefebvre's (1991) terms, contemporary globalised space is 'founded on the vast network of banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also on motorways, airports and information lattices' (p.53). The argument for the space of flows is questioned, however, by Massey (1995, 2005) who suggests that current spatial configurations do not constitute a radical break with the past. 'Traditional' societies were also interconnected (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, Oakes 1993), and there has always been a shifting balance between mobility and fixedness. Therefore, rather than seeing contemporary space as representing a new spatial logic, Massey (2005) argues that it is simply 'the establishment of new power-invested spatial configurations' (p.93). Whether we regard it as the materialisation of a new spatial logic or merely a reconfiguration of space, contemporary space appears to have particular characteristics, which I shall now consider.

3.3.1 Contemporary space: *homogenised, slippery, fragmented, hierarchical*

Homogenised, slippery

Globalisation has resulted in the homogenisation of some spaces. It has made the built environment 'ahistorical and acultural' (Castells 1996:418), and has led to 'the proliferation of sameness' (Buchanan 2005:22). The sameness of British urban space is bemoaned by Hatherley (2010) who argues that post-1979 neoliberal governments are in the process of creating a new Britain dominated by 'business parks, Barratt homes, riverside 'stunning developments', out-of-town shopping and distribution centres' (p.xxxv). Augé (1995) argues that the sameness of 'non-places' (airport terminals, for

example) has stripped them of meaning, so that they no longer confer a sense of place. Jameson (1991) suggests, though, that such places cannot be considered meaningless because they have simulated meanings, often relating to familiar settings such as the home, purposefully built into them. As Buchanan (2005) argues, such places 'combine ruthless corporate trading practices with cornerstore ambience' (p.29). While the users of non-places may recognise the superficiality of this symbolism, they can still use them in a home-like fashion. Therefore, while there is homogenisation, this does not equate with meaninglessness, because non-places may still elicit weak attachment.

According to Buchanan (2005), the key to understanding the way in which space has changed is not its homogeneity, but the enhanced mobility of the subject. Using the example of contemporary cities, he argues that we have created:

.. smooth, frictionless spaces that hurry the postmodern subject onwards like a slippery slope. .. [Contemporary] cities are, from an existential point of view, made of Teflon: they repel old-fashioned attempts to put down roots, ways of being that sink into the earth in search of a sturdy foundation on which to erect a new life. (p.19, 21-22).

The slipperiness of the urban environment is also considered in Pederson's (2006) study of Kastrup Airport, where the shiny, slanted, unadorned surfaces and imagery of swift movement and progress discourage settling. Hatherley (2010) similarly identifies the dominant idiom of contemporary UK public architecture as 'clean lines, bright colours ... and wipe-clean surfaces, as if furnishing a children's ward' (p.viii). These examples illustrate that to enable constant movement, slippery space must be exchangeable and must bear no trace of any previous occupants, so that it can be used again and again. However, active measures are often called for to force people to hurry onwards, such as the CCTV cameras and stop and search cards observed by Hatherley (2010). Attempts to prevent settling have been taken a step further in a recent architectural exhibition called 'Sentient Cities', which included a park bench that tips the sitter off after the time permitted for relaxation has elapsed². The trend towards mobility in urban environments is paralleled by a similar trend in the use of the workspace. Felstead et al's (2003) longitudinal study of changing office work indicates that it is increasingly 'detached from individual and personalised cubes of space, marked by walled cells or allocated desk space, and is increasingly being carried out in a variety of different places such as at home and on the move' (p.2). Developments in computing and telephony

² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/8310627.stm>; accessed 31 March 2010

have made workstations into exchangeable 'spatio-technical hybrids' (Schwarz 2003), more slippery than conventional office space because these spaces can be used by any employee.

Fragmented, hierarchical

As well as leading to the homogenisation of some spaces, globalisation has also resulted in the diversification of others (Brenner 1997; Lefebvre 1991). Globalised space is:

.. fragmented - separating, disjunctive, a space that locates specificities, places or localities, both in order to control them and in order to make them negotiable; and a space that is hierarchical, ranging from the lowliest places to the noblest, from the tabooed to the sovereign. (Lefebvre 1991:282).

According to Lefebvre, world capitalism is supported through overlapping sociospatial networks articulated on divergent geographical scales. These spatial networks are heavily stratified but there are interdependencies between spaces at all echelons in an 'uneven geographical development' (Harvey 2006, Massey 1984).

The way in which uneven geographical development arises is analysed in Massey's (1995) study of regional inequality in the UK. Massey (1995) argues that uneven development is 'the product of the stretched-out, intersecting and articulating social relations of the economy' (p.2), in particular, the growing trend for private sector organisations to locate workers dealing with conception in different regions from those dealing with execution. This spatial division of labour assumes that innovation emerges primarily from educated élites based at the organisational 'centre' and not in other contexts (such as production or use). Élite workers are in a strong position to choose their employer, and can demand pleasant working and residential environments and contact with similarly educated people. Thus, '[p]articular people are sought, distinguished by their possession of knowledge, a monopoly established as a result of the very separation of conception from execution' (p.138). However, the fact that there are 'research only' sites means that there must also be 'production only' outposts. Since these require a less skilled workforce, they can be located in inexpensive regions. A class-based spatial separation is thus made between high status, autonomous workers and lower status groups whose work is more precisely controlled. Consequently, '[t]he centre/periphery model does not reduce spatial inequality. Rather, it requires it and reproduces it' (Massey 1995:287-88). Massey (1995) argues that regional spatial division is characteristic only of private sector

firms, because public sector organisations need to be located close to the public to whom services are provided.

The separation of places for particular types of people has implications for identity. Dale and Burrell (2008) argue that the 'emplacement' (p.47) of particular groups in particular spaces is both an attempt to control patterns of proximity and interaction and an indication of social position in space. The integration of people performing like operations facilitates supervision, and segregation minimises unwanted physical proximity with the Other. Placing physical boundaries around organisational structures may in turn construct or reinforce social classifications and hierarchies, which 'take on an imposing and constraining force as they are built into material places' (Gieryn 2000:474, Massey 1992). Belonging to particular places rather than others implies the identity of the occupants (Korpela 1989, Rowles 1983). As Dixon and Durrheim (2000) put it, collective identities are typically fashioned through:

.. symbolic contrasts between 'our space' and 'their space' expressed in terms of oppositions such as marginal/ central, primitive/ civilised. (p.34).

Thus, identities come from dis-identification with others' spaces as well as connection with ours (Rose 1996). Emotional connections to places can be shaped just as much by experiences of exclusion as well as positive experiences of belonging; and some people's experiences of belonging is obtained by the exclusion of others from that place. As Dixon and Durrheim (2000) summarise, 'social identities implicate insider/outsider distinctions that operate across various sociospatial levels' (p.30).

Decisions about the spatial division of labour therefore divide spaces and allocate different activities and people to them, creating what appear to be separate, autonomous spaces. The impression of separateness is erroneous, however. As Lefebvre (1991) puts it, '[v]isible boundaries such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity' (p.86-87). Lefebvre (1991) terms this continuity the 'principle of interpenetration and superimposition of social spaces', meaning that 'each fragment of space subjected to analysis masks not just one social relationship but a host of them that analysis can potentially disclose' (p.88). Similarly, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) argue that culture emerges through a 'shared historical process that differentiates the world as it connects it' (p.16) and suggest that failure to regard social spaces as interconnected can conceal the working of power through space. As Gupta and Ferguson put it, '[t]he presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography to

conceal successfully the topography of power' (1992:8). Further, sociospatial relations interconnect spaces across scales, so that, as Spicer (2006) recognises, the influence of powerful institutions that condition organisational praxis can be analysed, although they are 'spatially located at a level that is in principle abstracted from local practice or emplacement' (p.326). In the context of this project, it therefore cannot be assumed that each building, accommodating a specific segment of the organisation, can be treated as an autonomous, self-contained 'unit' of analysis, separate from its organisational, spatial and social structural context. Consideration of the relationships between workspaces and between them and the other spaces to which they relate, has not been addressed in organisation studies, where the focus so far has been the 'autonomous' workspace, or the relations between work and home space. This is addressed in the thesis in chapter X.

Massey's (1995) analysis of the spatial division of labour shows how high status, autonomous workers are deliberately separated from lower status workers, thus adding a spatial division to pre-existing hierarchical divisions. Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) ethnographic study of the village education system in India beautifully illustrates the ways in which organisational hierarchical relations are spatially reproduced and maintained across scales. As Ferguson and Gupta (2002) argue, states 'present themselves as reified entities with particular spatial properties' (p.982), based on two taken for granted metaphors. The first, 'encompassment', is the idea that the state covers a series of ever-widening circles (e.g. family, community, borough and county). The second metaphor, 'verticality' relates to the image of the state as 'above' civil society (so that, for example, action by frontline workers is 'bottom-up' and strategic planning is 'top-down'). Ferguson and Gupta (2002) argue that these two metaphors 'work together to produce a taken for granted spatial and scalar image of the state which sits above and contains its localities, regions and communities' (p.982). The authors suggest that the pervasive idea of 'vertical encompassment' (p.983) in state bureaucracies is enacted in routinised practices which they term 'inequality of spaces' (p.987). In this situation, employees who are 'higher up' the hierarchy are always free to enter the work space of the 'lower' employees whose geographical areas they encompass. In contrast, lower status workers have only limited and circumscribed permission to enter the space of their superiors. This spatial inequality was illustrated most clearly in a ritual of surveillance known as 'the surprise inspection' (p.985) in which higher status officials were able to 'swoop down' (p.987) into the geographical space of the village workers at any time. Ferguson and Gupta (2002) argue that:

The ability to transgress space (the prerogative of 'higher' officers) was also a device of encompassment, as it was their position in the vertical hierarchy that gave officers the privilege of a particular kind of spatial mobility, a mobility whose function and goal was to regulate and discipline. (p.985).

In addition to these different spatial privileges, the linked assumptions of verticality and encompassment also enabled higher officials to be constructed as having 'greater vision, a better sense of the general good; and national, as opposed to local, interest' in contrast to lower levels officials who 'articulated the interests of particular communities, with limited generalizability across geographical areas' (p.987). These assumptions about the limitations of lower level officials, they argue, are summed up in the very term 'locality'.

3.3.2 *What about the state?*

In the discussion so far, I have focused on Lefebvre's (1991) consideration of the powerful role of capitalism in the configuration of space, and not directly on the space of public organisations. As I indicated earlier, the relationship between state organisations and capitalism is contested. On one hand, the purpose of NPM can be understood as an attempt to make state organisations more like private sector businesses (Dingwall and Strangleman 2005), but others argue that the public sector must be different in kind from the private sector, in order to provide the necessary stability for capitalism to be sustained (Gurvitch 1964, Stinchcombe 1997). In his essays on the state, Lefebvre (x, y, z, discussed by Brenner (1997)), elaborates the contradictory relationship between the space of the state and capitalist processes. Although neoliberal states place a high priority on facilitating the circulation of capital, they must also create a cohesive society. The fragmented, hierarchical space produced by capitalism therefore poses a problem for the state, which must attempt both:

.. to repair the abstraction and destruction of everyday social space that is induced through the accumulation process while simultaneously producing grids of social space that might permit the crisis-free, uninterrupted continuation of the latter. (Brenner 1997:147).

Brenner (1997) argues that neoliberal states have been forced to reconfigure their own sociospatial organisation in order to pursue these contradictory tasks. The office buildings I analyse in this study can therefore be seen as part of this reconfiguration. I

shall turn to consideration of the workspace next, beginning with the dominant trend in office design which the new offices follow.

3.4 The 'new office'

3.4.1 *Duffy's 'new ways of working'*

Enterprise House and Troy House, the buildings considered in the case study, are instances of a type of office architecture that has become widespread in both the private and public sectors, and appear to be representative of the wider 'spatial fix' – the spatial configuration assumed to be able to deal with the problems faced by capitalism at a particular time. The buildings exhibit features such as open plan offices, exchangeable desks, and breakout areas, and Enterprise House, the strategic hub building, is constructed predominantly from glass, and has a large atrium. The most influential proponent of this type of office architecture is the architectural practice DEGW, in particular Frank Duffy (Myerson 1998). The influence of DEGW and Duffy has spread from books (Duffy 1992, 1997, 2000) from their involvement in government design projects, and running a Workplace Forum network to bring together architects, managers and academics to explore design issues. The company appears to be marketing itself strongly to the public sector³. Although a different architectural practice was involved in the design of the case study buildings, the work of DEGW appeared to be a strong influence, because many design features reflected those advocated by Duffy (1997). Buildings are often highly standardised because architects are not straightforwardly the originators of their designs, but are, rather, translators of particular social discourses into a material vocabulary (Gieryn 2000, Hofbauer 2000). In the case of the 'new office', the stress on interaction and autonomy reflects the key features of the 'network' or 'post-bureaucratic' organisation. Just as gridded space (Brocklehurst 2006) and modernist architecture (Guillén 1995) contributed to the naturalisation of scientific management, 'Duffyised' architecture may now be contributing to the objectification of contemporary managerial ideology.

Duffy's central argument is that the material form of 'the new office' integrates with key organisational strategies, and can encourage 'new ways of working' appropriate to the

³ For example, Allen et al's (2005) 'Working without Walls' guide to good practice in the public sector in 'not just physical change but integrated business, organisational and cultural change' is co-produced by the Office of Government Commerce and the international workplace and design consultancy DEGW.

contemporary business environment. According to Duffy (1997), architecture has become part of the 'cut-and-thrust world of strategic management' (p.10) because '[t]he design of the material office and the direction of organizational change are intimately bound together, and must be closely correlated to achieve business success - not to mention business survival' (p.67). Duffy (1997) draws explicitly on what he terms the 'open-ended, fertile managerial aspirations' (p.49) of streams of contemporary management theory, such as BPR. This approach leads, he claims, to a radical break with the Taylorism-inspired designs which predominated in the twentieth century. Interaction and autonomy are central to Duffy's (1997) definition of 'new ways of working':

.. new ways of working are ... inherently more interactive than old office routines and give people far more control over the timing, the content, the tools, and the place of work. Much office work can now be done in ways that are mobile, peripatetic, even nomadic. (p.46).

As well as supporting interaction and autonomy, Allen et al (2005) add 'efficiency' and 'expression' to the criteria which must be met by the new office. Efficiency means driving down occupancy costs, which are 'often second only to salary costs' (p.47) and is achieved by maximising the actual occupancy of space using hot-desking (see section 2.x). Expression is 'the creation of a pleasing identity displayed to the workforce' (p.42).

I shall now discuss Duffy's recommendations for the design of 'new offices', considering them as conceived spaces. As Lefebvre (1991) argues, conceived spaces are simultaneously material and social projects which are designed to set up particular patterns of relationships, and are based on particular assumptions about how space and social life interrelate (Hofbauer 2000). I also consider empirical evidence relating to the consequences of these designs. This discussion is organised using headings relating to Lefebvre's writing: the emplacement of employees, spatial practices which the new offices are designed to support, and the lived spaces or symbolism built into these designs.

3.4.2 Duffy's 'design logic': who goes where

Duffy (1997) argues that office design can contribute to the fulfilment of organisational strategy by securing a match between the types of work undertaken in different parts of the organisation and the 'design logic' of offices accommodating them. According to

Duffy, the key determinants of office design logic are 'interaction' and 'autonomy'. 'Plotting' interaction against autonomy yields four categories of office work, each of which should be supported by a specific office design logic. 'Transactional knowledge' work occurs where both interaction and autonomy are maximised. It is:

.. office work that transcends data-handling because it can only be done through exercising considerable judgement and intelligence ... [it involves] ... highly intellectual staff, open-ended problem-solving, and above all constant access to a vast array of shared knowledge. (p.65).

Transactional knowledge work is best supported by a 'club' office design which provides a variety of settings to support both individual and collaborative work, and gives individuals considerable freedom to choose the place, time and nature of their work.

'Group processes' work is group work that is highly interactive but not necessarily highly autonomous, and is best supported by the 'den' arrangement, enabling team effort through the provision of open plan, group space and shared office facilities.

'Concentrated study' work (p.66) involves high autonomy but low interaction, and is best supported by the individual offices of 'the cell'. Work that demands little interaction or autonomy is termed 'individual processes'. This work is 'broken down into smallest components and carried out by staff who are given precise instructions and little discretion' (p.66). Individual process work is supported by 'the hive' which is 'open, ganged, minimal partitions' and uses 'simple dumb terminals or networked PCs' (p.66).

The consequence of this design logic is, therefore, that these categories of work are accommodated in separate office buildings, and ideally, separate areas. Staff groups working in dens, cells or clubs will be more likely to be located in a headquarters office near the city centre. However, 'back office' staff based in hives will be located 'away from the creative teams and decision-makers' (p.57) in 'cheaper office accommodation out of town' (p.61). Equipped with this approach to the analysis of particular design logics, managers will then be able to identify the relative proportions of each type in their organisation, and then think through implications of future change on each type. It is then possible to plan to accommodate change and 'future proof' (p.67) office buildings.

The language used by Duffy to describe the four types of work implies a hierarchical ordering of the workers themselves (for instance, distinguishing 'highly intellectual staff' doing transactional knowledge work from workers in hives using 'simple, dumb terminals'). Indeed, he apologises specifically for the 'unfortunate and outmoded elitist

overtones ... of the gentleman's club' (p.61) associated with the 'club' design logic. However, Duffy argues that his analysis should be seen, not as elitist, but as progressive, because office work will evolve in ways that require more interaction and autonomy, and low level 'individual processes' work will eventually disappear as it is either automated or moved offshore. Thus, 'the old hierarchical pyramids in which a handful of self-important managers controlled a vast subservient labour force' (p.53) will be replaced by complex organisational structures weighted towards 'a preponderance of professional and senior managerial staff' (p.53-4). This process will therefore lead to an increasing proportion of cells, dens and clubs, and a corresponding reduction in hives. Nonetheless, it is clear that Duffy's design logic facilitates the spatial separation of employees on the basis of the autonomy given to them, reflecting both the centre/ periphery model analysed by Massey (1995) and the separation of conception from execution which has become 'dogma' in public management (Hoggett 2005). The processes involved in bringing about this spatial separation, and its consequences, have not been considered in the organisation studies literature. These issues are considered in the thesis in relation to the separation of the 'strategic centre' and 'back office' functions into different office buildings.

3.4.3 *Spatial practices in the 'new office': fluid networks*

As Castells (1996) argues, shifting, fluid networks 'are the fundamental stuff of which new organisations are and will be made' (p.168). And, as Marchington et al (2004) point out, the deliberate disordering of hierarchy and blurring of organisational boundaries are central to attempts to reshape organisations as network forms. Contemporary office buildings are claimed to promote the formation of fluid networks by encouraging the interaction, autonomy and mobility required for this model of organising (Allen et al 2005, Duffy 1997), characteristics that are the antithesis to static metaphors of bureaucracy, such as 'silos' (Dale and Burrell 2008:117). In the argument for the 'new office', interaction and mobility are associated with choice, autonomy and freedom from hierarchical control. For example, Duffy (1997) argues that the new office supports 'office staff who are free to choose when as well as where they wish to work' (p.9) by providing 'few physical constraints' (p.10), leading to 'unremitting teamwork' (p.10). Thus, a key feature of the 'new office' is the absence of the physical boundaries dividing hierarchical levels and departments that are typical of bureaucratic space (Chanlat 2006) to enable networking across these organisational structural divisions. According to Allen et al (2005) the replacement of cellular offices with open offices is the first step in

‘transforming the government workplace’. Below I will discuss the extent to which the proximity created by open plan arrangements facilitates networking, dealing separately with networking across hierarchical levels.

Physical proximity and networking

Apart from ‘the cell’, all the office types in Duffy’s scheme are open plan, with the expressed aim of increasing interaction among employees. Open plan designs draw on ‘spatial syntax’ (Hillier and Hanson 1984), a strand of architectural theory in which it is assumed that proximity is proportional to interaction and that physical barriers are constraints on interaction, and must therefore be minimised. As Hillier and Hanson (1984) put it:

architecture ... has a direct relation – rather than a purely symbolic one – to social life, since it provides the material preconditions for the patterns of movement, encounter and avoidance which are the material realization – as well as sometimes the generator – of social relations. (p.ix).

Space is therefore understood as ‘a pattern of distance and proximity which can be manipulated’ (Taylor and Spicer 2007:328). Proximity is assumed to facilitate the formation of social networks, which will in turn generate useful social outcomes (Hawley 1950). Social networks do not need to be enduring or cohesive to produce innovations. Hillier (1996) suggests that weak ties generated by buildings are significant because they are with people one does not know one needs to talk to, and are therefore more likely to break the boundaries of existing knowledge.

Proximity and hierarchy

The amount of hierarchical division within a building can be understood in terms of its permeability or ‘depth’ (Hillier and Hanson 1984, Hillier 1996). Markus (2006) argues that hierarchically divided buildings have many layers of internal barriers whose purpose is to enable people at higher levels to attain successively higher levels of privacy. Because of its multiple layers, hierarchical space is ‘deep’. However, if the structure is deep, movement is likely to be restricted and chance encounters are unlikely, so that ‘the whole organisation will be limited in its ability to change, and in extreme cases, to survive’ (p.140). In contrast, open plan offices have few internal divisions and are

therefore 'shallow', so that in principle, movement between any organisational level is enabled. As Ferguson and Gupta (2002) show, the asymmetrical patterns of movement for people at different hierarchical levels which they term 'inequality of spaces' is a means by which organisational hierarchy is reproduced. In open plan offices, therefore, we might expect to see a greater 'equality of spaces' and consequently, a levelling of the organisational hierarchy.

Evaluations of open plan offices

While they are a standard feature of 'new office' designs, open plan offices were also a common feature in many twentieth century office designs. A large number of studies have sought to evaluate the relationship between open plan offices and a wide variety of variables, such as communication and job satisfaction (for a review, see Hatch (1990). However, the evidence from these studies is very mixed, with different studies indicating that private offices both inhibit and increase communication. Hatch (1990) suggests that these contradictory findings can be explained by the fact that satisfaction with the office environment is relational, so that there is dissatisfaction if some people have privacy and others do not.

An understanding of this contradictory evidence can also be derived from Massey's (2005) questioning of the assumption that proximity stimulates the formation of relationships, which lies behind open office design. Massey (2005) argues that proximity does not equate with inclusion, but rather, there are always 'others' in proximity, 'not least, though not only, 'women' and 'nature' (p.93). She concludes that we cannot consider:

.. a kind of denuded spatial form in itself (distance; the degree of openness; the numbers of interconnections; proximity, etc., etc.,) but the relational content of that spatial form and in particular the nature of the embedded power-relations.
.. There is no mechanical correlation between distance and difference. (p.93).

Massey's (2005) argument broadens the focus from Hatch's (1990) explanation to a broader consideration of power. It follows that distance or proximity cannot be presumed to shape particular patterns of social relationships in the ways that the designers of modern offices may assume. Rather, as Massey (2005) argues, 'the nature of the embedded power-relations' (p.93) are key to understanding sociospatial relations – a point echoed by Gupta and Ferguson (1992) who state that 'by always foregrounding

the spatial distribution of power relations, we can better understand the process whereby a space achieves a distinctive *identity* as a place' (p.8).

Greater movement through hot-desking

Hot-desking (also referred to as 'hoteling' (Elsbach 2003) or 'desk sharing' (Flexibility Forum⁴)), the situation in which 'staff have no fixed personal workspace and use any available desk as needed' (Felstead et al 2003:16) is an important part of the change to more flexible work practices sought in the 'new office'. Hot-desking is facilitated by architectural designs which combine flexible ICT systems with exchangeable workspaces, or 'techno-spatial hybrids', as Schwarz (2003) calls them. For Allen et al (2005), 'a full non-territorial environment' in which staff are able to choose the most suitable setting for specific types of work, and where space is 'designed and supplied around the needs of business processes' (p.23) is the fifth and ultimate stage in what they call the 'evolution of office space'. Significant organisational benefits are claimed to follow from hot-desking, in terms of cost-savings, spatial flexibility and fluid networking (e.g. Duffy 1997, 2000, Fawcett and Chadwick 2007, Warren 2003). Cost-savings can be obtained through the more intensive use of office space (usually measured using a ratio of the number of desks per ten members of staff) because the total space requirement need not increase in proportion to headcount (Duffy 1997). However, the material environment may not in itself force employees to become mobile. Therefore, hot-desking is frequently reinforced by 'office etiquettes' (Allen et al 2005) which include clear desk policies aiming to keep offices 'free of 'stuff' that clutters and impedes adaptation' (Bradley and Hood 2003:68).

The exchangeability of workspace is not a new phenomenon, as Dale and Burrell (2008) illustrate in their description of Ford's early twentieth century factory design, in which '[t]he more flexible space made it possible to experiment with new ways to organise the production process' (p.91). However, because the exchange value of abstract space is 'integral to the circulation of capital' (Brenner 1997:141-2), the exchangeability of very small portions of space that exists with hot-desking can be seen as a novel move in the development of abstract space, in which it is fragmented and exchanged at smaller scales.

⁴ www.flexibility.co.uk, 'resources for new ways of working', accessed 31st March 2010

The exchangeability of space links hot-desking to arguments which frame movement as either freedom or compulsion. The frequent movement entailed by hot-desking is associated with autonomy, as Duffy (1997) suggests when he says that nomadic ways of working 'give people far more control' (p.46) over how they carry out their work. The freedom implied by mobility can then be presented as a way of 'vying for - and keeping - talented, highly motivated employees' (Apgar 1998:122). Such designs give employees the opportunity to become 'technology-enabled, nomadic workers' (Bean and Hamilton 2006:321). Thus, a strong association is made between mobility and indirect control, so that freedom of movement in order to network goes together with freedom from hierarchical control. This contrast with the criticisms of the slipperiness of contemporary space (e.g. Buchanan (2005) in which, rather than moving by choice, people are forced to move inwards by 'Teflon-like' space.

Evaluations of hot-desking

A number of empirical investigations into hot-desking investigate its relationships with social interaction and identity. Several studies focusing on the implications of hot-desking for social relationships conclude that, rather than encouraging greater social interaction, the spatial reshuffling it entails can give rise to a 'lack of informal social interactions and the potential for loneliness/ isolation of the work' (Brown and O'Hara 2003, Harris 2003, Hislop and Axtell 2007:44, Schwarz 2003, Taskin and Edwards 2007). Indeed, Barnes (2007) suggests that the spatial disruption of relationships between employees can be an explicit managerial strategy aiming to 'break down pockets of worker discontent and discourage fraternisation' (p.246).

Studies by Warren (2006) and Elsbach (2003) indicate that hot-desking limits employees' ability to express and maintain their identities, because they no longer have permission to personalise the workspace. Employees in both studies attempted to recover this ability by re-creating the spatial arrangements and personalised desks associated with former offices, termed 'nesting' (Warren 2006) and 'squatting' (Elsbach 2003). In contrast, Millward et al's (2007) evaluation of the effect of a trial hot-desking system on employee identification concluded that being spatially dispersed did not alienate employees. Rather, the use of electronic communication mediated a shift in the focus of identification from the team, to the organisation. As in Elsbach (2003) and Warren (2006) it was briefly noted that some employees who were ostensibly hot-desking also tended to recreate departmentally segregated 'neighbourhoods' (p.556).

Lacking so far is consideration of the practical consequences of hot-desking for work processes and structures. For instance, in Elsbach's (2003) study, employees' dissatisfaction with the new non-territorial arrangements was assumed from the outset to link to 'the loss of a "connection" to their work and workplace, rather than practical difficulties' (p.630). This assumption is sustained even when one participant is reported to complain about the nuisance of having to unpack and repack work materials when hot-desking. There is also no indication of consequences of employees' resettling into former arrangements, suggesting that there may have been little pressure on desk usage in the organisations that were studied. This is a potentially significant point, since, as noted by the Flexibility Forum⁵ the tendency of some employees to resettle into their 'old office geographies' then creates a tighter ratio of staff: desks for other employees to navigate.

3.4.4 Symbolism of 'new office' design

As Taylor and Hansen (2007) say, office design is 'deeply invested with symbolism' (p.333). Duffy (1997) claims that 'new offices' express fundamentally different values from the dominant design of the twentieth century, which he suggests represented the 'values that Taylor emphasised – order, hierarchy, supervision, depersonalization' (p.17). Cairns (2002) suggests, to the contrary, that 'new offices' are not significantly different from earlier designs, since they retain the basic structural features of modernist architecture, including open plan space. Modernist architecture symbolises functionality and efficiency (Guillén 1997) and open offices openness and accountability, but also exposure and control (Hatch 1990). What perhaps distinguishes the 'new office' from previous designs is an attempt to 'charm as well as intimidate its occupants' (Dale and Burrell 2008:50) through the superimposition of different meanings upon 'modernist' symbolism. As Webb (2006) argues for attempts to regulate identity generally, these appeal to a wide range of social identities other than the employee, such as the home-dweller, the consumer, and the aesthete. Turning first to the home, as Hofbauer (2000) points out, modern office design:

.. attempts to mirror informal relationships or emphasise social bonds among team members, and to create workplaces that attract employees to the extent that an attachment to the workplace as 'second home' is generated'. (p.171).

⁵ www.flexibility.co.uk; accessed 31st March 2009

Symbolism relating to the home, or 'home value' as Jameson (1991) more precisely puts it, is also characteristic of urban environments, where its purpose may be to create an impression of rootedness at the same time as the user is propelled through the slippery, Teflon-like space. In the office, collective spaces such as the atrium or 'street' evoke the village and may contribute to a sense of collective belonging. Workspaces may also 'resemble consumption spaces such as malls and cafes' (Taylor and Spicer 2007:337) and appeal to the sense of choice and autonomy that accompany the identity of the consumer. Third, as Dale and Burrell (2008) point out, contemporary workspaces are often aestheticised. The extensive use of glass as a construction material gives rise to 'light and airy design' (Taylor and Spicer 2007:328) associated with élite organisations, and, when used in democratic buildings, gives the impression of that no barrier exists between politicians and public (Dale and Burrell 2008). Art and decorative artefacts are often incorporated as 'aesthetic actants' with the purpose of 'extending and guiding organizational tastes of (often) élite consumers' (Wolfram Cox and Minahan 2005:535). Artworks may be exhibited to represent to employees images of a desired type of organisation or manager. Such artworks do their work unobtrusively, as Zuidervaat (1991) argues, because they appear to be detached from the conditions of economic production; their apparent 'uselessness' invokes emotions assumed to be excluded from instrumental rationality. New offices may also include attempts to create spaces with deliberately ambiguous meanings open to interpretation by employees, as Clegg and Kornberger (2006) and Kornberger and Clegg (2003) suggest in their discussions of creative or 'generative' buildings. The authors suggest that the blurring of sharp boundaries and enlargement or confusion of margins can produce 'interstitial' or 'liminal' spaces which lack a clear function. These are:

.. transitional, marginal zones. They paradoxically mark the point where one state of being shifts into another; thus, they are spatial zones of becoming.
(Kornberger and Clegg (2003:84).

Such ambiguous spaces, the authors argue, enable re-interpretations of social relationships and identities and blur oppositions such as male/female, manager/worker.

For Lefebvre (1991), lived space refers to the way in which inhabitants and users of space attempt to create meaning, but due to the dominance of conceived space, lived space 'is so far displaced that it barely achieves symbolic force' (p.50). Others suggest, however, that the interpretation of space is an active process in which prior knowledge intervenes (Halford 2008, Smith and Bugni 2006, Yanow 1995, 1998, 2006) drawing on cultural representations such as literature, promotion and art (Taylor and Spicer 2007). As

indicated earlier, it cannot be assumed that the meanings people attribute to space will coincide with, or be suppressed by its 'official' meanings. An example of the socially effectual nature of 'constructed' meanings is given in Rofel's (1991) case study of a Chinese factory, which found that attempts to produce 'modern subjectivities' through modern factory space failed because they conflicted with meanings of space, identity and work that had been built up over time. Thus, Rofel (1991) suggests that '[m]odernity' is therefore not homogenising because memories are not erased by the introduction of new epistemes' (p.95). Brown and Humphreys (2006) show how employees in UK further education colleges used shared understandings of place to author the identities of groups and the organisation, and inform a wide variety of official and unofficial spatial practices.

4 Conceptual framework: the production of space and the production of organisation

In this final part of the literature review, I will draw together the key concepts from both areas of literature that will be used in the analysis. The central concept within the conceptual framework is structuration (Giddens 1984). In this project, structuration is understood as having a spatial dimension, so that simply by occupying and using space, we are engaging with the cultural world and with the social structures embedded in space, often in ways that are taken for granted. This engagement with space is part of the way in which our identity is constituted. At the same time, we act back on space, in ways that maintain it and also change its meaning and material structure. I use Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualisation of the social production of space to integrate social and spatial dimensions, and link the configuration of space with the social structures of capitalism. I also use Berger and Luckmann's (1966) analysis of the way that social reality is constructed to compensate for Lefebvre's (1991) neglect of agency. In Lefebvre's model, *lived space* refers to the patterns of meaning attributed to space and is similar to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concept of *typifications* (p.43). *Spatial practices* are the sedimented patterns of activities associated with particular spaces, also similar to *habitualizations* (Berger and Luckmann 1966:71). Berger and Luckmann (1966) also suggest the useful concept of *recipe knowledge* (p.57), the element of typified knowledge that informs practical purposes, so enabling us to see a link between practised and lived space in Lefebvre's model. Lefebvre's third dimension, *conceived space*, represents the social structures of capitalism, designed simultaneously as material

structures and 'as projects embedded in a spatial context which set up enduring sets of relations' (p.42). In his thinking, conceived spaces are powerful and push through particular spatial practices and lived spaces, so as to enable the sociospatial configuration of capitalism to be more or less fully achieved. While Lefebvre (1991) does not elaborate on the ways in which people 'act back' on space, Berger and Luckmann's conceptualisation enables us to see how people deploy alternative meanings and invent new practices in pursuit of their own purposes. We can therefore see lived spaces and spatial practices as less compliant than Lefebvre allows for. And, as with Giddens' structuration, in the process of 'spatial structuration', spatial structure and identity represent a duality, where identity is constituted through *emplacement*, the places to which we do, or do not belong (Dale and Burrell 2008:53), the spatial practices we use and the meanings that these spaces reflect back on us.

In this thesis, I am seeking to analyse the ways in which the space of the new offices shapes emergent organisational processes, structures and employment relationships. To do so, I use the basic idea of spatial structuration outlined above, together with a set of related concepts that are helpful in the analysis of social space in the context of organisation. The conceptual framework is summarised in Figure 1.

The new offices are understood as conceived spaces, which in this case are designed to shape the social relations of NPM. Within NPM, 'bureaucracy' is framed as a rigid, unresponsive organisational form which should be replaced by a market-oriented, network or 'post-bureaucratic' form, composed of networks of autonomous employees freely crossing boundaries within a shifting structure or 'variable geometry' (Castells 1996:165). These ideals are reflected in Duffy's (1997) recommendations for the new office, which also stress the elimination of hierarchy, interaction, autonomy, and 'unremitting teamwork' (p.10). While the designs of the offices relate to NPM, they do not simply materialise as a reflection of it. Rather, the people involved in commissioning and designing the new offices (the organisation designers), as members of the negotiated order (Strauss 1979), interpret NPM and office design in the light of their own understanding of the organisation, the County itself, their identity, status and so on. In the thesis I analyse the organisation designers' accounts of what the buildings were intended to achieve as they changed over time.

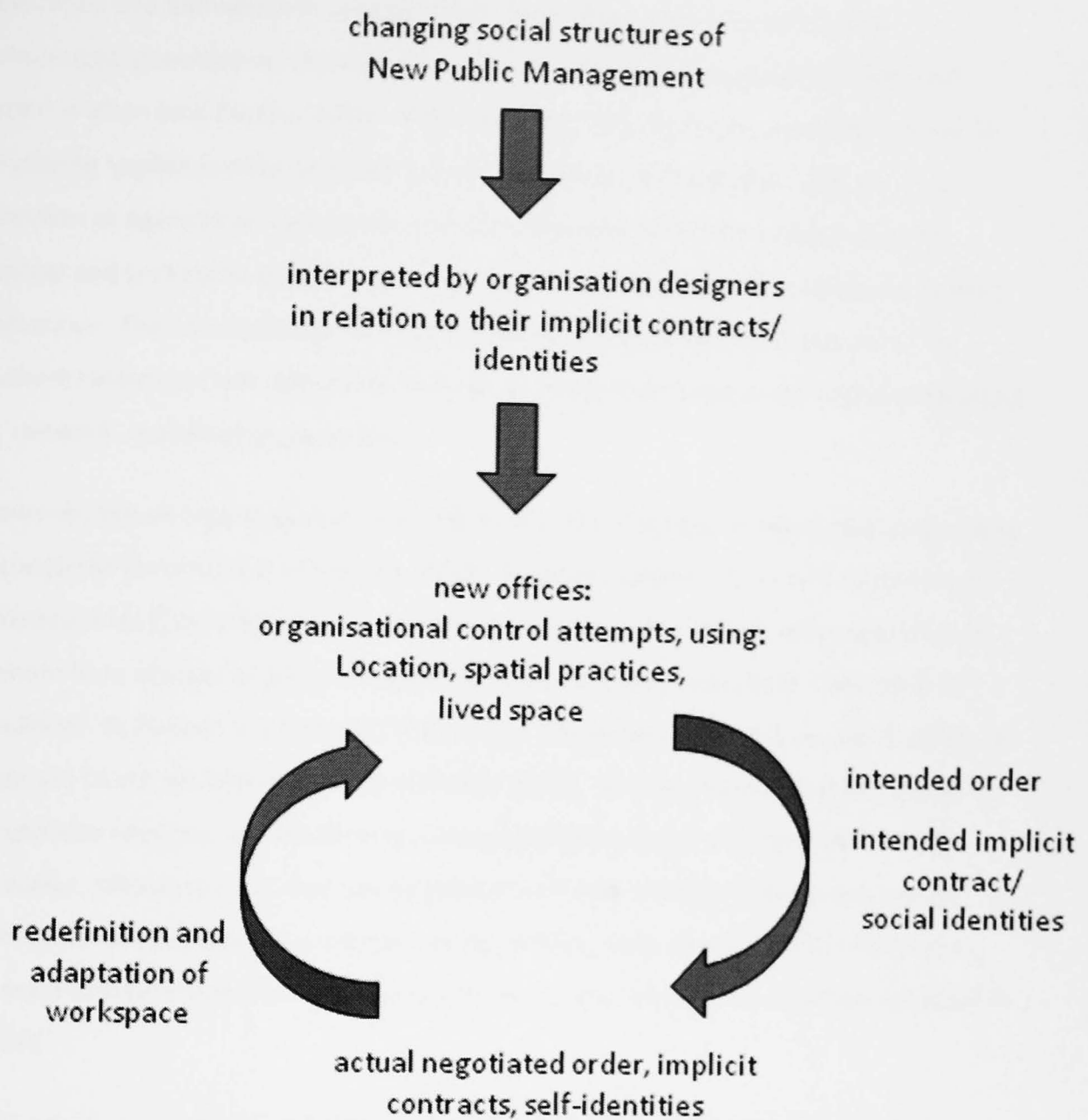


Diagram 1: conceptual framework

I also analyse the actual changes to organisational social reality related to the introduction of the new offices, as they emerged over time. To do so, I use Strauss's (1978) concept of the negotiated order, and consider the individual employment relationship using the concepts of the *implicit contract* and the part of it associated with *identity*. These concepts are useful in understanding work processes and relationships, and I will seek to use them in a way that also recognises the spatiality of relationships and identities. The new offices in SCC were strikingly different from the previous office accommodation, and, at the point of their introduction, could be expected to significantly disrupt taken for granted, 'normal' patterns of conduct. Over time, the new spaces then have the capacity to enable new social relations to emerge, become

objectified and ultimately to sediment into normality as they are passed onto subsequent 'generations' of employees. The way that buildings shape thought and action is often tacit (Yanow 2006). The new offices are, therefore, a possible means of producing implicit institutionalised control, which 'channels [human conduct] in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible' (Berger and Luckmann 1966:72), without managers making explicit attempts to control behaviour. The new buildings may align, therefore, with the general preference for indirect control (Jermier 1998) and the greater levels of autonomy and initiative idealised in 'network' models of organisation.

However, like all organisational control attempts, the attempts to shape behaviour made through the introduction of the new offices will have unintended, as well as intended, consequences (Gouldner 1954). As Berger and Luckmann (1966) show, people tend to deviate from courses of action designed by others and may resist definitions of their situation. As Auburn and Barnes (2006) put it, '[t]ypification is in the service of action, as opposed to action deriving from typification' (p.42). We can therefore expect to see employees adapting or transforming sociospatial structures encouraged by the new buildings, rebalance what they see as violations of their implicit contract and resist definitions of their identities provided by the offices. Such deviations from intended courses of action may then in turn result in new control attempts by managers (Gouldner 1954).

In the following chapter I will explain how I conducted the fieldwork and analysis.

Chapter 3

Investigating sociospatial reality

1 Introduction to the chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methods of investigation and analysis used, and the assumptions on which these were based. I begin by setting out the epistemological assumptions behind the methods I adopted, and explain the Pragmatist criteria for truth and validity that I aim to fulfil. I then define what is meant by ethnography and justify the use of this approach. Following this, most of the chapter is devoted to describing the design of the investigation. The research was carried out as a longitudinal study between 2004 and 2007, with two periods of fieldwork in which participant-observation, interviews and documentary analysis were all used as research methods. The first phase of fieldwork in 2004 focused on the officially stated intentions for the new strategic centre, Enterprise House. The second phase of fieldwork in 2007 then focused on changed official intentions for Troy House and the Public Service Villages which were being planned at the time, and on outcomes, both intended and unintended, in terms of emergent social reality in the new offices. Having explained this overall schedule of activities, from being given access in 2004 to its abrupt withdrawal in 2007, I then highlight particular issues that arose in the course of undertaking participant-observation and interviews, and which provided insights into the analysis itself. The chapter concludes with an account of how I analysed and interpreted the empirical materials.

2 Epistemological assumptions and Pragmatist criteria of truth and validity

In the previous chapter, I drew on both sociology and geography literatures to set out the ontological assumptions I make in the project. To summarise these assumptions, I adopt a 'becoming' (Chia 1996, 2002) or 'process-relational' (Watson 2002) ontology which regards reality as continuously formed through social relationships. I also assume that space is an

integral dimension of social structures and processes, so that it is possible to talk of 'sociospatial reality'. This emergent reality is constituted by interacting processes and relationships in engagement with the spatial and material world. As Massey (1995) puts it, 'we actively create space in the organisation and living of life. The way we do so will have an impact back upon the structuring of society and of our lives' (p.1).

These ontological assumptions predispose the investigation towards related epistemological assumptions. As Chia (1996, 2002) recognises, if a 'becoming' ontology is adopted, then it is not possible to assume that knowledge can mirror or represent 'entities', such as an organisation's culture. Rather, one must adopt what Chia (1996, 2002) calls a 'non-representationalist' position. This is because, as Dachler and Hosking (1995) explain, relational processes continuously construct organisational realities and are also the processes through which knowledge is produced. This leads, they suggest, to a blurring between epistemological issues and 'content' issues. When conducting social research, therefore, as Watson (2000) recognises:

... 'reality' cannot be mirrored, represented or 'captured' by the human observer. The human observer must use the language of the culture of which they are a part, both to make sense of what is before them and to talk about it. This means that they inevitably talk or write about a reality which is their own construction. (p.501).

Thus, knowledge is part of socially constructed reality rather than something that stands apart from it. It is important, however, to distinguish the position that reality and knowledge are socially constructed (which I adopt) from a social constructionist position which gives primacy to the role of language and discourse in the way that reality is shaped, by proceeding from the assumption that discourse brings objects into being (this approach is criticised by Watson 2008c). Rather, in seeking to investigate reality in which the social, material and spatial are bundled together, I follow the argument set out by Harré (2002), who suggests that although people's constructions of the nature and use of objects are more important than their material properties, these properties nonetheless place limits on what we can do with them.

The adoption of a non-representationalist epistemology does not mean that it is impossible to produce useful knowledge about reality. As Alvesson and Kärreman (2000b) advise, rejecting a naive representationalism does not imply 'a destructive, categorical rejection of the communicative powers of language' (p.8). Similarly, Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) suggest that 'the question is not whether there is a reality, or whether it is interpreted or

not, but rather how much of reality is interpreted, and how' (p.183). In this project, I use Pragmatist criteria of truth and validity, and regard knowledge as a socially constructed artefact which usefully informs action. As Watson (2000) explains, Pragmatist knowledge claims are non-representational and therefore do not aspire to providing a mirror image of the world. It is nonetheless possible to judge a knowledge claim on the basis of the extent to which it enables people to cope with their specific circumstances. As Joas (1993) says, '[t]ruth is no longer to do with getting a correct representation of reality in cognition; rather, it expresses an increase of the power to act in relation to an environment' (p.21). This enables us to judge between rival knowledge claims because, as Watson (2000) argues, '[o]ne story is truer than another to the extent to which it more effectively guides practice in that, or a similar, setting' (p.500). As Johnson and Duberley (2000:159) put it, 'justified knowledge is a socially constructed artefact created so as to aid humans in their practical endeavours of settling problematic situations' (p.159).

Having set out these basic assumptions, I shall now discuss the methods I used.

3 Overview of the ethnographically-oriented approach used

I used an 'ethnographically-oriented' approach (Humphreys and Watson 2008) to investigate emergent social reality in the two office buildings in the case study. The two main features of this approach were participant-observation (together with other qualitative methods such as interviews) and an attempt to interpret and write about this reality in a way that gives insights into the relationship between the office buildings and the social relationships that emerged within and between them. Before explaining these research methods in greater detail, I first need to clarify what I mean by the term 'ethnography'. Different scholars use 'ethnography' in different ways; for some, it stands for a type of research method, and for others, for a form of writing. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:1) observe, 'ethnography' is often used to refer to qualitative methods such as 'qualitative inquiry', 'fieldwork' and 'interpretive method', while for Rock (2001), ethnography equates with participant-observation. In this project, I take ethnography to be a form of writing which presents an account of the cultural life of a social group, organisation or community, using the understanding of ethnography explained by Humphreys and Watson (2008) and Watson (2011). The thesis does not provide a full ethnography in the sense of 'a full description of a specific world' (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001:161) but it still attempts to provide insights into the 'cultured lives' of people occupying and using work buildings, based on:

.. an anthropological concern to understand the human as a 'cultured being' ('ethno') and to write about them ('graphy') in a manner which provides rich insights into aspects of humans' cultured lives. (Watson 2011).

In this understanding, ethnography is therefore regarded as the *product* of research, in which the researcher can draw upon a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods. The particular research methods I used were participant-observation, interviews and analysis of official and unofficial documents. And because the project aims to produce a sociological analysis, observations and accounts were considered in the context of the wider social structures in which they are embedded, i.e. were related to a 'cultural whole', as Baszanger and Dodier (2004) suggest.

The main research method used in the study was participant-observation. As Rosen (1991) argues, if we assume that reality is socially constructed, then investigations of reality must include an understanding of the knowledge, meanings, assumptions, ideas, values and norms of the social actors involved in its enactment. And Jansen (2008) shows that in order to understand the role of particular places in the social construction of reality, it is necessary for the researcher to be there, in order to experience and observe the relationship between people and their material environment first-hand. As Bate (1997) puts it, participation enables the researcher 'to enter, and be entered by, the local cultural worlds' (p.1163). An understanding of the actions and orientations of other human beings can be derived most directly from the immediacy of participation in inter-subjective experience (Lofland et al 2006:15, Prus 1996). This concern for the researcher's physical presence in the field is reflected by Rosen (1991), who defines the ethnographer's method of collecting data as:

... [living] among those who are the data. He or she tries to learn the subjects' rules for organisational life, to interact with them for a frequency and duration of time 'sufficient' to understand how and why they construct their social world as it is and to explain it to others. (p.5).

The ethnographer's purpose is therefore to 'understand and reproduce the logic-in-use of the subjects on the social scene because *that* is the material of social life ... the motive power that drives social action' (Rock 2001:31; emphasis original). Understanding the 'logic-in-use' of the field entails a partially emic perspective (see Harris 1976), attempting to study social experience from within, drawing on the concepts used by actors when they interact and create meaningful experience (Denzin 1989).

Seeking to understand the meanings and knowledge that inform the enactment of culture is problematic, however. The accounts that people give of their actions and understandings are highly context-dependent (Potter and Wetherell 1987) and therefore stable meanings cannot be reliably inferred from what people say (for example, Alvesson and Kärreman 2000a, Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000). This problem is compounded when seeking to investigate organisational cultures. As Strauss's (1978) analysis of the negotiated order of organisation shows, the emergent order arises from the interplay of official and unofficial dimensions. However, there is often pressure on employees to display an *appearance* that official processes alone are being used. Ironically, though, the creation of this impression may require employees to engage in further unofficial processes (Brewer 2001) in which they use official or 'legitimate' language to conceal unofficial political activity (Altheide and Johnson 1998:300). Meaning is often communicated tacitly (Goffman 1959), through comportment, gestures (Larsen and Schultz 1990) and dress (Humphreys and Brown 2002, Pratt and Rafaeli 1993, Rafaeli and Pratt 1997) as well as through spoken and written language. Further, in this study, I focus on the emergent interplay between the social life of the organisation and its material environment. The negotiated order is thus assumed to include the material environment. However, buildings and other artefacts are mute and convey meaning tacitly, and people's responses to these tacitly communicated meanings are often also tacit and embodied, (Yanow 1998) for instance through movement, gestures, dress and personal artefacts (Elsbach 2003, 2006). Organisational social reality is, therefore, complex and shifting, and meaning is frequently conveyed in subtle and tacit ways. All of these problems are not simply surmountable by the use of participant-observation. Nonetheless, the use of methods removed from the field, such as surveys or formal interviews, would pose a risk of the researcher being able to access only the official dimension of the organisation. In contrast, an ethnographic approach which involves participant-observation grants significance to actions and accounts made *within* the social setting of the people being studied (Jorgensen 1989:12, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:3) and includes the researcher's own experience of participation as an important and legitimate source of data (Brewer 2000:59).

Although intensive participation is an important research method, as Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) warn, 'the researcher needs to share experiences, but not necessarily viewpoints, with those being studied' (p.163). Insiders may not be conscious of the fundamental presuppositions that shape their culture (Schutz 1964) and may regard particular arrangements and inequalities as 'simply as 'how the world is'' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:9) rather than as socially produced. Mills (2000/1959) observes that people do not

tend to make the connection between their personal predicaments and the wider institutional and social structural environment. Therefore the role of the ethnographer entails a flicking of attention between the 'raw materials' derived from participation in the field, and concepts, theories and methodological assumptions, so that each is tested against the other (Humphreys and Watson (2008).

A sociological analysis must set the organisational events and processes within its wider 'cultural whole', as Baszanger and Dodier (2004) put it. In this project, the key social structures which influenced the design and use of the new buildings were the requirements of New Public Management (NPM). As discussed in the previous chapter, NPM is a powerful influence in the way that public sector organisations function, and redesigned work buildings have become a significant means through which cultural change is sought (e.g. Allen et al 2005). However, forms of organisational control arising from social structures such as NPM may be taken for granted by people in the field (Jermier 1998, Rosen 1991). Consequently, employees may not link, for example, feelings of pleasure arising from being able to network in a stylish, high status building, or of frustration at not being able to locate a desk to work at, with international strategies aimed at improving the efficiency of the public sector. Therefore, as Rosen (1991) advises, this analysis is set within the context of social theory, in order to investigate how taken for granted organisational arrangements are socially produced.

Having explained and justified the general approach that was used, I shall now describe the design of the investigation in detail.

4 Research design

4.1 Initial access in 2004

Shortly after senior managers in SCC announced the purchase of Enterprise House in early 2004, I sought research access through the Learning and Development Consultant (with whom I had worked for several years) who in turn agreed access with the Head of HR. As Smith (2001:226) comments, organisational gatekeepers usually seek to restrict research access, and access to people at the most senior levels in organisations, the 'sacred areas' (Clifford 1983) is typically very restricted, even though the members of these 'social élites' tend to have the greatest influence over the social and material environment (Webb

2006:3). In contrast to this general tendency, I found that access was readily granted, including to the most senior managers, during both phases of this study (until it was withdrawn in autumn 2007). Two circumstances appeared to facilitate this unusually open research access. The first was that I already had access to the organisation as a management lecturer, and in this capacity had been trusted with handling sensitive information about the students/ managers and about the wider organisation. The second factor that may have aided access was that in 2004, senior managers seemed to be proud to have purchased Enterprise House in what they presented as a bold and audacious move, and at a relatively low price. At the time, representatives from several other local authorities had visited Enterprise House, expressing an interest in making similar changes to their workspaces and organisational cultures. Subsequently in November 2004, Enterprise House received the Easton Society's Award of Distinction, in which it was described as '[a] revolutionary new building of international standard'¹. The senior managers seemed to have a 'bullish' air resulting from the acquisition of Enterprise House, and expressed confidence that it could change the organisational culture in the ways that they desired. Because Enterprise House was so different from previous office accommodation used by SCC, the managers expressed curiosity about how the new occupants were speaking about the new building, but suspected that their own seniority would prevent them being given a frank, 'warts and all' picture. In this context, access to the organisation can be understood as a strategic exchange (Watson 1994) in which I was expected to provide senior managers with useful feedback from employees about the change they had made, and in return, receive access to the organisation as a research site and permission to use the data elicited for my doctoral thesis, provided that this was done confidentially.

4.2 Overview of the fieldwork

The fieldwork took place in two separate phases. The purpose of phase 1, which took place in 2004, was to investigate the official intentions for the ways in which Enterprise House might shape new organisational processes and structures. Phase 2 took place in 2007 and investigated the consequences of the introduction of both Enterprise House and Troy House. At this time, it also appeared that the official intentions for the use of buildings in the organisation had shifted, and these new intentions were also analysed as part of phase 2.

The data collection methods used were participant-observation, interviewing, and analysis

¹ Easton society website, accessed December 21st 2004

of a range of official and unofficial documents. Participant-observation included both participation in, and observation of the flow of activity in the setting, and 'informal interviewing', i.e., conversation within the setting which the researcher is able to some extent to direct (Lofland et al 2006:87). Qualitative, semi-structured or 'intensive' (Lofland et al 2006) interviews were also used. Interviews were undertaken because, as Lofland et al (2006:18) point out, they can enable integration with, and reflection on data from participant-observation, and because not all information was available first hand through participation (Hammersley and Atkinson: 2007:98). For example, in phase 1 I wanted to explore the official intentions behind Enterprise House, and thus needed to elicit accounts from the organisation designers relating to the design of the new building and how its spatial features might be able to bring about particular organisational changes. In phase 2, both Enterprise and Troy Houses were occupied. At this time, I wanted to analyse the consequences of the introduction of the new buildings, and accordingly, sought to elicit accounts from employees dealing with changes to their work processes and their employment relationships. It became apparent that for some employees, following their move to the new buildings, work was more frequently undertaken in other places (such as their homes) or outside conventional hours of work. Since these were places and times that I could not access directly as a participant-observer, interviews were necessary to investigate them. I also gathered a range of documentation. This included official documentation (working documents such as Council minutes, newspaper reports referring to SCC, internet pages, in-house magazines, posters and marketing materials) and informal documentation (such as emails, content of flipcharts seen posted in the buildings, cartoons, and a whiteboard which was regularly updated with what appeared to be mildly subversive comments about the organisation).

I will now summarise the fieldwork undertaken in each phase.

4.3 Fieldwork phase 1: investigation of officially stated intentions

The first phase took place between April and October 2004, beginning shortly after the first group of employees had moved into Enterprise House in March 2004. Four interviews were conducted, with: the architect and the Project Consultant (both of whom had transferred to SCC along with Enterprise House, from the X-En owned period); the Chief Executive of SCC; and the Director of the Project Board (the team specially set up to conduct the moves of staff into the new buildings and to inculcate the new practices that were stated to be

desirable in the new environment). An interview with the Head of Human Resources was sought but could not be arranged. I refer to these respondents as 'organisation designers' because all of them, in different ways, expressed the intention to stimulate the development of new organisational structures and processes by means of the new work environment, in line with Lefebvre's (1991:42) notion of 'conceived space'.

The aim of the interviews was to explore the introduction of Enterprise House 'from the perspective of the interviewee, and to understand how and why they come to have this perspective' (King 2004:11). Accordingly, the approach used was to impose a relatively low degree of structure, use a preponderance of open questions and focus on specific situations and action situations in the world of the interviewee (Kvale 1996). All the interviews took place in Enterprise House in small glass-fronted meeting rooms in April 2004. The length of the interviews ranged between 1 hour and 1 hour 55 minutes. The interviews with the architect and Project Consultant 'overlapped' so that they both participated in a joint interview of 45 minutes as well as having individual interviews. All interviews were recorded using a microcassette, and I transcribed them.

All the phase 1 interviewees had high status in the organisation in the context of the Enterprise House project. As Stephens (2007) advocates for high status interviewees, each interview schedule was specific to the individual, in response to their different roles and experiences. The interview schedules for the Chief Executive and Director of the Project Board focused on: the 'strategic agenda' for SCC, and how the new building was intended to move the organisation in this direction; the anticipated physical and symbolic effects of Enterprise House; whether, and how, the move to Enterprise might be complemented by other staff development initiatives; and how the effect of the new building on organisational functioning might be evaluated. In addition to these topic areas, questions for the Project Consultant also focused on the initial commissioning of Enterprise House by its former private sector owner, X-En. The interview schedule for the architect focused mainly on the relationship between the physical and symbolic features of the building and the desired ways of working that had been expressed by the commissioners of the building, first X-En and subsequently SCC. This was of particular interest because, as Markus (2006) speculates, in the relationship between architects and those who commission work buildings, architects are often given a degree of freedom over aesthetic design but are expected to defer to managers on questions of shaping the behaviour of employees.

I also undertook 14 days' participant-observation in Enterprise House during this phase.

Participation related to my existing role as a management lecturer contracted to work within the organisation, and accordingly took place in training rooms and in other collective spaces such as breakout areas, the café and the restaurant. The experiences I documented included facilitating four, three-hour workshops; attending two meetings pertaining to the courses I was involved in; engaging in four one-to-one meetings of approximately one hour's duration, with students in small meeting rooms or breakout areas; attending a retirement 'do' in the SCC lounge over an extended lunch period; and having lunch or a snack in the restaurant and café areas with students and my Learning and Development colleagues.

The first phase fulfilled three significant purposes within the project. First, it enabled the analysis of the intentions behind the building directly, based on accounts given by the people involved in the commission and design (rather than having to infer intentions indirectly on the basis of relevant literature). Second, in Spring 2004 when the first phase of fieldwork was conducted, Enterprise House had only been occupied by the first 'wave' of employees for two weeks. The new building was vastly different from all other office accommodation in the organisation, so that access was gained at the time of maximum 'strangeness' (which subsequently settled into familiarity). Third, the fieldwork and associated theoretical exploration that was done in this phase enabled the development and formulation of the conceptual framework.

4.4 Fieldwork phase 2: investigation of subsequent intentions and consequences

There was an interval of three years between phase 1 and the start of phase 2. During this time, I made regular visits to Enterprise House and to Troy House when this was occupied by FirstService staff in 2005. In 2006 I became a doctoral student at Nottingham University and through my doctoral studies, contextualised the project within an explicitly sociological framework. Drawing from a preliminary analysis of the accounts of organisation designers, the new buildings were conceptualised as interventions intended to bring about shifts in organisational control, in line with discourses of New Public Management. The aim of phase 2 was therefore to investigate the consequences of these interventions.

The phase 2 fieldwork took place between February and September 2007. The main source of data was 30 semi-structured interviews (discussed below) together with participant-observation undertaken throughout this period. As well as investigating the consequences

associated with the new buildings, the fieldwork maintained a focus on how official intentions for the use of buildings across the organisation were continuing to evolve. Responsibility for the acquisition and use of new offices had been allocated to a new permanent unit within the Property Department called the Workspace Improvement Team (WIT). The role of the WIT was to optimise the use of existing accommodation (for example, by intensifying the occupancy of buildings) and to plan and co-ordinate the design, development and occupation of new property, in particular the new Public Service Villages (PSVs). The WIT Manager became a joint organisational gatekeeper (with the Learning and Development Consultant) for the project. Official intentions in phase 2 were investigated through a series of regular conversations with the WIT Manager and other managers in the Property Department.

4.4.1 Phase 2 participant-observation

To enable participant-observation in the office areas, I was provided with a pass enabling entry to Enterprise and Troy House, and an IT profile enabling me to use the organisation's intranet and e-mail system. In the first phase, these offices had been a 'backstage' area (Goffman 1959) that I had been unable to access. When working in the offices I was in effect researching covertly (Burgess 1984) because unknown to them, I was observing and listening to the people nearby at the same time as checking e-mails and so on. I was permitted to take a limited number of photos, (shown in Appendix 1) although this was regarded by gatekeepers as a potentially sensitive issue. The photographs could not show any identifiable individuals, because this would be regarded as an infringement of their privacy. Consequently, no photographs were taken in Troy House because there was no way of framing the large, crowded open plan offices without identifying the people working there.

4.4.2 Phase 2 interviews

Thirty interviews were undertaken, both with employees who had already moved to new buildings (Enterprise or Troy House) and those who were then based in locality buildings and expected to move into PSVs when they were completed. Therefore in the interviews I sought to elicit employees' accounts of working in one of the new buildings, or the anticipated effect of a future move. An interview schedule was developed which reflected the interests of the conceptual framework, but worded colloquially, to encourage respondents to talk in the everyday language used in the organisation. The interview schedule is given in Appendix 2. The schedule was modified as this phase progressed, either to reflect the roles of particular respondents or to include topics which had been left out of earlier drafts. The planned questions focused on the following issues:

- the respondent's current role, relationships and experiences as part of the negotiated order of SCC; their accounts of significant changes which had taken place at departmental, organisational and national levels;
- how the respondent's work processes were enabled or constrained by their work environment; aspects which were made possible, or easier by new buildings, as well as aspects which were now more difficult or not possible;
- their response to the symbolism of their workplace;
- the respondent's experiences of specific elements of their workplace (office areas, breakout areas, meeting rooms, stairs, toilets etc.).

The conversations were loosely structured. Respondents were able to vary the order of topics, introduce new ones, and offer information that might otherwise be masked in everyday interaction (for example, one respondent began the conversation by expressing a sense of loss over the removal of a dedicated team room).

Holstein and Gubrium (1995) suggest that although the interviewer has a more dominant role than would be normal in everyday talk, interviews can nonetheless be regarded as part of the ongoing work performed in an organisation, and can therefore be treated as an element of participant-observation rather than as a separate activity. This was a helpful way of understanding the interviews, particularly since they took place in the work environment whose relationship with social processes was being investigated. In line with this understanding, I made fieldnotes about the setting and process of the interview, from greeting to parting and considered them alongside the interview transcripts. Where appropriate, I would begin the interview by asking the respondent to provide a quick 'guided tour' of their immediate work environment, so that I could see and experience aspects which they might then talk about in the interview. Aspects of the environment of the interview (for instance, a cartoon on an office wall, or the interviewee's interpretation of what people working in the adjacent offices were doing) were often referred to explicitly during interview conversations. Two interviewees confided accounts they felt were too sensitive to be recorded, after the digital recorder was switched off at the end of the interview, and notes of this material were made. Off-record data can be as important as recorded data for representing interviewees' subjective experiences (Warren 2002, Warren

et al 2003).

4.4.3 Phase 2 access, informants and locations

Whereas in phase 1 all interviewees were organisation designers, most of the interviewees in phase 2 were employees (including managers at various levels) who occupied and used work buildings in SCC. To elicit participation, I posted a short item on the Council's intranet to explain the project and invite people to come forward for interview (shown in Appendix 3). I also approached some individuals directly, including managers with whom I was acquainted, and people recommended to me on the basis of their roles and experience relating to the new offices.

As Rachel (1996) points out, access is not 'achieved' once and for all, but is an ongoing concern that needs to be renegotiated throughout the project. At the start of phase 2, I needed to elicit and maintain support from many more informants from across the organisation, and this brought new issues to the fore. A large complex organisation is socially stratified in terms of status, occupational or professional groups as well as gender, age, social class etc., and, as Altheide and Johnson (1998) say, 'the personal qualities of a given ethnographer will 'fit' or 'not fit' somewhere in this schema' (p.295). The degree of 'fit' between researcher and researched may place limits on what the researcher can and cannot learn in a given setting (Van Maanen 1988:4) although it is important to recognise that categories such as status are socially constructed, and so should not be overemphasised (and thus reified) in the research encounter (Lofland et al 2006:23). The description of the project and invitation to volunteer for interview that I posted on the SCC intranet was intended to convey that I would 'fit' everywhere, and thus would be able to learn from people in all categories. Following Waddington's (2004) advice, it sought to emphasise my commonality and sympathy with respondents, guaranteed confidentiality and, as Taylor and Bogdan (1984) advise, gave a 'truthful, but vague and imprecise' (p.20) summary of the research objectives and procedures. I also sought to show myself as possessing a solid institutional background (in the form of the University), and as an approachable and curious individual.

Thirty eight people responded initially, although not all were interviewed. Several people did not subsequently respond to my communications to them. One person who worked in a children's home was advised by her manager not to be interviewed, since this might breach the privacy and confidentiality of the children living there. Because I was reliant on volunteer interviewees, it was not possible to formally 'sample within the case' as

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:37) recommend, but informants nonetheless included people in a wide range of both ‘member identified categories’ (such as official status and location) and ‘observer-identified categories’ (such as ‘hot-deskers’ or ‘settlers’) which emerged as being pertinent to the study.

Most of the interviews were carried out at the interviewee’s place of work, although several respondents who worked in locality buildings opted to be interviewed at Enterprise House since they were frequently required to attend the building for meetings. A breakdown of the location of the interviews is shown below (all place names are pseudonyms):

Enterprise House:	18
Troy House:	4
Cottisham:	1
Record Archiving Unit:	1
St. Mary House:	2
County Hall:	1
Courthouse:	1
Kellworth Fire Station:	1
Haxton Youth Centre:	1

Although the fieldwork covered several buildings on the old campus and in localities spread across the County, I have not been able to consider these explicitly in the thesis (because of the need to limit its size). However, the analysis has included some accounts from respondents based in these buildings (dealing with, for example, their experiences of visiting Enterprise House, or receiving shared services from FirstService). The job roles of interviewees ranged from Director level to temporary staff, with the majority of interviewees working at managerial or practitioner level. Twenty two interviewees were women and eight, men. Six worked for FirstService (and were based at Troy House); twenty three worked for SCC, and one (the Project Consultant) was independent. The duration of the interviews varied from 1 hour 10 minutes to 2 hours. Twenty eight of the interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and were transcribed using a professional transcription service. Two respondents were unwilling to have their interview recorded, so notes of the conversation were taken concurrently and written up the same or the following day.

4.4.4 *Shift in official intentions*

Phase 2 also included formal and informal interviews with other 'organisation designers': a manager and staff member in the Work Environment Programme (WIT) and a manager in the Property Department. I also re-interviewed the Project Consultant. These interviews with organisation designers were significant because they suggested a shift in official intentions for new work buildings. Whereas in 2004, official intentions had emphasised the reduction of hierarchical relations and encouragement for networking across departmental boundaries, in 2007, intentions stressed cost reduction, making 'hidden' property costs explicit, and the intensification of the use of buildings. Such purposes appeared to be being implemented in various ways. For example, in autumn 2007, more desks were put into Troy House in spaces previously used as breakout areas.

These later intentions also focused more explicitly on organisational flexibility. A consultancy project called 'Securing the Future' (StF) was ongoing concurrently with phase 2, in which consultants from ABCD were analysing the business processes in operation throughout the organisation, with a view to outsourcing many services according to a 'flexible firm' model. The WIT staff presented the new buildings as a vital component enabling this restructuring exercise, because they enabled a very high degree of flexibility in terms of reconfiguring the occupancy of staff. Unfortunately, I was unable to secure an interview with any of the ABCD consultants, because, they stated, all their time was 'billable' and the cost of the interview could not be charged for. However, an implication of StF for ongoing access in this project was that it was necessary to distinguish clearly between the two when describing the project to potential informants. As might be imagined, the ABCD consultants were tolerated, but not generally liked (apart from by a minority of staff who may have anticipated that their own careers would be advanced via StF; see Watson 1982). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) point out that 'people in the field will seek to place or locate the ethnographer within the social landscape defined by their experience' (p.61) and therefore, the material I provided about the project emphasised the differences between my role as a researcher, and the role of a consultant. I pointed out that the research was not allied with any senior management project, although at the same time, I could not promise that senior managers would in any way be inclined to follow recommendations emanating from the fieldwork.

4.5 Feedback from SCC on preliminary analysis and departure from the field in 2007

In autumn 2007 I compiled a preliminary analysis of the empirical material to date. This served as an 'analytic memo' to focus and refine the empirical work, identify promising theoretical avenues, provide an opportunity for 'member validation' (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001:167) and to give feedback to SCC about the practical implications of the new buildings. This analysis was submitted first to interview respondents, who were invited to comment and suggest changes. No major changes were suggested. I then submitted the analysis to the WIT manager and the Learning and Development team. Previously in phase 1, the senior managers had encouraged me to include all points of view put forward by employees in feedback to them, including ones critical of the changes to the work environment. Accordingly, I did so, and the preliminary analysis included a wide range of expressions of opinion about the new buildings. However, in autumn 2007 there had been two key changes in personnel (with a new Chief Executive and a new WIT manager) and there appeared to be a degree of anxiety about allowing such criticisms to be expressed. Through a close informant I discovered, indirectly, that the new WIT manager was 'very concerned' about the points I had submitted. Waddington (2004) advises that the participant-observer should appear as a 'non-threatening person who will not harm the organisation in any way' (p.155) to those in the field. It may have been felt that this important principle had been violated, because disseminating what may have been interpreted as negative views about the organisation could be seen as harmful. I was aware that some use was made of this preliminary analysis in that the design specification of the PSV buildings was modified, albeit in minor ways. However, as Jorgensen (1989) points out, trust may be withdrawn at any time. I was not subsequently invited to present my interpretation and the new WIT manager did not respond to my attempts to contact him.

I was disappointed by my abrupt departure from the field, and doubt whether a point of 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser and Strauss 1967) was reached. However, given the overall time span of the fieldwork, the study is properly longitudinal (Rosen 1991:11) rather than the 'quick description' criticised by Bate (1997). The significance of the extended period of fieldwork in the project is that it has illustrated shifts in the meaning and purpose of the buildings over time. Both official meanings and purposes, and unofficial meanings (as reported by respondents) changed, and these changes were also reflected in my experience as a participant-observer.

I will now discuss specific issues that were raised in undertaking and analysing the fieldwork. These relate to participant-observation, interviews, and analysis and interpretation.

5 Participant-observation in the new offices

5.1 Overview of participant-observation undertaken

In phase 1, although I was excluded from office areas, my status fitted with Gold's (1958) description of 'participant-as-observer' because I was working closely with colleagues in the Learning and Development Team and our students/managers. I was thus a member of a loosely defined 'team' and, as an insider, was privy to my colleagues' reflections, stories and jokes about SCC. As a contributor to management development programmes commissioned by SCC I was also, indirectly, subject to evaluation through its performance management system. My participation therefore loosely paralleled the experience of SCC employees as they worked in the new buildings and the social structural context of NPM.

In phase 2, having become a full-time researcher, I became an 'observer-as-participant' (Gold 1958). I no longer belonged to a 'team' and this greater degree of detachment was reflected spatially, as I became a 'hot-desker' without an allocated bench but being able to sit (in principle) anywhere in either Troy or Enterprise Houses. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:83) state, greater emphasis on the observer role can be advantageous because it allows the researcher to participate in more social strata in the field, but in my case it also led to a heightened sense of marginalisation associated with hot-desking. In the absence of a team, I did not experience the camaraderie that some people reported about their experience of working in an open plan office. This 'bias' in my experience may contribute to a less favourable impression of the effect of the new buildings. However, the sense of marginalisation may in itself be illuminating data, since it appeared to be shared by other hot-deskers. The issue of marginalisation may itself become more significant if the trend towards more intensive use of buildings is continued (predicted, for example, by Allen et al 2005 and Elsbach 2003).

In both phases, observation focused on everyday 'talk in action' in which I took part or overheard, and 'informal interviewing' (Lofland et al 2007) in which I sought to elicit impressions or stories about the work environment, for instance as part of lunchtime conversation. A variety of official and unofficial documents were collected. Jotted

fieldnotes were made more or less contemporaneously with events in the field. These rough notes were then written up on a weekly basis, and at this stage I attempted to flesh out the events, experiences and interactions in the notes in greater detail and more reflectively, recognising that such descriptions inevitably 'involve active processes of sensemaking and interpretation' (Emerson et al 2001:353).

The buildings and other artefacts were not considered separately but 'incorporated into the fabric of ethnographic enquiry, just as they contribute to the fabric of social life' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:137). As Jansen (2008) shows, the material environment is part of the process of sustaining socially shared typifications, and the performance of work involves 'a sustained engagement with material means' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 137). Participant-observation therefore included consideration of the 'design vocabulary' (Yanow 1998, 2003) of the various work buildings in SCC well as the ways in which people appeared to interpret and interact with them. Several points of interest emerged. First, the ways in which people used parts of buildings which organisation designers regarded as significant in accomplishing their aims to make the organisation 'less bureaucratic' (for example, breakout areas) were focused on. Second, how individuals used their desks (the amount and nature of materials on it) and the ambience of the office environs (such as the light and noise, and whether it appeared crowded) was considered. Third, how buildings and objects were used in the enactment of organisational rituals (see Kunda 2006) such as formal Council meetings or informal meetings in the cafeteria, were also considered. Fourth, as Rosen (1991) notes, the boundaries of organisational culture are the object of continuous labour by managers as they seek to 'punctuate [organisational] experiences and meanings from its wider culture' (p.4). Cultural boundaries are represented spatially (Clegg and Kornberger 2006, Kornberger and Clegg 2003), and therefore, particular attention was paid to spatial boundaries and the ways in which they were traversed (via lifts, entry barriers, staircases, and walkways) or symbolised, for example by the presence or absence of artwork. Cultural affiliations can also be symbolised through the expression that individuals 'give off' (Goffman 1959) such as individuals' dress (Humphreys and Brown 2002), personal artefacts (Elsbach 2003, 2006) and gestures (Larsen and Schultz 1990) and these were also considered.

The offices areas in Enterprise and Troy Houses are highly 'legible' environments (Jansen 2008) because they are composed of simple repeating spatial patterns (benches of eight desks arranged in open plan offices, which are in turn repeated on floors of the building). Despite the radical difference between these workspaces and their previous offices, many

new occupants of Enterprise and Troy Houses reported that they had settled in remarkably quickly because of this straightforward spatial logic. Similarly, as a participant-observer, I settled in quickly and after my initial euphoria, participant-observation in these buildings came to feel like a routine and sometimes boring activity. It became tempting to devote more attention to the more sensational 'focal events' (Brewer 2000:111) happening at the time. These included, for example, a redundancy exercise in FirstService in January 2007, in which those selected for redundancy were informed in glass-fronted meeting rooms in Enterprise House, so that the event was visible to their colleagues in the adjacent offices. Van Maanen (1988) argues that we can learn more from the exceptional than from the topical (p.108); this will enable us to 'crack open the culture' of an organisation. However, I think this is a false dichotomy, and agree with Young (1989) who argues that it is at the level of everyday routine interaction that culture is formed and reaffirmed, so that:

The mundanity of the everyday is an illusion, for it is within these details that the dynamics of organisational culture come into being and use. (p.201).

Therefore, the approach taken here is that the exceptional can only be understood in the light of the everyday. For instance, only by understanding the mundane culture of FirstService can the apparently cruel redundancies be understood.

5.2 Researcher identity and impression management

As Miller (2004) states, access to research sites does not automatically grant access to accounts. Access is therefore an ongoing concern which is present in all the relationships in which the researcher engages. The researcher's identity thus pervades the whole enterprise (Coffey 1999:1) because respondents' appraisal of one's character and attitude influence the extent to which they will allow access to 'backstage' areas (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Given that organisations, in common with all social settings, are complex and stratified (Altheide and Johnson 1998), participant-observation requires 'a chameleon-like capacity to adapt to different types of people and situations' (Waddington 2004:163). During the fieldwork undertaken in SCC, I attempted various forms of 'chameleon-like' adaptation. When discussing issues regarded as controversial, such as the changes proposed by StF, it was occasionally necessary to suppress my personal beliefs and political sympathies relating to these issues. In the highly visible office environments within the central buildings, dress appeared to have become a more significant way of affirming one's status and credibility. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) advise that the researcher should dress in the same way as

the people in the field, and accordingly, I found that a smart suit was an absolute requirement in Enterprise or Troy House. However, in locality offices, the presence of the suit seemed to imply an apparently unwelcome association with the 'higher ups' at the centre. When observing people in their places of work I avoided conspicuously taking notes, and I abandoned my smart notebook in favour of an ordinary A4 pad so that I looked as if I was doing 'normal' work. As Emerson et al (2001) point out, note-taking reminds those studied that despite their proximity and apparent empathy, the researcher has different and perhaps unknown priorities. Fieldwork is indeed a 'peculiar practice' (Van Maanen 1988:ix) because undertaking it does not resemble the performance of ordinary work, and open observation may offend against deeply held cultural sensibilities.

Subtle observation was required particularly when hot-desking in open plan offices. When hot-desking, one is 'in transit', and the social experience is more akin to entering a carriage on a commuter train than going into a conventional office. It appeared essential to show 'civil inattention' (Goffman 1971), a mannerism which simultaneously acknowledges the presence of other people nearby, at the same time as indicating that one is not going to embark on communication with them. Civil inattention is enacted through an initial glance towards the other person, followed by a studied lack of interest in them, minimal eye contact, and careful management of physical proximity. When hot-desking, on arrival at the chosen desk, I would minimally greet or acknowledge others sitting nearby, but not introduce myself, because this would interrupt them. Rather, the norm was to log on and interact discreetly with distant other people via computer and phone. Therefore, participant-observation in these offices turned out to be a curious activity which involved observing without appearing to actually look at people; impressions often had to be absorbed sideways, through peripheral vision and via other senses.

In contrast to the careful disinterest required when working among strangers in offices, when in conversation, it was necessary to show great inquisitiveness, combined with a sharp grasp of the general situation. As Rock (2001) says, in order to erode taken-for-granted assumptions, one must ask questions which might be considered eccentric, irrelevant or indecorous by people in the field. At the same time, one has to show familiarity with their objective conditions (Bourdieu 1996) and in this case, I had to display fluency in the use of the specialist vocabulary of local authorities (such as Gershon, Local Strategic Partnerships, front office/back office, etc.) and thus show expertise in this setting. The 'acceptable incompetent' role advocated by Lofland (1971) would not have been appropriate, but rather, as Delamont and Atkinson (1995) argue, it was necessary to simultaneously develop

and show familiarity as a participant, and at the same time 'fight familiarity', in order to function as an effective observer.

6 Interviews

6.1 'Studying up': interviewing high status individuals in phase 1

All of the interviewees in phase 1 were high status, in terms of their status relative to the general population (Conti and O'Neil 2007) and within the organisation, as well as their capacity to affect the working lives of thousands of people through changes to the workplace. They were also high status in relation to me, although I suspect that my own status was ambiguous to them: while I was a 'trusted insider' (see Hoffman 1980), I was not at the time affiliated to an élite higher education institution. Social research on high status 'élites' has been termed 'studying up' (Nader 1972), where significant differences in status between researched and researchers pose specific difficulties for researchers (Odendahl and Shaw 2002). For example, élite interviewees find it easier to create particular identities during the interview process because they are often highly skilled and experienced in self-presentation (Ozga 2000, Ozga and Gewirtz 1994). Therefore, status differences can have dramatic effects on research practice and the character of the knowledge claims it produces (Conti and O'Neil 2007). However, it is important for researchers not to inadvertently reify status differences by regarding high status interviewees as inherently powerful. Status differences are socially constructed and emerge from complex relationships between individuals, organisations and institutions rather than residing within individuals (Aldridge 1993, Conti and O'Neil 2007, Stephens 2007).

Considering the phase 1 interviews in retrospect, two issues were raised by the high status of these interviewees. Contrary to Odendahl and Shaw's (2002) suggestion that the researcher's lower status is problematic, I suspect that in this project, my comparatively low status was an advantage, because I could be seen by the senior managers as both a useful informant and as providing a conduit through which they could convey their expectations about how employees should respond to the new environment. I was already a trusted insider who was able to 'fit in' with middle managers, who were seen as a key group in their response to the new environment. The senior managers may therefore have regarded me as someone who could elicit potentially sensitive information from this group, information which might not otherwise have been conveyed to them. In this respect, the two senior

managers appeared to make subtle attempts to direct my enquiries on several occasions in my interviews with them. For example, in the interview with the Chief Executive, he spoke of his decision to base all managers, including himself, in open plan accommodation. He then appeared to solicit feedback on how this decision had been received:

I didn't have any direct repercussions myself but I know that it caused a bit of consternation among some people ... that did send ripples of panic around some colleagues and you might pick that up, I'd be interested to hear, obviously in a very anonymous kind of way how that works.

The senior managers also expected the results of the research to be published within the organisation. The dissemination of the analysis, including their accounts, was therefore an opportunity for them to put across a positive interpretation of the new environment, as well as their expectations about how the staff should behave in it. We can see this as an example of an attempt to manipulate workers' implicit contracts (Watson 2003:191) by seeking to persuade employees that the new buildings provided an improved bundle of efforts and rewards to them.

The second issue relating to 'studying up' was the ambiguous role played by Enterprise House itself in the phase 1 interviews. Conti and O'Neil (2007) describe the way in which some high status interviewees appeared to 'use' their impressive office space as territory which reinforced their status, by allowing interruptions from secretaries and other colleagues, and taking the opportunity to 'multi-task' their daily work with the interview. In contrast, all the phase 1 interviews were carried out in the transparent meeting rooms, (because not even the Chief Executive had a private office, only a desk within an open plan office) and none of the interviews were interrupted. Ostensibly, then, the interview environment was 'neutral', and through the interviews, the 'levelling' capacity of the building was illustrated. However at the time, senior managers seemed to have a sense of triumph and pride connected with Enterprise House; they appeared to present the entire building as an enormous manifestation of their own agency. The impression I received was similar to that reported by Cassell (2005) of managers who were 'creating their own understandings of the change process through the interview situation ... creating, in some instances, the image of themselves as organisational heroes' (p.175) where, in this case, the building was the outcome of their heroic action.

It does not follow from the two issues raised above that the interviews were in some way flawed, however. Rather, as Rapley (2001) advises, all interviews are social encounters,

dependent on local interactional contingencies; whatever 'ideals' interviewers may aim for, no single practice will gain 'better' data than others. Thus, issues arising from 'studying up' bring into focus the general point that an awareness of this local context of data production should be central to the reflexive analysis of the data.

6.2 Social categories in the offices: issues arising from phase 2 interviews

Two issues emerged from the fieldwork in phase 2 which appeared significant in terms of the way that employees spoke of changes to their implicit contract: first, for employees in Enterprise House, the importance of the individual's job roles in terms of its requirement for communicating with colleagues; and second, for employees based in Troy House, the experience of being a hot-desker.

In Enterprise House, the job roles of respondents appeared to have a significant influence on their accounts of the workplace. Several observer-identified categories emerged which concerned the characteristic ways in which employees needed to relate to others in order to perform their role effectively. These were 'networkers' (people whose role was to initiate new projects, often by drawing on the expertise of colleagues in different Directorates); 'managers' (whose roles required them to lead and support a team as well as develop their own specialist area); their 'team members'; and 'specialists' who often worked alone and required access to specialist software, library and information resources. Enterprise House appeared to be designed on the assumption that all employees would have similar needs in terms of the way they communicated with others. However, this appeared problematic because different categories of employee had very different needs in terms of cross-Directorate networking, team-working, and solitude. The type of work performed by employees has also received little attention in existing studies, which tend to make a similar assumption (an exception to this is Halford (2005) who distinguishes between managers and their team members in her study of a 'hybrid' workspace).

The experiences of hot-deskers in Troy House (which was occupied intensively) were brought into focus through interviews with FirstService employees and also through my own participant observation in phase 2. My working day as a researcher often entailed travelling across the County to do interviews and then dropping in at Enterprise or Troy House in order to catch up on desk work. This paralleled the experience of many employees whose working day included travelling to visit clients or to attend meetings. Since I had no desk or place to

store my possessions, it was necessary to have them (digital recorder, spare batteries, sandwiches, file, phone, coat, umbrella, etc.) with me at all times. As well as being inconvenient, it was somewhat embarrassing to arrive at a workplace to meet someone for the first time when burdened with so much assorted baggage. There is a marked contrast between the glamorous descriptions of globally mobile, *élite* professionals (see for example Go and van Fenema 2006) and the experience of local mobility which I and some SCC employees had. Activities such as wandering around a crowded office in search of a desk, carrying all one's possessions everywhere, and eating a packed lunch or writing notes when parked in a lay-by or carpark do not imply that one is high status.

7 Analysis and interpretation

7.1 Assumptions made about empirical materials

Various types of empirical materials were assembled during the fieldwork: interview transcripts; fieldnotes, which recorded my interpretations of artefacts and what I, and other people, were saying and doing; official and unofficial documents; and photographs. The analysis therefore started with data from these sources as its 'raw materials'. These data were not taken as direct representations of external reality or of the meanings and beliefs espoused by individuals. Rather, all data were regarded as interpretations, some of which were made initially by SCC employees, but all of which were channelled through my own subsequent interpretations as the researcher and writer. As Geertz (1973) puts it, 'what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to' (p.9).

These 'constructions of constructions' relate to their social and spatial context in complex ways. As Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue, such constructions 'do not merely reflect or mirror objects, events and categories pre-existing in the material world' (p.6) but are accounts constructed to achieve particular purposes within a given context. The purposeful nature of accounts of place is stressed by Dixon and Durrheim (2000), who argue that they act 'as a rhetorical warrant through which particular social practices and relations are legitimated' (p.33). As Alvesson and Kärreman (2000a) note, organisational actors are 'politically conscious language users' (p.1132), varying their accounts according to context in order to navigate organisational power relationships. In conversations between researchers and researched, meaning and identity is jointly constructed (Cassell 2005, Potter and

Hepburn 2005) and both researcher and researched are active creators of meaning (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). 'Data' is therefore embedded in the particular relationship between the researcher and researched (King 2004) and within the particular material circumstances of the interview (Jansen 2008); these factors will have a bearing on what respondents choose to share with researchers (Kvale 1996). Similarly, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) advise, all documents, including official ones (for example, showing the occupancy rate of buildings or the percentage of computers switched on at a particular time) are social products; official documents cannot be assumed to show the 'facts'. Fieldnotes are likewise recordings of interpretations made by the researcher (Emerson et al 2001, Van Maanen 1988), in which the observation and transcription of the ongoing flow of social life embeds and fixes the unwritten behaviour, beliefs, values, and oral traditions of the researcher become fixed and classified, or 'textualised' as data (Ricoeur 1973). Then, as Van Maanen (1988) says:

... social facts, including native points of view, are human fabrications, themselves subject to social enquiry as to their origins. Fieldwork constructs ... emerge from a hermeneutic process; fieldwork is an interpretive act, not an observational or descriptive one. (p.93).

Therefore, all data is regarded as being situated, in a multiplicity of ways. 'Situatedness' relates to the setting itself; the sensitivity of the topic; power relations in the field; the nature of the social interaction between the researcher and researched (Brewer 2000:127) as well as the socio-cultural location; sex and gender of researcher and respondents; their historical contexts; and even apparently trivial local contingencies, such as 'missed buses' (Spencer 2001: 448). Therefore, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) advise, '[t]he aim is not to gather 'pure' data that are free from potential bias. There is no such thing' (p.102). Rather, all accounts must be interpreted reflexively, in the context in which they were produced. As well as involving introspection on the part of the researcher, reflexivity also implies a thorough awareness of the social conditions in which the people studied live (Bourdieu 1996) or, as Holstein and Gubrium (1995) recommend, the researcher should acquire knowledge of the 'material, cultural and interpretive circumstances to which respondents might orient' (p.77).

7.2 Analysis

Analysis started with repeated reading of transcripts, fieldnotes and other materials. The

empirical materials were initially divided into broad categories relating to the conceptual framework. They were then classified in greater detail into categories which emerged from the interpretation of the data, in each case maintaining a link between items of data and the context from which they were derived. For example, several sub-categories were included within 'intended change to identity of employees' such as 'behaviour'; 'dress and self-presentation'; 'new recruits'. The type of work that respondents were engaged in was similarly classified, both on the basis of their official level and job title, and by drawing from their accounts of how they needed to work within the unofficial organisation in order to function effectively. Theory development took place during each step of data collection and analysis, and a series of analytic memos were written to record emerging theoretical ideas. Relevant literature was reviewed before and after the fieldwork had been completed, so that the fieldwork was guided by predetermined concepts as well as by concepts emerging from the field itself. Analysis was undertaken as 'an iterative process in which ideas are used to make sense of data, and data used to change ideas' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 158). The approach taken was therefore somewhere between 'local/ emergent' and 'elite/ a priori' (Alvesson and Deetz 2000) because it used both 'stock concepts', and novel categories and concepts, which were developed inductively from the data. Similarly, the approach taken to the analysis lies in the middle of the continuum of ethnographic research defined by Humphreys et al (2003) between one pole, a rationally analytic, rigorously structured and systematic approach, reliant on some distance between researched and researcher; and the opposite pole, 'the outcome of in-depth, intuitive and empathetic understanding of the other' (p.10).

The accounts from respondents were often contradictory. Contradictions were particularly striking in the managers' accounts. For example, all of the managers indicated that they liked being able to approach other people informally, on the spur of the moment, but at the same time complained that they found being interrupted by others immensely irritating. Initially, I feared that these contradictions were an impediment to my making useful generalisations from the respondents' accounts, but subsequently interpreted them as having meaning which relates to the particular type of work or activity being spoken of at the time. Auburn and Barnes (2006) make this point in their discussion of the relationship between typifications of place and agency:

... what we know at a particular point in our engagement with the world is fitted to or selected as relevant to the project we are pursuing. Thus contradictory knowledge may be displayed in different contexts. .. Typification is in the service of action, as opposed to action deriving from typification. (p.42).

Apparent contradictions within accounts can then be seen as relevant to particular projects being pursued, and indications of the different identities and meanings that social actors must construct in the course of their work (Heyl 2001, C. Watson 2008). As Watson (2008b, 2009) recognises, these identities and meanings are often in particular tension in managerial roles.

As Brewer (2000) points out, placing the data into categories is not itself analysis. Analysis 'proper' takes place when the categories are linked. For example, in Troy House, open plan space tended to be regarded as neither an improvement nor a deterioration to the implicit contract for people who could regularly sit at the same desk, but was regarded as a clear deterioration by those regularly obliged to hot-desk. At the same time, focal events (Brewer 2000) were recorded and considered in the light of these linkages. Focal events included: an article entitled 'Hot Air Over New Building' which appeared in the local newspaper, reporting the views of a disgruntled employee shortly after the occupation of Enterprise House in 2004; a humorous story concerning a Councillor in Enterprise House who fell off his chair and into the water feature in the crowded restaurant one lunchtime; and the FirstService redundancies made in glass-fronted meeting rooms. Having begun the analysis systematically by placing the data into categories which were subsequently linked, I found that the analysis took place predominantly in the process of writing itself, because the writing forced me both to immerse myself in the data and in concepts that seemed to illuminate it, and to express the interplay of these two things with precision.

Having reviewed relevant literature and explained how I conducted and analysed the investigation, the preliminaries are now complete and we can go to Enterprise House in 2004.

Chapter 4

Taking up space: the expanding role of buildings in SCC

1 Introduction to the chapter

In this first empirical chapter, I analyse the changing official intentions expressed by the organisation designers in relation to the role of buildings in bringing about cultural change in SCC between 2004 and 2007. I focus in particular on their accounts of the wider geographical and organisational context, in which they justify the introduction of new types of offices and new configurations of employees. I also illustrate how, during the period of the fieldwork, a new strategic role was constructed for property in SCC, which presented it as something that could bring about cultural change across the whole organisation. The new 'strategic' intentions associated with property stated that all of the buildings used by SCC Council staff were required to support working practices that were referred to as open, flexible, and corporate. And the creation of the 'strategic centre' in Enterprise House was the first move in what became a complete spatial reconfiguration of all employees. This analysis therefore provides the wider context in which the two buildings I focus on in the case study, Enterprise and Troy House, are situated (discussed in the following three chapters).

As well as providing the context, however, the analysis of the broad scale re-spatialisation of the organisation is also a contribution of the project. During the period of the fieldwork, the spatial reconfigurations that were undertaken brought employees together and separated them in new ways. I understand these changes as new spatial divisions of labour, which, as Massey (1995) argues, are not just new patterns of employment, but 'represent whole new sets of relations between activities in different places, new spatial forms of social organisation, new dimensions of inequality and new relations of dominance and dependence' (p.79). The chapter therefore examines the emergent relationships *between* workspaces, within the context of the social relations of New Public Management (NPM). In the organisation studies literature, the question of relations between workplaces has been addressed only indirectly. Relations between workplaces are mentioned in studies by Gouldner (1954), Kunda (2006), Burns and Stalker (1961) and Brown and Humphreys (2006).

However, none of these studies directly addresses the intentions behind and consequences of the spatial reconfiguration of particular groups of employees in different buildings. The analysis therefore takes up Lefebvre's (1991) principle of the 'interpenetration and superimposition of social spaces' (p.88), which regards any portion of space as being constituted through many superimposed sets of social relations. The interdependence of what might look like separate spaces is also recognised by Gupta and Ferguson (1992), who argue that culture emerges through a 'shared historical process that differentiates the world as it connects it' (p.16). The spatial reconfigurations of employees that took place during the period of the fieldwork can therefore be seen as interventions which differentiate spaces and create new forms of connection between them. For example, the creation of FirstService involved the extraction of 'back office' staff from their directorates and placing them in a separate organisation and a separate building, at the same time as maintaining the connection between the 'back office' and the 'strategic centre', through all the social and contractual relationships that enabled them to commission or provide services.

This chapter tells the first half of the 'story', with the other half, analysing the consequences of the spatial reconfiguration of the organisation, being discussed in chapter 8. The analysis draws on data assembled during both phases of fieldwork, derived from interviews and conversations with organisation designers, and official documents, such as Council minutes. The chapter is organised chronologically, and deals first with the background to the acquisition of Enterprise House in 2004, and then with the organisation-wide property strategy that was triggered.

2 2004: the creation of the 'strategic hub' in Enterprise House

2.1 The four organisation designers

As was indicated in chapter 1, the acquisition of Enterprise House by the Council was opportunistic. The purchase was proposed by the Chief Executive and his colleague the Director of Social Care, in late 2003. Having been agreed by Councillors, the sale proceeded quickly and was completed in January 2004. The analysis in this section is based on accounts from these two key informants and from two other 'organisation designers', the architect and the Project Consultant. Both of them were already working on Enterprise House and transferred from X-En with the building when it was sold to SCC in January 2004.

The Chief Executive, James, had been with SCC for only a few months. Before joining the

organisation, he held a senior management role at a neighbouring local authority. This authority also covered a predominantly rural area, but, unlike SCC, housed concentrations of high tech industry associated with an élite university. The acquisition of Enterprise House was, at the time of the interview, James's most significant managerial intervention in his new role, and one of which he appeared to be proud. The Director of Social Care, Marcus, had taken on the role of Director of the Project Board, the cross-organisational project group created to co-ordinate the move of the 1,100 strategic level staff into Enterprise House. He had been with SCC for a year and three quarters. In addition to his job as Director of Social Care, he had a variety of other corporate responsibilities, including the leads on partnerships, diversity, and health and safety, and the operational management of Social Care in the Easton locality. Prior to joining SCC he had worked in London where he had been a Director of Housing as well as Social Services, and also worked as a columnist and a journalist. Marcus's previous experience was therefore varied both in terms of the roles he had performed and the places where he had worked, and he claimed that this enabled him to view SCC more objectively than employees who had worked there for many years. As he put it, *'I don't carry any baggage or heredity'*. He contrasted his own diverse experience specifically with the other managers in the top tiers of the Social Care Directorate, all of whom had remained in the same roles over long periods. As Marcus pointed out, *'in my Department I was the only new manager in the first four tiers in four years'*. Marcus left SCC for a high profile national role based in London later in 2004 and it seems possible that he had already secured the job at the time of the research interview.

The architect, Rory, and the independent Project Consultant, Simon, worked closely together but appeared to have very different ideas about what the new building could and should do. Although his design for Enterprise House closely matched Duffy's (1997) specification for the 'club' type of office, (discussed in chapter 2) Rory expressed scepticism about Duffy's architectural recipes for 'new ways of working', which presume that the built environment can be designed to induce particular behaviours. In Rory's words:

I'm an architect, I'm not here to champion new ways of working, although some of my colleagues in the business ... would. I don't think necessarily new ways of working is the be-all and end-all of it and companies like DEGW, who've been in the forefront of that architecturally, Frank Duffy, writing books on new ways of working ... you're wary of getting into that sort of crowd ... as if you can build a model society and change people.

In contrast, Simon frequently affirmed a belief in the power of the building to change the organisational culture in SCC. In his everyday conversation, he regularly paraphrased the

official 'vision statement' for the Enterprise House project, for instance:

Rory will laugh at this because I always quote this everything we do ... but we had a vision for moving into this building which was, you know, we're not just building a building or even just building an office ... it's about creating a work environment that will help encompass and stimulate cultural change and values and ultimately a service to the citizens of Southern County.

I inferred from Simon's manner of speaking that he had recently undertaken formal management education. His speech was peppered with fashionable management phrases, and on several occasions he illustrated his verbal accounts with sketched diagrams and graphs (for instance, showing 'culture change' plotted against 'time'). Rory interpreted the apparent difference in perspective between himself and Simon as arising from their different professional roles. As Rory spoke of his colleague, *'the role he's coming from, he has to drive that change and believe in it, I can afford to retreat into the world of architecture and be more objective or critical, perhaps'*. Simon had organised the completion of the building project and the transfer of staff into Enterprise House, and this had been implemented on time and slightly under budget. Many employees, including the Chief Executive, spoke highly of Simon's work. It was widely reported by the new occupants that they had been able to resume their everyday work within minutes of arriving at their new office locations, and they appeared both pleased and surprised by this speed and efficiency.

At the time of the interviews with the four organisation designers in March and April 2004, an air of success and triumph pervaded the Enterprise House project. The two senior managers had successfully brought about the purchase of a new, high-spec office building valued at £40m, for £16m. As part of this they had persuaded their Councillors that this was a worthwhile risk and had managed the acquisition in a short time frame. The building was then occupied on time and with little disruption. A single expression of staff dissatisfaction had been made in the local press, but this appeared to have been successfully dealt with. Enterprise House had already attracted interest from other local authorities considering following suit with their property. Many of the accounts from the organisation designers analysed below expressed a sense of success and achievement and portrayed, in Cassell's (2005) words, an 'image of themselves as organisational heroes' (p.175). To give one example of this, below, Marcus expressed his pleasure with the successful project and at the same time took the opportunity to compare himself and his colleagues at SCC with their rival authority, Borough Council:

.. we did deliver, it's probably one of the few major capital projects like this to be delivered on budget, on time, so we're pleased about that. And certainly the

Borough Council here, who have been longing to get out of their accommodation for years, are very envious ... because we didn't just talk about it, we get on and do it.

I shall now analyse the justifications put forward by the organisation designers for the creation of the 'strategic hub', in particular considering their accounts of the long-standing problems posed by the place and the people of SCC, and the 'old campus', the work buildings formerly occupied by the employees who were transferred to Enterprise House. These accounts need to be considered, however, in the context of this apparent sense of success, in which the organisation designers presented Enterprise House as part of the 'solution' to the problems they identified. They may, then, have attributed greater significance to spatial issues (for example, the old campus) than they might otherwise have done.

2.2 'Stuffy Southern County'

The organisation designers justified the creation of the new strategic hub primarily in terms of its ultimate benefit to the people of Southern County. Central to this justification was their representation of the County not just as an area served by a local authority, but as a place with particular geographical and social characteristics. Southern County is generally considered an attractive place to live and visit, and its coastline is a popular UK tourist destination. According to the Chief Executive, this generally pleasant environment created a disadvantage, because the public of Southern County tended to be happy with their current situation and so lacked the ambition to change it. As James put it:

It's not unique for rural areas, but I think it's more pronounced than I've ever come across in the other place, is the sense of 'let's just keep it as it is, let's not push it too far, let's not, err, be too bold' ... and that's reflected in communities and individuals as well as in the organisation. We have a below average wage economy, our skill base is still relatively narrow, and our physical environment in SCC is fantastic, it's not been destroyed by planners and infrastructure development. It would be very easy for SCC to become a quiet backwater that had a very particular niche tourist market for that, but actually if we are to create a sense of strong, vibrant, high ambition communities, that to me is fundamental, and it's fundamental partly because everybody only has a chance for life once and unless you're ambitious for yourself you forgo it and it's partly because I think unless we do that culturally, economically and in well-being terms we'll actually take backward steps rather than forward steps.

James therefore presented the situation as posing a clear moral choice for the organisation, between seeking to create '*strong, vibrant, high ambition communities*' which would enable individuals to make the most of their life chances, and allowing Southern County to become '*a quiet backwater*', resulting in people forgoing life chances. He re-emphasised this choice in his antithesis between '*backward steps rather than forward steps*', a rhetorical move which strengthened his argument for choosing the latter option. However, he argued, because most SCC employees lived within the County, they too displayed this lack of ambition and therefore could not properly fulfil their role in helping and supporting the public to achieve their own ambitions. Both of the two senior managers spoke of the continuity between the problems with the County as a place and the problems with SCC Council, the local authority. Marcus spoke in particular of the complacency of SCC's managers and suggested that this arose as a consequence of the good work-life balance that was possible in SCC:

... people on the whole come [to Southern] to live and work and get a better ... get a life actually, better work-life balance. But the downside is they never extend themselves, it's out of here, go to the pub, watch a bit of telly ... very nice, very sort of competent but not reactive enough or responsive enough to the environment around..

Thus, Marcus described the managers as '*competent*' and '*very nice*', but also implied that they were passive and did not '*extend themselves*' at work (his description of their leisure pursuits implies that Marcus also found these rather pedestrian). Many times throughout the period of the fieldwork, the people of Southern County, and of the Council, were spoken of as having this sort of mixture of characteristics – pleasantness, civility, and thoroughness, together with contentment with the way things are, complacency and narrowness. The notion of a typical 'character' which emerges historically from place-based relations between work and community is conceptualised by Beynon (1973, cited in Massey 1995) as 'local class character' (p.57). In Southern County, the local class character was referred to variously as '*stuffy Southern County*'; as people who '*stay put*' rather than move in search of new opportunities; and also with apparent affection, as people who were inherently courteous and friendly, as one respondent put it, '*the people are very nice people, are very trusting, civilised, kind, all those things*'.

Both senior managers suggested that the key difficulty to be addressed was the lack of responsiveness and ambition of SCC's managers. Marcus was openly critical of the managers who worked for him in Social Care. For example, he related an anecdote about

how his predecessor in the Director of Social Care role had launched an initiative to enable managers to learn from high-performing authorities in other parts of the UK. At the time, the 'star rating' of Social Care in SCC was only one star out of a possible three, and this was holding the authority as a whole back in terms of its overall rating. Therefore, there was considerable pressure on Social Care managers for improvement. The initiative provided funding for them to visit their high-performing colleagues in order to '*bring the knowledge back*', but according to Marcus, none of the managers took up the opportunity. As Marcus put it, '*nobody went anywhere*' and thus a chance to learn from colleagues with better ratings was lost. Neither had the staff been forced to reappraise their practice, Marcus argued, because in SCC there had been no 'crises' (such as the Victoria Klimbie case) that had affected some authorities. The two senior managers' accounts presented SCC's managers as having become fixed and immobile. This lack of mobility, they argued, meant that they stood apart from developments taking place elsewhere and were lagging behind managers in other authorities. As Marcus said of his Social Care managers:

Terrific ... they're a really good bunch, yes, behind in lots of ways because of a mixture of just not being in any traffic, any kind of intellectual or service traffic really and a feeling that if things are OK, we don't need to do that.

Marcus went on to argue that because the managers were not in any '*traffic*', they had become enclosed within their own culture, had internalised its particular social arrangements, and had become incapable of noticing when these arrangements became problematic. As he put it, '*when you're socialised into a culture and you're here a while, inevitably you become part of it and it's part of you*'. Marcus suggested, however, that as a newcomer with a diverse background, he was able to apprehend aspects of the SCC culture as problematic – in particular, the predominantly static, sedentary spatial practices which contributed to the enclosure of the culture. As a result, Marcus said, the organisation as a whole was '*a long way behind, and inevitably so with that profile of staff*'.

The two 'external' organisation designers, Simon and Rory, also construed the culture of SCC as '*behind*' (even though their acquaintance with the organisation had been short and limited in scope). They tended to compare SCC with X-En (for which Enterprise House had originally been designed). For example, Simon compared the present state of the culture in SCC with X-En's culture ten years previously, when it had been privatised: '*[SCC] are so much less further down the cultural change journey than X-En ... they are ten years behind*'. He expressed the organisation's limitations as a lack of customer focus and continuous improvement:

This organisation is not customer led, is not customer focused, there's one or two

people who are advocates and leaders of that, but the vast majority of these people, it's still very much job for life, keep my nose clean and I'll turn up, nine till five, get my money and go home. There's no real incentive around ... you know, driving forward change and improvement. There's no focus on continuous improvement here at all, they'll carry on doing exactly the same things they're doing because that's the way they've always done it. You know, why should we do it any different?

Simon appeared to draw on the discourse of Total Quality Management in order to reason that the lack of emphasis on customer focus and continuous improvement in SCC led to its being 'behind'. His account advances the notion of what Salaman (2005) terms an 'antibureaucratic' ideology, in which market principles and relationships are defined as inevitable and moral, and 'relationships and transactions are all defined in terms of the relationship between the business and the customer' (p.143). Simon's account also suggests that many managers manifested a 'bureaucratic personality' (Merton 1957), a trait usually regarded as a dysfunction of bureaucracy, since the managers appeared to him to regard historically created rules (such as expected attendance between 9am and 5pm) as ends in themselves, rather than as means for providing better services to the public. By implication, Simon's account suggests that the employees interpreted their implicit contract as 'restricted' (Fox 1974) because work tasks were closely prescribed, by '*the way they've always done it*', rather than as an open-ended contract which would require them to use their initiative and vary tasks in line with customers' needs.

All the organisation designers, as well as other respondents, referred to Southern County as a place, and also as an organisation, that was 'behind'. For James, the County risked becoming '*a quiet backwater*'; Marcus suggested that the staff were '*a long way behind*' and '*behind, in lots of ways*'. Simon argued that the Council was '*ten years behind*' X-En on the '*cultural change journey*'. It appeared to be taken for granted that as a public sector organisation, SCC should follow the cultural change 'route' already taken in the private sector. At the time of the interviews, I noticed the stress placed on this argument but did not question its logic. As Massey (2005) and Harvey (2006) point out, however, labelling places as 'backward' or 'behind' involves a sleight of hand in which contemporaneous differences in space are reconceptualised as points on a temporal sequence. This move has potentially significant social consequences. As Massey (2005) says, 'modernising' discourses (in this case, NPM and TQM) imply that, rather than understanding different regions as having different possible futures emerging from their own unique histories, they are assumed to be 'merely at an earlier stage in the one and only narrative it is possible to tell' (p.5). In this case, the narrative concerns the 'journey' from traditional, old-fashioned public

bureaucracy to the private sector-like, customer, focused, continuously improving organisation. Massey (2005) warns, however, that because capitalist processes are reliant on geographical inequality, most places cannot attain the élite economic status promised by this single narrative of progress; this is, rather, an argument that leads to uneven geographical development. And as Harvey (2006) argues, '[w]hole populations, cultures and territories are thereby presumed to be incapable of shaping their own history, let alone of influencing developments elsewhere' (p.72).

Having considered some of the ways in which the place of Southern County and the culture of the local authority appeared to mutually shape one another, I shall now discuss the ways in which the organisation designers accounted for the role of the old campus in the ongoing production of the culture in the organisation.

2.3 The old campus

Both James and Marcus claimed that the static, 'behind' culture of the organisation was reinforced by the spatial arrangements of the old campus, where the senior managers in each directorate had formerly been based. As James remarked:

Where we were before was absolutely dreadful buildings. I found them deeply, deeply depressing, I used to hate them with a passion. I hated them because they were disconnected ... you know, we had about seven or eight buildings spread over ten acres, I used to liken the Social Care office as like the tardis, people went in at half past eight in the morning and you didn't know what happened, they went into a time warp and then they'd be spewed out at 5.30 at night. They would never come across anybody else other than their immediate peers, and the same would be replicated across every single building, there was the Education building, the Social Care building, the Environment and Transport building. If I wanted a quick chat with someone, well I wouldn't think of having a quick chat with someone because physically you'd have to organise yourself so to do. So partly it was a kind of revulsion with our old buildings but also a sense that they didn't work, they didn't enable people to know each other in any kind of real, meaningful connecting way, they created a separation even within the departments because they were very much cellular office ... so it's fine if we thought that the vision for SCC was something that monks and hermits could achieve, but monks and hermits don't achieve the connections, actually they were ... you know, valuing separateness, insularity ... they were valuing the quiet deliberative approach to life, and they were not valuing what

I see as fundamentally the important networks.

James's main criticism of the old campus was that it prevented employees from networking, both across and within directorates. Networking was impeded, James suggested, both by the physical seclusion they caused and the symbolism of their separateness, which implied that '*separateness, insularity*' were qualities that were valued in the organisation. For James, the old buildings were thus one of the means by which passivity was instilled into employees, rather like the factory workers described by Gouldner (1954) who felt themselves to be at the mercy of an uncontrollable mechanism and likewise became unenergetic and passive. Rory similarly suggested that the old buildings had '*corralled*' the staff. Marcus argued that the old campus reinforced a '*lack of corporacy, not the sense of being one Council*'. (The word 'corporacy' was in frequent use at this time and was linked with the idea of having 'one Council' acting towards a common purpose, rather than Directorate-based 'silos' acting independently). He reasoned that the physical separation brought about by the separate buildings fatally impeded progress because '*we were in a syndrome where people would wait months to talk to people to get through diaries long after the issue could usefully be dealt with ... it was dead half the time*'.

Above, James used two colourful metaphors, which we can understand as lived space (Lefebvre 1991), to express his criticisms of the old buildings. First, (drawing from the popular TV series 'Dr. Who') James jokingly described the Social Care building as '*the tardis*¹'. His joke implied that the building actively controlled the people, who on entry became helpless passengers, first being taken into a time warp and then being '*spewed out*' (rather than exiting of their own accord) at 5.30pm. Therefore, for James, part of the problem with the buildings on the old campus seemed to be the role they played in maintaining the internalised organisational culture, in which it was taken for granted that work was directorate-based, performed individually using quiet deliberation, and undertaken within standard office hours. This point is reinforced with his other metaphor, in his suggestion that the old buildings constructed employees as '*monks and hermits*'. A similar metaphor is used by Larsen and Schultz (1990), who compare modern bureaucracy to a monastery where occupants are also secluded in their individual cells, their time dominated by the punctual, repetitive monastic routine. The separate buildings were presented, then, as supporting the fixed, immobile spatial practices which the senior managers implied were central in limiting organisational performance.

1 The 'tardis' (Time and Relative Dimensions in Space) is the Doctor's mode of transport through time and space. The old single storey, red-brick, boxy Social Care building did bear a superficial resemblance to the Police Box guise of the tardis in the TV series.

James's tardis metaphor also implies a further shortcoming of the old campus: because it separated James from his team of senior managers (the Directors of Services), he could not easily see what was going on. As James said, *'you didn't know what happened, they went into a time warp'* and this made it difficult to have *'a quick chat'* with someone. Therefore, for James, it appears that old campus was failing to fulfil a basic requirement of even the early factory system because he could not exercise managerial surveillance there. In this sense, the old campus of SCC bore a remarkable resemblance to the 'old factory' (which produced tobacco and was completed in 1750) described by Carmona et al (2002). Like the old campus, the labyrinthine structure of the old factory reflected a series of ad hoc enlargements, so that each building was 'a 'closed' space, as activities, operators and supervisors eluded detailed ... monitoring that could link them to specific times or spatial locales' (p.265). It is notable that the design of Enterprise House, with its open plan offices and equal desk space for all employees (discussed in the following chapter) enabled James to secure enhanced control over his senior team while at the same time being able to present the new arrangement as less hierarchical and more egalitarian.

However, the creation of the strategic hub in Enterprise House resulted in a new spatial division of labour in which employees not based in the strategic centre de facto became part of a new spatial 'periphery'. I now consider how the organisation designers framed this new 'problem' which the introduction of Enterprise House created.

2.4 The new division between 'strategy' and 'operations'

Clearly, the creation of the strategic hub meant that a new spatial division of the organisation had to be made, between staff whose jobs were defined as 'strategic' and would work in Enterprise House, and all other employees whose jobs were then regarded as 'operational', and would be based elsewhere, either remaining on the partly-vacated old campus or in locality buildings. In making this new spatial division of labour, what was termed the *'principle of occupation'* of Enterprise House was determined by the geographical spread of responsibility of particular job roles. 'Strategic' roles were defined as those having cross-County responsibilities, whereas operational roles covered only part of Southern County. As Simon put it, the central hub was:

... never intended to be an operational building it was a headquarters ... so it's about strategy, policy and County-wide management issues as opposed to ... the other guys who dig the roads and things are not based here.

Similarly, James argued:

... it wasn't meant as a centralist kind of model. It simply meant that these are the people who are dealing most closely with the cross-County issues ... they're not dealing with operational activities within just one bit of the County ... and they are dealing with kind of real policy formulation, strategy, thinking ... rather than operational delivery implementation.

James thus appeared to stress that the intention was not to centralise power, but that the new division reflected a meaningful difference between the work of '*real policy formulation, strategy, thinking*' and '*operational delivery implementation*'. The spatial separation of these types of work aligns with Duffy's (1997) advice for separation between 'club' and 'den' or 'hive' offices, on the basis that the 'club' caters for knowledge work, which uniquely requires 'highly intellectual staff, open-ended problem solving, and, above all, constant access to a vast array of shared knowledge' (p.62). The spatial separation between conception and execution also reflects broader trends in the UK private sector (Massey 1995) and, more recently, public sector (Hoggett 2005). The approach taken in SCC therefore appeared to be a commonsense approach which followed that widely adopted elsewhere.

This spatial division can be problematised, however, on the basis of the types of inequality that may be built into it. First, as Massey (1995) argues, the process in which job roles are devised and people allocated to them is not strictly rational, but is suffused with assumptions about gender and class, which are then reinforced if they are further embedded into new spatial divisions (p.136). Consequently, she suggests, the creation of a strategic hub adds a spatial division to a pre-existing class division, so that members of the central élite are 'surrounded by others of the same standing and status, and confirmation too of a set of values, reinforcing them and ensuring their reproduction' (p.137). This separation has implications for identity, as Dixon and Durrheim (2000) similarly recognise: identity is formed both by 'where we are' (for those in Enterprise House, together with others doing policy and strategy) and 'where we are not' (with '*the guys who dig the roads*'). Consequently, Dixon and Durrheim (2000) argue that accounts of such divisions need to be treated with caution. This applies especially to 'insider' accounts, because the voice of the insider is usually powerful, and can claim certain entitlements, including the right to define who does or does not fit in.

We can see that the rationale used for distinguishing strategic from operational roles, based on the size of the geographical area encompassed by the role, reflects the linked assumptions of 'encompassment' and 'verticality' identified by Ferguson and Gupta (2002). In SCC, responsibility for the whole of the area of Southern County was associated, as James put it, with '*policy formulation, strategy, thinking*' and was accorded high status, whereas responsibility for a restricted geographical area was associated with operational management, service delivery, and the implementation of policy (such as road-digging). As Ferguson and Gupta (2002) show, these linked assumptions also enable higher officials to be constructed as having 'greater vision, a better sense of the general good; and national, as opposed to local, interest' in contrast to lower levels officials who 'articulated the interests of particular communities, with limited generalizability across geographical areas' (p.987). These assumptions about the limitations of lower level officials, they argue, are summed up in the very term 'locality' – the same term used in SCC to refer to offices, managers and workers dealing with particular patches. The strategic hub can therefore be understood as the bringing together of all the employees who may be assumed to possess these higher level faculties, and who are afforded these spatial privileges. Therefore, while the creation of the strategic centre may appear to be a commonsense arrangement in which people with similar roles are grouped, it also adds a spatial division to pre-existing hierarchical differences in a way that may reinforce and extend such differences.

While they expressed strong agreement with the principle of occupation, the two senior managers expressed considerable unease about the way in which the new separation of employees might be construed by the staff, especially those excluded from the new 'centre'. James, for example, stressed repeatedly that the new division worried him:

.. but the thing that really worried me was that there would be people who'd be left behind on the old campus who are not strategic, therefore weren't going to come into [Enterprise House] in their role, and we'd see a divide growing. This is a quality of building ... I doubt whether there's another local authority building like it in the country. And that sense of divide between those who are here and those who are not is a real worry for me actually and one that I need to work really hard on over the next year to address. A kind of sense of an 'us and them', and that's my main worry. That is really fundamental because at the end of the day I'm Chief Executive of the whole organisation, not just the people here.

James spoke of the potential '*sense of divide between those who are here and those who are not*', as arising from the difference in the quality of office buildings that now existed.

Marcus made a similar point, referring to the *'inequality between this environment and buildings in [other towns] which are shit'*. This difference in quality, they both argued, could result in an informal *'two tier authority'* and undermine previous efforts to create a sense of *'one Council'*. As Brown and Humphreys (2005) and Yanow (1995, 1998) show, work buildings imply narratives about the identities of occupants, and dilapidated buildings can convey a corresponding low value placed on staff – especially, perhaps, if adjacent or connected buildings speak of the élite status of their occupants.

As well as acknowledging the effect that the difference in quality of building might have, Marcus also suggested that the spatial integration of senior staff in itself had already given rise to greater social division between strategic and operational staff:

... the gulf between the group at the top and the rest of the organisation has widened as a result of this ... [Widened?] Most definitely. There's only one thousand people here, 26,000 outside ... so 4% and they've seen that 4% get better accommodation and be more élitist and more integrated with each other, not with them outside. So ... I think that's really a problem for us.

Thus, *'the group at the top'* could be seen as *'élitist'*, both because of their superior accommodation and the fact of their being located together and consequently, socially integrated. The new strategic hub, then, was described as having created a new task, the reduction of inequality between the *'centre'* and the *'periphery'* to enable them to re-integrate. Giddens (1984) suggests, however, that the general tendency is for social *'centres'* to maintain, not reduce, their superior status. Those who occupy spatial centres, he argues, establish themselves as having control over resources and employ a variety of forms of social closure to sustain difference between themselves and those in peripheral regions, who are effectively treated as inferiors or outsiders. Consequently, centre/periphery divisions tend to endure over time (p.131). This point is developed by Massey (1995) who argues that the existence of an organisational strategic centre requires the creation of production-only outposts, and so the increasingly common spatial division between organisational centre and periphery *'does not reduce spatial inequality. Rather, it requires it and reproduces it'* (p.288). Thus, Enterprise House was likely to be *'in a position of structural dominance in comparison with, and in relation to, other [buildings]'* because it was *'the prime locus of control, of strategic planning, of finance, of the resources for research and innovation'* (Massey 1995:3; italics original).

Various problematic features are therefore bundled into the apparently commonsense, unproblematic spatial reconfiguration in which *'strategy'* is separated from *'operations'*: it

cements hidden class and gender inequalities (Massey 1995); the status differences it produces are self-sustaining through the personal attributes constructed for individuals at different points in the hierarchy (Ferguson and Gupta 2002); and these differences tend to become established and reinforced as a result of the sociospatial division between centre and periphery (Giddens 1984, Massey 1995).

3 2005 onwards: buildings become a central part of strategy in SCC

3.1 The new SCC-wide Property Strategy

Although the two senior managers expressed strong concerns about the new spatial division between strategic and non-strategic staff, there appeared to be widespread agreement about the success of the Enterprise House initiative in its own terms. As mentioned in chapter 1, the *'exceptional successful delivery of the [Enterprise House] programme'* was noted in Council minutes. The project also appeared to elicit the approval of central Government. Later in 2004, representatives from SCC were invited to join a working party of property professionals set up by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to draw up new guidance for local authorities on asset management. The guidance issued was consistent with the approach that had already been adopted by SCC with Enterprise House. In SCC, the resolve expressed by Marcus and James to bring all the accommodation 'up' to the same standard became official policy later in 2004, when the Council approved a new Property Strategy to cover all Council buildings.

In March 2004, the Council approved a proposal to develop a new SCC-wide strategy for corporate property, in association with FirstService. It was agreed that all Council office accommodation should adopt the model used in Enterprise House, and support *'a more open and corporate working style, better working conditions for staff and more flexible working, breaking away from the "one person one desk" model'*. It was also decided that FirstService staff would be based in Troy House, adjacent to Enterprise House, and that this office would also be *'managed on the same open and flexible working principles'*. As well as acting on the intention expressed by the organisation designers to reduce inequality across SCC's accommodation, the development of such a strategy responded to various central government requirements for local authorities to treat assets as strategic resources. At the time, new guidance from the ODPM made it a requirement that local authorities should undertake 'sound asset management planning'; asset management was included in the Beacon award themes; Comprehensive Performance Assessments were expected to include

asset management; and sound asset management planning was a requirement for local authorities wishing to use the freedoms for capital borrowing provided in the Local Government Act 2003.

SCC's new 'Corporate Property Strategy and Corporate Asset Management Plan'² was approved by the Council in October 2004. The new Property Strategy took into account what was represented as the positive experience of Enterprise House in terms of the quality of the accommodation and the open, flexible, corporate style of working it supported, and initiated a review of all the Council's office accommodation with a view to upgrading all of it to this standard. This was a very significant task because SCC's estate then consisted of 783 operational property assets, including 64 office buildings. The task of improving the work buildings was presented as seeking to achieve several purposes simultaneously: the disposal of obsolete stock; improvement in the quality of work buildings; facilitation of culture change; and reduction of ongoing total property costs. The Strategy proposed that a new unit, the Workspace Improvement Team (WIT), should be set up in the Property Department to undertake this widespread review and implement subsequent property moves. The Strategy stated:

The purchase, completion and occupation of Enterprise House has been the largest single property move ever undertaken by the council. The quality of the accommodation, the style of working promoted by the new building and the introduction of new more centralised facilities management have all raised questions about the council's other office accommodation whose poor quality and fragmented management arrangements are now more apparent not least to our own staff. ... Enterprise House has been planned around more open, corporate and flexible ways of working. This will set the standard for our other main offices and complementary work locations like oasis points, home working and community based facilities. The Workspace Improvement Team will incorporate a review of accommodation building on the Enterprise House model.

In the proposed property 'model', all offices would be open plan, would support 'corporate' working (i.e., would integrate employees from different directorates), and 'flexible' working, i.e. would use hot-desking (as the March 2004 proposal had put it, 'breaking away from the one person, one desk model'). In the Strategy, property was viewed 'as a resource which can, together with ICT, financial resources and people, enable and drive service

² Presented in Council paper E04/103

improvement' (point 21). Property, and the people responsible for managing it, now appeared to be afforded an enhanced status, since it was aligned with other functions also regarded as strategic and was represented as something which could enhance organisational performance.

3.2 The new organisation designers: the Workspace Improvement Team

The WIT comprised four staff members, two male and two female, all educated to postgraduate level. It was located in Enterprise House, in close proximity to the Corporate Management Team, with whom WIT staff worked closely. During 2005, the WIT had been occupied mainly on the refurbishment and occupation of Troy House, working with Simon, the Project Consultant who had worked on the Enterprise House project. In 2006 it began the wider review of all Council accommodation that had been specified in the Property Strategy. Then, the WIT defined its 'vision'³ as follows:

This is a people programme not a property project. We are creating a work environment in partnership, in which our people can perform and deliver services more effectively and efficiently for the benefit of our citizens.

As with the justification for the move to Enterprise House made by the Chief Executive, the purpose of the WIT was described in terms of its ultimate benefit to the citizens. Consistent with this official 'vision', Caroline, the WIT manager, described herself by saying '*I'm not a property person, I don't understand cabling and floor area and all that ... I'm a service person, cultural change is what I'm about*'. The officially stated purposes of the WIT provided further details of how such cultural change could be brought about:

At the core of the property strategy is an accommodation model based on corporately managed sites offering support for flexible ways of working. .. With regard to offices, the move to centrally managed, rather than service orientated, premises will further enable better and more cost effective use of premises. When combined with the introduction of new technology and new ways of working this should enable a significant reduction in both the number and total floor area of SCC offices. By bringing these crucial support elements together, the programme will

³ WIT Programme vision statement, in minutes of Resources, Finance and Performance scrutiny committee, Council paper RFP06/21

help achieve SCC's desire to move to flexible and appropriate working styles. ... Associated cultural change, structural and service development is required across the organisation.

These official purposes reiterated the themes introduced in the 2004 Property Strategy, for example, the requirement that all offices would be '*centrally managed, rather than service orientated*' and stressed that property would be used together with new technology to enable '*new ways of working*' and thus enable a reduction in overall floorspace. Notably, the statement indicates that as a result of the new proposed accommodation, '*[a]ssociated cultural change, structural and service development is required across the organisation*'. Thus, property was presented as having a central role in *changing* the way people work. This is an interesting point. My strong impression is that, prior to Enterprise House, it would not have been regarded as legitimate for property managers to 'require' cultural change to fit in with a property strategy; this would have been seen as 'the tail wagging the dog'. This strategic role for property did, however, reflect Duffy's (1997) recommendation for alignment between office design and organisational strategy, an approach that has become axiomatic in the facilities management literature (e.g. Yiu 2008). The view of property and strategy as being tightly integrated was also subsequently represented in central government guidance issued specifically to local authorities, published in 2008, which includes the suggestion that 'good asset management' can⁴: 'introduce new working practices and trigger cultural changes' and 'deliver exceptional services for citizens'; and warns that '[a]uthorities with weaker corporate centres that allow individual service areas to be stronger will lead to silo working'. The enhanced status of the WIT may also reflect a claim to professional status that appears to be being made for this area of work more generally. For example, Yiu (2009) seeks to identify 'a distinctive knowledge base of facilities management' (p.501); as Watson (2003) points out, control over a body of abstract knowledge is part of the way in which members of an occupation construct it as a profession.

3.3 Buildings and StF: a premonition of the virtual Council

In the second phase of fieldwork in 2007, the 'Securing the Future' project was,

4 Building on Strong Foundations – A Framework for Local Authority Asset Management. www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/assetmanagement, published 4 February 2008

unsurprisingly, a common topic of conversation, with many people speculating about whether they would be in the 'core' of staff who would keep their jobs in the authority. One of the managers I interviewed at this time suggested that a logical way of attacking the budget deficit in SCC would be to sell off Enterprise House, because with its capacity in excess of 1,100 people, it would be too large to accommodate the proposed core of 700 staff who would remain in strategic commissioning roles. It might, therefore, be sensible to use the building to generate a large capital receipt. In an interview with Caroline, the WIT manager, I suggested this to her. She replied:

Ah, yes, the mythical 700 staff. For a while it was the mythical 600, now it's gone up to 700! StF doesn't mean selling off the family silver – we should hold onto offices and also delivery accommodation. If we are breaking the organisation up and re-forming it, people feel vulnerable. But if you're still sitting near the people you work with, it will make that change easier. It also gives us business continuity. So for example if we had an office and we contracted the service to a voluntary provider and gave them the building but then the provider fails, you've lost the accommodation. If you hold onto the building you can turf a failing provider out. Also if we outsource the service you have to be able to bring it back into house – we can't absolve ourselves of responsibility and say, they've failed, so you can't have the service.

Caroline's response begins with a slightly scathing reference to the gossip circulating about StF with '*the mythical 700 staff*', implying that such rumours are an unreliable source of information. But she then paints a picture of what the new post-StF organisation might look like. It would retain Enterprise House, offices and 'delivery accommodation' (day centres, libraries and other facilities where 'customers' come to the building), because these assets are '*the family silver*', but the staff would be entirely replaceable. Retaining the flexible office accommodation would enable offices to be used by any organisation, so that services could be contracted to a voluntary provider, which could then be 'turfed out', the service brought 'back into house' before being contracted out again. In this scenario, therefore, the organisation would consist of a core of strategic staff together with a cluster of buildings. As Brocklehurst (2006) argues, 'the way space is constructed and regulated as part of everyday practice plays a strong influence on how ideas develop and become adopted' (p.80). Kallinikos (2004) makes a similar point when he argues that organisational artefacts (he refers specifically to software packages) are 'far from innocent means for supporting organizational operations'; rather, they:

.. embody human experience, inviting particular modes of understanding and action that involve both the *framing of the reality* to be addressed, *the determination of particular tasks* and *their sequential patterning*. (p.19; italics original).

In this instance, the existence of exchangeable space in the new offices appeared to create new possibilities for organisational action in which provider agencies could easily be 'turfed out' and replaced in the exchangeable accommodation. In subsequent chapters I will analyse the extent to which the new possibilities for spatial flexibility were actually exploited in the two buildings I consider.

4 Summary

In this chapter, I have tried to bring out three points of significance relating to the sociospatial organisation of SCC as it changed between 2004 and 2007. The first is the way that Enterprise House was presented by the organisation designers as an important part of the solution to the spatially and historically produced limitations of the organisation. Second, I have sought to show how the creation of the strategic centre then created a spatial periphery, and an associated set of problems stemming from this division which the organisation designers then had to address. And third, I have considered the way in which the role of property expanded in the organisational strategy of SCC, so that what started out as an opportunistic purchase over time became a central part of organisational strategy. In this new strategy, office designs were presented as being able to push through cultural change and also as opening up new opportunities for widespread structural change. I expand on the second and third points in subsequent chapters, especially in the analysis of Troy House given in chapter 7, since Troy House was part of the new periphery and exemplified several of the key differences from the centre predicted by Massey (1995) and Ferguson and Gupta (2002).

So far I have focused only on the context of the two new buildings. In the next chapter, we remain in the company of the four organisation designers, and go to Enterprise House in Spring 2004, shortly after the new building was first occupied.

Chapter 5

Grand designs: officially expressed intentions for the strategic centre

1 Introduction to the chapter

Following the analysis of the organisation designers' accounts of the problems created by the old campus, in this chapter I analyse the intentions they expressed for the ways in which Enterprise House could reshape the organisational order of SCC. As a conceived space, Enterprise House can be understood simultaneously as a material structure and as '[a project] embedded in a spatial context which sets up enduring sets of relations' (Lefebvre 1991:42). Enterprise House was therefore an element within the repertoire of managerial 'control attempts' (Watson 2003:112) being made in SCC, in line with the demands of NPM. As Gieryn (2002) observes, while buildings often reflect dominant social structures, these structures are also filtered through a 'design constituency' so that '[t]he interests of powerful voices in the [building] design process are etched into the artefact itself' (p.42). And Yanow (1998) distinguishes 'authored meanings' intended by architects and managers from the meanings 'constructed' by other users of buildings (p.217). The aim in this chapter is, therefore, to analyse the accounts of 'authored meanings' made by 'powerful voices' involved in the design of Enterprise House, relating to the design of the building, and the changes to organisational structures and processes that were intended. As I indicated earlier in Chapter 3, however, these accounts of managerial intentions are also constructions presented by the organisation designers in the context of interviews. As Dixon and Durrheim (2000) point out, 'constructions of place are oriented to the performance of a range of social *actions* ... [and act] as a rhetorical warrant through which particular social practices and relations are legitimated' (p.32-33; *italics original*). In the analysis I therefore use the rather awkward formulation 'officially stated intentions' and equivalents, as a reminder that these statements are better seen as purposeful accounts oriented towards particular types of managerial action, rather than straightforward expressions of personal belief or intent. The comparison of intentions and outcomes enabled by this analysis is one

of the contributions of the project. Within the existing organisation studies literature, the intentions of people who commission and design work buildings are *inferred* from plans (Hofbauer 2000), from experiences of occupants and researchers (Yanow 1997) or from more general recommendations intended to apply to a wide range of organisations (see Allen et al 2005, Duffy 1997) but not, so far, from accounts of designers and managers themselves.

The empirical materials analysed in this chapter were assembled during the first phase of fieldwork undertaken in Spring 2004. Sources of empirical materials were official and unofficial work documents (such as minutes of Council meetings, documents downloaded from the Council's intranet and e-mails), interviews with the four organisation designers, and participant-observation between April and October 2004. All the interviews took place in Enterprise House, which at that time had been occupied for just four weeks, by the first 'wave' of employees. Accordingly, interviewees frequently talked about how people appeared to be responding to their new surroundings, and often these accounts were 'illustrated' by referring to what we (interviewee and interviewer) could see at the time. The data does not, therefore, relate purely to 'intentions' expressed in advance of any emergent 'outcomes'. Rather, during this phase of fieldwork, the building had been occupied, and the recursive relationship between material structures and social relations was in process. At the same time, it was suggested by the organisation designers that while the building was a catalyst for organisational change, it could not determine particular outcomes, and its effects would therefore need to be reinforced by other types of managerial intervention. One such parallel intervention, a new office 'etiquette' specifying appropriate behaviour in the new environment, is analysed as part of this chapter.

I begin the chapter with a description of Enterprise House, in which I attempt to convey my experience of being in the building. The description is based on fieldnotes written in 2004 and follows these notes in its use of the present tense. I also refer to a series of photographs taken at the time, which are shown in Appendix 1. In the rest of the chapter, I analyse officially expressed intentions for the new building. This begins with the broad aims associated with the new building for changing the way the organisation should function. I then consider the organisation designers' accounts of the relationship between the material structure of the building and the new practices and meanings they suggested it could engender, using Lefebvre's concepts of spatial practices and lived spaces to organise the analysis. Following this, I consider two specific points of interest about the building: first,

the constant visibility of self and others, and second, the new office etiquette, a set of rules specifying the behaviours which were encouraged and prohibited in the new environment, in particular the clear desk policy. I conclude the chapter with a brief summary before moving on to the following chapter, in which I analyse the emergent sociospatial structures in Enterprise House three years later.

2 A walk round Enterprise House

2.1 Approaching the building

(Photographs 1 and 2)

Whereas the old campus was situated close to the centre of Easton, Enterprise House is located on the outskirts, where it forms part of a developing 'edge city', a phenomenon described by Duffy (1997) as a 'non-planned aggregation of office space, retailing, and housing' (p.101) based around car transport. Besides Enterprise House, this particular edge city includes Easton's large football stadium; a fitness club based in a large warehouse-style building with an enormous car park; and an empty industrial building belonging to EnerGen (which was subsequently acquired by SCC to accommodate FirstService). A housing estate of one and two-bedroomed homes was being developed nearby and was advertised for sale as 'home /work' space. In this location, Enterprise House can be conveniently accessed by the main arterial roads connecting Easton to its neighbouring regions, including London (the Park and Ride bus route was diverted to a new stop by the entrance) and is five minutes' walk from the train station. As Buchanan (2005) puts it, this type of cityscape 'works' if you travel by car; it is 'geared to keep you mobile' (p.19). In contrast with the bustling town centre, there are very few passersby. A hopper bus operates during the day to convey workers to and from the town centre and the remaining vestiges of the old campus. As with the science parks that formed a key element of the 'sunrise' economy described by Massey et al (1992), Enterprise House is remote from the local population centre within Easton itself, but is accessible to people travelling from afar.

Enterprise House stands in great contrast to its neighbouring buildings. Its appearance is very striking. The building is oblong and constructed mainly from frameless window walls, so that the internal structure of the building, and even people moving around within it, can be seen from the outside. It is always light – either bright with daylight, or emanating artificial light, depending on the time of day and the weather conditions. It is perhaps an

example of what Castells (1996) describes as 'the architecture of nudity' (p.420) because its external walls do not conceal, like clothing, but display the organisation in its nudity, as if the building is not there. Enterprise House is also an example of increasingly popular 'transparent architecture' for explicitly democratic buildings where the glass construction gives the impression that 'no boundaries exist between the people and the elites who are supposed to represent them' (Dale and Burrell 2008:259). Although it is large, and, at five storeys high, tall, its horizontal shape does not dominate the landscape as a skyscraper might do. Rather, it nestles, pretty and jewel-like, in its small garden space designed to fit the curve of the road. In an article entitled 'Unite and Rule' in a popular architecture website¹ Enterprise House is described as '[m]odern and elegant, this is new-look local government ... looks beautiful ... more like a smart corporate headquarters than a centre of regional government'. The contrast between the modern glass design and the brick or corrugated steel materials of its neighbours implies, as Yanow (1995) says, 'a story of social difference' (p.414) in which association with this building 'confers the social status represented by the edifice and its decor' (p.411).

2.2 Entering the building: into the atrium and collective spaces

(Photographs 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

Internally, the building has a simple structure. There are two office slabs running along the long sides of the oblong, each consisting of five floors, separated by an atrium. The office blocks do not extend to the full length of the building, so that at each end, the atrium space opens out into its full height. At one end there is the public entrance, reception area and 'holding pen'. At the other end, there is the staff entrance, a ground floor restaurant, a coffee bar based on a mezzanine floor, and the Council chamber. On entering the public entrance, the first thing one becomes aware of is the colossal size of the atrium. This vast space is awash with light, which floods through the glass roof and walls and is reflected off the pale polished limestone floor. According to the building website, the atrium 'manages an exhilarating civic presence'. My initial impression, recorded in fieldnotes, was that it 'feels like somewhere between a modern cathedral and a shopping mall without any shops'. The enormous vault creates a particular soundscape in which hundreds of voices and footsteps are muted into a soft, reverent murmur. As is the case for any social space, the atrium space represents many sets of overlapping social relations (Lefebvre 1991). As part of a civic building, it communicates 'polity identity stories to the polity itself' (Yanow 1995:417, also Goodsell 1988, Yanow 1998). This point is reinforced by a small plaque

1 www.building.co.uk accessed 21st February 2008.

mounted on the wall adjacent to the entrance, which informs visitors that Enterprise House was 'opened in 2004 for the people of Southern County'. The use of scale contrasting with everyday life sensitises visitors and occupants to the civic significance of the actions and meanings contained therein (Yanow 1998) and tells 'of the command of resources. To take up space physically is also a sign of power and control' (Yanow 1995:411). This is perhaps an odd form of symbolism for an organisation which is ostensibly the servant of the public, but as a public building Enterprise House implies that the upward social mobility it represents can also be acquired by the people of Southern County that the building helps to serve. Relations with and between employees are also represented by the atrium. As Duffy (1997) argues, its purpose is 'to make the whole organization visible to itself' (p.30). Such a large collective space is, as Pederson (2006) says, a strategy aimed at instituting 'the idea that there is a 'we' suspended in time and space, corresponding to 'the place' (p.188). Although there few passersby, the space of the public is always on view through the transparent walls, so that employees have a constant reminder of its significance. The atrium is therefore a important place in which several sets of relationships are superimposed – relationships between employees, and between them and the public outside.

The reception area is situated to one side, partially shaded by two large meeting rooms facing it. While waiting in the holding pen, visitors sit on comfortable armchairs, looking at their work papers or at the gigantic wall-mounted TV screen showing News 24. This gives rise to a sense of connection with important world events: as well as being here, in Easton, you're also there, in Gaza. Simultaneous participation in virtual, as well as physical, social space has been termed 'polyinclusion' (Go and van Fenema 2006) and this too contributes to the impression that Enterprise House is a modern space, a node in the 'space of flows' (Castells 1996). From the holding pen, the route into the building proper leads through card-operated turnstiles below a narrow footbridge into the central concourse. Employees based at Enterprise House are issued with a pass that most of them wear on a lanyard worn round the neck. SCC's 'core values' are woven into the cloth of the lanyard: 'I deliver excellent results; I put customers first; I work for a team with no boundaries; I learn, I adapt, I create'.

At the opposite end to the public entrance, the atrium opens out into the restaurant. Most of the spacious restaurant area is taken up by tables and colourful modern seating. This eating area is structured by shallow pools of water with curtains of vertical water shoots flowing into them, so that the light plays on the grey slate beds of the pools. Through the

restaurant it is also possible to see the mature cedar and pine trees in the compact surrounding 'garden'. The food service area is in a recess located to the side. At lunchtime, the restaurant is busy, and noisy with the buzz of conversation and the clatter of cutlery, although the noise is damped by the huge space. The staff entrance to the building is located at this end, and again there are swipe card turnstiles inside the door through which staff must pass to gain entry. Above this on a mezzanine floor is a cafeteria selling snacks and drinks, known colloquially as 'the coffee platform' or 'the oil rig' because of its visible thick, steel supporting girders.

2.3 Moving through: stairs and bridges

(Photographs 13, 14, 15, 16)

The central concourse contains all the lifts and stairs, as well as walkways which run alongside the offices and bridge the atrium to connect the two opposing office blocks. These bridges do not cross the atrium at regular intervals, but are unevenly spaced and angled. The wide, open tread staircases also jut irregularly into the open space of the concourse. The Building website describes the concourse colourfully: 'overhead, footbridges fly across at crazy angles like something out of Blade Runner'. One of the nicknames for the building, 'Hogwarts'², plays upon this feature, referring to the film adaptations of the fictitious school of witchcraft and wizardry, where it is commonplace for stairs to magically materialise at eccentric angles. A practical implication of the irregular positioning of the walkways is that occupants might have to consciously work out how to get from one office block to another. The route formulated might be indirect and circuitous, taking the person past other, unintended office areas. The atrium is so spacious that it rarely appears crowded, but there are always people moving in and through it. They tend to be smartly dressed people, walking or conversing, and there is the sound of the click of heels on the polished floor. A new 'sign language' (Dale and Burrell 2007:225) appears to be emerging in response to the open space; this includes the Enterprise House 'wave', a raised hand and forearm in acknowledgement of an acquaintance spotted at a distance. The sign language has become part of the set of 'small rituals' (Larsen and Schultz 1990:293) which speak of how to relate to colleagues and superiors, and signal organisational virtues.

The bridges and walkways on the upper floors are very high, and for some people provoke

2 The origin of this idea probably lies with M.C. Escher's 'Relativity' (1953) which depicts three staircases on three different planes.

vertigo. The end of one walkway on the fourth floor goes nowhere but overhangs a towering drop above the reception area. Visitors to the building are often 'shown round', and this is a popular spot on the informal tour. Transparent lifts convey their passengers smoothly and briskly between floors. Works of contemporary art, both paintings and sculptures, are placed throughout the building, and regular art exhibitions from local schools are shown in the concourse. This may act as another reminder of the polity whom the building's occupants serve; and these members of the polity are young, aspiring, and creative. Some of this artwork appears to arouse visitors' curiosity. For example, people entering the public entrance are confronted by a 'rubbish heap' which on close inspection is seen to be permeated with tiny items of personal 'treasure', such as a sepia photo, a cheap ring. Approaching the far end of the atrium, one's eye is caught by a decorated tent erected opposite the Council chamber, which at first sight, looks highly incongruous. In general, the artwork is contemporary and a little 'edgy'.

2.4 Breakout areas and offices

(Photographs 18, 19, 20)

Returning to the central concourse and ascending via lift or stairs to the walkways, it is possible to see directly into the offices, because most of their area is separated from the atrium by glass walls. However there are short sections of opaque, painted walls adjacent to the toilets and breakout areas which are coloured green, deep yellow-gold or purple. These colours are rich and mellow, then bright when the sunlight falls on the walls, giving an effect that is both tranquil and energising, reminiscent of the 'elastic tension' that Sassoon (1990:176) suggests is often associated with the colour green. This combination of relaxation with energy strikes me as a widespread contemporary semiotic; another example may be the electronic fanfare that plays when the PC is powered up, preparing the user as calm, yet with a sense of anticipation, ready for their interaction with the machine. The colours also enable the office blocks to be colour-coded as a way of indicating their location (so for example, Democratic Services is based in Gold Floor 1).

Employees gain entry into the office areas using their swipe cards, which release the glass doors. The offices, known as floorplates (the architectural term has 'caught on' in the organisation), are shallow at only 17m across; consequently, all desk positions receive natural light from the external windows. Each floorplate is lined with a row of small meeting rooms with glazed doors. These rooms are designed to accommodate two or three people

and are furnished with small tables and chairs, and a phone. The remainder of the floorplate is taken up with desks. There are no private offices: all desks are part of the open plan space. The desks are arranged in 'benches' of eight; each desk is equipped with a computer, phone and a desk 'return' placed at right angles to the desk. There are low level storage cabinets between the benches, but no partitions, so that it is possible to see across the entire floorplate. All employees, including the Chief Executive and Councillors, have the same amount of desk and storage space.

Individuals have nominal ownership of a particular desk, and one's unique desk location is indicated through a set of 'co-ordinates' (for example: Purple, Floor 2, Desk 84). Enterprise House can physically accommodate 900 people working there at any one time, but after the first occupancy, it provided the office base for 1150 staff. This ratio of about 12.8 staff per 10 desks is comparatively low in hot-desking terms and creates only modest pressure on desk usage, since a proportion of staff will always be away from their desks (because, for instance, they are working off-site, at lunch, or off sick). However, the IT and telephony systems support the practice of hot-desking. On arrival at their chosen desk, the employee enters their personal ID and password onto both computer and phone, in order to link that particular desk location with that employee. At the end of the work session employees are expected to make their desk available to others who might need it, and so are supposed to log off their computer and phone, and remove work and personal possessions and place them in storage, before logging on (possibly elsewhere) at the start of the next work session.

In contrast with the huge vault of the atrium space, with its colour, irregularities and decoration, the office spaces appear uniform and sterile, and the desks cramped. The offices relate straightforwardly to Lefebvre's (1991) description of abstract space as gridded and visual (p.49). Because all the offices share a common structure based upon a simple repeating pattern of multiples of eight-desk benches and meeting rooms, they are 'legible' (Jansen 2008) and can be 'read' and understood almost instantaneously. However, the common, simple spatial logic of the offices and desks gives rise to a place-less quality (Augé 1995). Although individual offices could be distinguished by, for example, the view outside and the particular people sitting in them, it was not uncommon for visitors to arrive at an office only to discover that they had inadvertently come to the wrong floor, or block. As Hofbauer (2000) observes, open offices symbolise efficiency but at the same time, a 'highly abstract, non-specific social structure is being fostered' (p.177).

Because nearly all of the external and internal walls are glass, it is possible to see into, and through, the offices and meeting rooms. There is only one office, used by the Joint Emergency and Planning Unit, which is not visible from the atrium. The building provides a huge visual arena: one's view stretches across the atrium, through the offices on the other side on the same floor (and also a wedge of the offices on lower floors) and into the outside world. As well as being able to see, one can also be seen in most locations within the building, and this links to two other nicknames for the building. 'The ant colony' is a humorous reference to the cross section of such a colony displayed for scientific or educational purposes, where it is possible to see the ants at work, not conscious of being observed. 'The panopticon' has overtones of surveillance and may also be an indication of the high educational level of some of the occupants.

Each office has a breakout area that extends from the glass office door and across to the walkway overlooking the atrium, so it forms part of the atrium space. This is where the coloured part of the dividing wall is, so in each breakout area there is colour, as well as one or two paintings. The breakout areas are equipped with kitchen facilities (sink, fridge, storage cupboards, water heater and recycling bins) and are furnished with low level tables and informal seating. Ladies and gents toilets are positioned a little further along the walkway, past the breakout area. The toilets are stylish, with dark slate floors and contemporary fittings. The lifts stop at points on the walkway close to the breakout area. Because of its connecting position, one must pass through the breakout area to make a drink, visit the lavatory, or move to another part of the building.

2.5 The County Lounge and the Council Chamber

(Photographs 20, 21)

The fifth (top) floor differs from the other floors in that there is an office block on one side only. The opposite side is an open, unstructured platform dotted with casual seating, known as the County Lounge. This space is intended for informal group 'occasions', such as entertaining visitors, lunches and daytime work 'parties'. When not taken up for these official purposes, the Lounge is usually populated, rather sparsely, by individuals relaxing, reading the paper, or using mobile phones. Because of its topmost position in the building, it tends to be very bright with daylight and is sometimes overwhelmingly hot. Taking the lift to the fifth floor office block on the other side results in an unnerving experience: as the transparent lift ascends, the fourth floor office block opposite disappears downwards from

view, and instead of another office descending into view, there is only an open, bright visual field and it feels as if the lift has emerged out of the roof and flown upwards into the open air.

The Council chamber is situated directly above the restaurant. This is an oval enclosure containing 90 desks for councillors and a small press gallery. Because the public area is small, staff wishing to view Council meetings must do so at one remove, by videoconference in one of the formal meeting rooms on the ground floor. The office area for Councillors is adjacent to the chamber, and while it is still based on the repeating bench pattern, this office is more spacious and also provides comfortable-looking sofas. In the Councillors' area, the glazed doors of the small meeting rooms are frosted, making it difficult to recognise the individuals occupying them.

2.6 The contrast with the old campus

The building fulfils many of the ideals of modernism in architecture, with its use of volume rather than mass and solidity, elegant materials, technical perfection, and in the offices, standardisation (Guillen 1997). However, it also departs from these ideals in its use of ornamentation (colours, artwork and the water feature) and in structural elements which can surprise or confound the occupant (the irregular bridges and dizzily high walkways). In both of these ways, this building was very different from the 'six obsolete buildings'³ that occupants of Enterprise House had previously used. These differences appeared to be disrupting employees' presuppositions of what an office building should be. A shared environment that surprises in this way obliges occupants to collectively re-negotiate what sort of place this is, and how they can relate to it and to each other (Jansen 2008). Therefore, this early phase of occupation was likely to be accompanied by the emergence of new lived spaces (Lefebvre 1991) or typifications (Berger and Luckmann 1966) as well as new spatial practices (Lefebvre 1991). In the rest of this chapter, I analyse what the organisation designers spoke of as the new spatial routines and meanings the building could shape. I shall turn to this analysis next, beginning with the way in which the purchase of the building was justified in official Council documentation.

3 www.building.co.uk, accessed 21st February 2008

3 Officially stated intentions for Enterprise House: new values and practices

The purchase of Enterprise House in January 2004 was opportunistic, in that the Council had not been planning to acquire a new office building as part of its programme of work. The acquisition of such a significant asset therefore needed to be justified strongly to Councillors, the public and other constituencies. The official justification was made on the basis that the new building could both change the organisational culture and improve services, as follows⁴:

The vision of the programme is:

To provide an infrastructure that creates an environment to help us become one organisation, i.e. break down directorate silos, encourage more teamworking and interaction, improve knowledge sharing, reduce emphasis on hierarchy, be more flexible, provide more opportunity for creativity, innovation and communication etc, provide a council chamber and democratic space fit for purpose.

*We are not just building a building or even just building an office, we are **creating a work environment** that will help stimulate and encompass our cultural aspirations and service delivery objectives’.*

Thus, the new building was presented as ‘not just ... an office’ but a ‘**work environment**’ which could stimulate culture change. The Chief Executive, James, elaborated these ‘cultural aspirations’ as follows:

The vision for the County Council is to promote an organisation that is able to embrace that willingness to be bold ... to embrace that willingness to be ambitious and to try things ... and to be supportive of communities in their own self-aspiration. And that isn’t exclusively about delivering professional services competently or even excellently ... it is about that, but actually that’s only the beginning. It’s actually about creating an organisation that’s passionate, creating an organisation that wants to do things, creating an organisation that’s able to make the most of its critical mass by internal connections and external leadership. We have an

⁴ Excerpt from Corporate Performance Overview and Scrutiny Report CP04/28, 2004; bold in original).

opportunity to move from the safe solid virtues of thoroughness, professionalism to a wider leadership role. That's not leadership in a sense of directing, but conveying a sense of what might be ... and in that capacity, more pace, more willingness to take risk ... and creating an organisation that's got that sense of vibrancy and purpose would be fundamental to achieve that.

Above, James set out an argument for a new culture in SCC. This 'vision' aligns with Peters and Waterman's (1982) ideal of a 'strong' culture where control is maintained through shared values rather than rules, and, as Barley and Kunda (1992) put it, the organisation becomes 'a locus of shared values and moral involvement' (p.384). As James set out, the shared values were to be boldness, ambition, aspiration, passion, vibrancy, pace, and risk-taking, all of which were necessary to support local communities. His account also proposes a 'wider leadership role' for the organisation, in which it would '[convey] a sense of what might be'. This approach aligns with the notion of transformational leadership, where the central concern is to institutionalise new meanings that are above and beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand (Denis et al 2005:448). As Marcus similarly expressed it, 'the ambition is for people to have much higher levels of ambition'. And in order to do this, James suggested that a move away from 'the safe solid virtues of thoroughness, professionalism' was needed.

James also suggested that the weakening of hierarchical relationships was key to his 'vision' for the Council:

... moving away from hierarchies, the valuation of informality over formality, the valuation of exchange of ideas over the authority of office... a sense of energy, a sense that we're delivering certain things that otherwise we wouldn't have done, connections being made in ways they wouldn't have been ... and a sense that we're able to do things more quickly, so the speed of movement is actually more consistent with the thought process.

As Grimshaw et al (2005) point out, deliberate disordering of managerial hierarchies has been central in 'network' approaches to the modernisation of public services. In James's account, such a disordering would then release energy, enable new (lateral) connections to be made, and increase the speed of the work (speed being, as Ramo and Skalen (2006) point out, a key imperative in NPM). The weakening of managerial hierarchies was also referred to in terms of breaking down directorate 'silos'. The need to do this was stressed repeatedly

in both the official documentation and interviews with organisation designers as a key element in bringing about cultural change. Throughout the interviews in phase 1, many criticisms of directorates as being intellectually and practically confined within their separate fiefdoms were expressed. In contrast with the divided and closed buildings of the old campus, the openness of the new building was spoken of as opening up the potential for more relationships and a multiplicity of interests. As James put it:

Certainly we need a complete focus on customer and consumer and community rather than provider. The building matches that, in the sense of much more openness to influence, making it a much more accessible place for people to come in and dialogue and debate and represent their views ... a sense that one is open oneself to influences beyond your narrow professional sources of traditional routes of influence, and comfort zones.

Thus, it was argued that through its openness and the new relationships that it would enable, the new building could switch the focus of employees from an inward, provider-centred focus, to a focus on 'customer and consumer and community'.

All the organisation designers also expressed confidence in the ability of the building to influence outside constituencies, such as the public, government, and SCC's partner agencies. As Marcus said, the design of Enterprise House contrasted starkly with the old campus, and 'set a vision of something new and metropolitan'. Rory, the architect, spoke of a new image of the organisation which the building could broadcast to potential new recruits to SCC:

I think it can act as a sort of beacon for the actual organisation ... and it says something about the fact that they want to go somewhere, so therefore it is likely to attract a better quality of person, possibly, than would have considered working for a County Council, before.

As Dale and Burrell (2008) point out, much contemporary workplace architecture seeks to create an 'elision between the external image of the building and the image of the organisation' (p.29). The new building could therefore symbolise positive values to a wide range of constituencies, including potential new recruits; as Massey et al (1992) point out, high status professional employees can demand quality office accommodation and frequent contact with other high status members. Thus, it was suggested that the building could do its cultural work over the longer term, by attracting higher quality employees from outside,

and so ameliorate the current problem where managers would stay in the same jobs for years.

Many of these statements of official intentions for the building, both documentary and verbal, included antitheses between 'desirable' organisational qualities that Enterprise House would help to develop, set against 'undesirable' qualities that should be moved away from, weakened or reduced. In Table 5.1, I summarise these stated intentions as values and practices that were to be moved away from, as opposed to values and practices that were to be moved towards.

This table, summarising the organisation designers' accounts, is very similar to Table 2.2 (p.31) which summarises Heckscher's (1994) comparison between bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic 'ideal types'. This resemblance suggests that the model of the post-bureaucratic or network organisation formed a strong influence on the intended direction of change in SCC. The stated intended changes can be summarised as weakening the managerial hierarchy, blurring internal and external organisational boundaries, and ceding power to individuals working in flexible, changing networks. The weakening of silos would inevitably involve a switch in allegiance from the professional values represented in directorates to commitment to the organisation and the customer.

So far I have considered the changes that Enterprise House was presented as being able to influence in a general way. I shall now consider in more detail how specific design features of the new building were argued to be able to make these changes. To do so, I will use Lefebvre's (1991) concepts of spatial practices and lived space, together with the concepts of typifications and habitualizations which are central to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) account of institutionalisation. In broad terms, the organisation designers suggested that bringing 'strategic' staff into physical proximity within a single building would stimulate new spatial practices of networking across Directorate and hierarchical boundaries, and that the new design would also create an uplifted mood, of energy, belonging and optimism to catalyse the formation of networks.

	shift away from:	shift towards:
attitude to change	disinterest: 'let's just keep it as it is, let's not push it too far' (James) 'they never extend themselves' (Marcus) 'not reactive enough or responsive enough to the environment around' (Marcus)	ambitiousness: boldness, ambition, passion, sense of vibrancy and purpose, willingness to take risks, 'creating an organisation that wants to do things' (James) 'driving forward change and improvement' (Simon)
focus	internal: focus on provider 'not customer-led, not customer-focused' (Simon)	external: focus on 'customer and consumer and community' (James) 'supporting communities in their own self-aspiration'; 'wider leadership role'
power	Hierarchical: valuation of formality authority of office Professional: 'safe, solid virtues of thoroughness, professionalism' narrow, traditional professional influences and 'comfort zones' (James)	Networked: the valuation of informality exchange of ideas (James) Professional power reduced, in favour of openness to a wider range of influences
structure	closed, silo-based: 'not in any intellectual or service traffic' (Marcus)	Eroding silos: 'make the most of its critical mass by internal connections and external leadership' (James)
speed	slow: '[the issue] was dead half the time' (Marcus)	more pace, speed 'the speed of movement is more consistent with the thought process' (James)
pattern of employment	long-standing employees: 'job for life' (Simon)	attracting high quality recruits 'better ... than would have considered working for a County Council, before' (Rory)
external image	'stuffy Southern County'	new and metropolitan (Marcus) a beacon for the organisation (Rory)

Table 5.1: Officially expressed intentions for the way in which Enterprise House could reshape the organisation

4 Designing new spatial practices

4.1 Networking: 'popping along'

The old campus was described as fixing employees within cellular offices within directorate buildings, so that they also became fixed within a limited set of relationships, confined to fellow professionals. In contrast, a key design principle expressed for Enterprise House was that geographical proximity and a lack of segregation would facilitate free movement, spontaneous encounters and the development of social networks. This aligns with the assumptions of 'space syntax' (Hillier and Hanson 1984), discussed earlier in chapter 2. Based on this principle, James described the new freedoms which he was already experiencing:

... the capacity to bump into each other, the capacity to engage and discuss quickly with each other, the capacity to think, oh so-and-so, I really ought to have a word with them ... I tell you what, I'll just pop along and see them. You wouldn't 'pop along' in our old complex to see anybody because it was a struggle, the chances are by the time you got there, they wouldn't be there. ... I love this building because it fits my style, I was never able to do it in [the old campus]. In this building I can see ten people in thirty minutes, a series of snatched conversations, and I haven't got to engineer it, I just walk through the building, oh, so-and-so, oh, so-and-so and so-and-so, and actually that's the way in which I think you keep in touch with what's going on and what matters to people, and if that can convey a sense in reverse in which people can say to you what they feel, that's very important .

All the organisation designers spoke with enthusiasm about new freedoms of movement, based, as James stated, on the ability to 'just walk through the building'. Based on this, their accounts spoke of an entirely new work process, which would be self-directed, spontaneous, and quick (because no sooner have you remembered that you need to speak to someone, than you can do so). The informality and frequency of this contact could then, it was argued, keep people up to date with changing situations, and would also make senior managers more approachable because the sight of them, relating informally, would become commonplace. The deregulation of interactions would thus remove an important element of what Kallinikos (2004) alludes to as the 'elaborate social edifice' (p.16-17) of bureaucratic formality.

Since the new freedoms of movement were available to everyone using the building, and senior managers were seen to be taking advantage of them, it was suggested that other staff could then feel able to follow suit. As Simon put it, *'by their demonstration it becomes acceptable that this is the way we do things around here'*, appearing to draw on Drennan's (1992) definition of culture as 'how things are done around here' (p.3). Thus, senior managers seemed to have particular influence over how other employees should act in the new space – an attribute referred to by Jansen (2008) as 'interpretive authority' (p.154). If the new spatial practices were then shared on a widespread basis, the outcome could be a club-like office (Duffy 1997) populated by 'networkers who don't have to be told what to do or where to be at a certain time but nevertheless need a place to meet, exchange ideas, and share resources' (p.18). James's enthusiasm for the new building, including his suggestion that he 'loves' the building, implies that this place was a valued resource in terms of his own identity work. As Manzo (2003) points out, people select and use places that help them meet the goals of their everyday life as part of their ongoing identity work. The mobile, informal, high-energy networking that James appeared to model can be understood as the social identity that the building puts across, and which he wanted other employees to emulate.

Further, the organisation designers suggested that the informality of movement that was now possible could also enable a corresponding informality in terms of the way that employees presented themselves. Rory expressed the aim that relationships should become:

.. informal, which means that people feel able to talk to each other, and not held back in the strictures of some formal business approach, whether it's wearing a suit and tie or acting in a way where a meeting is very formal and has to be minuted. So hopefully in that sense, that informality would be productive because people would be communicating and understand other people's desires and needs and understand the way they work together.

In this view, the relaxation of formality in dress, manner and mode of communication could enable more authentic communication, revealing people's (previously obscured) desires and needs. It implies an assumption that the person we are when we dress and meet informally is who we 'really' are. Since, as Dale and Burrell (2008) argue, identity is 'a series of practices that we live through' (p.110) it appears that organisation was legitimating a new

social identity for employees through the informal interactions facilitated by the building, one which was unguarded and expressed 'true' desires and needs. To put it another way, the tension between 'outward facing' and 'inward facing' identity work (Watson 2009) would be reduced because of the elimination of the 'strictures' of formal business manners.

4.2 Look! No hierarchy!

As I indicated earlier, James presented the ability to meet colleagues informally, just by walking through the building, as a way in which the hierarchy could be levelled. But the main device used in the new building to attempt to produce a less hierarchical social order was the accommodation of all staff in open plan space. As James pointed out, the move to Enterprise House:

... enabled us in a very manifest way to remove hierarchy. On the old campus I was the arch-excellence example of hierarchy. Over there I probably had the biggest offices there were in the building but if I was to do my job properly I should hardly ever be in them because being Chief Exec is not about sitting behind a desk reading papers, dealing with e-mails, it's actually about talking, engaging, working with colleagues up and down the County all the time. ... It just didn't make sense to anybody. And what that was doing was saying, 'I'm at the top of the hierarchy, I get the biggest office'.

As implied in James' statement above, the former buildings maintained hierarchical power by making managers physically inaccessible to their staff, and through the imposing symbolism of the big, well-appointed office (Hatch 1990). Office space on the old campus was 'deep' (Markus 2006) because it was only possible to arrive at senior managers' offices by passing through a series of barriers; typically, these would include other offices containing staff who would 'guard' the manager from incursions that were unplanned or deemed unnecessary. Markus (2006) suggests that a 'deep' spatial structure tends to fix groups within a hierarchy and renders chance encounters unlikely. And Clegg and Kornberger (2006) argue that the content of 'upward' communication is progressively lost as it passes through the many layers of the deep, hierarchical structure. The possession of an inaccessible office within a 'deep' structure is itself also symbolic of rank, as Halford and Leonard (2006) imply in employees' references to the remote 'lairs' of senior managers. These sorts of spatial features may contribute to the phenomenon described by Sveningsson

and Alvesson (2003), in which 'top level managers frequently live in a more conceptual and thus abstract world, partly detached from the large parts of the operational and daily work of the organization' (p.1169) - a situation which James argued that he would like to reverse. In contrast to the old campus, the new open plan offices were 'shallow' and provided no symbolic differences or physical segregation between occupants. The elimination of visible differences in power and privilege to create an ostensibly egalitarian environment may, as Gouldner (1954) suggests, reduce the tensions linked to the inequality which is part and parcel of bureaucratic organisations (p.161). Contrary to Lefebvre's (1991) suggestion that the workspace will always indicate 'position in the mode of production' (p.288), as a newcomer in phase 1, when visiting the open plan offices, I was unable to tell which people were managers unless I knew them personally.

All of the organisation designers reported that most managers had responded favourably to the new open plan offices. However, there were some exceptions, as Simon indicated:

... one or two others have found it very challenging ... those status symbols of success that you've worked for, like an office, your own car parking space and all that kind of thing ... you feel very frustrated by losing that and I think that's accentuated in the public sector because some of these people have had offices for thirty years.

Simon's account suggests that private offices can be regarded, not just as symbols of hierarchical status, but also as public symbols of previous hard work and success achieved over time (perhaps thirty years). The abrupt removal of such symbols may therefore be felt as the withdrawal of this recognition or the devaluing of that work. This change may exemplify Pollitt's (2009) suggestion that in public organisations attempting to become post-bureaucratic, the past is irrelevant and what matters is what happens next – a point hinted at by Simon in his subtle sideswipe at 'these people [who] have had offices for thirty years'.

A second concern that had become apparent in the early phase of occupation was the sense of exposure felt by some managers. As Simon suggested, some managers:

... suddenly felt very exposed and concerned about suddenly being with their people ... quite bizarre really, isn't it? If you really think about the role of the manager and leader it's actually about helping others achieve, as opposed to your own personal work, it's about actually helping your team to achieve all the objectives that you're trying to do, it's only right that you should be there and be amongst them and

available to them and the open plan environment does that.

James suggested that this sense of exposure was felt most strongly by middle managers, because:

.. they probably feel exposed from me and from below, so if you've got a recalcitrant workforce who doesn't like being told what to do and you've got me saying we're going to have a standard way of doing certain things, actually those in the middle probably feel quite threatened.

In their former offices, managers would previously have benefited from the spatial privileges afforded to them by 'inequality of space' (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:987), in which subordinates would have to seek permission before entering the manager's office.

Managers with private offices would then be able to remain unseen when they wished, and would be able to stage manage their appearances (Muetzelfeldt 2006). And because this spatial arrangement indicated which people had power and authority, the appropriate recognition of their position, termed 'organisational civility' (Muetzelfeldt 2006) would be facilitated. Conversely, the new, equal space entailed unremitting exposure between managers and their staff, and a requirement for organisational civility to be continuously, and much more delicately, negotiated.

4.3 The Councillors' office: a 'no go' area?

During the first phase of fieldwork I visited all the office areas in Enterprise House. I found that apart from the occasional glance at my visitor's pass, I was ignored by the occupants. I visited the Councillors' office area only once. My experience of this visit suggested that, as well as the subtle material difference between the Councillors' and officers' office areas (such as the frosted glass on the meeting rooms) there might also be a social difference. On entering the Councillors' area I was immediately spotted by a woman sitting at one of the desks. Alerted to my presence, she approached; I felt as if I had made some sort of blunder. After a brief and pleasant conversation I found that I had been escorted back onto the walkway outside the office. It appeared that, as a person of lower status, I was not supposed to intrude upon their area, and despite the officially espoused equality of spaces (Ferguson and Gupta 2002), in practice, some Councillors perhaps regarded themselves as exempt.

The senior managers I interviewed spoke of this potential social separateness of the Councillors' area as a problem which they needed to address. For example, in a conversation with Marcus, I informed him that I had visited the Councillors' area earlier that day:

Yes, you won't get told to go away, but you won't get welcomed ...

AH I was asked very kindly whether I could be helped ... [yes] you know, whether I was lost.

That was an invitation to fuck off actually [laughter] [I know] Some Councillors want to mingle around ... but the two leader Councillors both wanted more separate arrangements.

Similarly, James expressed a concern that the separate arrangements could become established as normal practice:

I have said to them I think it's very important that they use the full building, they don't say, this is our area, and give a sense to other people you enter at your peril, or to fail themselves to engage with colleagues in the rest of the building.

The senior managers both expressed the view that the levelled, networked culture would not develop unless all employees participated equally. For this reason, they argued, they had given up their own private offices. They suggested that if any individuals were allowed to have private offices, there would ensue a bombardment of claims to the entitlement of privacy from other managers, and the effectiveness of the building in stimulating the new culture would be undermined. More fundamentally, regardless of status, privacy no longer met the requirements of the work, as James put it, *'it's about being around, it's about being visible, it's about being seen, it's about communicating, it's about discussion'*. In local government, it is unusual for officers to advise members, and James's advice to the Councillors can be seen as an expression of confidence in his own 'interpretive authority' (Jansen 2008:154) in relation to the new workspace.

4.4 Tessellation: blurring the boundaries of directorates

The rigid separation between directorate 'silos' and their corresponding professional specialisms was highlighted in the official documents and interviews as a significant problem,

and one which had been exacerbated by the separate buildings on the old campus. Accordingly, blurring the boundaries between directorates was spoken of as a key objective which could be moved towards by locating all the senior staff in a single building. In Enterprise House, strategic staff were not only housed together, but located in the office space in such a way as to bring groups that were presented as having clear potential for working across boundaries, into direct proximity. Directorates and groups that had the potential for 'synergy' (for example, strategy and policy) were collocated on the same floorplate. These arrangements were referred to as 'tessellation' (based on 'tessera', the pieces from which a mosaic is made by fitting them snugly together to form a picture); this word entered common parlance in the organisation. Employees brought into proximity in the office space also shared the same breakout area located immediately outside. As James described it:

The other big concept we've followed is to do away with Departments. So we've not occupied the building in classical traditional ways, we've not said that's the Education floor, that's the Social Care floor, we've actually tried to use the occupancy around themes so, strategic regulation, children's services, adults' services, what have you. And create the concept that those who have got most synergies to develop across each other should be based closely in proximity to each other. .. If we can create ideas around themes of connected issues, then we are building a culture which is more based on project working with those who you most closely work with rather than departmental hierarchy.

The proximity of particular groups to one another was, therefore, 'designed in' as a way of encouraging the initiation of new, lateral connections and projects. The breakout areas were, according to the organisation designers, key to establishing the culture of project working. Movement into and through the breakout areas was also 'designed in', as Rory described:

.. we then used the device of the circulation within this atrium street and the way that we handled it was by bringing the tea points out into the space to force them out into the space, they couldn't stay in their office areas. ... So you can't help but bump into a colleague in the breakout area. ... The breakout areas are extensions of the office areas, so people can feel comfortable that they're still in their own environment but they can relax or they can have a meeting.

Employees thus had no choice other than to go into the breakout areas, where they would

be likely to encounter other colleagues. The informal furnishing and layout of the breakout areas reflected Clegg and Kornberger's (2006) notion of 'interstitial spaces' (p.154) whose function is purposefully left unclear so that it is open to different interpretations by users of the building; this in turn can lead to creative, or 'generative' potential. At the time of the interviews, an early 'success story' which appeared to exemplify the 'generative' potential of the new building, was circulating. Simon had been approached by a colleague, who had told him this story unsolicited:

.. he said, it's fantastic, he said I work in Trading Standards on issues around traders dealing illegally with under-age people and I got talking at the coffee machine to a colleague who sits a few desks away in the office area who works in the Youth Offending Service. He said, we just got talking about what we do, and we suddenly realised that we're working on the same problem but from other ends ... and we're now getting together to work at how we can improve both things, both ends of what we're doing. And to me that was just an absolutely perfect example of what this new environment was hoping to achieve.

In this account, physical proximity between people who did not know one another enabled them to create a new link between their directorates to address a specific problem. The example appears to fulfil the expressed intention to create lateral project-based structures, based on the needs of the public rather than objectives passed down the hierarchy. It also illustrates Hillier's (1996) suggestion that weak ties are significant because they are made with people one does not know one needs to talk to, and so are more likely to break the boundaries of existing knowledge. At first sight, it also appears to be an example of what Massey (2005) describes as the potential in spatiality for:

.. the happenstance juxtaposition of previously unrelated trajectories, that business of walking round a corner and bumping into alterity, of having (somehow, and well or badly) to get on with neighbours who have got 'here' ... by different routes from you; your being here together is, in that sense, quite uncoordinated. This is an aspect of the productiveness of spatiality which may enable something 'new' to happen. (p.94).

As Massey (2005) argues, however, 'what might look like randomness and chaos is often someone else's order ... order and disorder are always present' (p.107, p.117). In this case, order was 'built in' by the organisation designers to 'manage' encounters and thus create a particular order. This was done by 'tessellating' particular groups, by forcing employees to

enter breakout areas, and by attempting to 'purify' the strategic centre (Massey 2005:94) through the exclusion of employees not defined as 'strategic'. As Dale and Burrell (2008) observe, movement through contemporary work buildings is frequently 'choreographed' (p.67) so that what appears as freedom and informality are at the same time structured by power.

I shall now turn to the way in which the organisation designers spoke of the meanings they attributed to the new building.

5 Designing new lived spaces

5.1 'The spaces have to feel good'

As discussed above, the organisation suggested that Enterprise House could enable mobility and informal networking. James had also spoken of possibilities for a new organisational culture that was ambitious, bold, and passionate, '*an organisation that wants to do things*'. As many studies of attempts to create strong cultures suggest, however, 'engaging with employees' feelings and values is likely to be the most fragile of all managerial activities' (Warhurst and Thompson 1998:11). Kallinikos (2004) argues that attempts to elicit commitment are slow and uncertain, because of 'the drag ... imposed by the inclusive involvement of people - the indolence of the body, and the languish [*sic*] process of personal or psychological reorientation' (p.13). And, as Kunda (2006) adds, normative control implies 'heavy claims against the self' (p.13), since it seeks to encompass the thoughts, feelings and experiences of employees. The architect, Rory, referred to Enterprise House as a 'work environment', which for him was something that could engage directly with employees' feelings and emotions:

When Simon says creating an environment, he means an environment of the way that people work. When I say creating an environment I mean something additional to that which is ... something that makes you just feel good to be in the space and the spirit of it it's not a measurable effect that you can quantify but I would like to feel that people came to the building and felt they belonged to a team that was doing something, going somewhere and they were looking forward to it, put a spring in their steps as they walked into the building to start work. ... The building has to have a nice quality, a good feeling ... the spaces have to feel good.

Thus, Rory expressed the hope that being and working in the building would ‘*feel good*’, inspire a sense of belonging to a wider team that was achieving and progressing, and create a sense of anticipation as well as physical energy. This can be understood, in Dale and Burrell’s (2008) term, as enchantment, ‘the linking together of matter and meaning to produce various power effects’ (p.47). Enterprise House could, then, make the heavy claims of indirect control seem light, because being in the space feels good; and it could energise the indolent body and put a spring in its step. And Yanow (1997, 2003) points out that our initial responses to built space are embodied and tacit; this building could, as Kunda (2006) says ‘educate people without them knowing it’ (p.4). Thus, positive emotions and embodied energy could be elicited tacitly, without explicit exhortations to espouse particular core values or commit to particular objectives.

5.2 ‘Feels like home’

An important way in which the building could encourage informal interaction was, it was suggested, an association with ‘home’. As Rory stated, what would make the building ‘work’ was:

... bringing people together from disparate buildings and then involving people in a building that they can feel part of and feels like home to them. You can actually see people and feel you’re in one building working together.

While there were some formal areas of the building (such as the large meeting rooms, the reception area and holding pen) most spaces in Enterprise House implied informality. The association with ‘home’ could be seen, for instance, in the breakout areas, which were equipped with all the appliances usually found in a household kitchen, together with relaxed seating in the adjacent ‘lounge’. The restaurant was described metaphorically by Rory as ‘*the space where kids play with a football*’ implying that this was not an organised and controlled space. As well as the informality of the material environment, he suggested that the visibility of other colleagues could inspire a sense of togetherness and co-ordinated effort. The association with home is significant because, as Manzo (2003) points out, the meanings invested in the home are a common source of ‘place identity’. And, as Jansen (2008) points out, ‘[w]hen subjects interact in a space that is easily typified, they can draw on an obvious set of practical and interpretive resources – and take it for granted that their

peers are doing the same' (p.154). Jameson (1991) refers to the tokens of 'home value' often found in contemporary space, and argues that although people recognise them as substitutes for the real thing, they nonetheless have a weak place-conferring effect. In Enterprise House, therefore, employees may recognise parts of the workspace as having 'home value' and thus be primed to transfer pre-existing typifications from the familiar environment of the home, to the workplace. Rory's account of what Yanow (1998, 2006) terms the 'authored meanings' of the building combine the inspiration of a sense of anticipation and the creation of physical energy, with relaxation and informality, akin to the 'elastic tension' (Sassoon 1990:176) which I earlier suggested has become a pervasive type of symbolism in work.

6 Visibility as opportunity and control

In the 'walk round Enterprise House', I described the unusually high degree of visual access provided by the predominantly glass structure of Enterprise House. Although the organisation designers spoke of this mainly in terms of its advantages, both for staff and external constituencies, one of the nicknames for the building that was used by employees was 'the panopticon', implying surveillance and control. Dale and Burrell (2008) define 'panopticism' as the visually based technique 'whereby an individual fits their behaviour to the gaze of society in its various forms, this behaviour ultimately becoming the norm' (p.67). The process of self-discipline entailed is not only a form of negative restraint, but also a productive form of power (Foucault 1977). Therefore, the visual formant of abstract space (Lefebvre 1991:286) functions simultaneously as opportunity and control. In this part of the chapter, I shall analyse the ways in which the organisation designers spoke of this dual character of visibility and the ways in which it could enable both opportunity and control. The building allowed employees to see many of their colleagues and this was presented as an enabling influence which could facilitate the spread of 'desirable' behaviours. At the same time, employees were also visible to many others, and this was spoken of as a potential constraint on 'undesirable' behaviours.

6.1 Seeing: supporting the spread of new practices

Previously I analysed the ways in which the organisation designers argued that the physical

and symbolic features of Enterprise House (such as its associations with 'home') could supporting organisational objectives (such as the spread of informal communication). The building therefore tacitly encouraged the invention of new spatial practices. Following this, the highly visual property of the building also appeared to influence the establishment of these practices on a widespread basis. It appeared that seeing new spatial practices being enacted by others (including senior managers) helped to induct other staff into these practices. On many occasions in these early interviews, respondents would point to what they could see, describing the new 'desirable' spatial practices that were being illustrated. This might involve looking across the atrium into an office on the opposite side, or a breakout area on another floor. For example, as part of a conversation in a breakout area, Simon commented:

... already we're seeing these areas of the coffee platform, the breakout areas, being used by people for meetings like this. I'm sure you'll go round today and you'll see people sitting at these desks with a nice cup of coffee, with their notebooks out, actually doing some work and certainly some of the early criticism that we had was around so much casual space, informal areas, but in reality they're already starting to realise the potential of those spaces, without us doing that much to promote it.

Spatial practices that might formerly have looked like leisure (having a chat over a coffee) appeared to be newly associated with 'proper' work. As Simon implied above, this type of work could be seen as a pleasurable activity, taking place in stylish but informal surroundings, with various comforts to hand. As well as the material cues in the building, the sight of other people using the building in particular ways seems to have helped these practices to 'catch on'. In Berger and Luckmann's (1966) terms, the building first cued 'externalisation' (the invention of a new practice) and then 'objectification' (whereby the new practice becomes socially taken-for-granted and 'normal'). As Jansen (2008) explains, people in an unfamiliar space 'orient to the space and react to its contents together, through interaction. They simultaneously regard their surroundings *via* each other and each other *via* their surroundings' (p.129; italics original). And Jansen (2008) further suggests that labyrinthine layouts fragment groups and restrict individuals' ability to engage in joint activity and interaction, making it more difficult for them to assume that they are sharing a common experiential world with their colleagues. The reverse may have been the case here. In a building that is open and regular, occupants are able at most times to interact with their surroundings together and to regard each other doing so. It is then commonplace for people to observe new patterns of activity emerging, and to try them out for themselves. This

ability to facilitate the rapid institutionalisation of new practices may be a significant effect of the visual formant of abstract space.

The visibility of the building also appeared to function as a constant visual 'prompt' of particular work employees had to do. As Simon put it:

.. you can look across and you can see, oh crikey, I need to go and speak to him, and rather than sending an email, and waiting a few days for a response or whatever, you just walk across or even shout across.

Thus, visual proximity appeared to 'work' by enabling employees to see many of their colleagues, with the result that their 'to-do' list was continuously displayed in an embodied form. This example illustrates the dual control/ opportunity character of visibility. The sight of the colleague might cause a self-disciplining jolt ('*oh crikey*') but this can then be acted on directly, by walking or shouting across. This type of chance visual 'encounter' was worked into the design in ways other than simple transparency, for example by the irregular bridges that obliged employees to pass by offices containing colleagues they had not (yet) realised they needed to talk to. It also illustrates how the building could facilitate the intention to speed up the work expressed by James, in which '*the the speed of movement is actually more consistent with the thought process*'.

6.2 Being seen: curbing undesirable practices

While the new building was presented as offering new freedoms (such as movement, interaction, relaxation and informal self-presentation), the organisation designers also alluded to the necessity for constraints. In a large open space with few physical barriers, it was argued that there had to be limits on things like noise or excessive indulgence in non-work activity. Although the organisation designers did not make this point, such practices could be regarded as excesses of the informality that the building was designed to promote. Rather, self-restraint was couched, as James described, as '*that sense of individual responsibility to the organisation, colleagues to each other*'. James's remark interprets 'being seen' not just as a negative restraint, but, as Iedema and Rhodes's (2010) suggest, as something which can 'intensify mutual attentiveness to the point where interaction affords an ethic of care for self and other' (p.199). Marcus suggested that this sense of responsibility was an explicit intention for the glass design. In the following excerpt from a

conversation which took place in a transparent meeting room, he referred to the fact that we were visible to the people in the adjacent office:

.. the intention was to have a more relaxed environment, a more open environment, so the designing in was all glass, so that people can see us ... they can guess what we might be doing. You know, there's nowhere you can go where you can't be seen. I read Jeremy Bentham and Foucault at some length on that. In a group of eleven hundred and fifty people, self-direction, self regulation is very important. My view is it needed transparency and openness, that the only way to break down the hierarchy was for the senior managers not to have offices and not be treated differently from everybody else ... and to be equally visible and so ... the only difference is, there isn't a warder, everybody's like a warder.

AH: Ah ... what does that mean that they do ... if they're a warder?

We're not encouraging behaviour that somebody should look in ... because part of the panopticon is that you get on and regulate yourself, you're not sitting there looking in at what we're doing, you're not with your ear to the door ... because it would soon be apparent if you did.

To paraphrase Marcus, the stated intention was to create a more relaxed and open environment with less hierarchical control. But the relaxation in hierarchical control needed to be compensated for by self-regulation, so it followed that, using the metaphor of the panopticon, everyone must act as a 'warder'. Marcus's account, however, suggests that being a warder within a building full of other warders is a complex social task. Although everyone was now highly visible, watching (or listening to) others could not be done overtly, because that in turn would be observed, and would itself be regarded as a failure of self-regulation. Any surveillance must therefore be done surreptitiously, under the guise of what Goffman (1971) terms 'civil inattention'; this involves pretending not to notice those who are in close proximity to you. Employees are thus obliged to act as warders - they have little choice because others are so visible - but at the same time, have to look as if they are minding their own business.

It was recognised by the organisation designers that a building in which '*there's nowhere you can go where you can't be seen*', as Marcus put it, could cause discomfort for some employees. This was spoken of as a sense of exposure, not only to one's immediate team members, but to the wider organisation. As James reported:

.. a number of people said to me that they felt that there were pockets in the

organisation that would genuinely find that a threat because it was more transparent ... they couldn't hide in a quiet way, in ways in which they had historically been able to do.

James appeared to couch this issue delicately – he reported it as something that was told to him, rather than as a firsthand account. In conversations with another colleague at the time it was confided to me that particular Assistant Directors were regarded as having '*feet of clay*'. Recalling James's apparent frustration at being unable to access particular senior managers on the old campus, it seems possible that James may have had in mind specific managers who would now be unable to '*hide in a quiet way*' (from him) and would be more accountable in the open space.

The accounts from the two senior managers and the Project Consultant suggested that transparency was wholly desirable. The architect, Rory, however, expressed a degree of scepticism. He appeared to distance himself from the official message being given to staff that the new building was in all respects better:

... people are being told that it's better ... it's not necessarily better, I feel watched now, now why is that better? ... and it's not going to work for everybody. But I think it's like going to a nudist beach, you know, first you're a little bit worried that everyone's looking at you but then you think, hang on, everybody else is naked, no-one's looking at each other ... I think that's what'll happen, you know, they'll get on with it.

Rory's suggestion was that, as on a nudist beach, when people realised that everyone was equally visible, they would stop feeling self-conscious and stop bothering to look at others (echoing Marcus's point that the principal task in the panopticon is to '*get on and regulate yourself*'). However, an ethnographic study of a nudist beach (Douglas and Rasmussen 1978) suggests that people do not in fact stop looking at one another just because everyone is naked. Rather, they do so surreptitiously, and men in particular, often in groups, look obsessively at women. Rory's metaphor therefore implicitly raises doubts about the explicit content of his argument. But he also added that transparency may be regarded differently according to people's age: whereas older people may regard being visible as an infringement of their privacy, in contrast, for a younger person in their twenties, '*those personal liberties are understood differently by them, perhaps ... they're brought up in a world with CCTV cameras and everybody working in an open space*'. To put this in Berger

and Luckmann's (1966) terms, acceptance of being visible and competence in the spatial practices this requires is something that the next generation to be recruited will already have internalised.

I asked the organisation designers whether they thought that being visible had so far had any effect on the new occupants of the building. Both the senior managers suggested that people were starting to dress more smartly, as Marcus said:

Well people have started to dress up. Yeah, there is a bit of that going on, apart from a few people completely unreconstructed. [laughter] I could show you some people, well really, really they are, you know, slob and whether the environment socialises them ... I've no idea whatsoever.

Thus, although the emphasis of the building was presented as informal, as Hofbauer (2000) indicates, the condition of permanent exposure may lead to a requirement for new kinds of impression management. In particular, smart dress may be the 'appropriate' response to the invitation tacitly made by the building for occupants to fulfil and complete its own modern, metropolitan narrative (Jameson 1991). As Humphreys and Brown (2002) show, dress is implicated in the negotiation of individual and organisational identities. In Enterprise House, there was no explicit attempt to regulate the dress and appearance of employees, as there was for the hotel and retail employees described by Witz et al (2003), but there may have been an implicit expectation of 'aesthetic labour', i.e., 'the animate component of the material culture that makes up the corporate landscape' (p.44); those not properly performing aesthetic labour were described above as 'slobs'.

While spatial practices concerned with dress and appearance appeared to be regulated indirectly, those concerned with the organisation of personal desk space were given explicit attention by the organisation designers.

7 Configuring the user: the clear desk policy

All the organisation designers used the word '*catalyst*' when describing the anticipated effects of the building. They suggested that while it would be able to initiate the desired culture change, it would be insufficient on its own, and its effects would therefore need to be reinforced by parallel managerial interventions. Rory, for instance, suggested '*I always*

saw it as being a catalyst because I think it would be arrogant of designers to think that social, economic, environmental history is about how architecture affects how people act'.

Simon made a similar point when he suggested that Enterprise House '*was never designed to be the solution. It was a step change on the way to that solution*'. He illustrated his point with a little sketched graph in which 'culture change' was plotted against 'time'.

Bringing about culture change, he argued, was a '*long, slow burn*'; the introduction of the building could result in a leap 'up'; but then it would be back to the long slow burn, which would require continuing managerial effort. Woolgar (1991) observes that when a new artefact is introduced into an organisation, employees are often 'configured' to make their behaviour conform to the intentions behind the object. At the time of the initial occupation of Enterprise House, a new 'office etiquette' was introduced and circulated to all staff in the open plan offices via the intranet and posters. This can be understood as one of the ways in which users of the building were 'configured' to reinforce its catalytic effect. The office etiquette stated that employees were required to: respect others' confidentiality; limit noise or other activities that might disturb colleagues; and maintain a tidy office environment by adopting a 'clear desk and work top' policy. This was policed by the 'Building User Group' and was the focus of apparently considerable managerial efforts to create a marked change of habit in the new office.

The amount of storage space allotted to each individual in Enterprise House was limited to one low level storage cabinet. Since this also had, in principle, to accommodate everything that had been in use on the individual's desk at the end of their work session, the consequence was that for most occupants their quota of storage space in the new building was considerably less than they had previously used. Prior to moving into Enterprise House, there was official encouragement to throw away or archive any paperwork not in current use. The officially stated purpose for this 'de-cluttering' exercise was to enable employees to settle in quickly and also to initiate them into new habits in which their use of paperwork and need for storage were much reduced. These intended new habits were stated as reading documents from the screen rather than paper copies. Limits on the use of paper, it was argued, could then result in a greater use of face to face conversation and a quicker work process. Marcus described his own new practices as an ideal in the new building:

Well I don't have anything, I just have what's in this rucksack. Don't have an in-tray, don't have any filing ... just have a rucksack full of whatever I'm working on. I throw paper away on the basis that I'll never need it, or if I do, somebody else has got it.

However, as a senior manager, Marcus was perhaps a special case, since he had a PA, the *'somebody else'* most likely to possess a copy of the paperwork he needed. People without this support, particularly those undertaking roles that were accompanied by a heavy load of paper resources (official folders, case files, and books) might find it more difficult to travel light.

Tidiness was spoken of as being important for two reasons, as Simon described:

.. we're very visible to the outside world, our customers, everyone who walks past is a customer of ours, and if they see piles of boxes and papers lying on the floor and all that kind of thing ... And the storage units, it's dead easy to pile things up on the top of those, move them round a bit, and create a virtual office, and we're proactively discouraging that from happening, by sort of challenging people who are starting to do that kind of thing.

Therefore, tidiness was stated to be important, first because a messy office would create an unfavourable impression among *'customers'*. It was also suggested, as James put it, that piles of papers *'would not look right'* in this building. Such *'clutter'* would look incongruous juxtaposed with the clean, minimal, modern aesthetic of the building. It may also be inferred from these accounts that *'piles of boxes and papers'* are strongly associated with the negative stereotype of bureaucracy, for example, the sheer pointlessness of having to complete forms in triplicate. As well as symbolising bureaucratic inefficiency, paperwork is overtly historical and old-fashioned. As Pollitt (2009) points out, the modern post-bureaucratic ideal needs no history, and paperwork can then be framed as unnecessary (as well as providing a further indication that the organisation is *'behind'*, as Massey (2005:5) puts it). During this period, I also learned of other efforts to create a unified, coherent aesthetic impression in which all of the artefacts within the building had to show consistency with it. Marcus was directing efforts to outsource the catering function because, he argued, the catering staff who had transferred from the old campus provided food that was *'provincial'*, and did not fit with his espoused vision of the building as *'new and metropolitan'*. Even the cappuccino was joked about as being *'not quite right... it's municipal cappuccino'*. Artefacts make constant reminders of the culture (Schein 1978, Vilnai-Yavetz and Rafaeli 2006:52) and it may then be the case that any artefacts which are inconsistent with the building *'stand out'* and appear incongruous. The effect of an incongruent artefact may also be to expose the carefully designed and managed consistency of all the other

artefacts, and thus undermine the intended cultural message. Like metaphors, artefacts may work most effectively at conveying particular messages when they remain tacit (Schon 1979).

The second stated reason for the stress on office tidiness was that untidiness could impede the development of networking practices within offices, especially across directorates. The low-level filing cabinets became a particular focus for attention, because, as Simon explained, they could be built up using piles of papers and then rearranged to create improvised partitions enclosing partially private areas, thus re-creating the privacy of offices on the old campus. If this was permitted, as James put it, *'we will lose the transparency and the capacity to work across, because some people will create six foot stacks around them and ... we don't need that, we don't want that'*. In this view, placing objects on the desks and timber tops were presented as acts of resistance to the new intended culture. The organisation designers seemed to be concerned that if they did not back up the influence of the new workspace with their own managerial initiatives, 'backsliding' from the improved practices that had been achieved would set in. Marcus justified his concern by pointing again to the fact that many managers had worked in the organisation for more than ten years and had worked in the same way. As he put it, *'unless we do something to develop it then I think it's pretty inevitable that they'll recreate a pretty substantial chunk of their existing working practice'*. Using the tops of the cabinets for additional storage was therefore forbidden in the new office etiquette.

The tops of the storage units were finished with polished, flat sections of wood, and the design of these timber tops had, evidently, been the focus of intense debate. As Simon pointed out above, the top of the storage unit was an obvious place to keep papers that would not fit inside it. Since it was the expressed intention to deter this practice, the creation of a timber top set at an angle (so that papers would slide off) had been considered. However, Simon and Rory speculated that this would have irritated employees, who would then have tried to find ways to *'get round it'*. It was decided to have a flat top, because, as Rory suggested, this would *'treat people as adults'* by showing trust in them. Then, even if employees were tempted by the enticing, flat timber top, they would feel a sense of responsibility for the shared environment, and resist using the illicit surface. I asked what would happen if somebody was to place materials on their storage cabinet. Simon replied:

.. our Facilities Management team will go round every now and again and they'll notice that kind of thing going on and they'll talk to the team, and say, come on, this

is not really the game, and they will then deal with it very much at the local line management level. If they don't do anything or the management team are actually rebelling against some of these protocols, then we've got a user group being set up for the building, there are ten of us in the association, and they will deal with it, and if it doesn't get dealt with through that route then they'll call the management team, who will take some ownership of it, and then the Director will say, you have got to move that stuff off. But we are trying to say, 'well, come on guys, this is not really the done thing' and trying to deal with it that way.

Those succumbing to temptation would therefore face a chain of sanctions culminating in an order to 'move that stuff off', although the intention appeared to be to encourage people to tidy up, using an informal, comradely manner.

A considerable amount of thought and effort appeared to have been devoted by the organisation designers (who included the Chief Executive and a Director of Service) to the issue of tidiness. At the time I found it surprising that such high status, clever people would spend so much time grappling over the apparently trivial problem of the possible appearance of papers on top of filing cabinets. Although, as Heath et al (2000) point out, work documents play a key role in work processes, they have received little attention in the organisation studies literature, and their absence from this literature tends to reinforce the impression that the issue of paperwork is inconsequential. However, I now agree with Bruni (2005:375) who advises that 'including non-humans in ethnography is an interesting opportunity to ... include the study of 'boring things' (Star 1999)' because 'boring things' are not inert, but embody identity, power and control. And, as Young (1989) points out, organisational culture is formed and reaffirmed through mundane, everyday interaction – including interaction with 'boring things'. In this light, the requirement for tidiness can be seen as an attempt to influence organisational culture by modifying employees' most mundane, taken for granted spatial practices. Thus, while the clear desk policy might appear trivial, it exerted control over one of the few ways in which employees could modify their work environments and thereby contribute to emergent sociospatial relations.

The clear desk policy also prohibited leaving personal items on the desk. As argued by Elsbach (2003, 2006) and Warren (2006), the personalisation of employees' work area can be understood as part of ongoing identity work, which is then threatened if the ability to display personal items is denied. Marcus appeared to speculate on what the effects of this

might be:

I put a couple of personal knickknacks on my space ... which I can do 'cause I lead the project just to see, what happens ... they were given to me by somebody with learning disabilities so I can't throw them away. But this is the price of working at a managed office. Basically you don't manage the office or have anything to do with it, you just use it and somebody else manages it for you ... which you could say in itself encourages passivity.

Marcus's statement appears contradictory, since he suggests that he personalised his desk, apparently as an experiment to find out whether, in spite of his status, this would be noticed and commented on by the Building User Group. As he goes on to point out, however, there may be a trade-off between having a '*managed office*' (enabling flexibility, networking and speed) and the ability to elicit commitment, because people cannot 'put down roots' (Buchanan 2005:21) in an environment which they merely use (rather than 'own' or 'live in'). The same point is made by Goffman (1961):

The personal possessions of an individual are an important part of the materials out of which he builds a self, but as an inmate the ease with which he can be managed by staff is likely to increase with the degree to which he is dispossessed. (p.76).

There is thus a problematic trade-off between the involvement of the self (a requirement in the strategic centre in order to stimulate greater ambition and proactivity) and the ease of management. Increased flexibility may, then, have the associated cost of reduced identification with the organisation. As Baldry (1999) argues, the removal of personalisation and locational identity from the office contradicts espoused movements towards indirect control and 'strips the employment relationship 'right down to the cash nexus, skewing the effort-bargain and undermining any rhetoric of commitment' (p.549).

The explicit rules and system of policing for the clear desk policy contrasted with the type of control imposed by the building itself, which as Hatch (1997) says, removed particular elements from daily negotiation, but did so tacitly. The tacit 'rules' of behaviour suggested by the building were impersonal, applied equally to everybody, and thus concealed power differences in a similar way to the bureaucratic rules described by Gouldner (1954).

Managerial control and power differences were then re-exposed by the clear desk policy. Employees appeared to notice this contrast, and often mentioned it in everyday conversation. James commented:

.. some people are saying we are moving into a world where there is slightly more control, you know, 'you shalt not think, you shall be told how to behave, and you shall structure your desk in this manner, and you shall have only so much height and no plant foliage'. It's partly cause actually I would say that SCC is not used to that kind of style of management, whereas other organisations are. So it's not that this is a style of management that's at an extreme, it's just that it's quite different to what I would regard as an under-managed organisation, historically.

James's use of Old Testament style language, as if reciting commandments ('*you shalt not think ...*') appeared to be an acknowledgement that some employees regarded the new rules as excessive control over their personal conduct. While acknowledging that this type of direct control had been increased, James re-framed the issue as a contrast with what had been an '*under-managed*' organisation (again using the reference to previous practice as '*history*'), in which employees had taken their ownership of their desk for granted, with the efficient, clutter-free environment that was required if fluid networking was to take place.

8 Summary : Enterprise House as the 'ideal network' building?

In this chapter I have analysed the intentions expressed by the organisation designers for the ways in which Enterprise House could reshape the whole organisation. I have also analysed the links they suggested between the material structure of the new building and the '*enduring sets of relations*' (Lefebvre 1991:42) to which they aspired. Their expectations for the building appeared to be very great. Enterprise House, as Simon argued, was seen not just as an office, but as '*a work environment that will help encompass and stimulate cultural change and values and ultimately a service to the citizens of Southern County*'. James expressed aspirations for new organisational values of passion, boldness and ambition, and for an organisation which not only provided excellent services, but also inspiration and leadership to the public. This '*vision*' for the organisation's future was in complete contrast to their description of the staidness, slowness and complacency of SCC as it had been on the old campus. However, the organisation designers expressed confidence that these monumental ambitions could be realised. This could be achieved, they argued, by reshaping the strategic centre in the model of the network organisation, which would emphasise networking, informality and speed, and in which hierarchy, '*silo*' working and the inward focus that resulted, would be eliminated. They argued that the new building was capable of

constructing these new patterns of relationships, because in this workspace, everyone was equally accessible, there were no material indications of hierarchy, and structural divisions were consciously blurred by the way in which staff groups were located and the tacit 'forcing' of movement and mixing made by the space. The movement that was required to create new networks was cued by the energising and yet relaxed 'feel' of the building. Visibility was presented as an asset which would both help people to learn how to use the building and curb undesirable behaviour. And the minute control over employees' spatial practice that was attempted with the clear desk policy was justified as a way of sustaining the catalytic effect of the building and preventing practice from slipping back into old habits. In the next chapter, we move forward in time to 2007 to consider the sociospatial reality that had become institutionalised in the intervening three years.

Chapter 6

The invisible hierarchy: the re-emergence of bureaucratic structures in Enterprise House

1 Introduction to the chapter

The analysis given in the previous chapter suggested that Enterprise House was officially intended as an intervention to reshape the strategic centre as a 'network' or 'post-bureaucratic' organisation. In line with this, the organisation designers suggested that the new building '*enabled us in a very manifest way to remove hierarchy*' and supported '*a culture which is more based on project working with those who you most closely work with, rather than departmental hierarchy*'. As Grimshaw et al (2005) point out, deliberate disordering of the hierarchy is central to attempts at organisational change towards the network model. The significance of spatially-embedded hierarchy is also recognised by Gupta and Ferguson (1992), who point out that the identity of a place can be understood by 'always foregrounding the spatial distribution of hierarchical power relations' (p.8). In this chapter, I analyse the consequences of the move of 'strategic' staff to Enterprise House, paying particular attention to the new spatial distribution of power relations in the building and its consequences for employees doing different types of work. The analysis draws on interviews, fieldnotes and official and unofficial documents compiled in phase 2 of the fieldwork in 2007.

In this analysis, I use the concept of inequality of space (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; discussed in chapter 2) to assess the extent to which the official intentions were realised. Ferguson and Gupta (2002) argue that the uneven distribution of spatial freedoms implicated in inequality of space is a powerful but taken-for-granted factor in creating and maintaining organisational hierarchies. In this chapter, the concept is used to inform the analysis of a conscious attempt to level the hierarchy in the strategic centre through the more even distribution of spatial privileges. In Enterprise House, the stated intention to level the hierarchy can then be understood as creating the potential for equality of space

through the open offices and other shared spaces of the new buildings, assuming that this would in turn lead to a reduction in the use of hierarchical work processes, and increased use of lateral co-ordination, such as teamwork and networking. In 2007, it was noticeable that Enterprise House was often referred to explicitly as a 'non-hierarchical building' and as 'the democratic space' (referring to the whole of the workspace, not just the Council chamber) in official communications, implying that equality of space had already been realised.

Before proceeding with the analysis, I will mention that many of the respondents' accounts were contradictory. As discussed earlier in chapter 3, I interpreted such contradictory accounts as indications of the differing activities, purposes and projects which respondents were dealing with. As Auburn and Barnes (2006) put it, contradictory knowledge may be displayed because it is 'fitted to or selected as relevant to the project we are pursuing' (p.42). Based on this understanding, four broad classes of activity or 'project' were created in the course of the analysis, which related to specific patterns of accounts about the new building. These were: networking; doing specialist work; working as a team member; and doing managerial work. This approach is similar to Coupland et al's (2008) analysis of accounts of emotions at work, in which 'rather than an institutionally held level of appropriate articulations of emotionality, there was a role-related, socially located rule system linked to separate categories [of work]' (p.327). Unlike Coupland et al's (2008) study, the categories used here are types of work activity rather than clearly defined occupational groups, but they nonetheless appear to relate to and legitimate particular orientations to the new building. The job roles of some respondents strongly featured one of these types of work. Managerial work, however, tended to include the full range of activities, since, as well as managing others, managers were also required to do specialist work, networking and acting as team members themselves.

The chapter is divided into three parts. First, we make another visit to Enterprise House, and I highlight noticeable changes between its appearance in 2007 and when it was first occupied in 2004. In the second part of the chapter, following Gupta and Ferguson's (2002) advice, I foreground what appeared to be the spatial distribution of power relations within the building – the routine spatial practices used by organisation members at different levels of the hierarchy. This is considered, first, in terms of practices used by managers and their team members within the open offices, and second, in terms of the whole building and the ways in which both offices and collective spaces were accessible, or not, to employees of

differing statuses. Finally I analyse accounts concerning the changes to work processes which took place in this new context, in relation to the four classes of work activity listed above. (The distinction made between the spatial distribution of power relations and the emergent work processes in this context is useful, but not always watertight, and there are several areas of overlap).

2 Back to Enterprise House in 2007

In 2007, Enterprise House was regularly used to host public events such as art exhibitions and fairs. Local news, such as election results, was often reported from the building, and it appeared to have become a media 'hub' for the organisation and within the County itself. On the several occasions when events in Southern County were reported in national news (such as on the BBC website), the news report would often be accompanied by a photo of Enterprise House. The strategic centre seemed to stand metonymically for SCC, in the same way that 'Number Ten' stands for the Government, or 'Whitehall' for the civil service. In this sense, the architect's expressed hope that the building would act as a '*beacon*' for the organisation appeared to have been fulfilled.

When I visited the building at the start of the second phase of fieldwork, my first impression was of a rather serene, relaxed environment. I found the building a pleasant and uplifting place to be. However, it quickly became apparent that particular official expectations that had been stressed during the initial occupation of the building had not been fulfilled. First, although further groups of staff had been moved into Enterprise House in 2006, the building was not intensively occupied (the ratio was 1369 staff: 996 workstations, or about 13.7 staff per 10 desks). Thus, although the acquisition of the new building had been presented as an important break with the previous principle of 'one person-one desk', hot-desking was not normal daily practice for most occupants. Hot-deskers tended to be part-time employees or (like me) visitors to the building. The limited shift to hot-desking in Enterprise House had been acknowledged in Council minutes, where it was attributed to '*the existing ICT legacy*' and '*the limitations of the existing culture*'¹. Second, perhaps related to this relatively low intensity of use, the clear desk policy, which initially had been vigorously policed by the Building User Group, had also been relaxed. In fieldnotes I recorded the presence of many items that would formerly have been considered 'offences' against the policy – for example,

1 Minutes of Resources, Finance and Scrutiny Committee, 6 October 2006

paperwork and personal items (such as photos, toys or small models) on many desks, as well as items (such as papers, binders, a tin of Quality Street) on the timber tops of the filing cabinets or on the floor. In one of the only two partially private office areas in the building, the Joint Emergency and Planning Unit (JEPU) area based on the ground floor, a whiteboard was showing a steadily growing list of '*Words and Phrases not permitted in JEPU*'. These 'banned' terms included '*blue sky thinking*', '*think outside the box*', '*value-add*' and a variety of other phrases that constituted trendy managerialist discourse at that time. The whiteboard appeared to be a blossoming of frivolity in the one place in the building where it might go unnoticed. The widespread presence of 'clutter' seemed to contrast significantly with the original situation in 2004, as one respondent also observed:

It was all built around the hot-desk/ clear-desk principle and people weren't allowed photographs of their children on their desks ... and people used to come and tell people to take things down. But now, if you have a look around ... mine's not particularly personalised but a lot of people's desks are. So, I could understand it but it hasn't really come to fruition.

Third, in contrast with initial expectations expressed by the organisation designers that breakout areas would be buzzing hives of activity, routinely used as a locus for teamwork and networking, these areas appeared rather deserted. Many were empty, although in some there might be one or two people sitting individually, eating their lunch while reading the paper or a magazine. Even at first glance, therefore, it appeared that some of the official intentions that had been presented as important during the initial occupation, had not been realised: there was little pressure on desk usage, and little mobility between desks; the office areas were messy; and there was little networking in one of the key places designed for this activity.

Having made this brief, informal 'tour' of the building, we shall now go into the offices to consider the spatial distribution of power relations, in order to evaluate the extent to which earlier aspirations for the network organisation were realised.

3 The invisible hierarchy in the offices

In this part of the chapter I analyse the ways in which managers and their staff negotiated the spatial arrangements within their offices. I suggest that, although the material

environment made no obvious hierarchical distinctions, spatial privileges were still allocated differentially on the basis of organisational status through the routine spatial practices that employees used. These spatial practices concerned the position of managers' desks and the way in which they were used, and the overall ambience of the office areas.

3.1 Managers' desk positions

In contrast with offices on the old campus, space in the new open offices was 'shallow' (Markus 2006) because there were no physical barriers creating separate areas with sharp differences in accessibility. During the fieldwork in phase 1, when looking across rows of apparently identical desks, I could not infer anything about the status of their occupants. The second round of fieldwork suggested, however, that while the open office space was shallow, it was not completely 'flat'. Although there were no barriers creating less accessible depths, there were nonetheless subtle gradients in accessibility. The less accessible desk positions were those adjacent to the windows giving onto the atrium and the outside of the building, and in the corners of the floorplate². The more accessible desks were adjacent to the aisle, in particular those opposite the entrance where there was the constant traffic of people entering and leaving the floorplate. It was very common to find the least accessible positions being occupied by people of higher status.

Many interviewees spoke of this relationship between status and desk position. For instance, when I asked Nick (a professional specialist) whether it was possible to tell who the managers were in his office, he replied:

Oh, it's who's nearest the window. The nearer the aisle you are, the less important you are, which is why I sit right by the aisle because I have so little importance (laughs). You noticed I pointed out the chap who was the leader of our entire service? He was right by the window.

Jeff, a senior Environment and Transport manager (who, unusually, did not occupy a window seat), suggested that '*managers tend to cherry pick the desks by the window or ideally in a corner. One manager who sits in a corner uses the meeting room as an office*'. Often, if the manager concerned had a PA, the PA would sit next to the manager on the aisle side, so that

2 A journalist who worked in a similar open plan environment informed me that, in her organisation, such positions were dubbed 'viewbicles'.

she (at the time, all were female) could filter interruptions. While Jeff talked about managers cherry picking the best positions, managers who occupied such desks spoke as if this had happened quite by chance. For instance, Elizabeth, a senior manager in Children and Young People remarked, *'you know I'm quite lucky because I've got a window seat'*.

It did not appear to me that the senior people used their status to seize the best positions for themselves. Rather, the seating arrangements were the outcome of negotiations among team members in which the status of managers was deferred to tacitly. Their staff often expressed recognition of the fact that managers had been deprived of the privilege of a private office, and that this might make aspects of their work more difficult. Allowing the manager to occupy a more private position was spoken of as enabling a partial compensation for the privacy they had lost. Further, it was frequently suggested that managers' space should not be casually intruded upon by their colleagues. As Jenny (Purchasing Officer) pointed out:

I do know somebody who found it very, very difficult because he had, as an assistant director, had his own office with his PA and he wished he could close the door and have confidential conversations. But they had to adapt to a different way of working when they came here because they were then so visible, including the Chief Exec. You know, your PA can't say 'sorry, he's out' because you can see he's there. People just have to be more respectful, don't they, of each other's working space?

Jenny's statement implies that the former private offices facilitated a type of organisational diplomacy, in which the PA could politely say that the manager was 'out', rather than saying 'he doesn't want to see you at the moment', and possibly causing offence to the visitor. The removal of the barrier thus also removed this way of repelling unwanted visitors. Like many interviewees, Jenny appeared to sympathise with the manager, and suggested that the job of filtering interruptions (formerly undertaken by the wall and the PA) should now be taken on by the staff themselves, and couches this as being *'more respectful'* of the manager's space.

This unofficial 'rule' relating status and desk position therefore appeared to have been institutionalised, since there was 'reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors' (Berger and Luckmann 1966:72). The role of staff members can be seen as an instance of self-regulation as a consequence of disciplinary power (Foucault 1977). However, I think it can also be understood as an example of 'organisational civility', which

Muetzelfeldt (2006) defines as the 'appropriate acknowledgement of hierarchy and authority' (p.121): subordinates should be neither obsequious nor pushy, and superiors should show an appropriate level of dominance, being neither arrogant nor lacking in confidence. Muetzelfeldt (2006) proposes that 'architectural power' (p.121) concerns the way in which hierarchy and authority are inscribed in physical arrangements, and argues that this power includes but goes beyond panoptic surveillance. Architectural cues relating to hierarchy may be subtle, so that there are 'invisible lines' (p.123) that mark boundaries of shared participation. Although invisible, these boundaries are powerful because they are internalised. With the transfer to open offices, there were very few architectural cues indicating status; however, the physical walls that formerly separated managers from their colleagues appeared to have been replaced with invisible boundaries. And although these boundaries were 'potentially more ambiguous, contextual, negotiated and specific to particular individuals' (p.124) subordinates appeared to think twice about crossing them.

On one occasion at the beginning of phase 2 of the fieldwork, I appeared to have inadvertently trespassed across one such invisible boundary. I had arranged to meet an interviewee, Sue, at her desk:

I approached Sue's desk at the appointed time, but found it unoccupied. What to do? There was a man sitting by the window next to Sue's empty desk, and a young woman opposite. I thought to myself, well I'm damned if I'm going to assume that she's the admin person! and I asked the man, very politely, if he knew where Sue was. He was visibly irritated by this interruption. He looked up long enough to inform me, brusquely, that she was at a meeting, and by the time I was thanking him he had already fixed his gaze back on his computer screen, where it remained. Stung, I retreated from the bench and waited for Sue in a nearby meeting room where we might be able to spot one another when she returned.

Subsequently in the interview with Sue I found that this man was a senior manager. At the time of the encounter I found his behaviour rude. Now, my interpretation is that as a newcomer, I was not equipped with the appropriate typification, which would have told me that this individual was probably a manager who did not expect to be disturbed with such a banal enquiry. From the manager's point of view I had transgressed the boundary that usually protected his privacy and it was legitimate for him to display open irritation; this would introduce me to the rule, or remind me of its existence.

Following this incident I became interested in how other newcomers acquired this typification relating status and desk position, since the cues provided by the material environment were subtle and not always reliable. Two new members of staff, who were new both to the organisation and to this type of office environment, reported very different experiences. Annabel, a high status newcomer to the organisation, reported that on arrival in her new post, she was introduced to colleagues, and it was this knowledge of the people that enabled her to settle in:

When I first came to Enterprise House it felt like an architect's model, where you have little airfix models of people. And I actually felt quite ... not alienated but not embraced like some of the buildings you go in. But then I was welcomed and introduced and it was the people who began to make a difference. You were met and taken round and shown who was who and how to do stuff. And the sense then was that the whole building is geared up to enable you to work and is very enabling and facilitative.

Shahida was recruited to a temporary post for a specific project. In contrast to Annabel, she was not introduced to others, and so had to work out the invisible boundaries of her local hierarchy by trial and error:

I've never worked in a hot-desking open plan environment, which takes some getting used to. I don't know if they're not very good at inducting people in our section but they don't ... they didn't introduce you to people. They don't tell you who people are, what their roles are, who you are; you don't know who's the manager that you shouldn't interrupt and who's the admin person who might be able to help you. Which in one way makes you figure it out yourself and makes people more personal ... but in a way that's a little bit intimidating.

Shahida expressed unease that after several months in post, she still did not know the people on the adjoining benches or what their roles were, and so periodically plucked up courage and asked them outright. She reported that another junior colleague who joined later was afraid to approach people directly and consequently, did not settle into work comfortably. It is not possible to claim that this modest comparison of four newcomers indicates any kind of pattern, but it is still interesting that the senior newcomer was given a head start in formulating recipe knowledge about who could be approached, whereas the junior newcomers were not. If this was more generally the case, it would compound the subtle hierarchical relations within the office areas, because the lower status staff would be

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more likely to make blunders of the type that I, and Shahida, appear to have made.

3.2 Avoidance of using the manager's desk as a hot-desk

A second spatial practice that appeared to have become institutionalised was that employees would tend not to hot-desk at a particular desk if they knew it to be a manager's regular position. Again, though, this was not because the managers explicitly prohibited others from sitting there; rather, staff appeared to defer tacitly to the manager's space. As Jeff put it:

Since we moved to this office, I've always come in and sat there. I've never found anybody else there. Strictly, it's available for anybody. And I wouldn't moan in the slightest you know, I'd just go and find somewhere else, but it's never, ever happened, never.

Similarly, Sue (Leadership Development Manager in Environment and Transport) stated that she gave explicit encouragement to her team members to use her desk in her absence:

I feel I have to double emphasise it and say 'look, I'm not really more important than you and if you're using a machine that happens to be at a desk that happens to have my name on it, then that's fine, I'll use another one, it's not a problem.

Sue appeared to be emphasising that she was no different from all other employees who occupied the building: the desk did not 'belong' to her because she was the manager. The tendency for employees to avoid hot-desking in positions occupied by managers appears similar to the inequality of space described by Ferguson and Gupta (2002), where lower status officials did not intrude on the space of their superiors. Here though, lower status people seemed reluctant to use their managers' space even though they had explicit permission to do so. In this case, there appeared to be a form of spatial inequality which was co-constructed as much by subordinates as by managers, on the basis of what they took to be civil behaviour towards the manager.

3.3 Managers' influence over spatial practices within their office areas

During phase 2, I hot-desked on all of the floorplates in Enterprise House, and I was struck by

the wide variation in spatial practices between offices (for instance, in terms of their level of occupancy, amount of movement, level and nature of conversation, the friendliness or otherwise of occupants, and the amount of work and personal materials on and around the desks). For example, the Libraries and Heritage office was still and quiet (it was possible to hear the hum of the air-conditioning) and the manner of the staff tended to be rather formal and courteous, whereas the Joint Emergency and Planning Unit (JEPU) tended to be lively and noisy with conversation, jokes and regular bursts of laughter. Thus, although the material environment of the floorplates was homogeneous, the cultures, each being 'an ongoing human production' (Berger and Luckmann 1966:69), were diverse.

Many interviewees suggested that managers had particular influence over these sub-cultures which they used to support their own preferred way of working. Vicky (Accident Data Analyst in Environment and Transport), for instance, sat near to her Assistant Director, who she suggested disliked noise so that *'around him, you feel that people don't talk because he will tell them that they're making too much noise'*. Jenny described her manager as *'a bimbo'* who set the tone for her bench, which had a culture which Jenny described as *'very un-PC'*³. On this bench, women attending for job interviews had been marked for their attractiveness by the male members of the team, and a young new recruit from Leeds was badgered relentlessly with jokes about Northerners. Several accounts from staff members also suggested that their managers indulged in practices that they found irritating and disruptive, but the team members avoided expressing their irritation directly. For example, Vicky complained that her manager was *'a distraction'* because he tended to wander around looking for someone who would *'counsel him and to listen to him'*. Another person expressed outright fury at the ABCD consultant whose booming voice and irritating mobile phone ring tone could be heard across the floorplate, but because he was working on behalf of 'the management' she had suppressed a desire to ask him to be less noisy.

The situation resembles the inequality of space described by Ferguson and Gupta (2002), not in terms of where people of different status were permitted to roam, but at the smaller scale of the spatial practices they routinely used. In the offices, it appears that managers were able to expand their influence to encompass the wider area occupied by their staff, through particular spatial practices (such as a requirement for quiet, or the ability to enter the immediate workspace of their subordinates). Ferguson and Gupta (2002) observe that '[t]he 'higher up' officials are, the broader the geographical range of their peregrinations' (p.987).

3 'PC' refers to 'political correctness', so 'un-PC' means 'not politically correct'.

Similarly, in the office context, the 'higher up' officials seemed to be able to extend their physical influence over a wider area than was possible for lower status staff.

The original intentions expressed by the organisation designers included a desire to stimulate less hierarchical work processes by accommodating all the staff in open office space, regardless of their status. The analysis above suggests, though, that the hierarchy was still inscribed onto the office space by the social processes that had become institutionalised there. Although there were no walls or partitions in the new space, it was as if they were still there, because habituations corresponding with conventional, hierarchical office architecture appeared to have been recreated. In the open space, managers frequently occupied an invisible 'room' in a relatively inaccessible position; their desk, unlike other staff members', was tacitly regarded as private; and managers had some control over how their staff functioned within the office space and were able to employ spatial practices which intruded upon them. Although to the outsider the open floorplate appeared homogeneous, the 'invisible lines' (Muetzelfeldt 2006:124) marking out areas of differing status seemed to construct an invisible office. The invisible office was similar to a conventional office where the manager has a private room and team members share adjacent space, which the manager influences and can enter freely. Although these boundaries were invisible, they were still powerful, because, as Muetzelfeldt (2006) points out:

The boundary that stops each of us from walking behind a superior's desk uninvited does its cultural work of reincorporating us into the power structures that we work in, even (or perhaps especially) when we are not conscious of the constraint we are subject to, and we are in other ways interacting with our superior as if we were equals. These boundaries are not equally permeable in both directions, and generally they constrain superiors less than subordinates. (p.124).

The fact that these boundaries were invisible and only weakly indicated in the material environment meant that employees were reliant on being in possession of the appropriate typifications in order to act with the appropriate civility. Employees need to be 'in the know', in order to perform the appropriate spatial practices competently. In Enterprise House, some newcomers were inducted into these practices, and others left to find out by trial and error. While inequality of space inscribed through invisible boundaries appeared to mark out status divisions within the offices, unequal space was also extended into the shared spaces of the building.

4 The invisible hierarchy in the building

4.1 Re-creation of inaccessible, 'deep' space for Councillors

The Councillors, the group of employees at the topmost level of the hierarchy in the strategic centre, appeared to create a separate area for themselves which other employees were discouraged from entering, and from which they emerged only infrequently. The Councillors occupied a dedicated office adjacent to the chamber on the first floor which, unlike officer departments, was not shared with other staff groups. In phase 1, the two senior managers I interviewed expressed particular concern that Councillors should not remain within this space, and should encourage officers to access it freely. Judging from the accounts of many people I interviewed in phase 2, the intention that Councillors would participate in this type of equality of space was not realised. As one respondent claimed, *'Councillors are treated like royalty. It's a non-hierarchical building, but some people are more non-hierarchical than others'*. Another interviewee, Penelope, who in the course of her work had to initiate contact with a range of portfolio holders, stated that she *'would not dream of just wandering in'*. She suggested that while some Councillors were approachable, others maintained their inaccessibility vigorously, and resisted all means of contacting them:

.. nominally they're on e-mail, nominally they've got phone numbers ... and some of them are fine with that and some of them are like, 'why are you phoning me? Why are you phoning me?' You have to get clearance to approach them, they are completely hedged around with all the niceties of etiquette.

The Councillors appeared to have created a 'power spot' (Gieryn 2000), a secluded place where 'interlocking directorates can assemble informally and plot moves' (p.475). In the earlier analysis of the open plan offices I concluded that many staff recognised that the loss of their private offices was significant for their managers, and acted towards them with a notable degree of consideration and civility. In contrast, the maintenance of a private area for the Councillors appeared to be disliked or resented by most interviewees, because this was seen as retaining a privilege for themselves which was not afforded to other staff and which went against the official discourse of the 'non-hierarchical building' or 'democratic space'. For example, Penelope spoke, with seeming suspicion, of the Councillors behaving like *'secret squirrels'*. It thus appeared that, as well as the hierarchical organisational structure being represented and maintained by subtle differences in spatial practice in the

open plan offices, it was also represented at the scale of the building by the maintenance of a separate area for the top group.

The maintenance of this private space was also spoken of as having consequences in terms of how the organisational hierarchy functioned. According to Elizabeth, the collocation of Councillors in the same building as officers, but in a segregated area, shifted how the hierarchy was interpreted by organisational members:

*I think the power's shifted up ... the County Councillors are more immediately evident. Now we have members in the building and therefore if [a Councillor] has a tantrum over there in the corner then most people know right across the floor that there has been a tantrum. So I would say that the power structure's become more apparent. .. Because managers of all grades are now sitting with administrators and other employees, the management power has been dissipated, somewhat, and you've got a top stratum and the rest. .. Now everybody is aware that there are members, they know exactly where they are and what they might look like, and if they've had tantrums and how many people they've upset in the last week. But we haven't got the two-way bit in because what they actually wanted was to have better communication **with** members. Now I don't see that, I only see the ripple effect of what members **require**, but that may be my jaded view.*

Thus, the presence of Councillors in a separate area implied their 'top-ness' because their space contrasted with the rest of the space which all officers, managers and other staff, shared. These latter groups then appeared to be at a lower, but similar, level. An implication of this 'shifting down' of senior officers seemed to be that directors and other senior officers now appeared less powerful. Penelope remarked that she had recently been asked by other members of staff who was the director of their service; this surprised her, since she had taken it for granted that employees would know their directors' names.

It also appeared that while the Councillors discouraged intrusions into their office space, it was commonplace for them to enter officers' office areas, sometimes having 'tantrums', as Elizabeth suggested. I will give an example of one such 'tantrum', told to me by Jane, Equalities and Diversity Manager. Jane had obtained funding for and organised a conference on diversity for all SCC staff, to take place in Enterprise House. A well-known Asian woman comedian had agreed to attend and speak at the conference, and over 60 place bookings had been made by staff. Although they were not the primary intended audience, Jane then

circulated invitations to Councillors, as a courtesy. Upon receiving her invitation, Andrea, the Leader of the Council, arrived without warning at Jane's desk and complained loudly that the date for the conference had not been agreed with her, that she was unavailable on this date, and therefore the conference would have to be moved to a date convenient to her. She fulminated in this way for several minutes before returning to the Councillors' office, leaving Jane feeling humiliated and angered. Jane was obliged to move the date of the conference, and this set her planning back by several months. When the conference eventually took place, having stipulated that the event had to be reorganised, including the nationally famous comedian, Andrea did not turn up. Ferguson and Gupta (2002) suggest that the clearest indication of inequality of space in their study was the 'surprise inspection' (p.985) in which senior officials used their greater mobility to 'swoop down' (p.987) into the space of lower officials in order to discipline them. Although my analysis does not include accounts from Councillors themselves (despite several approaches, I was unsuccessful in securing an interview with a Councillor), I suspect that there is a relationship between the Councillors' possession of a private space and the capricious behaviour that was reported. The maintenance of a private office provides a place to withdraw to following a 'tantrum', thus enabling both themselves and the officer on the receiving end, to recover from the encounter, rather than having to remain within the bad 'atmosphere' that has been created. I take up this point again in the analysis of appraisals and Troy House (chapter 7).

4.2 Senior officers' attempts to recreate 'deep' space for themselves

Unlike the Councillors, the directors of service did not have a separate office area, and officially, were included in hot-desking arrangements. However, they appeared to restore greater privacy to their office by locating most of their informal meetings elsewhere. On the old campus, in line with Larsen and Schultz's (1990) observation, meetings between senior and more junior staff would typically take place in the senior person's office. This may be because it was more convenient for the senior member of staff not to have to travel, and because their office space (and perhaps the travelling of the subordinate) symbolised their authority (Rosen et al 1990). In Enterprise House, there appeared to be a direct reversal of this pattern, in that the more senior member of staff would travel to the subordinate's work area for the meeting. Sue described her reaction to this change of practice:

In the past if I had a one-to-one with my manager and they're a director, then I would go and see them. Or even assistant director, you would normally ... but

Amelia is very 'no, I'll come and see you'. And actually, that was really 'oh! You're going to be bothered to come and see me?' And it means that she can come when she's ready obviously, but no, the norm is that you would go to see your director, but Amelia's different. Which is good and why I want to work for her.

Sue appeared surprised by Amelia's insistence that Amelia would make the effort to travel to see her, rather than the reverse, as was formerly the case. On the face of it, this new practice looks like a move towards equality of space, through which Amelia was trying to reduce status differences. Sue appeared to interpret Amelia's practice in this positive way, and the change seems to have led to a clear improvement to her implicit contract. But the new practice can also be seen as a way of helping to restore some privacy and 'depth' (Markus 2006) to Amelia's own office space. As a director of service and sharing an office with fellow directors, Amelia's office area could potentially be overwhelmed with visits from many staff. Any director who regularly occasioned such interruptions might become unpopular with his or her colleagues. Therefore, although the switch in location appeared to be a reversal of a hierarchical relationship, it also partially restores the hierarchy by recreating inaccessible, 'deep' space for the top managers.

4.3 Appropriation of meeting rooms by Councillors and senior managers

In addition to the small meeting rooms lining the floorplates, there were five larger meeting rooms in Enterprise House. They had to be pre-booked using an intranet booking system, which secured the room on a first come, first served basis. Many of the managers I spoke with complained that there were not enough larger rooms for the number of meetings that actually took place. As Elizabeth put it, *'trying to book large meeting rooms for more formal meetings is the devil's own job'*. The larger rooms were, therefore, a scarce resource, and they were often booked months in advance. Although the official system secured the room on a first come, first served basis, it appeared that more senior staff occasionally 'pulled rank' and substituted their own booking for one previously made by lower status managers. For example, although Jeff was a senior manager, he had had room bookings overridden:

In terms of big rooms, there are very few and they tend to get nabbed ... any meeting involving a Councillor will take precedence; rightly or wrongly, but that's the way.

AH: Can they bump people out?

Absolutely. Yeah, not only Councillors, I've been booted out by the Chief Exec two or three times as well. What can one do?

AH: Swallow it?

(Ironically) Exactly. There's nothing that can be done, these are very important meetings you know.

Jeff's ironic remark appeared to suggest that it would be pointless for him to object if he was 'booted out' so that a more 'important' meeting could be accommodated. To illustrate the other side of the issue, Thomas (a Director) also acknowledged the shortage of larger meeting rooms, but described the problem as follows:

I'm not sure that we have proper intelligent use of the larger meeting rooms. You know, bad PAs just say 'we'll have to delay the meeting', without asking 'is it more important that we shove these people out to get this meeting in?' So a meeting that could be postponed for a day or wasn't really necessary anyway because there was nothing on the agenda, stops a more important meeting from taking place. A good PA will say, 'well I can see that's more important so I've moved this meeting' and that is a job for somebody to apply that intelligence.

Thomas, who appeared to have appropriated meeting rooms by 'shoving' others out, suggested that the booking system should prioritise the 'importance' of the meeting and that all PAs should apply this criterion to the task of securing rooms. While Thomas repeatedly stressed 'importance' as the key criterion, the actual pattern of unofficial appropriation of rooms appeared to be based on the status of the person booking them.

To summarise the analysis of sociospatial relations in Enterprise House thus far, there appeared to be several 'invisible hierarchies' operating at different scales: on individual benches within the offices, between the service directors and other staff, and between Councillors and officers. In the next part of this chapter, I analyse accounts of the use of this hierarchical space for people undertaking particular types of work: networking, doing specialist work, being managed, and managing.

5 Networking

5.1 'Not gossiping but networking'

In line with the push towards network governance in public services, various job roles had been created within SCC's strategic centre whose purpose was develop new integrated services. Integration was sought between services that were provided separately through different directorates, and between parts of the Council and external agencies. One of the research respondents, Annabel, had been the first person appointed to a new role of Head of Service Development in Health and Social Care. Annabel's work was wholly reliant upon networking because she was responsible for initiating and implementing projects, but did not manage a team of staff. In Castells' (1996) terms, her work involved the co-ordination of variable organisational geometry through the creation, development and ultimately disbanding, of project groups to address changing public requirements. As she described the work:

*.. it's a new way of working with not having a team, to go out and borrow people. So you have to spend lots of time not **gossiping** but **networking**. So it might be in the kitchen or on the stairs and they will say, 'did that paper go OK?' and that constitutes a meeting. .. It's very much around what we would call soft skills, being able to get the best out of people, how do you influence and how do you negotiate. It's about building relationships, where you sort of say 'I've got a real problem at the moment' and they usually want to help you.*

In Annabel's terms, the new type of work appeared informal – it looked like gossiping and was reliant on her ability to form working relationships through goodwill, without any managerial ability to compel people to participate. It appeared opportunistic, and work could take place in any location – as she said above, the kitchen or the stairs, but also other places such as car parks or corridors (of other buildings). As Massey (1995) points out, with high status autonomous staff it is not always possible to tell what they are doing at any time, and this also appeared to be the case for networkers (whose work might be mistaken for gossiping). People with managerial roles also needed to network, and many of them reported that the new offices enabled them to network more effectively across teams and directorates. For example, Jeff stated:

The building works well as a 'strategic home' because it's easier to see people. If I know somebody well I'll turn up at their desk, quite literally, just swan up. Probably

annoys people actually because they're probably trying to concentrate on something else. Or I'll phone up and if it's somebody that I really don't know at all I'll make an appointment to see them and use one of these little rooms like we are now.

Annabel appeared to regard Enterprise House as a valuable resource in this work:

I'll invite my external contacts here. And there is this sense of pride ... and then you'll get 'is it true you've got a fountain and a water feature?' I think it sends a very clear signal about being modern, forward thinking.

Work buildings have become 'impelling symbols of corporate virtues and managerial intentions' (Berg and Kreiner 1990:43), which also reflect the status of their occupants (Yanow 1995, 2006). The interpretation of the building as '*modern, forward thinking*' which Annabel suggested was made by her external contacts seemed to be very much as the organisation designers had originally intended, for example, as '*something new and metropolitan*', as Marcus had suggested. The external contacts appeared to have been rather awestruck by the building's more exotic features, and the implication is that it facilitated Annabel's work because her contacts felt inclined to participate in her projects, in order to share the high status conferred by the building.

5.2 Presentation of self

Annabel's work also made her highly visible to other employees, including high status members:

*I think one of the things that had a huge impact on me was the fact that you've got directors out on the floor ... including the Chief Exec, **with** people. He will see you, he will recognise you.*

In Enterprise House, the 'networking' way of working that Annabel was charged with, was thus validated by senior managers who were also '*out on the floor*' role-modelling this type of behaviour and having what Jansen (2008) terms 'interpretive authority' (p.154). Annabel also suggested that because she was constantly visible to her colleagues, including key external contacts as well as high status managers in SCC, she now paid meticulous attention to the way in which she presented herself. Shortly after taking up her post, she '*went out and spent a lot of money on clothes*' because, she argued, judgements about status were

made on the basis of small variations in dress and other aspects of personal presentation. For example, she stated that she usually wore jackets because *'wearing a cardy says 'admin''*, regularly had her (hair) roots re-dyed, and always wore make-up, although it was essential that this should look subtle. It appeared that Annabel was performing *'aesthetic labour'* (Witz et al 2003) voluntarily, as a work resource.

Several other respondents whose roles involved networking and who therefore could frequently be seen in the collective spaces of the building, also commented that their self-presentation had become more important. My visits to Enterprise House, both as a management tutor and a researcher, required me to act as a networker, and I noticed the unusually high level of attention I paid to my dress, appearance and manner during my appearances in the building. Although not a *'pure'* networker as was Annabel, Elizabeth observed *'people's level of dress just went up!'* In the new building, she implied, there was both greater awareness of others, and greater awareness of how one might appear to them:

.. we've got much more acknowledgement of one another and acknowledgement of self ... so that's about 'I am who I am regardless of whether I'm on a walkway, sitting at a desk or visiting the loo' ... maybe more clarity of function for the individuals who are here because they don't define themselves by territory so much.

As Dixon and Durrheim (2000) point out, self-identity often relates to where we belong. However, within the strategic centre, there was little distinction between office areas, given their common format or *'legibility'* (Jansen 2008) and employees who undertook networking would move frequently from place to place. Elizabeth suggested, therefore, that one's identity was defined less by territory and more directly by the body. Similar suggestions were made by other respondents, who observed that it was possible to identify male managers by their formal suits, senior women managers by their assertive gait, and women Councillors by their eccentric, but very expensive, designer label clothing.

5.3 Invisible barriers to networking

According to the organisation designers, Enterprise House was designed to enable networking, and accounts given by *'networkers'* such as Annabel suggest that it could support this purpose very well. Not all attempts at networking were successful, however. In contrast to the above accounts of *'successful'* networking, is the following account from Pat,

Research Manager in Environment and Transport, whose role was to conduct and co-ordinate research across directorates. Pat suggested that she had made a variety of efforts to try and initiate new networks, none of which had been successful:

Now we've settled in, I'm disappointed only from the social side, in that I thought we'd get to know more people and you would have a broader network and be popping between floors and just chatting ... well, not just chatting, but there would be a bit more interaction. But it's not worked out like that. We sat next to this team from Social Care ... but because we did not have a work reason to interact with them, we sat alongside people we didn't really get to know.

Contrary to arguments that proximity and the absence of boundaries will lead to greater interaction (discussed in chapter 2), it appears that networking practices do not necessarily emerge if the people concerned lack a prior reason to engage with others. And even if such a 'work reason' does exist, it is still possible to hit against 'invisible lines' (Muetzelfeldt 2006) operating in the group being approached. For instance, Pat recounted the following anecdote about her attempts to initiate an informal way of working with a colleague in Education, with whom she worked regularly on a joint project:

But we've found that even though the number one person is sitting round the corner on this floor, I still have to book a meeting every few weeks to book some of his time. He doesn't delegate it to others, either, so I've only got the one person I can talk to and I find it very difficult to get into their process.

AH *So why is that, d'you think?*

Well I would say it's time, they haven't got the time. They'd love to sit and talk to you at length, but he knows that he's got a pile of committee reports on other things he's got to do and it's a very hard compromise to make.

AH *Now that's interesting because earlier you said you didn't end up talking to people you were sitting right by because you needed a work reason. Now you've got a work reason?...*

We've got a work reason and we're still kept at arm's length. And we've had the same problem with Property ... we say, 'oh yes, we'll come down and speak to you', and they'll go 'well, we'll give you an appointment', and they kept getting changed. And that's a different department and it's the same thing. It's just about, I suppose, people's priorities actually matching.

Pat's statement suggests that for this colleague, the work priorities still flowed down the

hierarchy, rather than horizontally across networks, so that his pile of committee papers took precedence. It is also interesting that the Property department, whose role included supporting informal networking, also insisted on making appointments even when opportunities to meet informally were offered. Pat's suggestion that informal networking will only emerge when '*people's priorities actually [match]*' exposes an assumption that may be made in network models of organisation, that the priorities of employees will automatically coincide, thus facilitating the formation of new connections within the network. In Pat's example, the priorities of potential networkers appeared not to coincide and it was still possible for managers (including Property managers) to '*hide in a quiet way*' as James had complained of the old campus.

Patterns of informal networking also appeared to be shaped by invisible lines based on status differences between potential networkers. Many respondents appeared to take it for granted that when they were approached by a higher status member, the respondent would politely pause their current activity in order to listen and respond. An approach from a lower status person, on the other hand, would be referred to as an 'interruption' and might be spoken of with irritation. For example, Penelope, who managed several training programmes, differentiated between approaches from students and the Chief Executive:

Yeah, I think I suffer from being interrupted by students just popping in ... there is a bit of a problem with that, but on the whole we're quite respectful of one another, I mean we don't run in to see James every five minutes, for example.

AH *Do the senior managers run to you?*

They do come here when they need to speak to us about things ... we've had James several times about urgent stuff, so it works for him as well.

This may be another instance of the unequal permeability of 'invisible lines' in relation to people of different status, which, as Muetzelfeldt (2006) states, 'constrain superiors less than subordinates' (p.124). High status staff such as James would generally be welcomed so that, as he put it in 2004, '*I can see ten people in thirty minutes ... I haven't got to engineer it, I just walk through the building, oh, so-and-so, oh, so-and-so and so-and-so*'. Since invisible status boundaries would always be permeable to such high status members, these staff could be unaware of their existence for others and may have been puzzled by the fact that networking had not developed to the extent to which had been intended.

Whilst most networkers (including managers) expressed enthusiasm for the speed and

informality which networking enabled, Thomas expressed doubts about its efficacy:

The one thing that I would advise anybody working in this building though is that it's dead easy to think, oh there's somebody who I need to talk to, they're going to get a cup of coffee. And the conversation you have walking to get the cup of coffee is not the same conversation or quality of decision you'd have in a formal meeting in a meeting room, or the same response you'd get if you emailed or telephoned them. So there is the issue about how you interact with colleagues in an open plan environment and be mindful of the quality of the decision you're getting and the permanency of the decision you get. You might think, oh great, I grabbed that person and I got a 'yes', and then a week later you're wondering why it's not working.

This contrasts with James's comment in phase 1 that the speed of decision-making should be more consistent with the speed of the thought process, and his criticism of what he presented as the slow, deliberative approach of the '*monks and hermits*' of the old campus. Thomas's statement is more attuned to du Gay's (2000) suggestion that while bureaucratic processes may be slow, their value lies in their thoroughness; he argues, not that this type of networking matches the thought process, but that it cuts it short – in other words, '*it's not working*' because the person going for their cup of coffee has not had the time to properly think the proposal through.

6 Working as a team member

6.1 Symbolic enhancement of status

Most respondents who described their roles predominantly as contributing to the work of a particular team spoke favourably of the new building. For example:

I love the building; I love it because .. I like the glass, it's so open. I like it because it's airy, light, modern. (Jenny, Purchasing Officer).

I'm the sort of person that likes this open working environment. I like the fact that we've got open offices and you're not pigeonholed, that you can talk to everybody ... you can see everybody and you just feel that you're all part of the same thing. (Sunil, Equalities Officer).

I feel proud to work here. Being in a cutting-edge building makes me feel that the organisation has a resource of innovation and modernisation, which can be a breath of fresh air in stuffy Southern County. Things like the artwork make you feel like they care about what it's like as an atmosphere for the staff. And it's also saying to somebody working in a dusty old community resource unit, 'we have the power and we have the status. (Shahida, Temporary Project Officer).

These typifications (Berger and Luckmann 1966) or lived spaces (Lefebvre 1991) appear to fulfil the aims expressed by the architect when he spoke of the new building as being 'something that just makes you feel good to be in the space and the spirit of it' and as a place where 'you can actually see people and feel you're in one building working together'. All three extracts speak of positive feelings engendered by the openness and modern aesthetic of Enterprise House. The point made by Sunil, that the building did not 'pigeonhole' people can be read both as not dividing employees physically into separate office 'boxes' and also not classifying them according to a particular fixed and possibly stereotyped identity. And Shahida observed that the building reflects a higher status both to employees and to external constituencies than does most public sector accommodation (such as 'the dusty old community resource unit'). Many team members compared the new building favourably with their previous accommodation, which was often portrayed as dingy and old-fashioned using derogatory terms such as 'portakabin' or 'broom cupboard', including an intriguing rabbit-based metaphor which compared a building on the old campus to 'a warren hutch'.

Such positive responses were frequently accompanied by expressions of appreciation for the presence of managers working in the open plan space with other employees. The managers' presence appeared to be interpreted as an enhancement of the status of the staff and as a symbol of less hierarchical organisation. Respondents suggested that the proximity of managers strengthened their sense of belonging and commitment to the organisation. As Sue put it, her director was now 'not behind a PA behind a door'. Vicky, who had previously worked in Democratic Services where she sat close to the Chief Executive, put the case more strongly:

Oh I loved that, you just feel even more part of the whole organisation and the whole thing. It was wonderful.

The new proximity to managers often contrasted with team members' former offices, in

which they would occupy the lowest ranking space, distant from more senior staff. In Enterprise House, team members appeared to respond to the élite status symbols embedded in the 'design vocabulary' (Pederson 2006, Yanow 2006) of the building, as well the embodied presence of the senior staff, which also appeared to be interpreted as status symbols reflecting positively on the status of other employees.

In phase 1, the organisation designers argued that managers and staff sharing office space would improve organisational performance because immediate, face to face communication would help teams to achieve their objectives. Many staff reported clear benefits from sitting with managers for precisely this reason – that it facilitated more frequent face to face communication with their managers, in both directions. Sue, for example, suggested that it was helpful to sit next to her assistant director *'because I can say to him, 'you went to the ADs' meeting, what happened?'* and likewise, he could check things out with her. Shahida suggested that the proximity of her manager had been particularly helpful to her as a newcomer, since it enabled her to ask for guidance regularly, and so avoid mistakes that she might otherwise have made by proceeding without it. She contrasted the situation with her previous workplace:

In my last job I was left to do things my own way and then sometimes my manager would say 'well why did you do it that way?' And I was like 'well nobody gave me any guidance so I just did the best thing I could' ... you know what I mean?

However, it did not appear to follow from this that all staff would find it easier to approach or interrupt their managers. In particular, younger staff and those who appeared less confident appeared reluctant to do so, despite encouragement from colleagues. As Vicky reported, *'I'll say to [X], 'go and ask him', but they still see him as this 'higher figure' ... the open plan working doesn't get rid of all that because of the actual culture of work, it doesn't get rid of that'.*

6.2 Constantly visibility: 'there's nowhere you can go and just be'

Because the boundaries separating employees at different levels of the hierarchy were now 'invisible' (Muetzelfeldt 2006), managers inevitably undertook constant surveillance of the staff, whether they intended to or not. In phase 1, Marcus suggested that the visibility in the design of Enterprise House would reduce hierarchy because, using the concept of the

panopticon, *'everyone's a warder'*. The fieldwork in phase 2, however, suggests that while everyone may have been a warder, managers were widely regarded as the more important warders whose disciplinary gaze was most keenly felt and acted upon. This was particularly the case for the more junior level staff. Shahida, who welcomed being able to access her manager for his advice, nonetheless suggested that his daily presence was a mixed blessing because it put pressure on her to look as if she was working. She claimed that she had adapted by simply making sure that she *was* working whenever he was present:

You stop minding ... I'll give you an analogy here. You know how you never want to do the washing up but when you do it, it's not actually that bad. And you might as well just get on and do it. And actually pretending to look like you're working is worse than working in a way. Having to be efficient or whatever is more interesting.

The activity that Shahida describes as *'pretending to look like you're working'* is what Goffman (1959) terms 'make-work' – activity which gives 'the impression that [employees] are working hard at the moment' (p.112). As Goffman points out, 'make-work' is 'usually seen as the burden of those of low estate' (p.113). In the new offices, the regular presence of managers appeared to put pressure on their staff members to 'look busy', and as Shahida said, you might as well *be* busy. She spoke of looking as if you are *not* working, or 'skiving', as something to be avoided:

You feel like you have to be on the ball all the time because there's people ... like your manager sitting next to you. And sometimes you feel you look like you're skiving when you're not, because for example when I first started working here, I didn't have my e-mail account set up so I had to use my own e-mail account. So if you're sitting there on Hotmail with all your personal e-mails in front of you, you look like you're skiving when you're not. And the trouble is I still get people e-mailing me to that address, so I still have to check it. But ... it's like I'm not doing anything.

Several women respondents reported that there was always pressure to be seen to be doing something. As Jean put it, *'there's nowhere you can go and just be'*. This pressure accords with Hofbauer's (2000) observation that open plan environments create a need for constant impression management; in Enterprise House, however, this pressure was reported only by lower status employees. In their study of call centre environments, Baldry et al (1988) describe their impression of 'uninterrupted and intensive working' (p.174) and while I do not think that County had adopted what Baldry et al (1998) term 'team Taylorism', there nonetheless appeared to be considerable pressure on junior staff to appear to be working

intensively.

As well as appearing to be working, the team members also had to show that they were not flouting the required protocols. For example, Shahida spoke of Rebecca's influence (a senior manager whom Shahida referred to as '*the big boss lady*') as follows:

And everyone's a little bit like 'oh, make sure you do the right thing', when Rebecca's around, you know. (laughs) If you even go to the loo, you're supposed to lock your computer so that nobody can change anything or access data ... most people don't or they don't remember. But if you don't do it when she's there, you get into trouble.

The ability of managers to look directly at what more junior staff were doing appears to be another instance of the unequal spatial practices that I commented on earlier. As well as being able to influence the level of noise and types of interaction among their team members, it appeared that there was also 'inequality of looking', in which managers were able to look directly at staff in ways that were not reciprocated. Rather than everyone being a warder, as Marcus had suggested in 2004, it appeared that the disciplinary gaze still followed the contours of the hierarchy. This was particularly evident in the context of performance appraisal.

6.3 Being appraised

In Enterprise House, appraisals were usually undertaken in the small glass-fronted meeting rooms lining the floorplates. Several respondents commented on 'bad' appraisals or other meetings which they described as difficult, where the visibility of the encounter to colleagues in the adjacent office compounded the problem. For instance, Becky commented:

These blasted rooms, these meeting rooms, horrific. They're not confidential whatsoever. Not only are they glass, so people can see, but there's no confidentiality between the rooms, you can hear every blooming word. I've been upset in one of these meeting rooms, just with my manager, with work stresses I've had and I think I don't want the world seeing me crying thank you very much.

Similarly, Jean indicated that she had been '*on the end of a bad appraisal*', was in tears in the glass meeting room and felt that everyone was looking at her. Although she said that she

'just wanted to get out' her manager appeared not to show much sympathy. Jean seemed to interpret being forced to remain in this situation as a form of bullying. While these respondents did not object to the idea of a negative appraisal in principle, they appeared to object strongly to it being conducted in a way that displayed the difficulty to others. Appraisal can be understood as the exercise of Foucauldian disciplinary power (e.g. Townley 1993) through which the appraisee is encouraged to acknowledge their shortcomings in a way that enables them to begin a process of self-improvement. It is therefore normal for disciplinary power to be exercised discreetly, so that the recipient of discipline feels empowered to accept the need to improve. However, making this process visible to others may undermine the appraisal as an exercise of disciplinary power, because when the discipline is visible to others it becomes more like the episodic, public spectacle of old-fashioned sovereign power. As Foucault (1977) indicates, public discipline is out of kilter with modern norms of behaviour, which may explain the strong objections made by appraisees to this situation.

Jenny pointed out, on the other hand, that visibility can also protect against bullying. She compared the situation in Enterprise House with a former workplace, a 'scout hut' in a remote rural location, where she suggested she had been bullied by her manager:

In Enterprise House there isn't really anywhere that you don't feel watched. But in a way it's good because for example when you have your PDR, it's actually a bit of a protection because if you look back over the years, people were bullied. Here, you can't be bullied because everything is visible. So in a way it's a protection. On the other hand, if you're upset about something, there's nowhere to go. Where can you go? All you can do is go to the Ladies.

For team members, the visual formant of the abstract space of the office appeared to be particularly significant in that it obliged them to undertake 'make-work', brought the possibility of public discipline, did not provide a hiding place to retreat to, but also guarded against systematic bullying.

7 Specialist work

The roles of several respondents involved a significant research element. For example, Nick's role as an ecologist involved carrying out research to inform local policy on farming,

the AONBs in Southern County, and planning decisions generally. Vicky defined her role in Environment and Transport as providing an evidence base for ways of reducing road traffic accidents. Several of the managers interviewed also had a specialist element to their roles. This type of work appeared to require sufficient privacy to enable concentration. It also required specialist resources, in the form of paperwork or equipment, such as large scale maps and plans, drawing equipment, laminators and TV sets (required by Communications staff). Many specialists also required particular software, which was only installed on certain PCs, meaning that they were usually exempt from any requirement to hot-desk. In his recommendations for the configuration of the 'new office' Duffy (1997) advocates that this type of 'individual, concentrated work with little interaction' should be supported by 'the cell' layout, in which 'enclosed offices are designed to allow the powerful, self-directed individual as much potential for concentrated work as possible' (p.63). It is therefore unsurprising that employees with predominantly specialist roles appeared to find working in Enterprise House difficult, as the following exchange with Nick suggests:

AH: *Has this building changed the way you work?*

Yes, I now work at home.

AH: *OK! (laughs).*

The only way I can get involved, intelligent work done is not to be here because it's too noisy. I only come here for bouncing e-mails around, making telephone calls, gathering together the information I need. But I can't do anything with it when I'm in the office, I have to take it home and have peace and quiet, put it in its right and proper place within a report.

Nick occupied a desk adjacent to an aisle. His desk was piled with papers, leaving only a small clear area on it for desk work. On the floor next to his desk, a row of about twenty books was propped against the filing cabinet, and his other books and materials were stored in a metal cupboard at the end of the floorplate. Vicky made a similar point:

Often, because of the nature of my work, it involves a lot of analysing data. And I'm usually distracted in the office. So sometimes it's easier to take it home because you sit there and do it.

Nick was scathing about the design of Enterprise House, pointing out that:

You've got to remember the building wasn't designed for public servants; it was designed as a call centre. I'm not particularly keen on modern architecture and I do think that the idea of making people work inside a greenhouse is rather an unusual

one. I think it was intended to be an imposing, modern, efficient looking building and I think people choose that style of things because somehow or other modern is seen as more efficient.

Unlike the team members, who generally commented favourably on the modern aesthetic of the building, Nick questioned the taken for granted association between modern architecture and efficiency noted by Guillèn (1997) because, for him, the building did not enable efficiency. According to Nick, the main difficulty with the office was the overheard conversation which constantly intruded on his concentration, such as (as he reported) *'did you see the match last night?'* or *'have you seen my book on widgeon?'* Nick expressed objections to a wide range of the building's features: the poor design, the difficulty in cleaning the external glass walls, the dimensions of the lifts (which he claimed were too small for persons of his expanding waistline). Overall, his judgement was that it was *'wrong, wrong, wrong!'* The pattern that consistently emerged from these accounts was that complex or creative work was difficult to do in the offices, whereas straightforward work could readily be done there. This is the reverse of the pattern observed by Halford (2005) in her study of an insurance company which had introduced 'hybrid workspace' combining home and the workplace: employees in Halford's (2005) study reserved complex, unfamiliar tasks for the workplace so that they could be discussed with colleagues; and routine, repetitive work was taken home.

8 Managerial work

Managers' accounts of Enterprise House were contradictory, both in terms of the typifications they used to refer to the building, and in terms of how the space influenced their work in practical terms. They expressed ambivalence over the meanings that could be attached to the building, often appearing to take into account how they imagined it was perceived by key constituencies such as the public or other employees based elsewhere in the County. Many expressed pride in the image of Enterprise House with its connotations of status and modernity. For example, as Director of Communications, Thomas's role was to show the public what the organisation was doing; he was what Goffman (1959) might call 'a specialist who will spend his time expressing the meaning of a task and spend no time actually doing it' (p.43). He suggested that Enterprise House was a useful resource for his role, because it told the outside world *'don't mess with us'*. While they also acknowledged

the usefulness of the image of the building in some contexts, several other managers appeared sensitive to the possible accusation that it had cost a large amount of public money, and they were anxious to explain that it had been purchased at a cut price and was less expensive to run than the old campus. Some managers also expressed sensitivity about how Enterprise House might be regarded by SCC staff based in other buildings. They reported their sense of unease over the contrast between it and other buildings, and expressed suspicion that other employees regarded the building enviously. As Fran (Adult Social Care Manager) said:

*I'm aware that there's still a degree of ... resentment's probably the right word ... from staff 'out there' in nasty little portakabins with outside toilets and no phone, that they haven't got the kind of facilities we've got. I think amongst other staff there is an understanding of this whole new culture and that tends to be staff who have actually come to see the building, you'll see the penny drop ... they'll say 'oh, **this** is what it's all about! I can see it now!' ... But the poor sods over on the Dark Side have got the really short straw ... it's all artificial light, there's no windows and what's lacking is the sheer beauty of this building.*

Fran therefore suggested that when the staff 'out there' experienced Enterprise House directly, it would explain and justify itself by showing them 'this whole new culture', the new social relations that it could enable (although, I have suggested, the appearance of non-hierarchical relationships given by the physical office space is misleading). The reported comment 'I can see it now!', suggesting a sudden appreciation of the meaning of this unfamiliar social space, is similar to that expressed by some of the visitors to the bizarre museum described by Jansen (2008) who, formerly bewildered, say 'I get it!'. Fran also referred to Troy House as 'the Dark Side', a humorous label for the building which was in circulation at that time. Relationships between staff in the strategic centre and 'the Dark Side' are analysed in the next chapter.

People with managerial roles also provided very contradictory accounts about their experience of working in Enterprise House. I link these contradictions to the varied activities required in these roles, in which managers were expected to co-ordinate the activities of their teams, network with other managers and also undertake specialist type work requiring concentration. As Newman (2001, 2005) suggests for the era of 'network governance', however, priority was still given to performance targets set by central government. As Jeff put it:

If you don't meet your targets, you don't get as much funding, so that is the bottom line that is important. We're very target-driven ... data-led ... you have to have that data to back up what you're doing, you've got to prove that you're achieving that.

The priority for managers therefore seemed to remain the achievement of centrally-set targets, and failure to achieve them signalled that managers were not doing the job properly. As Salaman (2005) and du Gay (2004) suggest, managers were still steered from the centre.

8.1 Managing a team

Many of the managers reported an improvement in the way they communicated with their staff team and the greater work flexibility that could result from their proximity. For example, the content of Thomas's work as Director of Communications appeared often to be dominated by external events over which he had no control. For example, in the year preceding my interview with him, there had been a serious outbreak of farm animal disease, and a serial murderer in County, both of which had attracted national attention. Prior to the move to Enterprise House, his team had been split across two separate buildings. When both teams were brought together in the new office, all of Thomas's team were, as he put it, 'in line of sight' and he suggested that this gave him much greater flexibility when coping with changing work priorities:

.. you're able to say, 'OK, schools organisation review has peaked, we need nine people to work on this today'. And it's not a case of negotiating, trying to get people from other buildings to come across, finding a desk for them. No, you can just say, 'right, we all know we've got to deal with this. You three stay with the day job, you nine, you're now working to this person to get whatever he needs doing done'.

Many managers reported similar benefits. The managers' comments that everyday proximity smoothed and speeded the work along mirror similar points made by many team members. While this change was suggested to be beneficial, it did not level the hierarchy (as was the official intention), but rather enabled the existing hierarchy to function more flexibly and rapidly.

Earlier I discussed the difficulties expressed by employees on the end of 'bad' appraisals

conducted in glass-fronted meeting rooms. Thomas added to this point by illustrating what could happen after the appraisal was finished:

.. you're sat in an open plan office with colleagues, you do an appraisal, they don't like the appraisal and they've got to go back and sit opposite you. That's bad for you and it's bad for them. And bereavement or some other personal tragedy that you're dealing with, where do you go and hide? Actually you can't.

As Goffman (1961) indicates, one of the features of a total institution is that, unlike in 'normal' society, inmates are not permitted to show their dissatisfaction (for example, by pulling a face or rolling their eyes) if they are disciplined. Inmates must suppress these reactions in order to show compliance with their treatment. Similarly, the constant proximity between managers and staff members working together on the same bench means that neither the staff member nor the manager can complain to his or her colleagues, or 'let off steam' in any way following an awkward encounter.

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that 'looking' tended to follow the contours of the managerial hierarchy, so that while managers were free to look at (and if necessary comment on or criticise) staff members, the reverse was less likely. The account from Thomas, below, recounting an incident in which lower status staff openly looked at senior managers, tends to support this notion of 'unequal looking':

About two years ago we had to do a major piece of work about restructuring the organisation, so we had to engage with the unions. And we went up to the fifth floor to have a meeting in a glass office like this, and because it's the fifth floor, nobody else goes up there except the people who work there. So you know, if they smell fresh meat, they're all sort of looking round and saying, 'who are you, what are you doing?' And of course they see the Chief Executive, the Head of Comms, and the Deputy Leader wander into an office with two union reps.

AH Heavy.

Yeah. So the eyeballs follow you into the room. And we decided during the meeting that we would send out a message to staff explaining that we're having this meeting. And we got the meerkat response. We were in the meeting and the e-mails went round, everybody looked at their screens and then spun round, shot up, straight backs, looked into the glass booth where we were.

This account contrasts with those from more junior staff who indicated that they often

regulated their behaviour (for example, by looking busy) when in the sight of managers. Thomas's objection to being looked at by more junior staff appeared to be very strong: he used bodily terms to describe the occupants of the fifth floor which suggest brutishness or savagery ('*they smell fresh meat*'; '*the eyeballs follow you*'; '*the meerkat response ... spun round, shot up, straight backs, looked ..*'). In Thomas's account, the overt looking can be understood as a failure to show the appropriate, courteous civil inattention (Goffman 1971) required in the visible environment, and therefore as poor manners deserving of robust criticism. Managers may have taken it as normal that they could look at staff, but a tacit rule appeared to have been breached when the reverse happened.

8.2 The loss of space for 'uninterrupted thought'

While many managers appeared to value the greater opportunity for networking that Enterprise House provided, they also complained bitterly about being interrupted. Earlier, Pat's account spoke of the attempts she had made to approach others informally, as she put it to '*have a broader network and be popping between floors and just chatting*'. Pat, who had a doctorate in geography, also had a strong specialist element to her role as well as a team management element. She suggested:

The thing I have most problems with is because it's so open plan and because I am a manager as well, that you get the interruptions. I do find it's difficult to sit and concentrate on doing something creative and imaginative and new and different. Answering e-mails and doing routine stuff, fine, but if you were trying to develop a whole new approach, like [example], I can guarantee I will end up doing that at home. I actually choose to say 'right, I'm going to do this, this is the job I'm going to do at home, specifically this' and I'll sit at home and do it for a whole morning. It's the same for any job that needs uninterrupted thought. .. It needs uninterrupted thought, where you can go and sort of build on it and develop it. And what you get at the end was quite different to how you first thought.

According to Pat, creative work was never possible in the open plan offices, because even if it was quiet and she was not actually interrupted, she expected to be, and this alone interrupted her thought. Working in a small meeting room did not guarantee uninterrupted thought because the occupants could still be seen and approached. In County, creative work did not appear to be a predominantly collective process as is often implied in chaos and

complexity models of architecture (e.g. Kornberger and Clegg 2003) but was more often presented as an individual process requiring *'uninterrupted thought'* as Pat phrased it.

Like other specialists, many managers also suggested that they found overheard conversations distracting. Jeff, for example, suggested that he could *'blank out'* conversations about roads and buses overheard from his direct colleagues, but not conversations about unfamiliar topics overheard from the Drug and Alcohol Team which was based nearby. As for the other specialists, Jeff suggested that working at his desk was fine for routine work, but if he was working on what he called *'proper writing, as opposed to computer screen writing'*, he would have to move to a meeting room:

So that to me is the major drawback which is a function of the seating and not having one's own office. You know, there are times when I'd kill for my own office.

While Elizabeth described the new open plan arrangements as *'excellent'* she also indicated that *'the space for reflection'* had been lost in the new office:

.. what we've lost is the space for reflection and that really worries me in my current role because there is nowhere that you can just sit and reflect on task or need ... the good thing about having individual offices was that it would be possible to research or to read ... but it's other people's interactions and the fact that you're set up in such close proximity .. so if you suddenly decide that you need to reflect on this piece of work or look something up, are you going to walk to the Knowledge Centre upstairs so you can sit and have your reflect, or are you just not going to do it?

A similar point was made by Julia, Complaints Manager in Adult Social Care. Complaints were often made initially by phone, and the phone conversation might involve confidential details about individuals (such as members of the public or staff whose performance was being complained about), and sensitive matters (such as intimate care). In this context it was usually not appropriate, Julia suggested, to suspend the call in order to move into a meeting room where the conversation could be handled confidentially, because the interruption might irritate an already aggrieved caller. Most calls were therefore conducted in the open plan office, where, Julia suggested, the knowledge that it could be overheard made the conversation stilted and awkward. Allen et al (2005) acknowledge that large open plan areas *'do not adequately support work that requires not only collaboration but also concentration, and in some cases, confidentiality'* (p.10). The situation also illustrates the way in which work is spatially divided, not just at the level of jobs, as Massey (1995)

discusses, but also within jobs, so that the employee must now move to undertake different types of tasks (desk work, informal networking and individual reflection). Whereas in conventional offices, the space was socially integrated, so that it was possible to undertake a variety of tasks from the office or desk, the new office consists of a variety of specialised spaces. However, as the above illustrations suggest, it is not always convenient to move, so that certain types of work may not get done, or are done badly. According to Elizabeth, this type of spatial division of work had the following implication:

.. if you want an organisation which is geared up entirely to action and reaction so that you get customer service which is there, now, as required, targets met, then maybe you're achieving all your goals. If you're after an organisation which is going to inform the targets ... which is going to be proactive in meeting needs, identifying needs and maybe even dissipating those needs then ... we're not going to have it.

9 Summary

In the previous chapter I concluded that the officially expressed intention for the strategic centre was to transform it into a network structure. In this chapter I have analysed the actual sociospatial relations that emerged in the building, and as Gupta and Ferguson (1992) advocate, have proceeded by 'foregrounding the spatial distribution of hierarchical power relations' (p.8). In this analysis I have sought to show that while aspects of the organisation's bureaucratic structure were blurred and reshaped, the sociospatial organisation of the strategic centre retained a bureaucratic structure recognisable in terms of the bureaucratic 'ideal type'. The differences between this situation and the intentions originally expressed by the organisation designers are similar to the effects of network governance observed by Newman (2005) which she claims has been to 'bend' rather than 'break' bureaucracy. This sociospatial structure was marked out by 'invisible lines' marking out status boundaries, which as Muetzelfeldt (2006) suggests, are ambiguous and yet powerful, because they perform their 'cultural work of reincorporating us into the power structures that we work in, even (or perhaps especially) when we are not conscious of the constraint we are subject to, and we are in other ways interacting with our superior as if we were equals' (p.124). Echoing Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) concept of inequality of space, Muetzelfeldt (2006) points out that '[t]hese boundaries are not equally permeable in both directions, and generally they constrain superiors less than subordinates' (p.124). In Enterprise House, these boundaries appeared to enable and constrain patterns of looking as

well as patterns of movement. Status differences also appeared to be produced through other spatial practices in the building, such as the retention of 'deep' space for senior managers and private space for Councillors. And within this sociospatial structure, different types of work activity were supported to different extents. Networking proceeded smoothly for high-status employees but was often problematic for lower status staff who encountered invisible lines that were not permeable to them. There were both benefits and disadvantages for teamworkers as a result of their proximity to managers. Many of the requirements of specialists work were not met by the building. Managers expressed the greatest degree of ambivalence, apparently in relation to the multiple roles and perspectives they adopted in the course of their work.

In the next chapter, we walk a few yards across the road to Troy House, the building accommodating FirstService.

Chapter 7

The Dark Side: exchangeable space, flexibility and non-inclusive roles

1 Introduction to the chapter

In this final empirical chapter, I focus on Troy House. This building accommodated FirstService, the newly created Public-Private Partnership (PPP) whose function was to provide 'back office' services to SCC and a local District Council. As in the analysis of Enterprise House, I consider both officially expressed intentions for the building and what appeared to be its actual consequences in terms of the negotiated order, the employment relationship and employee identities. In this case, the organisation designers did not include senior managers as was the case for Enterprise House, but the Workspace Improvement Team (WIT), the unit created to implement the new Property Strategy issued in 2004 and which managed the purchase, refurbishment and occupation of Troy House.

As I indicated in the previous chapter, in Enterprise House, the ratio of staff: desks was relatively low at approximately 13.7 staff: 10 desks. Consequently, hot-desking was rare and earlier intentions to promote it as a normal way of working in the building appeared to have been abandoned. This situation was acknowledged in official Council documents and was attributed to a combination of the IT system and the limitations of the existing culture (which the building had initially been presented as seeking to change). Therefore, although the space in Enterprise House allowed any employee to work from any position, in practice it was not used exchangeably in this way, and this enabled 'invisible hierarchies' to become institutionalised in the building. The situation was different in Troy House. In this building, there were just over 15 staff for every 10 desks and this higher ratio, together with the fact that the work of FirstService staff tended to be much more desk-based, meant that it was necessary for many staff to hot-desk. As well as using the space intensively, the exchangeable property of the space in Troy House was also deployed to enable the spatial configuration of employees to be changed at short notice. In this chapter, I focus on the

officially stated intentions for these flexible ways of using the space, and the consequences of doing so. I use Kallinikos's (2004) conceptualisation of modern organisation as configurations of roles in this analysis (discussed in chapter 2). It is useful to regard FirstService as composed of non-inclusive roles as Kallinikos (2004) suggests, because the spatial intensification and reconfiguration of employees that was practised in Troy House appears to give a clear illustration of the spatial dimension of the modern employment relationship which Kallinikos (2004) analyses, in which roles can be 'reshuffled to address the emerging technical, social and economic demands the organization is facing' (p.23). This type of flexible, rapid spatial reconfiguration is something that would not be possible in conventional, non-exchangeable office space.

Before turning to the analysis of sociospatial relations in FirstService, I first highlight the distinctive features of its organisation as a Public-Private Partnership. This understanding is necessary because the organisation of tasks through the use of business processes in FirstService appeared to articulate with the use of space in Troy House. Following this, I describe Troy House, drawing on my own experiences and accounts of FirstService employees. I then discuss the official intentions for Troy House expressed by members of the Workspace Improvement Team (WIT), which indicate the value that was placed on spatial flexibility in this building. I then analyse the emergent sociospatial relationships in Troy House, focusing on four aspects: the socio-spatial relationships between the senior managers in the Corporate Management Team, and other employees; the relationship between the business processes used to configure services and the use of the office space; the responses of employees to the intensification of space use and hot-desking; and the role of visibility in the context of a redundancy exercise.

2 The FirstService model: flexibility and business processes

As a public limited company, FirstService functioned in a different way to the local authority from which most of its staff were seconded. In line with the PPP model advocated by Government, FirstService had to trade profitably with the other partners, so that Telecom could recover the significant investment it had made in the partnership and thereafter make a profit. The approach adopted to achieve this cost recovery was to replace the specialised HR, IT and Finance services which had previously been provided within specific directorates with generic services. Such generic services would not be reliant on the specialist knowledge

of particular individuals and could also be provided cost-efficiently to further local authorities or other agencies. The importance of generic services was stressed in FirstService's official values, which included the statement '*We have a model for service delivery which can be used anywhere*'. This approach to organisation is characteristic of a wider approach to public service modernisation, in which, as Marchington et al (2005) observe, BPR is used to streamline activities and maximise 'Economic Value Added'. The structural model used is 'business process outsourcing' (p.5), the transfer of in-house staff to a contractor which re-engineers the work. In this case, staff were seconded to FirstService rather than transferring directly to the new employer. A brief 'case study' of the partnership produced by Telecom (Collier 2008) suggests that this enabled the staff to '[retain] their employment continuity with the authority in order to provide comfort and security'. The use of BPR to create non-specialist services can be seen either as a shift to lateral organising in line with network governance, or as a shift towards more centralised control. McNulty and Ferlie (2004) argue that BPR enhances lateral organisation by cutting across the functional boundaries which encourage people to pursue sectional goals, thus losing sight of the overall objective of value creation for customers. It can also be seen, however, as an example of 'systems rationalism' (Barley and Kunda 1992:377), a rational approach to organisation in which sets of processes are devised and then interconnected to form systems to meet managerial objectives. As Barley and Kunda (1992) point out, systems rationalism is reliant on the use of direct control, which in turn entails the assumption that employees are 'calculative actors who would either understand the economic advantages of an efficient system, or be powerless to resist a well-designed structure' (p.384).

The outcome of the BPR exercise in FirstService was a process-based model of organising which was new to the majority of employees. In this model, the prescribed processes were issued to the relevant staff member by line managers via the computer system. The employee would be informed of the time budget allocated for the task and the deadline by which the completed work had to be passed on to the person responsible for the next step in the process. The workload of individual staff was, accordingly, composed of particular processes attached to various projects. Projects and processes were allocated by line managers on the basis of the spare capacity of staff, as indicated on the computer system. At the same time as seeming to deploy firm direct control mechanisms through the new business processes, FirstService also appeared to seek to secure deep commitment from its staff. FirstService can therefore be understood as a 'hybrid' organisation in which centralised control over processes was sought in combination with the establishment of a

‘strong’ culture, promoted as flexible and empowering (Courpasson and Clegg 2006, Hodgson 2004).

Having introduced these elements of the way in which the new organisation functioned, we shall now take a look round Troy House, taking into consideration some of the typifications of it used by FirstService employees.

3 A walk round Troy House

Troy House was originally built in 1867 as an electricity generating station. Its original structure was a rectangular cuboid with no internal divisions, enabling the building to accommodate heavy industrial machinery such as turbines and coal-fired boilers. This simple, open structure was retained in the building’s new use as FirstService’s office. Most of the internal area was taken up by very deep floorplates arranged on three floors, with HR and the senior management team occupying the top floor, Finance occupying the middle floor and IT and Learning and Development based on the ground floor. There was a small café selling drinks, snacks and light lunches on the ground floor near the front entrance. Lifts, stairs, and toilets were located behind a partition spanning the rear of the building. A row of larger meeting rooms was situated along one side of the building on the second floor, thus gaining natural light from the windows, but cutting it off from the adjacent floorplate. Using the same basic arrangement as the office areas in Enterprise House, each floorplate was taken up with rows of benches of eight desks, with approximately 30 benches on each floor, giving a maximum capacity of approximately 240 staff per floor. Each desk was equipped with a PC and phone. On my first visit to the building in 2005, I was shocked and disheartened by the sight of so many people organised densely, row upon row, over the vast floorplate, in an office with no colour or artwork, and no obvious place for relaxation. Their situation seemed to exemplify Baldry’s (1999) suggestion that neat lines typify ‘the low status of the controlled and powerless’ (p.538).

During a series of fieldwork visits to Troy House between 2005 and Spring 2007, the building appeared to be at close to maximum occupancy, with very few vacant desks visible. The majority of staff were working on their PCs, or using their phone, some wearing headsets. The office areas were rather noisy, and walking through them, I was assailed by various smells, such as the sandwiches people were eating at their desks, coffee, or aftershave.

When entering the floorplate, I found that my eye would sweep across the area in search of a face I might recognise. I noticed, however, that although the occupants of the office (particularly those near the entrance) were probably aware that someone had entered, their eyes would usually remain locked to their screens, apart perhaps from the briefest flick upwards before returning to their computer. I was later to understand this manner not as 'civil inattention' as described by Goffman (1971), but 'complete inattention', a shield contrived to defend the individual from the totality of all the possible distractions (discussed later in this chapter).

There was one breakout area on each floor, created by leaving a gap between two benches. These were furnished with small circular tables and more casual looking seating. Each floor also contained a block of three glass-walled meeting rooms. On the ground and first floors, these were situated on the edge of the floorplate against the external wall, but on the third floor, the meeting rooms were situated within the floorplate, although off-centre, so that a partially enclosed area was created between these rooms and one of the external walls. Meeting rooms were normally cleared when people vacated them, although during several visits made in March and April 2007, a process diagram on flip-chart paper remained tacked up inside one meeting room. The word 'DISCIPLINE' was written in enormous capitals above the flowchart.

The original half-moon shaped windows running along both long sides of the building were retained on the top floor, but on the other floors there were windows on one side of the building only, so that there was little natural light in those office areas and most employees were reliant on artificial overhead lighting. All the walls and columns were painted white – there was no colour coding of blocks as there was in Enterprise House. Also in contrast to Enterprise House, there was very little artwork on the walls. During the period of intensive fieldwork in 2007, every available vertical surface (walls, columns, doors, filing cabinets) was adorned with multiple copies of three posters, advertising the 'Priorities for Change' and 'New People Survey' (Appendix 4). These posters included bizarre imagery, such as the silhouetted image of a man in a business suit, jumping for joy. This phenomenon was described by one respondent as '*a bombardment of propaganda*'.

With its rows of identical benches giving visual access to about 240 people on each floor, Troy House appeared to provide a remarkably clear example of the geometric and optical characteristics of abstract space (Lefebvre 1991) which 'tends towards homogeneity,

towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities' (p.52). The lack of colour or any form of adornment not having a clear work function points to a modernist aesthetic in which function, monotony and standardisation are in themselves intentional aesthetic values, rather than a pill to be sugared by superimposed decoration (Guillèn 1997). In such architecture, Etlin (1991) says that 'there is nothing there that is useless or superfluous, because like a machine, this will end up hindering its functioning' (p.265).

As discussed in chapter 2, several concepts can be used to consider the meanings attributed to space by inhabitants, including 'lived spaces' (Lefebvre 1991:33), 'constructed meanings' (Yanow 1997; 2003) and 'typifications' (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Many of the respondents in FirstService commented favourably on the outside of the building, describing it as '*a very attractive building*' or '*like one of those huge hangars they used to store Zeppelins in*'. But most respondents expressed negative views about the inside of Troy House, as Christine (HR consultant) suggested:

... on my tongue-in-cheek more cynical days I do think it's a bit of a Victorian workhouse. Because it is a Victorian building I believe, and you look at it and you think hmm, yeah, you can see people being worked pretty hard in there!

The '*workhouse*' metaphor used here by Christine was also used by many others, and there were similar metaphors in circulation, such as '*the battery farm*', and the '*Mental Health Hospital*'. Common to these metaphors is the implication that the work regime in Troy House was seen as an austere and controlling one, in which the occupants were powerless. For instance, Christine in the quote above spoke about '*people being worked*' rather than '*people working*' (voluntarily). According to Schein (1985) such metaphors can be seen as 'artifacts' which both produce and express organisational culture. These particular metaphors imply that Troy House was in some ways regarded as a 'total institution', which Goffman (1961) defines as 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life' (p.11). Clearly, metaphors such as '*battery farm*' were used jokingly, and part of what makes them funny is exaggeration. FirstService employees were not physically imprisoned in Troy House and they did not sleep there. However, as Schon (1979) argues, metaphors 'take' when they are meaningful in the context of the lived problematic situations because they 'select for attention a few salient features and relations from what would otherwise be an overwhelmingly complex reality' (p.264). Thus, metaphors such as '*workhouse*' imply that

what was salient and problematic for many FirstService employees was a shared impression that they work under an austere and controlling regime. This impression appeared to have been reinforced through comparison of the building with neighbouring Enterprise House, as Christine mentioned:

It took a really long time to get any pictures in here, yet there are lots of displays in Enterprise House. And we felt very much like the poor relations ... very white and stark and clean and neat and minimalist.

As Dixon and Durrheim (2000) point out, collective identities are fashioned through 'symbolic contrasts between 'our space' and 'their space' expressed in terms of oppositions such as marginal/central, primitive/ civilised' (p.34). Christine's suggestion that FirstService staff saw themselves as '*poor relations*' implies a sense that the building was shaping a new, lower status identity for them.

4 Official intentions expressed for Troy House: flexibility, flexibility, flexibility

4.1 Reconfiguring the organisation

In 2007 I interviewed two members of the Workspace Improvement Team (WIT) staff and had a series of meetings with Caroline, the manager. (In phase 2, Caroline was one of the two organisational gatekeepers for the project, to whom I reported back periodically, to keep the organisation abreast of the themes that were emerging from the fieldwork). During this period, the WIT staff continued to express intentions that new open plan offices, including those in Troy House, would encourage networked communication and the erosion of organisational 'silos'. However, there was also a notable new emphasis on the efficiency of use of buildings (this was continuously monitored using measures such as the percentage of PCs in use), the need for cost reduction, and the ease with which spatial rearrangements could be made to facilitate organisational restructuring. These latter features were stressed particularly strongly in relation to Troy House. For example, as Caroline suggested:

The building is never fixed - you can always make it work more efficiently. We can significantly reduce property costs because we can crunch more people in, and by stacking efficiently. We can organise project teams ... or we could say it should be entirely flexible and have admin staff in one place and then everyone else hot-desks,

*so no zones for specialist functions at all. It's completely fluid, it just wouldn't have been possible in traditional space. But we are breaking people's ownership of their space, which some people are not comfortable with - it's **a** space, not **your** space.*

In Caroline's account above, efficiency and flexibility could be facilitated by two forms of re-spatialisation, neither of which would have been possible in the former office space. First, the occupancy of the building could be intensified, by increasing the ratio of staff: desks; as Caroline put it, *'you can crunch more people in'*. In this type of exchangeable space, as Duffy (1997) says, space planning 'is far less at the mercy of changes in head count' (p.80) and space use intensification can be planned on a statistical basis (Felstead et al 2003, Warren 2003). Second, people could be moved around, individually or in groups, to create new combinations that meet changing needs (*'re-stacked'*). The office space therefore seemed to be regarded primarily as a grid upon which roles could be configured and reconfigured. This was possible because the desks in Troy House were both standardised and exchangeable, not tied to any particular individual: as Caroline pointed out, *'it's **a** space, not **your** space'*. This change in the nature of employees' ownership of their workspace was referred to frequently by WIT staff as *'the move away from one person one desk'*. Consequently, employees could be spatially reconfigured at short notice, thus enabling the rapid reconfiguration of roles described by Kallinikos (2004) in which roles are 'reshuffled to address the emerging technical, social and economic demands the organization is facing' (p.23). The new space therefore facilitated the re-patterning of the roles which Kallinikos (2004) argues are the fundamental constitution of modern organisations, in ways which, as Caroline recognised, *'just wouldn't have been possible in traditional space'*.

Caroline's account seems to express a degree of excitement about the new possibilities for organisational action that the new type of space had created. As Kallinikos (2004) points out, organisational artefacts (he refers specifically to software packages) are 'far from innocent means for supporting organizational operations'; rather, they:

.. embody human experience, inviting particular modes of understanding and action that involve both the *framing of the reality* to be addressed, the *determination of particular tasks* and *their sequential patterning*. (p.19; italics original).

As Kallinikos (2004) argues, in this case, the new possibilities opened up by the space appear to have prompted a way of thinking about employees more explicitly as roles which could easily be re-spatialised. This is perhaps indicated in the language of 'crunching' and

‘stacking’ which Caroline used (and which is common parlance in facilities management). Crunching and stacking are actions that would be normally performed with inanimate objects, but here it appeared to be regarded as logical and natural for them to be performed with human beings. The account illustrates the integration of the material and symbolic dimensions of space (in Lefebvre’s (1991) terms, spatial practices and imagined space): the flexible space allowed people to be moved; and simultaneously, the constant possibility of reconfiguration offered by the space framed a view of employees as roles to be reshuffled.

4.2 Anticipated effect of exchangeable space on the employment relationship

It was recognised by the organisation designers that the shift away from ‘one person, one desk’ represented a change to the employment relationship with staff. In the former offices, each employee had been provided with their own desk for the duration of their employment in a particular role. Some staff had worked in this way over a long period; as Simon stated, somewhat scathingly, *‘some of these people have had offices for thirty years’*. Having ‘ownership’ of a desk was, therefore, a taken-for-granted way of working. The shift to hot-desking that was now required if the flexibility of Troy House was to be exploited was, as Taskin and Edwards (2007) recognise, not just a technologically different way of working, but a redefinition of managerial control and of the employment relationship. Such changes were expressed in different ways by the organisation designers. Simon, who as an independent Project Consultant was himself an experienced ‘mobile worker’, sought to emphasise the benefits and freedoms of this mode of work:

.. the mobile worker is someone who can work from various different locations including home .. he’s out and about, he’s moving around, so technically the infrastructure here is capable of supporting that, virtually anybody can log on to any of the PCs in the building, work at any desk in the building and have attachment to certain functionality. At any time, you just come in and plug and play, that’s the ethos of it.

Simon’s description of the mobile worker expresses that ‘he’ is active, mobile, technically capable and ready to exploit the material and technical features of the new building to the full. There is also a hint of masculinity in Simon’s description of the mobile worker, linked with his use of the male pronoun and the implied relish of the hypothetical mobile worker’s relationship with technology (e.g., *‘plug and play’*). His account reflects the ‘virtual

professional' described by Go and van Fenema (2006:72), a high status worker who is constantly on the move and communicates with colleagues and customers electronically. However, accounts from the WIT staff in relation to how individual employees might experience the loss of their desks contrasted with Simon's account (perhaps because the WIT staff worked much more closely with employees who were affected by the change). Feedback from various staff consultations that were ongoing at the time suggested that many staff did not regard hot-desking as an enhancement of their freedom. Therefore, the move to hot-desking had to be justified to them. For instance, Cheryl suggested that:

.. people's work environment is the last bastion that they can control. Everything else – StF, the joint venture, Gershon – people in their hearts know they can't control. Then we come along and say 'by the way, we're going to take your desk away'. We've had to take a tough line ... every other service other than Property has had to make big cuts, the Council as a whole, we've got to shrink £20m off our base budget year on year, it means things like shrinking people's home care packages. It's incredibly hard to tell people this – the press, the public, so if there's a choice between cutting the homecare worker and having the worker sharing a desk ... well, what do you do?

In contrast to Simon's, Cheryl's account frames hot-desking as taking away something that the staff had control over, in a context where they already had little control. As Baldry (1999) recognises, a perceived inability to control disliked aspects of the environment results in those conditions becoming translated by workers into part of the 'price' of doing the job, the effort-bargain. Accordingly, Cheryl's account justifies the change by pointing to the financial pressure to which local authorities and in particular, back office services were exposed at the time. The Council as a whole was required reduce its overall spending, to avoid accumulating an increasing shortfall in its budget. However, cuts to front line services were difficult to justify to the public. In this context, cutting the property budget appeared preferable, because it could be argued that this would have no detrimental effect on services. Cuts in property spending were also less visible to the public, particularly, as in the case of Troy House, where the property concerned accommodated the 'back office'. The imposition of hot-desking could then appear preferable to the alternative of front-line staff redundancies, as Cheryl suggested. A similar choice between hot-desking and possible redundancy was used to justify the trial of a hot-desking system in a finance industry organisation (Millward et al 2007). Jermier (1998) suggests that this type of threat of 'capital flight' is a form of coercive control.

Caroline, the WIT Manager, used a different argument to counter possible objections to hot-desking. Rather than describing it as the 'least worst' option, as Cheryl did, Caroline sought to stress the exchange of requirements and benefits involved in the new arrangement:

The Workspace Improvement Team offers a deal. We'll give you a more flexible, dynamic job and a nice work environment; you will give us a flexible approach to working and you'll have to give up ownership of a desk. Some staff don't want to buy into that ... so at what point do you push staff and say, 'this is what's going to happen'?

In Caroline's argument, hot-desking was part of a bigger package of efforts and rewards in which greater flexibility over the place of work was both a benefit (along with a better work environment) and an expectation. Thus, giving up ownership of a desk was presented as a route to a better exchange overall.

All three accounts can be seen as managerial attempts to 'manipulate worker implicit contracts' Watson (2003:191), i.e., to persuade employees that the bundle of rewards that is on offer is a fair return for the efforts that they are being asked to put in. Caroline's account is expressed as a straightforward trade between a better (more flexible, dynamic job) and a better work environment in exchange for the loss of ownership of a desk. Simon's account speaks of a clear improvement in which greater physical freedom and movement, excitement in relation to the use of the new technology, and a positive identity are offered. The new identity relates to the dynamic body/ technology rather than the static, outdated desk, and is active, mobile, dynamic and masculine. Cheryl's account suggests that hot-desking implies an increased price because of the loss of control, but one which is preferable to front line staff job losses. This frames hot-desking in a positive way because it can be seen as a personal sacrifice made to protect services to the public – it is a demonstration of the employee's commitment to service users, because the benefit is not to the employee, but to others who have greater needs. As Caroline stated, the move to hot-desking was not actually negotiable. However, in a context in which employees already faced uncertainty, appearing to impose hot-desking rather than negotiate over it may have risked provoking overt conflict.

So far, we have seen that the officially stated intentions for the use of Troy House appeared to contrast with those expressed for Enterprise House. In this building, the exchangeable

property of the space was to the fore, and the possibilities for intensification (crunching) of the offices and reconfiguration of staff (restacking) were constantly being considered. As Kallinikos (2004) suggests for the case of software packages, the exchangeability of the space appeared to invite a particular mode of understanding that framed the tasks to be addressed, and in addition to this, also appeared to frame a corresponding understanding of the staff who would undertake them. Having considered these officially stated intentions, I shall now turn to the emergent social order in Troy House, beginning with the sociospatial relations between the top managers in FirstService and other employees.

5 The dark corner in the Dark Side: The Corporate Management Team space

In the description of Troy House given earlier, I referred to the various metaphors circulating among the staff (e.g., ‘workhouse’) which jokingly implied that FirstService was managed in an austere, authoritarian fashion. In Troy House, many respondents suggested explicitly that the top managers conducted their relationships with the staff in a way that they found authoritarian. This unequal relationship appeared to be reflected in, and produced by, the spatial arrangements in Troy House. The hierarchical relationship appeared to have been established at the very outset, as Alex (Business Analyst) recollected:

The first day, I remember when Telecom came, it was like ... it was like the lorry that arrives in a drought-stricken village with rice on the back. You know, there was this ‘we’ve got the power, we’ve got the money, we tell you what to do and you be grateful for it, and you do anything we ask you to do’.

The dramatic analogy used by Alex suggests a profound imbalance between the power of those in charge of the rice and the desperation of the starving villagers queuing to receive it. The manner in which the CMT of FirstService initiated their relationships with the newly seconded staff appeared to come as a shock to many staff (who had previously been included in the elite ‘strategic hub’ at Enterprise House). The initial approach used by the CMT may, however, be seen as an attempt to communicate the new, private sector organisational arrangements unambiguously to staff. CMT members may have recognised that private sector objectives and approaches would have been unfamiliar to many former SCC, and may in addition have accepted the popular portrayal of public sector employees as ‘behind’ and resistant to change. It may therefore have been felt necessary to ‘get off on

the right foot' (Goffman 1959:23), i.e., to exert control very strongly at the outset of the relationship so that it could be eased up later.

The apparently hierarchical relationship between the CMT and other FirstService employees was reflected in the spatial arrangement of staff in Troy House. Although the CMT members were not located in a dedicated separate office area (as were the Councillors in Enterprise House), they had occupied a space on the top floor which appeared to have been subtly, but deliberately, enclosed. The benches occupied by the CMT were bounded along one side by the external wall (with windows, a scarce resource in the huge floorplates of Troy House) and opposite this by a row of glass-fronted meeting rooms. These rooms were positioned down the centre of the floorplate and their doors opened on the other side to the CMT area, so that the latter could not be accessed via the meeting rooms. The ends of this area were flanked by a row of secretarial staff across one end and storage cabinets across the opposite end, so that a relatively inaccessible 'room' was created. This contrasted greatly with the complete openness of the massive floorplates elsewhere in this building. An employee in the Finance Division, Chloe, suggested that our interview took place in one of the meeting rooms adjacent to the CMT area, so that we could observe it surreptitiously. She remarked:

Don't know if I dare say ... oh, I'll say it. When we moved up here, it's an open plan office, so in theory you can sit anywhere you want. But if you notice, you've got lockers that side, these meeting rooms here, so the doors don't open that way, and a bank of secretaries down there. It's not exactly accessible is it?

Chloe's hesitancy over pointing out the relatively inaccessible CMT area suggests that the staff were not supposed to notice or comment on this arrangement, in a context where these very managers were instructing others to relinquish their desks. There were many similar hushed criticisms of CMT members, who appeared to be regarded by most staff as remaining physically distant and aloof, not 'walking the organisation' as one respondent put it. Rather, many people observed that CMT conducted arm's length relationships with the staff, using various artefacts as intermediaries, such as computer, leaflets (such as the 'values' leaflet which arrived unexpectedly on all desks), or posters (which had been described as a 'bombardment of propaganda'). Ross, a Business Analyst, commented on the top floor location of the CMT area:

It's a classic 1950s ... it's just astonishing that for some reason you've got the chief executives at FirstService all sitting on the top floor physically, and it's no different to

the 1950s ... and you've got all the guys that do the taking the PCs apart in the basement. Well actually it's not the basement, but no windows, which is a classic place for techy people to be. You know, why didn't it happen the other way round? If they're so full of this 'let's break out of the mould'?

Exactly like the Councillors in Enterprise House, the CMT area thus appeared to be regarded by other employees as a 'power spot' (Gieryn 2000:475). The FirstService managers chose the top floor, which as Ross observed, is a traditional arrangement - as Hofbauer (2000) also observes, 'Heads' of department are often located on upper floors, whereas manual labourers are in the basement' (p.166). Various explanations have been suggested for the tendency for senior managers to occupy top floors: in warfare, the 'command of heights' is a useful position (Gieryn 2000:475); it borrows a culturally-specific interpretation of 'the top' as representing God's residence in heaven (Yanow (2003:27) or draws on an anatomical metaphor with conception (brain) on top, and execution below (Hofbauer 2000). In addition to these metaphorical parallels, it is also the case that the top floor is an inaccessible, 'deep' place in a work building: a building is a vertical cul-de-sac in which the top floor is at the end and therefore has less passing traffic. In line with this notion of inaccessibility, Ross suggested that the CMT area functioned as:

.. the dark corner where they all meet and have the real discussions ... and just tokenise the actual flattening [of the hierarchy].

As Gupta and Ferguson (1992) point out, the spatial distribution of power relations is central to the identity attributed to a place. In Troy House, the maintenance of this semi-private space for the topmost group was also spoken of as having consequences in terms of how the organisational hierarchy functioned, in particular in the way that business processes were used in combination with the space, and the way in which a redundancy exercise was handled.

6 Business processes, roles and the use of space

In this part of the analysis, I consider the way in which the new, business process-based model for organising the work of FirstService articulated with the spatial design of Troy House. Both the systematic use of business processes and the use of exchangeable, open plan space were unfamiliar to FirstService employees. These phenomena contrasted starkly

with their previous mode of working and office environments and there was therefore a situation in which taken-for-granted aspects of reality had been disrupted. It is therefore not surprising that many respondents drew comparisons between the new organisational model and spatial arrangements with their previous experiences as employees working within directorates in SCC. Below, I will first analyse respondents' accounts of the new business process model and then turn to the ways in which of the space of Troy House articulated with it. Luke (Business Analyst) commented on the significance of processes in the new way of organising work:

I think you need to be someone who can be, for the working day, very process driven. If that's in your nature you're going to be OK. But if it's not in your nature you need to be able to play at doing that. You have to be able to account for every minute of what you do. What you're doing is justifying your existence you know, why did you spend an hour doing that?

The systematic and precise accounting of employees' time appears to be an example of the 'speed' logic, which Ramo and Skalen (2006) suggest is 'the imperative in virtually every NPM idea' (p.516). It can also be understood in terms of Kallinikos's (2004) suggestion that modern organisations contract with roles, not persons in the non-inclusive employment relationship: in Troy House, employees had to demonstrate that they were undertaking this role from one minute to the next, rather than doing something irrelevant to the role. This is a notable switch from the approach commonly associated with 'traditional' bureaucracy, in which employees were expected to be present at their workplace at specific times (and which James complained about in relation to the old campus). In Troy House, the physical location of employees was deemed irrelevant, but they were required to account meticulously for their use of time.

All aspects of the work in FirstService were defined by business processes. One employee spoke with apparent nostalgia of the greater freedom she had had as a former County employee:

I think to behave as you want to behave is difficult. There is very much ... you are scripted to behave in a certain way. I would love to be able to be spontaneous and to think, 'ah, I know how we can do this. Let's just go and do it now'.

Many respondents suggested that the centrally defined processes did not always work, so that it was necessary to depart from the prescribed process in order to accomplish some

tasks. However, doing this appeared to be rather risky, because adherence to the processes appeared to be strongly controlled: *'if you step outside [the process], they'll have you'*. One person who expressed a strong 'anti-process' view indicated that at times, he found to his surprise that he was following the process to the letter and arguing that others should do likewise. The extensive use of processes therefore appeared to have had a similar effect to the culture management programme described by Kunda (2000), in that while employees might align themselves with or against the initiative, the official culture achieved a form of dominance because it was the central issue through which people defined themselves.

Several respondents indicated that processes could be changed rapidly, as Trevor (Business Analyst) suggested:

You need to be able to ... very fast, understand areas of work that you've not been exposed to before. And processes change every day almost. So one day you could be writing a document with these headings, and the next day you could be writing a document with completely different headings and being asked to do it in a completely different way, and in a completely different timeframe, because they're trying to evolve the processes. And that change you have to accept as a worker.

Trevor's account highlights one way in which the use of processes can lead to 'short term' flexibility (Watson 2003:111). Trevor's role, or 'abstract set of functional requirements' (Kallinikos 2004:24) required him to complete various processes which could be changed at short notice. His role could thus be instantly modified (part of the reversible characteristic of the role) and so lead to rapid organisational change, not requiring lengthy retraining or consultation with the staff member. Trevor seemed resigned to this aspect when he observed that the change was something which *'you have to accept as a worker'*.

Many respondents suggested that the office space in Troy House aligned with and supported the process model. These accounts commented on both the material arrangement of desks and computers through which the processes were assigned to employees and the meanings attributed to the sociospatial arrangements by respondents. As Alex (Business Analyst) explained:

FirstService is based on money; it's not based on anything else ... unlike SCC, which is based on need and budget, FirstService is based around how much profit we can make, and that actually influences a building design I think.

[Do you think so? Can you kind of track through your argument there?]

First of all it treats you as a resource ... or certainly where I am, I'm a money making machine. So ... and when you have that culture embedded all the time and you get reminded of that, you behave in a different way. And then you see around you a world that is designed around making the optimum use of you as a unit of money making. I think the layout of the building is optimised for productivity, which may be not around the best way for people to think. Because what's behind all that is a very strict process you know, you are told you have three hours of time within 20 days to write this document and then we put this document to somebody else. So it's very regimented. It doesn't take account of human behaviour, human wants, individual needs you know, 'this is how we want you to behave and we will remind you of that'... constantly. By the design of the building, and by you saying how much time you're spending on things, and that is centralised on a computer system. You tend to tell the machine what you're doing and not somebody. And somebody looks at the machine to find out what you're doing rather than come to you. So the actual human interaction is going as well. You start ... it does actually influence your behaviour I think, and you start to email people that are behind you or you don't go and see them. And it's a vicious circle because you start to lose I think, for me anyway, I start to lose a lot of the personal skills that are involved (laughs). So it's open plan, but it's not ... it doesn't force human interaction; everything is structured around the PC. The computer defines the layout. People don't define the layout. And therefore the computer is king. Although it's unspoken, it is the king.

Alex's account links the aim to make a profit, the means used ('very strict process') and the building design. According to Alex, 'the computer is king' because it is the predominant medium of communication. What Alex described as the 'regimented' layout of Troy House therefore simultaneously symbolised and facilitated the enactment of the managerial process, in which processes were stipulated centrally and issued to staff. In this model, particular location was unimportant, including proximity to particular colleagues, because processes were used in a way that appeared to assume that they could be carried out independently of any particular space or proximity to other colleagues. The exchangeable space thus facilitated the mobility of roles, in the sense that according to the official logic, they could be carried out anywhere, in any context.

It also suggested that the environment framed him as '*a resource*', '*a money-making machine*' and '*a unit of money making*', not a person with '*human wants, individual needs*', which the office did not accommodate. This suggests that the combination of the building and the processes provided Alex with a constant reminder of the *selectivity* of his role (Kallinikos 2004), based on his capacity as a '*unit of money making*', while ruling out other aspects of his identity in its '*full-blown cognitive, emotional and social complexity*' (p.21). Individual roles were then constituted as the enactment of specified business processes. In shaping him as a role, this framing of reality appeared to be partially '*successful*' since it seemed able to influence how Alex behaved. This included, he suggested, a decline in his interpersonal skills, since these were not required now that the role could be performed anywhere, not reliant on the proximity of particular colleagues.

Alex's account points to the new, computer-based spatial practices required in Troy House. It also touches on the meaning or lived space which he attributes to the design of the building, in particular the social identity he interprets from this design: '*you see around you a world that is designed around making the optimum use of you as a unit of money making*'. A similar point was made by Chloe (Finance Officer) who commented on the view from her desk:

.. it's just the same rows of desks with cabinets along the ends .. I wouldn't say it was negative, it's just that you leave your personality and character at the door. .. When you come through the door, it's that identity bit that goes. So if you haven't got your identity, it doesn't really mean as much.

In both of these excerpts, what Alex refers to as the regimented layout of the offices appears to point to the selectivity of employees' job roles. In Chloe's case, it is as if the role is '*cut*' from the person as she enters the building, so that just the role comes in and begins work. Chloe appears to display what Kallinikos (2004) terms '*the intrinsically modern capacity of contemporary humans to systematically and consistently suspend all other personal or organizational aspects that do not bear upon the role*' (p.21; italics original). Alex also referred to the capacity for selectivity when he suggested that people would have to '*play*' at being process-driven for the duration of the working day (p.x, earlier). Emily (HR Consultant) had expressed a liking for the colours and artwork in Enterprise House, but suggested that such features would not be appropriate in Troy House because they would contradict the predominant way of working there:

.. it would be wrong to try and incorporate those colours and that sort of playfulness

over here ... because it's very much like the form follows the function over here .. it would be totally out of kilter here, even if you got the colours the same.

Emily's point reflects the observations made by Guillèn (1997) that a modernist aesthetic conveys a message of function, standardisation and machine-like efficiency. She seems to suggest that this is a useful reminder of the type of work that has to be performed in Troy House.

Above, I have suggested that what Alex described as the '*regimented*' space of Troy House facilitated the use of business processes because it enabled the computers to convey processes efficiently and at the same time symbolised the efficiency and functionality sought in FirstService. However, the exchangeability of the space is the feature which enables 'short term' flexibility (Watson 2003). In FirstService there appeared to be a great stress on rapid change and flexibility. One person who claimed to enjoy change nonetheless complained that '*where they say flexibility it's the worst possible kind. They want something to happen within a week, but nobody's thought through how to make it happen within a week and it causes pressure and stress to individuals*'. An example of this rapid change was described by Emily and points to the way in which staff could be moved instantaneously to different parts of the building at the same time as their roles were changed:

Some people were working in Training and woke up one Monday morning to find they weren't trainers any more, they were actually Business Analysts, they had no experience of business analysis and were just moved. People were moved. [How curious; that's very odd]. Yes. And this is the area you will be sitting in, and this is the type of work ... you know, go on, be gone.

In this episode, new Business Analyst roles appear to have been replicated, and Training ones deleted - exploiting the mobile and reversible characteristics of roles. Indeed, it appeared that the modern principle of constructing the employment relationship using roles as building blocks had been taken to lengths which many respondents found surprising (as did the researcher) because these roles were regarded as requiring entirely different bodies of knowledge and experience. Kallinikos (2003) suggests, however, that this sort of change is made possible through 'standardization of work content that renders the execution of work independent of the skills and abilities of particular people' (p.598) – in this case, the standardisation of processes used to compose the roles of Trainers and Business Analysts. Troy House appears to have enhanced the capacity of FirstService to enact change in this

way, because with its exchangeable desk space, the people enacting these roles could be moved instantly; the space facilitated the 'reassembling of standardized action patterns' (Kallinikos 2004:21). In Emily's account, there is also an implication that because instantaneous change was made possible by the combination of business processes and exchangeable space, the managers then expected instantaneous compliance from those affected. The peremptory instruction to '*go on, be gone*' suggests that delay introduced by employees inclined to question the change would be unwelcome. Such delay, emanating from 'the languid process of personal or psychological reorientation' (Kallinikos 2004:27) could be presumed by managers executing the change to relate to the non-role part of the human being and thus be not relevant to the performance of work. This episode appears to be another instance in which the possibility of instantaneous change goes hand in hand with the construction of employees *as* roles. In other words, the space of Troy House facilitated the reconfiguration of roles and simultaneously made the framing of humans as roles more 'perfect'.

7 Cost-efficiency: 'crunching' Troy House

7.1 Settlers versus hot-deskers

As mentioned earlier, the intensive use of Troy House was, according to official statements, an important way in which the building was intended to contribute to the profitability of FirstService. Troy House was occupied at a ratio of about 15 staff: 10 desks. In the local terminology used by the WIT, the choice of this high ratio was referred to as '*sweating the building*'. As Caroline (the WIT manager) had pointed out, it was intended that staff should regard the office as providing '*a space, not **your** space*' and accordingly all staff were expected to work at any available desk. In Kallinikos's (2004) terms, the expressed intention was that roles should be fully mobile.

However, during the fieldwork visits to Troy House in 2007, I noticed an obvious difference from the officially espoused spatial practices of universal mobility. On all three floorplates it appeared that about half of the desks had been 'settled' by particular individuals. As one respondent observed, '*you can see that more and more people are actually saying 'this is my desk and this is where I work'*'. The settled desks might have, for instance, files or other paperwork stacked on them, posters affixed, or rows of books propped against the side. On

some desks, photographs, small models or other personal items were displayed, although the majority of the artefacts appeared to be directly connected with work. Official intentions for the 'minimalist office' (Bradley and Hood 2003) expressed through the clear desk policy in Troy House had not, therefore, been fully realised. The majority of the settled desks were situated around the edges of the floorplate, adjacent to windows, and in the corners. The most accessible desks in central positions and adjacent to the aisles, where there was constant traffic, tended not to be settled. Consequently, what might appear at first sight to be homogeneous, individualised, abstract space in the offices was actually a patchwork of two distinct types of space. Settled space was composed of small groups of desks which were routinely occupied by particular groups of employees. Their artefacts signalled to others that the desk 'belonged' to a particular occupant, even if it was currently vacant. The tendency for people in hot-desking environments to re-settle in particular spots is noted in the 'Flexibility Forum' website¹ where it is observed that '[t]here are always people who don't agree with [desk sharing] and will try to subvert the principles by resuming old habits and re-establishing the old office geographies'. However, 'people who colonise create a tighter ratio of desks: people for everyone else to work with', the website warns.

Some respondents indicated that they were able reliably to sit at the same desk each day, and that they preferred to do this. For instance, Emily, an HR consultant, stated:

I am quite an early bird, so I tend to get in before most people and I tend to try and use the same desk. Because I think humans are habitual creatures, so I think you should feel comfortable. I've got myself next to a window that I quite like and I'm opposite a colleague that I quite like. And people move around me and that's fine, that's quite nice actually in some ways.

By arriving early, Emily seemed to be able to secure a desk adjacent to a window and near to a colleague. This repeated spatial pattern was, according to her, simply a useful daily routine. Other employees who had 'settled' also spoke of the usefulness and convenience of settling. Particular objects, such as work files, would be close at hand, and particular colleagues nearby for work and social conversation. Settlers also indicated that their settling behaviour speeded up the work, because, for example, on arrival at work they could go directly to 'their' desk, rather than first having to search for an available place. In general, settling appeared to function as an habitualization, which enabled the settlers to focus on what they spoke of as more meaningful work; as Berger and Luckmann (1966) put it, 'the

¹ www.flexibility.co.uk accessed 29 September 2007

background of habitualized activity opens up a foreground for deliberation and innovation' (p.71). The widespread use of the settling habitualization may indicate that although, in the official spatial logic of Troy House, undertaking roles did not require any particular location, many role-holders construed the actual requirements of their role as needing a routine, including a particular place from which to enact it. Above, Emily comments on a material feature, a window, and proximity to a colleague, that she '*quite likes*'. As well as providing an economical and useful work routine, for Emily, settling can also be seen as an attempt to bring in more of her identity into work rather than leaving her '*personality and character at the door*', as Chloe suggested.

Some settlers were, like Emily, able to establish their routine by arriving early. Others were managers whose space was tacitly deferred to by colleagues who were aware of their higher status. It appeared that people with caring responsibilities (such as taking children to school) were less likely to be able to settle, because they were less likely to be in the office between 8.00-8.30am when desks in prime space could be secured. Although none of the settlers indicated directly that they were claiming ownership of a particular space, or attempting to deter other people from using it, (which would openly contravene the official policy) some hinted that obvious signs of occupancy would make the desk a less desirable place for others to hot-desk. For example, Julie suggested:

I sit on a group of desks with the other finance managers and they all come with a lot of stuff, files and things, we've all nested. And I think basically if you've got more clear space on top of your desk, your desk will be used.

According to Julie, she and the other heads had 'nested', exactly as Warren (2006) puts it, using the artefacts that accompanied their roles. As well as having a work purpose, the '*files and things*' also appeared to function as a subtle signal aimed at deterring others from using the desk. Personal items, such as photographs also appeared to be used in this way. Elsbach (2003), Warren (2006) and Tyler and Cohen (2010) show that such items function as expressions of identity which serve to create and maintain relationships. In the context of competition for space, as was the case in Troy House, they may simultaneously imply a claim to the territory, since it might feel intrusive for a hot-desker to use the desk in the presence of such intimate items. Brown (2009) terms this type of practice 'anticipatory defence' (p.46). In Troy House, the purpose of the defence appeared to be to protect the useful spatial routine that the possession of territory provided.

In Enterprise House, managerial status appeared to play a significant role in the sociospatial structure that emerged in the building, with managers tending to occupy the more privileged (private) desk locations. The situation appeared to be different in Troy House. Although some managers either occupied these positions or grouped themselves together (as was the case with Annabel and her colleagues) many managers had to compete for space alongside their non-managerial colleagues. Like other staff, they could find themselves sitting anywhere. Their proximity to 'ordinary' staff appeared to have the effect of demystifying them, as Ross suggested:

.. you could be sitting next to somebody who's incredibly senior, and it's reassuring to hear them put the phone down and go 'bloody hell! ...' it's reassuring to hear that that's happening at that level, very senior level, as much as it is for you. Because in the old way of working they had their own office, they shut the door, you always assumed that they knew what they were doing. And when you hear that they're making mistakes it gives them a vulnerability which you respect really, in some senses. I've sat next to somebody and laughed at the problems they're having, but it's not 'ha ha ha, look at you!', it's more 'thank goodness, they're actually human'. Although they may be three or four seniority above, they're actually struggling. How on earth they cope with that if they were from an office environment that used to give them their own room, I don't know.

In the previous office accommodation in which managers had private offices, restrictions on contact meant that 'the audience [could] be held in a state of mystification in regard to the performer' (Goffman 1959:74). In Troy House, as Ross's account implies, occupants could not help but eavesdrop on their neighbours, to discover, as Goffman also suggests, that 'often the real secret behind the mystery is that there really is no mystery' (p.76) – just an ordinary mortal struggling with their work, sometimes getting things wrong. While Goffman advises that 'the real problem is to prevent the audience from learning this too' (p.76) in this context, demystification appears to have enhanced the standing of the performer.

People who regularly hot-desked appeared to have a detailed knowledge of the sociospatial landscape of the office, including the ways in which settlers could set up anticipatory defences of their preferred desks. As mentioned above, such defences included the repeated bodily presence of the settler, and the presence of personal or work artefacts on the desktop. In addition to these 'methods', some settlers appeared to work in pairs, and would ask their partner to 'save' the desk for them in the event that it was approached by a

hot-desker. Some employees who regularly used laptops would apparently leave the computer cabling set up for use by a laptop, rather than the PC provided. This form of defence was spoken of by hot-deskers as being particularly irritating, because in order to use the desk, the prospective user would have to crawl under it on all fours to rearrange the cabling. Women in particular expressed feelings of annoyance and embarrassment at having to adopt a posture which could be seen as suggestive, in full view of large numbers of semi-strangers, both male and female, in the open, highly visual office. Leaving the desk configured in this way thus exercised considerable control over the space, because hot-deskers had to choose between not using the desk, or having first to perform this undignified and faintly shameful act in order to make it usable.

Since the official policy in Troy House outlawed ownership of desks, it followed that there was no clear distinction between 'occupied' and 'available' space, since it was always legitimate for other people to 'counter-claim' settled space. The continued presence of desks which were clearly 'settled' implies that by and large, settling went unchallenged and such counter-claims were unusual. However, they remained a constant possibility. Alex described an occasion in which he challenged a claim of ownership by sitting at a settled desk:

I tested it out, I sat where this guy always sat ... he'd got bits of computer everywhere, and he didn't come in, so I thought, 'I'm going to sit at his desk because it's a hot desk'. So of course, he turned up and ... he was alright, but he couldn't quite handle it. I wasn't going to move. I wasn't being horrible, but I thought, well it's a hot desk you know, I'm going to sit here. And he had to come and unhook everything and take it somewhere else.

Although Alex's claim seems to have been successful, this encounter appeared uncomfortable and strained. Apparently, Alex had to muster considerable determination to resist moving, as can be seen from the sequence of justifications he makes above for staying put. The episode underlines the ambiguous status of settled space in Troy House: although settlers claimed particular 'private' spaces, because their behaviour contravened official policy, their 'ownership' of particular desks could not become securely established through 'reciprocal typification' (Berger and Luckmann 1966:72). Consequently, there was likely to be an irresolvable tension between the settled and mobile populations, concerning the ongoing negotiation over 'owned' and available workspace. The settlers were obliged to continually defend their 'private' space against possible interlopers, because claims over

what is officially public space have to be actively maintained (Duncan 2005). In turn, hot-deskers had the choice either to occupy marginal areas, or experience the awkwardness and potential conflict of infringing space implicitly claimed by settlers.

Having considered the way in which the use of space was negotiated, I shall now analyse the consequences reported by hot-deskers. First, I consider the way in which regular mobility leads to the loss of useful habituations. I then focus on the loss of regular proximity to managers and colleagues.

7.2 New work arising from the loss of habituations: 'faffing about'

I suggested earlier that people settled because settling enabled them to maintain useful sociospatial habituations, which would not be possible if they were constantly mobile. Hot-deskers lacked such habituations, so that activities which would previously have been 'background' routines had to be returned to the foreground, where they demanded explicit attention. 'Reversed' habituations then created extra work, including activities such as searching for a desk to work at, and carrying, storing and retrieving work objects. For example, Emily, an HR consultant, spoke of the need for repeated storage and retrieval of work artefacts when hot-desking:

.. first thing in the morning at [previous office] I'd arrive at work and my desk might be in a bit of a state because you could just dump and leave at the end of the day. So I'd just be able to get on and go straight to work. Whereas here, I've got to get all of my stuff out of a locker. And that's another five minutes or so of my day faffing about, setting myself up. And we're always 'oh, has anybody got any sellotape?' 120 of us haven't got sellotape because it's all in a locker somewhere.

Emily's account described the consequences of the removal of a useful habituation as 'faffing about, setting myself up'. The expression 'faffing about' implies activity of a trivial and pointless nature. Many hot-deskers expressed irritation at having to undertake such additional work, because they regarded it as low level and a waste of time. But although it was generally disliked, 'faffing about' was unavoidable, because meaningful work could not proceed until this preparation was complete. The hot-deskers' predicament appears to exemplify Bruni's (2005) argument that although objects such as paperwork and sellotape are remarkably 'boring things' (p.375), they are nonetheless critical participants in social

processes with humans, and therefore cannot be simply circumvented.

The low status attributed to ‘faffing about’ contradicts the inference of high status that often accompanies ‘nomadic’ work (e.g. Go and van Fenema 2006) as well as Simon’s description of the active, masculine, dynamic mobile worker. For example, packing and unpacking work artefacts and wandering around in search of a desk signals that the employee has not been allocated space by their employer. These activities may also symbolise the reversibility of the employee’s role, who receives the use of a desk in return for their labour only on a temporary, provisional basis, while they are actually performing desk work. Similarly, when hot-desking, I was usually encumbered with several bags containing digital recorder, paperwork, notepad, personal items, lunch, coat, umbrella (and so on) and was painfully aware that this did not convey a sleek, businesslike appearance. In UK society, property ownership is highly valued, so that being without property in this context implies lower social status (Duncan 2005). This taken-for-granted social norm may also permeate organisational norms (Watson 2003) in such a way that lack of organisational ‘property’ (an office or a desk) implies that the employer places a low value on the employee, and has little commitment towards them. In Hirst (forthcoming) I explore the similarities between the ways in which hot-deskers negotiate office space with parallel negotiations of urban space undertaken by vagrants. ‘Faffing about’ may, then, signal that the commitment of the employer is only tentative and temporary, and hints at the employee’s ‘spoiled’ identity (Goffman 1963).

7.3 Separation from colleagues and proximity to strangers: ‘every day could be your first day at work’

As discussed earlier in chapter 2, several studies have noted what Taskin and Edwards (2007) term the ‘de-socialising’ effect of hot-desking. Similarly, in Troy House, it appeared that the constant mobility entailed by hot-desking led to a sense of isolation from colleagues, so that many respondents spoke of their former spatial arrangements in teams or groups with apparent nostalgia. The single exception to this general sense of loss was a woman who had formerly worked in an isolated office with a bullying manager, so that separation from him was a welcome escape. However, most hot-deskers accounted for this aspect of the new office as a worsening of their working conditions. Their former conventional offices appeared to be regarded as spaces which had ‘social centrality’ (Hetherington 1996), in that

they provided a focus for the articulation of identity and a sense of belonging. Many hot-deskers suggested that their lack of regular proximity to colleagues undermined their relationships with them, with comments such as *'we're no longer a team, but a loose-knit group of individuals'*; and *'we very seldom interact. If we do, it's by email, globally from our manager'*. Another respondent remarked, *'My manager is quite invisible'*. The de-spatialisation of relationships was strongly felt in particular circumstances, as Julie (Business Analyst) suggested:

.. in [former office], if someone was off sick, you'd see that they weren't there, find out what was wrong and send a card. In Troy House, you don't find out that sort of thing. Because people move round, you can't assume they'll be in the same place every day. So you might be not be there and might be working at home, or ill, or dead. And no one would notice until weeks later.

In Troy House, the use of ICT as the main communication tool for mobile workers did not appear to compensate for the loss of physical proximity to colleagues, as it did in the study by Millward et al (2007). Rather, the constant mobility involved in hot-desking appeared to have eradicated what had been, for these employees, spaces with social centrality. The everyday situation of hot-deskers in Troy House would be to sit among semi-strangers, people who might perhaps be known by sight. Because, as Warren (2006) points out, relationships only develop over time, the hot-deskers' regular appearance among strangers meant that their daily social environment was always new. As Chloe explained:

*Having a natter and a laugh usually develops over weeks, months and years ... and that unwritten permission that you are now allowed to make jokes and what have you. But if you're hot-desking and you really **are** hot-desking, you don't really engage. Every day could, potentially, be your first day at work.*

It seemed to be the case that hot-deskers in Troy House had, in these circumstances, to adopt a low profile, using 'civil inattention' (Goffman 1971). Civil inattention is a form of impersonal courtesy in which the presence of another person is briefly acknowledged using a glance, before looking away again to signal that the person is not an object of curiosity; at the same time, this indicates one's unavailability for communication. In this repeated, 'first day' environment, the hot-desker could easily be a nuisance to the people sitting nearby (for example, by asking for directions to the printer, having a noisy phone call, or consuming a packed lunch) but could rarely be a benefit to them. It appeared that hot-deskers must therefore make as little impact as possible on those nearby, and must reciprocate the civil

inattention shown to them.

Because Troy House was 'sweated', the meeting rooms were often fully occupied and the breakout areas (formed by gaps between benches with no walls or partitions to separate them from the sight and sound of ongoing desk-work) were noisy, there might be no secluded space available for concentrated work. Some employees indicated that they would try to find space in next door Enterprise House or go home to work. Some, however, reported that they could, to an extent, to shield themselves from interruptions and distractions by sheer effort of will. As Jennifer (HR Manager) put it:

I have a different sort of focus and concentration in this building. When my children were small I could have eight children playing, screaming, climbing over me, under me, dog, post ladies, the whole lot going on and I would remain deep in concentration. I have the same technique here, that is to say I get quite tired because I concentrate very hard in order to keep out the other bits of distraction and I'm not sure that's necessarily helpful in terms of the quality of work.

In my former role I had worked closely with Jennifer and had a friendly relationship with her. After her move to Troy House, on several occasions I noticed that when I passed through her floorplate close to where she was sitting, she did not look up and acknowledge my presence, but kept her eyes firmly fixed to her desk or screen, perhaps using the '*different sort of focus and concentration*' she described above. I found it impossible not to feel a mild sense of rebuff when being ignored in this way, while at the same time realising that Jennifer could not possibly greet every passerby with whom she was acquainted. I reasoned that her apparent mild discourtesy was produced by her visibility, not her personal discourteousness. I began to think of this behaviour as a variant of the 'civil inattention' described by Goffman (1971) in which the imperative to maintain one's concentration means that one does not make the initial glance of acknowledgement. It is, after all, more polite to ignore someone we have not noticed than someone whose presence we have acknowledged. This manner may explain Hatch's (1990) counter-intuitive finding that in open plan offices, 'the absence of privacy limits communication' (p.142). Taskin and Edwards (2007) suggest that the de-spatialisation brought about by telework and hot-desking leads to 'de-socialisation'. However, the term 'de-socialisation' is perhaps misleading in the sense that it implies that sociality has been taken away. In Troy House, it seemed to be the case that different types of sociality, including civil inattention and complete inattention, had become prevalent.

8 Life on the Dark Side: where do we belong?

In the previous chapter I indicated that in 2007, occupants of Enterprise House had started to refer to Troy House as *'the Dark Side'* and FirstService as *'WorstService'*. The reference to the Dark Side seemed partly to relate to the austere, artificially lit environment of Troy House. As Shahida put it, *'everyone feels sorry for the people in Troy House because they haven't got any windows and they feel claustrophobic'*. 'The Dark Side' is also a reference to the fundamental conflict within the Star Wars series, in which 'the light side was associated with creation and life, and the dark side with death and destruction'². The two nicknames also seemed to be used to convey a sense of a more distant relationship with the people providing 'back office' services, as well as a deterioration in the quality of the services. The spatial separation of 'strategic' and 'back office' staff can be seen simply as an application of Duffy's (1997) design logic, in which staff groups with different requirements for autonomy and interaction are separated, so that the spatial arrangements that result are an accommodation of pre-existing differences. However, as Gupta and Ferguson (1992) point out, '[t]he otherness of the other arises from the production of cultural differences within the historical processes of a socially and spatially interconnected world' (p.16). Since, as Lefebvre (1991) also indicates, cultures and identities are produced by the relations between apparently separate, but interconnected spaces, the recent separation between the strategic centre and 'back office' can also be understood as an interesting case of spatial separation alongside the production of 'otherness' at a point in time when this separation had just occurred and the creation of 'otherness' was beginning.

From the perspective of FirstService staff, their separation from SCC as an employer was ambiguous. This was because, as Collier's (2008) summary of the PPP states, staff were seconded to FirstService, thus 'retaining their employment continuity with the authority in order to provide comfort and security'. When the new organisation was set up there had been little resistance or questioning of the staff's new employment situation. In their discussion of social boundaries, Lamont and Molnar (2002) suggest that when a newly introduced boundary appears porous, people feel that they can cross it individually, so there is usually acceptance of the change rather than collective resistance. This understanding may have been applied to the boundary between the two organisations: staff who are seconded normally return to their regular employer after the period of secondment ends. Emily

commented on her ambiguous employment status:

It's quite funny because I say 'us' meaning Southern County Council, because although I am seconded my payslips still say Southern County Council, my contract still says Southern County Council ... the only thing that's any different is my badge. It's purple, it says FirstService. So I feel very much like I am part of Southern County Council. But I think the perception of us is different. And I think there's a lot of blame culture between the organisations, so it's like, 'oh them over there, over the road, the Dark Side, WorstService' ... we get told that repeatedly. Because at the end of the day, we don't deliver the way we used to. But what they don't understand is that all of their senior management have bought into this entire model, so anything that's shortcoming, someone back here [in Enterprise House] needs to think about what they asked for and how much money they wanted to save, and whether that was realistic.

The ambiguity centred on a sense of still belonging to SCC simultaneously with the impression that from parts of SCC, FirstService staff no longer belong, but rather are framed as 'them over there, over the road, the Dark Side, WorstService'. This was a joking reference to the fundamental conflict in the Star Wars series, in which the Dark Side is associated with death and destruction. Staff in Enterprise House also pointed out the confused relationships between people who until recently had been close colleagues, as Vicky suggested:

.. they're still the same people, the fact that they're in a different building doesn't really make a difference because we're close, but there is a huge divide there. You can't directly talk to someone in HR, you have to go through the system, and I don't think that's good for relationships.

Many respondents in FirstService expressed a stronger sense of allegiance to SCC than to their new employer (as did participants in Hebson et al's (2003) case study of outsourcing). For example, Alex appeared to align more closely with the public service ethos of County than with the profit-oriented ethos of FirstService:

I often align myself more with the customer than I do with FirstService. FirstService is about saying it's different and it's separate and you know, you must be more efficient, we must be more commercial. But I've actually not gone to meetings in order to save the County Council some money, because I know it's going to cost £341 to go to that meeting and I've balanced out, do I really need to be there?

2 Wookieepedia; the Star Wars website, accessed 12th February 2008

Alex appeared to be manipulating the contract between the two organisations in favour of the customer, SCC, even though his official task was to generate revenue for the provider. In 2007, the separation of staff into the two organisations and buildings was still relatively recent, but there were indications that the spatial separation was adding to the sense that there were two different social spheres, even though the two buildings were only about 30 metres apart. As Chloe suggested, she no longer went across the road to meet business partners because *'it's not that you don't know where to find them, you don't actually know what they look like'*.

Another phenomenon that may over time contribute to the social separation between SCC and FirstService is the recruitment of staff from the private sector as direct employees of FirstService. In Spring 2007, there had been several vacancies in FirstService which were filled by people who had formerly worked for X-En. X-En, it might be recalled, was the energy company for which Enterprise House had originally been commissioned, before it went into administration. And in 2004, Simon, the Project Consultant, had suggested that SCC was *'ten years behind'* X-En on what he called *'the cultural change journey'*. As Dingwall and Strangleman (2005) suggest, a tried and tested way of instilling private sector culture into public sector organisations is to recruit people from the private sector to 'show public servants "how it is done" (p.481). It seems curious that people who had worked for the organisation for which Enterprise House had originally been designed were now joining the 'back office' as employees in a move which seemed to continue the process of making SCC function more like a private sector organisation.

9 The redundancies in FirstService

There was a widespread impression that there was a relatively high staff turnover in FirstService. As one respondent put it, there was a *'new culture in FirstService. Easy in, easy out'*. However, a redundancy exercise took place in January 2007 which appeared to cause widespread shock and revulsion among staff in both FirstService and their former colleagues in County. Thirteen people were made redundant from the ICT division, with the job losses being officially justified as resulting from the Gershon Report, which required all local authorities to make year-on-year savings of 2.5%. The reaction of apparent disgust among staff related to both the timing of the redundancies (which were announced with no advance warning) and the place of the announcement. Those selected for redundancy were

informed by members of FirstService CMT in a glass fronted meeting room in Enterprise House, in view of some of their former colleagues in the adjacent office. The ICT staff who were to keep their jobs were similarly informed in the meeting room next to the group being made redundant. The redundant staff were then escorted by security personnel back to their desks in Troy House, (a route which took them through Enterprise House, across the road, through the Troy House reception area, alongside the café and through another huge, busy open floorplate) where they were required to log off their computer and collect personal belongings, before being escorted from the building. Their passwords on the ICT system were then instantly changed so that they would never be able to log on again.

A modulated expression of concern was officially noted in the official minutes of FirstService's ICT demand/capacity review, in which Unison representatives at the meeting pointed out that: *'members of staff were only given half an hour to collect belongings before being escorted off the premises. The Unison representatives expressed their concern regarding how [FirstService] dealt with the latter stages of the process'*³. Although they were generally referred to as 'the FirstService redundancies', according to the official process used, the staff were not being made redundant by FirstService. Because they were seconded to FirstService from SCC (rather than being employed directly by the new company) in the official process they were 'released back' to Southern County, which in turn executed the redundancies because there were no longer any back office job roles in this part of the local authority.

I shall now consider the role that both buildings (Enterprise House and Troy House) appeared to play in the redundancy process. At the time, I was unable to do this because my own sense of dismay was so strong that I could not see any reason for this use of the visibility of the buildings other than gross insensitivity or deliberate callousness. I was personally appalled by the manner of the redundancies because one of the people made redundant, Henry, was a manager who was then studying for his Masters degree. I had worked closely with him at an earlier point in his studies and I knew that only the previous year, his wife had died unexpectedly from a brain tumour. In 2010, I still see the manner of the redundancies as insensitive and callous, but also as an outcome of an attempt to design the redundancy process in such a way as to ensure that it was as dispassionate and controlled as possible. This analysis is speculative in the sense that members of the CMT who had executed the redundancies were not interviewed.

3 Minutes of Joint Working Party, 17 May 2007

The following account is from Christine, a consultant in the HR division in FirstService. At the time of the announcements, Christine had been at her desk in Troy House. She was informed of the redundancies by phone from a colleague in Enterprise House who had just witnessed the event, so that Christine knew about it even before the laid-off staff had returned to Troy House for their belongings:

Recently there were some redundancies from a certain department and they said 'right, you're all going to come through and we're going to tell you what the outcome is'. And the people outside in the office were like 'oh, right ... oh, they look happy, they're not the ones that got the boot'. 'Oh, they look jarred off and they're rushing out ... guess what, I know who's just been laid off'. And then everybody talks, so that means that the whole Council knows and they've only just been told they've got to go straight out of the building.

Christine described the use of these meeting rooms for the redundancy announcement as 'disgusting ... repulsive' when it would have been possible to use alternative conference accommodation in a nearby hotel. Ross's account, below, relates to his experience as a member of the group which was spared redundancy:

It was an absolutely appalling piece of people management. We were herded into different rooms dependent on whether we were going to be OK or not. That was how it was done. And they were OK about it, the senior managers were OK about it. It was handled so badly. There was never any time to prepare for it, it was just done within hours, literally. You know, you were happy at 9am and you were redundant ... well, you were, whatever they called it, released back to SCC at 1pm. And you didn't know at 9am that that was going to come. ... And you were escorted off the premises. Leave now, don't clear your desk, just go now.

Ross's account emphasises the apparent brusqueness and impersonality of the process, which the senior managers seemed to express as being normal work, in contrast with his own opinion of it as 'absolutely appalling'. The speed of the change is striking, with the redundancies being made with immediate effect (as was the shift in roles from Trainers to Business Analysts discussed earlier). It also highlights that, although the redundant staff were seconded to, rather than employed by FirstService, in this instance, the security that was originally associated with this employment status (Collier 2008) did not materialise.

The sense of shock expressed by people who witnessed or heard about the redundancies lingered for several months and was spoken of most strongly by employees who had worked closely with the redundant staff. One close colleague suggested that:

.. it was very much dead men's shoes for a few weeks, people were very nervous about sitting in people's places where they used to be ... that's where old what's-his-name used to sit, and nobody really wanted to log onto his PC.

Several respondents suggested that immediately after the redundancies, the 'presence' of the newly absent people lingered, phantom-like, in the office. Some of the redundant staff sat regularly at particular desks, so that those spaces came to express an association with particular people's identities (Duncan 2005). This association may have been strengthened by the fact that the computer and phone screens displayed the user id. of the person who last used them, so that any subsequent user would be confronted by the name of someone now absent and would be reminded of the circumstances of their departure. However, even though it appeared to be seen as disrespectful to use these vacant desks, the pressure on desk usage brought about by the 'sweating' of the building was such that after only about two weeks the vacant desks were occupied again.

Several months after this event, I unexpectedly met Henry in the Enterprise House restaurant. He was still completing his Master's dissertation and had come to meet with his supervisor. He described the process as being *'all over within half an hour ... a big shock'*. After being physically marched from the building, there was a period of three months notice. At the beginning of May 2007 he received a formal letter confirming the end of his employment, with *'no thanks ... nothing personal'*. Henry indicated that he was still seeing a counsellor once a week, and was thinking of going into the ministry.

It appeared to be widely accepted by staff that, under Gershon, redundancies were inevitable and that managers, being more expensive to employ, were more vulnerable. I could not understand, however, why people were made redundant in full view of their colleagues, so that their shock and humiliation was displayed – a situation which was then extended as they were paraded through both buildings with a security escort. The selection of Henry for redundancy when his wife had recently died of cancer seemed to be simple cruelty. And I did not understand how it was possible for the FirstService managers to do this while adopting a neutral, impersonal and unsympathetic manner throughout, appearing to be, as Ross put it, *'OK about it'*. Below I offer some speculative ideas in relation to these

issues, paying particular attention to the role the physical environment appeared to play in these events.

The employment relationship in FirstService (as in all modern organisations) is 'non-inclusive', i.e., contracts with roles, not persons (Kallinikos 2004). In FirstService, however, the non-inclusive relationship appeared to be pushed more to the fore by the ubiquitous business processes and the exchangeable desk space in Troy House, both of which expressed the selective, mobile and reversible characteristics of employees' relationship to the organisation. Since the employment relationship was explicitly framed by the material environment and business processes as transacting with roles, redundancy could then be seen as merely deleting (reversing) roles. This way of framing the redundancies may also have been facilitated by the fact that it was for Southern County Council, the partner organisation, to actually execute the redundancy and thus deal with the person undertaking the role. Thus, the redundancy process itself, as well as the selection of any particular individual for redundancy, could be legitimated and performed as another rational act relating to the roles from which the organisation was configured. As Kallinikos (2003) puts it:

The separation of role from the person is essential to the de-emotionalization of social action. ... emotions such as grief, passion or joy should be refrained from in contexts other than the deeply private. .. In the wider public sphere and the workplace, human behaviour ought to obey the logic of tempered consideration, task orientation and calculation. (p.610).

So far, this analysis points to a possible way of understanding the impersonal manner and the inclusion of such a vulnerable individual in the group to be made redundant. The use of the highly visual building may be also be illuminated by a requirement for the 'de-emotionalization' of this particular social action. While their own unemotional stance to the event could be legitimated, CMT members could not be sure that the people being made redundant would follow suit and refrain from expressing emotion. Rather, they would be likely to be shocked or angered and their behaviour might therefore pose a risk to the organisation. Particular risks arose because some of the staff had extensive privileges on the IT system and could, in principle, have sabotaged it. They could also have expressed dissent and involved other colleagues in objections to the redundancies. Therefore, the newly redundant staff had to be kept under control – a point hinted at in FirstService's official response to the union's expressed concern about the process: *'FirstService management were anxious to ensure the most effective and acceptable regime consistent with security'*.

The rapid timeframe, the transparent meeting room and the security escort may therefore have been used by CMT as attempts to control the behaviour of the newly redundant staff in a situation in which emotions were likely to be very inflamed. Through these means, the risk of damage to the computer system and the building, and possible contamination of social relations with remaining employees were minimised. These risks were perhaps seen as so great that the final 30 minutes in the workplace for these staff had to be the most tightly controlled period of their entire employment with SCC. In addition, (whether intentionally or not) making the process visible to other staff provided them with 'a frightful spectacle of what may be done to them' (Belknap p.194; cited in Goffman 1961:39) and so may have also reduced the possibility of complaints from 'survivors' about the process.

The apparent preference of the CMT for executing the redundancies in this tightly controlled fashion may also link back to their occupation of the partially separate office or 'power spot' (Gieryn 2000) on the top floor of Troy House. Their spatial separateness from other employees may have provided the CMT members with little personal knowledge of the individuals concerned, reinforcing the framing of these employees simply as the roles most suitable for deletion. However, the lack of personal knowledge of the staff to be made redundant may also have given rise to a nervousness on the part of CMT members, who could not trust the staff to behave rationally. This possibility is illuminated by Berger and Luckmann's (1966) consideration of despotic behaviour, in which they suggest that despots are 'endemically nervous' because:

I cannot know all the factors that go into the continuing success of my despotism. I know that my orders are always obeyed, but I cannot be sure of all the steps and all the motives that lie between the issuance and the execution of my orders. There are always things that go on 'behind my back'. (p.59).

The CMT's sociospatial isolation from these staff may perhaps have raised their sensitivity to the possibility of things going on 'behind their backs' and thus adding further justification for the exercise of very tight control over the execution of the redundancies. Following the episode, the private office space then provided a place for the CMT members to retreat into, rather than having to share the space of surviving employees who would naturally want to discuss the episode (as was the case for Councillors in Enterprise House following their 'tantrums'). This appears, then, be another instance of inequality of space (Ferguson and Gupta 2002) which enables senior officials to 'swoop down' into the space of lower officials before returning to their own space, from which lower officials are excluded.

10 Summary

In this chapter I have tried to convey the functional, austere environment of Troy House. In this building, the emphasis of officially stated intentions was on sociospatial flexibility, which could be obtained by exploiting the exchangeable property of the workspace. As the interviews with WIT staff indicated, this flexibility could be achieved by ‘crunching’ or intensifying the space use, and ‘restacking’ or reconfiguring groups of employees or individuals in order to match changes in job roles. The sociospatial arrangement which emerged in Troy House was similar to Enterprise House in the sense that the top group, FirstService CMT, occupied a ‘power spot’ (Gieryn 2000:474) from which they ‘plotted moves’. In the rest of the building, the way in which this space was configured and used appeared to have achieved the ideal claimed by Allen et al (2005) in which space is organised to meet the needs of business processes. The large, open floorplates which many staff had to move around enabled the managerial relationship to be transacted via the computer, which became ‘king’, as Alex put it. Respondents spoke of the way in which this shaped their identities, for example, as ‘*a unit of money making*’. The hot-deskers’ situation is of interest because they conformed most closely to official policy in which desk space was not ‘owned’. Hot-desking, however, appeared inefficient because it eliminated time-saving habituations and fragmented relationships with colleagues and managers. I also indicated the way in which FirstService staff appeared to be constructed as ‘others’, despite the proximity of Troy House to the strategic centre. The redundancy exercise provided an extreme illustration of the use of visibility to achieve control.

In the next, final chapter I summarise the analysis of Enterprise House and Troy House. Through a comparison of the two buildings I also draw conclusions about the wider spatial reconfiguration that was made in SCC.

Chapter 8

Pulling it together: the social architecture of bureaucracy

1 Introduction to the chapter

My intention in this final chapter is to summarise the analysis of the spatial reorganisation of SCC throughout the period of the fieldwork and consider it in the context of wider social and spatial structures. Since I began the fieldwork in 2004, the organisation has been spatially transformed. In place of the old campus, consisting of a motley collection of separate directorate buildings, together with many locality offices scattered across the County, there is now a strategic centre for the top managers and Councillors, a 'back office' for those providing HR, IT and Finance services, and two large Public Service Villages (PSVs) housing operational managers and front-line staff across a range of services. The inclusion in the case study of two of these buildings, in which managers adopted very different approaches to the use of space to match their desired organisational configuration, and in which very different consequences emerged, has provided the opportunity to consider the relationship between the configuration of space and different forms of bureaucracy. This analysis is extended by consideration of the announcement in late 2010 to outsource all Council services, broadly along the lines suggested in the recommendations of 'Securing the Future' made by ABCD in 2007. Accordingly, in this chapter I compare and contrast the officially expressed intentions for, and the consequences of, the introduction of the two new offices. I also step back to consider the wider spatial pattern that emerged in the organisation as a whole.

In line with the sociological aspirations of the project, I make particular use of concepts dealing with the wider sociospatial context and with the ways in which organisational space is produced, maintained and changed. Accordingly, I consider the pressure for organisational change brought to bear on local authorities through NPM, away from the negative stereotype of 'bureaucracy' and towards the 'network' or 'post-bureaucratic' model of organisation. And this wider context also includes trends in the ways that space is configured, towards an increasing fragmentation and 'slipperiness' (Buchanan 2005). As I

noted earlier (chapter 2) these two distinct streams of literature can be connected via Lefebvre's (1991) concept of 'abstract space', space as configured to support the requirements of abstract labour. The workspace can then be seen as something which is designed to support a loose bureaucratic structure in which employees are expected to act autonomously, or a tight structure in which employees' actions are tightly controlled.

The chapter is divided into six parts, the first four of which relate directly to the preceding empirical chapters. I begin by going back to the old campus and the County in 2004, in order to discuss the problems posed by these overlapping portions of social space, which the organisation designers suggested could be addressed by the move to Enterprise House. I then discuss the ambitious intentions expressed by the organisation designers for the ways in which Enterprise House could reshape what they presented as an outdated bureaucracy into an outward-looking, inspirational organisation based on a networked form. I then move forward in time to 2007 to analyse the sociospatial reality which actually emerged in the new building. As I have suggested, new networked structures emerged to an extent, but the transformation to a network form was limited by the hierarchical sociospatial structure, which I call the 'invisible office', which was reproduced in Enterprise House. Still in 2007, I then turn to the adjacent office building, Troy House. Despite earlier aspirations stated by the original organisation designers that all offices in SCC should be of the same material quality and provide for the same flexible, networked ways of working, for this 'back office' building, the official intentions appeared to have shifted. In Troy House, the official focus stated by the new organisation designers based in the Workspace Improvement Team appeared to prioritise the cost-efficient use of space and the capacity to flex the organisation structure rapidly. The outcome of this way of managing the space was a sociospatial structure in which the key distinctions were between the top managers and all other staff, and between employees who could settle at particular desks and those who could not.

Having considered the distinctive sociospatial structures which emerged in each of the buildings, I then consider two aspects which were common to both. The first is the maintenance of a semi-private space by the group of employees at the top of the organisational hierarchy (in what was officially suggested should be an entirely non-hierarchical environment, in which all employees would be equally accessible). The second feature is the condition of almost constant visibility which employees experienced in both offices. In this discussion, I identify the relationships between spatial practice, gender and hierarchy as a worthwhile avenue for further research. The final part of the analysis involves a stepping back from the two offices to take in the wider pattern of spatial and

organisational reconfiguration through which SCC has been transformed. I speculate that the new arrangement includes a new hierarchy of 'slipperiness' in which the top managers based in the strategic centre appear to have retained a traditional ownership of their space, contrasting with employees in the organisational periphery, for whom ideals of the 'non-territorial environment' (Allen et al 2005) appear to have been more closely realised. I conclude the thesis with an indication of its limitations and directions for future writing.

2 Back to the old campus: the dissolution of the bureaucratic monastery

In the first stage of the fieldwork in 2004, the conversations about the old campus and the wider space of Southern County were with the original 'gang of four' organisation designers. These were James (the Chief Executive), Marcus (the Director of the Project Board), Rory (the architect) and Simon, an independent Project Consultant. All were key members of the Project Board who worked on the final stages of the design of Enterprise House and implemented the first occupation of the new building. All four of them presented the negotiated order (Strauss 1978) of the organisation as fulfilling many of the negative stereotypes of bureaucracy, which, as Kallinikos (2004) observes, are associated with 'routine, initiative-stifling office work and introvert organizational culture of rigid administrative procedures and redundant complexity' (p.14). They portrayed the organisation as bureaucratic, slow, unresponsive and '*behind*', and argued that these problems were produced by the wider space of Southern County and the configuration of the old campus. I will, therefore, begin this part of the chapter by summarising their arguments about how the County itself and the physical structure of the old campus had shaped the organisation in this way. This summary is shown in Table 8.1.

	feature of place	consequences for organisational sociospatial relations
spatial practices	good work-life balance and pleasant environment of Southern County	<p>employees competent but '<i>never extend themselves</i>'; '<i>not reactive or responsive enough to the environment around</i>' (Marcus)</p> <p>static: not in '<i>any intellectual or service traffic</i>' (Marcus)</p> <p>closed: unaware of their own shortcomings</p> <p>'<i>a long way behind</i>' other local authorities (Marcus)</p>

	separate, disconnected directorate buildings	passivity employees comply with bureaucratic time <i>'never come across anybody other than their immediate peers'</i> (James); <i>'corralled'</i> (Rory) inaccessible to senior managers lack of <i>'corporacy'</i> (Marcus) slow: the issue was <i>'dead half the time'</i> (Marcus)
lived space	SCC as a <i>'quiet rural backwater'</i> with economic activity limited to being a <i>'niche tourist market'</i> (James)	disinterest in change; lack of ambition: <i>'let's just keep it as it is'</i> (James) organisation is <i>'not customer-led'</i> (Simon) <i>'job for life'</i> (Simon)
	<i>'absolutely dreadful .. deeply, deeply depressing disconnected buildings'</i> (James)	<i>'valuing separateness, insularity .. the quiet deliberative approach to life'</i> (James) not valuing <i>'the fundamentally important networks'</i> (James)

Table 8.1: Summary of organisation designers’ expressions of the problems caused by Southern County and the old campus

The organisation designers suggested that this unsatisfactory situation resulted from both the wider environment of the County and the old campus. These two aspects overlapped because most of the employees and managers in SCC also lived in the County. They suggested that because the County itself is mainly a rural, pleasant and beautiful area, that this generally agreeable environment had over time produced what Massey (1995) terms a ‘local class character’ (p.57) notable for its lack of ambition and contentment with the way things were. Many other respondents made similar points throughout the fieldwork. County appeared to be seen as a place in which people arrived and then settled; it was a place where people *‘stayed put’*. Thus, while the rest of the world was always moving on, because employees in SCC were isolated in what the Chief Executive referred to as the *‘quiet backwater’* of Southern County, where they remained static, they had become detached from contemporary ideas and practices. The organisation designers’ argument can be understood using Castells’ (1996) concept of the ‘space of flows’, characterised by constant, relentless networking and movement, resulting in constant change in the configuration of

organisations and society. In Southern County employees were not participating, as Marcus put it, in *'any intellectual or service traffic'*, so that in relative terms, in SCC, time was standing still. The organisation designers suggested that what they framed as employees' complacent and unambitious attitude was compounded by the uneventful, crisis-free history of the organisation, in which there had been no catastrophic episode which forced employees to question their taken for granted working practices.

However, the old campus was presented as the central obstacle to changing the organisational culture in the ways that the organisation designers suggested was essential. On the old campus, employees were 'contained' within separate offices, which in turn were contained within separate directorate buildings. The organisation designers argued that this workspace had produced patterns of social relations in which staff were isolated and interacted only with other people based in their directorates who shared their professional background. They also argued that the buildings implied values that were no longer appropriate, such as separateness, insularity, and *'the quiet deliberative approach to life'*, as James put it. Because so many employees were long-serving, the organisation designers suggested that employees had internalised this culture, which consequently had become fixed at an earlier point in history. Their accounts of the material environment of the old campus relate strongly to Chanlat's (2006:18-22) reading of the space of public bureaucracies. Bureaucratic space, Chanlat (2006) suggests, is typically divided, hierarchically organised, and closed. In addition to these features, Chanlat (2006) argues that the spaces of public bureaucracies also include indications of a clear separation of the public sphere from the commercial interests of the market, expressions of the impartiality of the bureau, and the expression of the work identity of the public servant. Larsen and Schultz's (1990) notion of the 'bureaucratic monastery' shares these themes of fairness, impartiality and piety – a notion also alluded to more critically by James when he spoke of the old campus implying *'monks and hermits'* as ideal public servants. The combination of the County itself and the old campus had resulted, the organisation designers argued, in an organisational culture that was *'very behind'*, as Marcus put it. Although this is a commonplace and widely accepted form of argument, as Harvey (2006) points out, it is contestable. 'Backwardness' is associated with 'an unwillingness or inability to 'catch up' with the dynamics of a western-centred capitalism, usually portrayed as the high point of modernity or even of civilisation' (Harvey 2006:72). In the case of SCC, the modernisation of an organisation portrayed as *'behind'* appeared to form the central justification for the radical action taken by senior managers, first, the purchase of Enterprise House and then the reconfiguration of the entire organisation. Thus, the old campus, an instance of an old-fashioned bureaucratic monastery, had to be abandoned.

All the organisation designers expressed similar interpretations of the type of implicit

contract which was shaped by the overlapping social spaces of the County and the old campus. The exchange of efforts and rewards which they suggested were prevalent are summarised in Table 8.2.

inputs required of employees framed by the old campus	rewards offered to employees by the old campus
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• punctual attendance during traditional office hours• competent work performed using traditional approaches• interaction with peers within directorate• quiet deliberation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• good work-life balance• job for life• no expectation that employees would ‘<i>extend themselves</i>’ or be ‘<i>reactive and responsive .. to the environment around</i>’ (Marcus)

Table 8.2: Old exchange of efforts and rewards in SCC

They suggested that the efforts that employees put in were punctual attendance, basic competent performance in tried and tested ways but without any sense of compulsion to improve processes, and avoidance of risk or experimentation. These efforts were exchanged for rewards in the form of pay, a job for life, and the pleasant environment and improved work-life balance afforded in SCC. This exchange relates clearly to the traditional implicit contract described by Hiltrop (1995) and Thompson (2003) which proponents of the ‘emergent contract’ allege to be unviable in contemporary organisations.

The organisation designers suggested that this environment also shaped the practices and values of employees in particular ways. As I suggested in chapter 2, social identities, including what Watson (2008:132) terms ‘personas’, are embedded in space – the routine practices, implicit rules and symbolism associated with particular spaces tells us who we should be. The organisation designers’ accounts can be interpreted in this light, so that through the spatial practices and lived space of the buildings, the old campus tended to confine employees’ identities within directorates, rather than encouraging them to network across directorates. It encouraged solitary, introverted practices - as James put it, ‘*the quiet deliberative approach to life*’. This social identity was physically passive and allowed itself to be directed by the physical environment and the time routine of the working day – someone who, as James suggested, would enter their office building ‘*at half past eight in the morning and you didn’t know what happened, they went into a time warp and then they’d be spewed out at 5.30 at night*’. Individuals manifesting this sedentary, isolated and pious identity were

summed up by James as *'monks and hermits'*. There is a distinction, however, between the way in which the organisation designers described the social identity put forward by the old campus and the real people who worked there. When talking about them, they appeared to have in mind particular individuals, who, while fulfilling the negative aspects of the expected identity as being sedentary, isolated, narrow, traditional, slow and unambitious, were also described as *'terrific, a really good bunch'*, *'nice, civilised, kind'*, *'very loyal'* and as having various other positive but unexciting attributes.

At this stage, the organisation designers also expressed strong concern that while the new strategic centre building they had just acquired addressed these spatially and historically produced problems for the strategic level managers who would occupy it, it also created a new problem of spatial inequality between the strategic centre and the other parts of the organisation. This new inequality would be the outcome of both differences in the material quality of office accommodation and the increased togetherness and integration of the high status people in the centre, which the organisation designers argued would be noticed and resented by the people who had been excluded from the centre. Tackling these differences was the purpose of the 2004 Property Strategy, of which Troy House was a key part.

3 Enterprise House: the spatial solution?

3.1 Creating networks; getting rid of hierarchies and paperwork

In chapter 5, I went on to analyse the way in which the organisation designers talked about the relationship between the material structure of Enterprise House and the reshaped organisational social structure that they suggested could result – how it could be a significant part of the solution to the problems they had identified. In this analysis, I used Lefebvre's (1991) concept of 'conceived space' (p.42), regarding the new building as both a material structure and as a project designed to shape enduring sets of relations. However, one of the criticisms of Lefebvre's (1991) work which I mentioned earlier is his tendency to reify capitalism, as if particular configurations of space result directly from capitalism without any intervening agency. This analysis compensates for this neglect of agency by illustrating the processes through which material structures are the outcomes of negotiations between capitalists (Harvey (2006:81), in this case, the managers who commissioned the final stages of the design of Enterprise House, the architect who designed it and the consultant who managed the occupancy of the new building. The analysis also

shows the ways in which these organisational actors presented the relationship between the material structure and the social structures that might result. The table below summarises the key points from this analysis, categorising the material structure using Lefebvre's dimensions of spatial practice, lived space and the location or emplacement (Dale and Burrell 2008) of the new building.

	material features of Enterprise House	stated intended consequences in terms of organisational order
spatial practices	proximity and lack of segregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> networking, '<i>popping along</i>' (James) '<i>speed of movement .. more consistent with the thought process</i>' (James)
	'shallow' open plan office space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> removal of hierarchy and the creation of 'equality of space' to allow networking between levels
	tessellation of related directorates/ choreographed movement into collective areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> networking in home-like environment weakening of professional affiliation and strengthening of corporate affiliation practice innovations resulting from cross-directorate relationships
	other colleagues constantly visible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> spread of new spatial practices appropriate to the new environment gives a reminder of work to be done and opportunity to do the work
	being visible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-regulation rather than managerial regulation responsibility to colleagues and the organisation
	tidiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> presentation of favourable image to customers encouragement of networking by maintaining visibility, and not implying privacy maintenance of functional aesthetic of workspace

lived space	an environment that ‘makes you just feel good to be in the space and the spirit of it’ (Rory)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• inspires physical energy and sense of anticipation; ‘<i>put a spring in their steps</i>’ (Rory)
	informality of collective spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• informal, authentic communication and self-presentation• feeling of belonging and ‘home’
	being able to see others in the strategic centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• feeling of belonging to the wider team of the strategic centre
location	separation of strategic centre from operational periphery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• integrated policy and strategy formation• clear sense of separation from operational activities

Table 8.3 Summary of organisation designers’ stated intentions for Enterprise House

Throughout these interviews, the organisation designers appeared to be relating broader social structures (relating to the network organisation, NPM and TQM, with its focus on the customer) to the material structure of the new building and to the enduring sets of social relations that it could help to realise. The changes to work processes spoken of by the organisation designers mirrored the ideals of the ‘post-bureaucratic’ organisation (Heckscher and Donnellon 1994) and Castells’ (1996) description of the network organisation, in which the hierarchy is flattened, the boundaries are dissolved and ‘the actual operating unit becomes the business project, enacted by the network’ (p.166). The organisation designers indicated that Enterprise House could help to reshape the strategic centre of SCC in this way, by making networking an easy and obvious thing to do, and by inspiring employees to take full advantage of their new spatial and organisational autonomy through its uplifting and energising symbolism.

They also presented the design as being able to attack two features of traditional bureaucracy which could impede this change. These were, first, control exercised through the organisational hierarchy and second, employees’ reliance on quantities of paperwork or ‘written files’ (Meier and Hill 2005:52). The shallow (Markus 2006) space of the office areas and the absence of other material indications of status within the building suggested the absence of any hierarchy; there appeared to be no material preconditions for the pattern of ‘inequality of space’ described by Ferguson and Gupta (2002). The shallow space could then free employees from the strictures of hierarchical control and directorate/ professional

'silos'. The modest amount of desk and storage space limited the amount of paperwork that employees could place at their desks. In addition to the limitations created by the physical environment, the amount of paperwork stored by individual employees was also explicitly managed by the pre-occupancy de-cluttering exercise and the 'policing' of the clear desk policy by the Building User Group in the early stages of the building's occupation. The organisation designers argued that all but essential paperwork had to be eliminated because it would give an impression of inefficiency to 'customers' and because it could enable individuals resistant to the new culture to recreate semi-private spaces within the open plan offices. As well as these reasons, it also strikes me that paperwork is a widely understood and prominent symbol of bureaucracy, so that removing it at a stroke could broadcast a signal of profound change to the organisation. Idioms such as 'rules and red tape' and 'forms in triplicate' make a metonymic association between paperwork and the stifling, obstructive attributes that are popularly associated with bureaucracy. Paperwork also provides a convenient visual symbol of bureaucracy. For instance, the cover of du Gay's (2000) book 'In Praise of Bureaucracy' shows a woman apparently retrieving papers from a large room filled entirely with filing cabinets. The cover photo of a follow-up volume, 'The Values of Bureaucracy' (2005) is a close-up of a dense stack of paperwork. The strength of the association between paperwork and bureaucracy may help to explain what I thought was a surprising amount of attention being devoted by senior managers to the eliminating it. Thus, through a combination of the material environment and supporting managerial interventions, the building could acquire the 'slipperiness' observed by Buchanan (2005), '[repelling] old-fashioned attempts to put down roots' (p.21-22). Together with the reduction in hierarchical relations and the stimulation of networking, this could enable SCC to realise the qualities of boldness, ambition and continuous improvement that were spoken of as necessary in order to fulfil its role for the public of the County.

3.2 The new contract: excellence plus?

The organisation designers also spoke of the new building as a renegotiation of the implicit contract of employees (Herriot and Pemberton 1996) in which more energetic inputs and rewards associated with Enterprise House replaced the introverted, sedentary values and practices which had become institutionalised on the old campus. Earlier I suggested that in the contract shaped by the old campus, steadiness, loyalty, and what James termed '*the quiet deliberative approach to life*' were exchanged for job security, stability, fixed office hours and a good work-life balance. The organisation designers argued that Enterprise House shifted this relationship towards one consistent with the network organisational

form. As James suggested, the new building represented '*an opportunity to move from the safe solid virtues of thoroughness, professionalism to a wider leadership role*' in which it was necessary, but not sufficient to deliver services '*competently or even excellently*'. What was required now, he argued, was passion, commitment, initiative, energy and pace. The idea that individuals should aspire to 'more than excellent' performance is resonant with Hartley et al's (1995) analysis of the 'emergent' psychological contract, in which it is a normal expectation that employees should put in effort above and beyond the letter of their formal contract.

The organisation designers all made a link between this enhanced level of performance and a set of active, vigorous spatial practices. Employees would have to be proactive, mobile, and approachable. In order to become more mobile, they would need to be less rooted to their desks. Therefore, they would not have ownership rights over their desk, would lose storage space and would have to accept control over the amount and nature of materials on their desks. Managers would lose their entitlement to a private office. These changes were presented as essential because in order for networking to become the normal way of working, control through the managerial hierarchy would have to be relaxed. All these losses were, therefore, justified as being necessary for the adoption of the new, networked work process and were presented as being fair 'rules' which were relevant to the work process (Gouldner 1954). Table 8.4 summarises how the organisation designers presented the new balance of efforts and rewards made available in the building.

new inputs required of employees	new rewards offered to employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initiative and physical energy required for networking • willingness to work with colleagues in different directorates • commitment towards the organisation as opposed to professional specialism • willingness to approach colleagues at different hierarchical levels • for managers, loss of private office and spatial symbol of their status • tolerance of being visible • willingness to dress and present oneself appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • freedom of movement; mobility, action • variability, fluidity of work; effective project working • pleasure of being able to network with colleagues in different directorates and at different levels • non-hierarchical work environment • better achievement of managerial objectives • face to face communication • a building that feels good • relaxed, comfortable, informal working;

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• willingness to share desk• acceptance of direct control over personal workspace (tidiness, reduced paperwork and no personal items)	<div>ability to express authentic self-identity</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• sense of second home• membership of a successful, ambitious organisation• membership of high status strategic centre• strategic identity: physical, active, dynamic
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Table 8.4 Organisation designers’ expressions of new inputs and rewards shaped by Enterprise House

The organisation designers presented the move as an improvement to the implicit contract in which new rewards would outweigh new expected efforts, as Watson (2003) suggests is typical. At the same time, they appeared to acknowledge that there would, for some employees, be new inputs required of them that they might initially dislike. This was particularly the case for middle managers who might have become accustomed to ‘*hiding*’ in private offices and who might initially construe the exposure entailed in open plan working as a violation of their contract.

In general, the building appeared to shift the implicit contract into a more diffuse type (Fox 1974) and moved the locus of control towards employees, who, as Duffy (1997) suggests, appeared to have greater freedom ‘to choose when as well as where they wish to work’ (p.9). The shift to indirect rather than managerial control implies an overall intention to move this strategic part of the organisation towards greater ‘flexibility for long term adaptability’ (Watson 2003:111), in which employees were given greater autonomy and encouragement to act on their own their initiative. This form of control is ambiguous, because all of the new inputs required can also be put forward as new freedoms and rewards. For example, the ability to move around the whole building freely and talk spontaneously to colleagues in any directorate was described by James as a freedom, but it was one that managers were now firmly expected to make use of. If managers did not avail themselves of this new freedom, and remained behind their desks, they were not seen as fulfilling their side of the contract, because mobility was presented as critical to the formation of networks. This ambiguity of the contemporary requirement for mobility is noted by Dale and Burrell (2008), who point out that ‘associations of movement and spontaneous friendly interaction are the opposite of traditional images of the worker as

controlled and directed' (p.121).

3.3 The new social identity: the high status, energetic networker

The organisation designers presented the old campus as a dreary environment which shaped the identity of employees as reliable, punctual, and competent, but also sedentary, isolated, passive, inwardly focused on narrow professional interests, formal and slow – a social identity that James summed up in his metaphor for the staff as *'monks and hermits'*. The new social identity that was designed into Enterprise House was presented as the antithesis of this. The organisation designers' accounts implied that the building could shape high status employees who were physically energetic and active, outgoing and confident in a range of social settings, approachable, comfortable with being visible and stylishly presented. This person would be indifferent to the organisational hierarchy and would relish opportunities to approach, or be approached by, any other colleague, regardless of their status. They would have relinquished attachment to a desk and the paperwork that accompanied it, much as Marcus claimed he had, relying just on the contents of a rucksack. As Dale and Burrell (2008) point out, identity is produced through the daily embodied practices that people live through as well as the sets of discursive alignments they choose. Accordingly, the organisation designers' accounts appeared to include a significant embodied dimension to this social identity as someone who, like James, could *'see ten people in thirty minutes, a series of snatched conversations'* and would *'just walk through the building'*.

The symbolism of the building, in particular the atrium, also reflected back on the identity of its occupants, who were now implied to be modern, élite and stylish, and with a constant outward focus on the needs of the public. Within Enterprise House there was a noticeable contrast between the offices and the atrium space. The office appeared to be clear examples of geometric, optical abstract space (Lefebvre 1991:49). They provided only a small quota of impersonal space to each occupant, and because of their similarity, were easily mistaken for each other, so that visitors regularly got lost. The office areas could therefore be regarded as *'non-places'* (Augé 1995) offering what could perhaps be termed a *'non-identity'*. Alternatively, they could be seen as expressing an identity of functionality, from which everything superfluous to function had been stripped (Guillén 1998). In contrast to the austere offices, the atrium space was lavish in size and appeared to have a variety of meanings built into it, implying that occupants were high status, cultivated and adventurous. In Dale and Burrell's (2008) words, it seemed to seek to *'charm as well as intimidate its*

occupants' (p.50). The choreographed movement in which employees were pulled from the offices into the atrium again implies a shift in social identity away from membership of directorate-based professional groups towards membership of the strategic collective. The visibility of the building also implied a new pressure on employees to manage their identity, because, as Watson (2009) argues, our self-identity is 'very much a matter of the person whom we see reflected in the eyes of others, and we 'manage' the image of that 'person' to influence how those others see us' (p.127). As Rory suggested, however, this identity could be construed as authentic, informal and relaxed. Rory resolved the apparent contradiction between this authenticity and lack of active self-management with the high visibility in the building with his '*nudist beach*' metaphor which presented constant exposure as something which people would soon accept as normal because everyone was in the same boat.

Inside the building, there were few indications of different status. However, the spatial separation of 'strategic' from 'operational' staff in Enterprise House (in place of the former spatial divisions between directorates) also implied a more pronounced status differentiation between these groups who, as James argued, were carrying out '*real policy formulation, strategy, thinking ... rather than operational delivery implementation*'. Simon expressed a similar antithesis between those dealing with '*strategy, policy and County-wide management issues*' and operational staff such as '*the other guys who dig the roads and things*'. This form of spatial division is endorsed by Duffy (1997) who argues that 'creative teams and decision-makers' (p.57) should be located, not just in separate buildings, but in separate areas from other staff, so that networking opportunities between the former can be maximised. Thus, while Enterprise House can be understood as an egalitarian space which promoted encounters between staff whose status was irrelevant, it can also be seen as an attempt to create a what Massey (2005) calls a 'purified' space from which lower status employees have been excluded. The new spatial division between strategic from operational staff has implications for identity because it creates an insider/ outsider distinction (Dixon and Durrheim 2000), in this case coupled with a pre-existing status difference. And, as Ferguson and Gupta (2002) point out, high status individuals in the 'centre' which both sits above and encompasses the space of those in the periphery, acquire connotations of intellectual breadth and vision, in contrast with the presumed limited interests of their colleagues in localities. For those in Enterprise House there was, therefore, an implied shift in identity through its counterpoint with what Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) term the distinction between 'self-identity and 'anti-identity', the 'not-me' position' (p.1189). The contrast between Enterprise House and other buildings reflects Dixon and Durrheim's (2000) suggestion that collective identities are fashioned through 'symbolic contrasts between 'our space' and 'their space' expressed in terms of oppositions

such as marginal/ central, primitive civilised' (p.34) – contrasts which could already be seen in the various antitheses used to justify the inclusion or exclusion of particular staff in the strategic centre.

The way in which the organisation designers presented their aspirations for Enterprise House can be understood as achieving a spatial, embodied manifestation of the 'ideal' network or post-bureaucratic organisation. As they argued, the building could help to realise a new awareness of, and emphasis on, organisational mission and the customer; and power would disperse from hierarchical structures to enable decisions and actions to be made through fluid, flexible project groups, whose configuration would change in response to emerging public needs and pressures. The new building was also presented as being able to shape a new employment relationship offering high levels of autonomy, spatial freedom and an attractive, dynamic social identity in exchange for commitment, physical energy and mobility. At the same time, it could undermine particular characteristics of traditional bureaucracy: the hierarchy of authority, the division of the organisation into fixed jurisdictional areas, and the extensive and systematic use of paperwork.

4 Enterprise House: the building of choice

4.1 Bent bureaucracy

When I returned to Enterprise House in 2007 for the second phase of fieldwork, it soon became apparent that the actual sociospatial negotiated order (Strauss 1978) had retained several features of a bureaucratic hierarchy. Enterprise House was not intensively used and the efforts of the Building User Group to keep the space clear had been abandoned. Apart from part-time employees and visitors like me, most people did not hot-desk. Because they were able to settle into an habitualized pattern, it had been possible for employees to create a stable spatial structure, which was different to the fluid, constantly changing network structure that the organisation designers had presented as an ideal. This spatial structure appeared to be a modified form of the hierarchies which had operated on the old campus. Hierarchical relations were evident at different scales and organisational levels: between team members and their managers; between these teams and the senior officers; and between Councillors and officers. The 'inequality of space' (Ferguson and Gupta 2002) which had previously existed in the old campus, a material environment which encouraged it, had been recreated in Enterprise House, even though this new environment appeared to

be able to create a levelled hierarchy. All of these hierarchical sociospatial relationships were, however, maintained through 'invisible lines' (Muetzelfeldt 2006) and so could not be identified by merely looking. I was initially puzzled by Lefebvre's (1991) suggestion that the visibility of abstract space makes the analysis of social relations 'harder and more paradoxical' (p.83). However, the fieldwork I conducted in this second phase seemed to illustrate Lefebvre's point, that visibility can be a distraction which draws attention away from the structure of social relations, which in this case were demarcated, as Muetzelfeldt (2006) indicates, by invisible lines. The way in which the space was used by employees in different roles and at different levels suggested that, as Warhurst and Thompson (1998) say, 'vertical structures [remained] the backbone' (p.17) of SCC's strategic centre. This hierarchical sociospatial structure also exemplified Lefebvre's (1991) argument that the space of work supports both 'productive activity and position in the mode of production' (p.288) – something that was not apparent when considering the shallow office space during the early phase of occupation.

This sociospatial structure recognisably reflected bureaucracy as it is represented in the 'ideal type'. It appeared to be the case, however, that the hierarchy was blurred and reshaped in distinctive ways in the more open space. Newman (2005) argues that the drive to create laterally connected networks and partnerships in the 'network governance' phase of public sector reform has been to 'bend' rather than 'break' bureaucracy, because new network structures have overlaid and reshaped, but not supplanted hierarchical ones. Similarly, it seemed to be the case that Enterprise House bent the bureaucratic structures of SCC rather than replacing them with networks. Hierarchical relationships within and across teams and directorates appeared to be blurred because of the greater degree of informal communication between managers and their team members and because (provided they had sufficiently high status) managers such as Jeff could '*just swan up*' to their colleagues in other directorates. The usual hierarchical patterns of interaction appeared to be reversed when the top managers travelled to meet lower status staff, rather than meetings taking place on their own 'territory', although this reversal of a former spatial pattern can also be seen as maintaining pre-existing hierarchical differences in the new, open environment. The pre-existing hierarchy seemed to be both stretched and condensed by the presence of the Councillors in what was effectively a private area, thus creating what Elizabeth referred to as '*a top stratum and the rest*'. However, the sociospatial structure appeared nonetheless to be a variant of the hierarchically organised bureaucratic 'ideal type'. It cannot be assumed that that this structure was the outcome of individual choices – some managers and staff may have preferred to sit separately from one another, and most respondents suggested that there were times when they would find this preferable. However, this pattern of 'bent

bureaucracy' appeared to be the sociospatial structure which had become institutionalised.

This hierarchical sociospatial context appeared to support different types of work to different extents. Employees had a variety of different types of projects to pursue, and they typified the space in different ways, according to their purpose at hand (Auburn and Barnes 2006). I categorised these differing classes of 'project' as networking, being managed, doing specialist work and managing. The enablements and constraints created by the social and material structure of the building had different implications for these different types of activity. This is summarised in Table 8.5 (p.251).

4.2 Networking

The environment of Enterprise House appeared to support the work performed by high status networkers very well. Their accounts suggested a marked improvement to their implicit contract, especially for those who had previously worked in what they presented as lower standard accommodation. Because of their status, the invisible lines marking out hierarchical differences were permeable to these employees. Therefore, once they were acquainted with the sociospatial structure, they were able to see *'that the whole building is geared up to enable you to work and is very enabling and facilitative'* as Annabel said. High status networkers could just *'swan up'* to their colleagues in other directorates, exactly like the *'popping along'* which James had originally advocated.

Useful work could then be performed through planned or spontaneous encounters in the informal collective spaces of the building. The building seemed to support this networking process in a variety of ways. It enabled easy visual and physical access to colleagues working in different directorates and at different levels. Networkers also indicated that the high status symbolism of the building helped their work. The impression of Enterprise House as 'new-look local government ... more like a smart corporate headquarters than a centre of regional government'¹ appeared to confer high status on networkers in the context of their relationships with external contacts, but in a way that was not imposing, so that the relationships were informal and productive. The efforts that networkers had to put in included presenting a personal appearance congruent with this status, although they framed this as an enjoyable process. Being able to match the narrative provided by the building (Yanow 1997, 2003) seemed to enable networkers to develop a pleasing identity which was

¹ www.building.co.uk, accessed 21st February 2008

	Councillors	networking	working as a team member	specialists	doing managerial work
spatial practices	<p>maintain a separate 'private' office which others are discouraged from entering</p> <p>emerge to have 'tantrums' (Elizabeth)</p> <p>take precedence when booking meeting rooms</p>	<p>use all the spaces in the building for informal negotiation and relationship-building</p> <p>awareness of being seen by senior managers</p> <p>meticulous attention paid to personal appearance and dress</p>	<p>occupy more accessible desk positions</p> <p>may not be introduced to sociospatial landscape of the office</p> <p>two-way communication with managers is helpful</p> <p>demystifies managers</p> <p>sense of constant exposure and need to look busy</p> <p>managers are permitted to look at and check up on their subordinates</p>	<p>works at home for any 'involved, intelligent work' (Nick)</p> <p>irritated by overheard conversation</p>	<p>occupy less accessible desk positions</p> <p>privacy partially protected by 'invisible lines'</p> <p>more likely to be introduced to sociospatial landscape</p> <p>desk not used as a hot-desk</p> <p>can influence spatial practices (e.g. noise level) of others nearby</p> <p>senior managers locate meetings in subordinates' space</p> <p>may approach others, 'just swan up' (Jeff); or may hit 'invisible lines'</p> <p>team members are 'in line of sight' (Thomas)</p> <p>staff are not normally permitted to stare at superiors</p> <p>nowhere for 'uninterrupted thought' (Pat); nowhere you 'can just sit and reflect' (Elizabeth); nowhere to 'go and hide' after difficult situation (Thomas)</p>
lived space	<p>other staff may see Councillors as 'a top stratum' (Elizabeth)</p>	<p>'sense of pride'; 'modern, forward thinking' (Annabel)</p>	<p>'I love it .. open, light, airy, modern' (Jenny)</p> <p>'feel you're all part of the same thing' (Sunil)</p> <p>'resource of innovation and modernisation' (Shahida)</p> <p>feel like they care about what it's like as an atmosphere for the staff</p> <p>managers' status conferred to nearby staff</p>	<p>a 'call centre'; 'a greenhouse'; 'somehow or other modern is seen as more efficient'</p>	<p>'more than just a call centre' (Jeff)</p> <p>it says to the outside world 'don't mess with us' (Thomas)</p> <p>'there are times when I'd kill for my own office' (Jeff)</p> <p>organisation is geared for 'action and reaction' but not for informing targets, anticipating needs</p>

modern, forward thinking, fashionable, spontaneous, and persuasive. For the high status networkers, there appeared to be a sense of 'fit' between the tacit spatial rules of the place (Gieryn 2000) and the spatial practices they actually used, and between the 'authored' meanings (Yanow 1998, 2006) of the building and the meanings they attributed to it. However, employees of lesser status who attempted networking were not always successful, because such attempts might cut across invisible lines which were not permeable to them, so that a sense of rebuff could result.

4.3 Team members

Most team members expressed ambivalence about the new building, although on balance, they suggested that it represented a clear improvement to previous accommodation they had occupied. This sense of improvement appeared to be linked to the constructed meanings (Yanow 1998) they attributed to Enterprise House and which appeared to signal an enhancement of their status. The modern, glass construction and artwork implied that the staff were valued by their employer, and spoke to the outside world of their status too. Their association with Enterprise House placed team members in a new social milieu compared to the types of office they might previously have occupied (such as Shahida's '*dusty old community resource unit*'). In this building, the relatively low status of team members was not signalled spatially as it would typically have been for most team members in conventional offices. It appeared that the aspirations expressed by the architect that employees would feel that '*they belonged to a team that was doing something, going somewhere*' was fulfilled for many team members.

However, team members expressed ambivalence in relation to their proximity to their managers in the open plan offices. The advantages of proximity were that it was possible to speak with the manager informally, and their nearness was also symbolic, so that the manager's status 'rubbed off' on team members. Many team members also reported a series of disadvantages associated with constant exposure. They had to appear busy; they risked being caught '*skiving*' or not following protocols; managerial discipline was always exercised in a semi-public way; and there was nowhere to hide or '*just be*' as Julie had said. These accounts align with Hofbauer's (2000) observation that open plan offices create the need for constant impression management – in Enterprise House, there was no 'backstage' to retreat to and express anything which contradicted the officially intended meaning. The phenomenon of constant visibility can also be linked with Duffy's (1997) enthusiasm for 'unremitting teamwork' (p.10) in the 'new office' and Castells' (1996) apparent endorsement

of fluid networks which are 'relentlessly modified as networks adapt to supportive environments and market structures' (p.198). In Enterprise House, constant visibility appeared also to imply unremitting availability. The situation in which '*there's nowhere you can go and just be*' speaks of an exhausting need to present oneself as working in the expected manner, for the entire working day. As Kunda (2006) argues, normative control implies 'heavy claims against the self' (p.13), since it seeks to encompass the thoughts, feelings and experiences of employees. Because of the condition of constant visibility, in Enterprise House, there appeared to be constant pressure to display such appropriate thoughts, feelings and experiences. If we view the work of team members in terms of the 'non-inclusive' roles from which bureaucracy is composed (Kallinikos 2004), the result of the constant visibility of team members was that their roles encompassed a greater proportion of the time in their working day. For these staff, Enterprise House implied a heavier claim than conventional accommodation because of the increased time spent 'in role' which it demanded. I return to the issue of visibility later in this chapter.

4.4 Specialist work

Most people whose roles consisted mainly of performing specialist work disliked the building because of the lack of privacy and quiet which they said that they required for their work. For some specialists, the allotted desk space could not accommodate the equipment or other, written, resources they needed. Consequently, most specialists reported a marked deterioration in their implicit contract and tended to rebalance this by simply working at home. The situation appeared to be slightly better for specialists who were based in less accessible parts of the building where there was less visual distraction and passing traffic. One specialist, Nick, was therefore able to notice the assumption that modern architecture supports efficiency, because for him, the two did not go together. Some expressed strong dislike of the building and complained about many features such as the size of the lifts, the bad design, the heat in summer, the noise and the fact that cleaning took place during the working day. Nick summed this thoroughgoing dislike of the building when he described it as '*wrong, wrong, wrong!*'. A sense of not-belonging is an overlooked form of place identity (Manzo 2003), so for Nick and many other specialists the building appeared to represent the 'not-me' (Carroll and Levy 2008) against which they actively positioned themselves.

4.5 Managerial work

Many managers appeared to be ambivalent about the new space and their accounts were the most contradictory. While they often expressed pleasure in relation to the relative ease of managing team members and networking with other managers, sharing space with their team members resulted in numerous and sometimes irritating interruptions. As Jeff remarked, *'there are times when I'd kill for my own office'*. There were also particular situations which made sharing the space uncomfortable (such as following an appraisal that had gone badly) because proximity allowed the manager and staff member no escape from the stressful situation. While most managers' accounts focused on the spatial practices they used in the building, they were also sensitive to the way it could be construed by other constituencies.

Enterprise House catered for all the different activities built into managerial roles by providing a range of different spaces designed for different functions and with different degrees of formality. This was originally proposed to give all employees choices over what type of work they could undertake and where. Although this choice was available, in practice, managers often did not avail themselves of these alternative spaces. While it was possible to travel to a small meeting room to undertake a confidential phone call, or to sit and read, several managers suggested that they were too busy to travel back and forth, even if the journey was short. Even when sitting in concentration in a small meeting room, they could still be spotted and interrupted.

Thus, in the strategic centre there appeared to be a wide variety of activities which employees were pursuing, in the context of particular job roles which could either focus strongly on one activity (as in the case of specialists) or include several (as in the case of managers). For some staff (particularly the high status networkers) the building seemed to offer them freedom and choice in ways that helped them work effectively. For others, the building appeared to inhibit the performance of their work. These diverse accounts take us back to Cairns' (2002) advice (mentioned in chapter 1) that although 'new office' architecture is presented in some literature as empowering and in other literature as oppressive, we should not assume that either of these views is 'correct'. Rather, as Cairns (2002) suggests, these differences are 'framed by different contexts of thought and action and ... result in very different forms of socially constructed reality' (p.808). In Enterprise House, the varying accounts appeared to relate to the different contexts of thought and action shaped by different types of job role, exactly as Auburn and Barnes (2006) suggest when they argue that 'what we know at a particular point in our engagement with the world

is fitted to or selected as relevant to the project we are pursuing' (p.42).

The diverse opinions expressed by occupants of Enterprise House can also be considered in the context of Duffy's (1997) 'design logic' upon which the design of the building appeared to be based. Duffy's claim is that office design becomes integral to organisational strategy when categories of workers with different spatial requirements are separated, so that each group is accommodated in an environment that caters for the degree of autonomy and interaction that they require. Enterprise House appeared to be designed as a 'club' office fitted to 'transactional knowledge work' (p.65) undertaken by high status managers and professionals requiring high levels of both interaction and autonomy. And the organisation designers argued in 2004 that this design would support the formation of a fluid organisation structure resembling the network or post-bureaucratic form. In practice, however, not all the job roles actually undertaken by the staff based in the strategic centre fitted the assumptions made about work in either of these models. In SCC, the 'principle of occupancy' of the strategic centre agreed in 2004 was based on the criterion of a County-wide geographic spread of job role. The organisation designers argued that this would separate people with strategic responsibilities from those with operational roles, thus replacing the former spatial divisions based on directorates with a division between conception and execution. This decision made implicit use of the assumptions of encompassment/ verticality which Ferguson and Gupta (2002) argue is typical of the spatial organisation of states: higher level managers have responsibility for a geographical area which encompasses the areas of lower level officials, and this encompassment enables the managers' roles to 'sit above' their subordinates. In SCC, however, this way of deciding on the occupancy of the strategic centre appeared not to coincide with a universal requirement for high interaction and autonomy which, according to Duffy (1997), determines a fit with the 'club' office. The division of 'strategy' from 'operational detail' adopted in SCC is becoming increasingly common in the public sector (du Gay 2004, Hoggett 2005) and reflects the now taken for granted separation of conception and execution in the private sector (Massey 1995). The approach taken by SCC of spatially separating strategy from operations may, therefore, also be taken up in other public sector organisations. This analysis suggests that if the division is made on the basis of the geographical spread of role, as was the case in SCC, there is no guarantee that this will coincide with the 'design logic' advocated by Duffy (1997) and new public sector offices created on this basis may not fulfil the ambitious outcomes they are designed to achieve.

5 Troy House: the rise of the exchange value of space

5.1 Officially stated intentions for Troy House: flexibility

In 2005 when Troy House was acquired, refurbished and occupied by staff seconded from SCC to FirstService, responsibility for the acquisition and use of buildings had transferred to the Workspace Improvement Team, who worked alongside Simon (the original Project Consultant for Enterprise House). The members of this team were the new organisation designers whom I interviewed to investigate the official intentions for Troy House. When the Property Strategy was being formulated in 2004, the SCC senior managers strongly expressed the need for equality of accommodation across the organisation because, as James pointed out, he was *'Chief Executive of the whole organisation, not just the people here'*. For them, this meant raising the material standard of other office environments at the same time as spreading the new networked, flexible working practices they argued were essential. However, in 2007, the official intentions expressed by the WIT for the way in which this space should be used stressed that it could contribute to the cost-efficiency of the organisation and could enable employees to be spatially reorganised to fit changing circumstances. Unlike in Enterprise House, where the exchangeable property of the office space was not put to significant use, the exchangeable property of the space in Troy House was exploited, in that employees were periodically spatially reconfigured (*'re-stacked'*) and the use of the building intensified (*'crunched'*) to adapt to changing circumstances. This way of using the space appeared to fit well with the organisation of work in FirstService, where job roles were framed as collections of business processes which could flexibly be replicated, adapted or withdrawn. The definition of jobs as the summation of particular processes maps precisely onto the non-inclusive employment relationship which Kallinikos (2003, 2004) suggests is central to modern organisation. In FirstService, the use of business processes, the exchangeable space and the apparently centralised exercise of managerial control all appeared to work together to produce a way of organising which prioritised *'flexibility for short term predictability'* (Watson 2003:111). This was because, as Kallinikos (2004) argues, regarding job roles as modules enables them to be reshuffled, replicated, adapted and withdrawn and thus compose a wide variety of different possible organisational forms, even though the basic units are standardised.

As the accounts from the WIT staff and the Project Consultant suggested, this new way of working created a changed implicit contract which employees had to accept. An important element in the new *'inputs'* expected from staff was that they could be obliged to move, as a

consequence of the ‘re-stacking’ of the building, or the need for hot-desking brought about by the intensive occupation of Troy House. This is in contrast with the strategic centre, where the organisation designers presented Enterprise House as an enabling structure which opened up new freedoms for employees to move as they chose. While the loss of ownership of a desk was acknowledged *as* a loss in a context in which employees’ control over their work was already diminished as a result of wider changes (such as ‘Gershon’) the change was also presented as offering benefits. The loss of a desk could equally be seen as an opportunity to exploit new freedoms of movement that were enabled by mobile technology. The new exchange of efforts and rewards spoken of by the new organisation designers is summarised in Table 8.6.

expressed new inputs required	expressed new rewards available
<i>‘a flexible approach to working’</i> in which the employee can be moved at short notice	<i>‘a more flexible, dynamic job’</i>
	<i>‘a nice work environment’</i>
	freedom of movement and use of technology
	attractive social identity: active, mobile, masculine, technologically capable
loss of ownership of desk; loss of control over workspace	contribution to the protection of front line posts and demonstration of commitment to public service

Table 8.6 Organisation designers’ expressions of new inputs and rewards shaped by Troy House.

The new social identity offered by the use of the building was implied in different ways by the different organisation designers. For Simon, the Project Consultant, it offered an identity that was physically active, fully engaged with leading edge technology, and had a hint of masculinity. For the two women members of the WIT, while the use of the space offered possibilities for a more flexible and dynamic identity, it also represented a realistic and altruistic person who would prioritise the overarching purpose of public service rather than seeking to perpetuate the benefits they had historically enjoyed as employees.

5.2 The ‘workhouse’ and identity: leaving your personality at the door

In Troy House, the sociospatial structure which appeared to have emerged was based on distinctions between the CMT and other members of staff, and between people who could settle and others who hot-desked. The different spatial practices used by these groups appeared to be central to their experience of working in the building and the way in which organisational hierarchies were produced. However, the majority of employees I spoke with expressed similar interpretations of the meaning of the workspace and participated in the jokes about Troy House, in which it was referred to as a ‘workhouse’, ‘battery farm’ (etc.). The staff also commented on how the environment, in combination with the use of business processes to organise their work, reflected on their identities as employees. These observations are summarised in Table 8.7.

observations made by FirstService employees about Troy House
metaphors for FirstService/ Troy House used by FirstService employees: <i>‘the workhouse’</i> ; <i>‘the battery farm’</i> ; <i>‘the mental health hospital’</i>
metaphors for FirstService/ Troy House used by employees in Enterprise House: <i>‘the Dark Side’</i> ; <i>‘WorstService’</i>
absence of colour and artwork in Troy House implies that FirstService employees were <i>‘the poor relations’</i> . Also implies focus on function and efficiency, <i>‘you leave your personality and character at the door’</i>
multiple copies of official posters, drinks coasters and values statements framed as <i>‘a bombardment of propaganda’</i>
occupation of separate ‘room’ on the top floor by CMT members spoken of as <i>‘like the 1950s’</i> ; scepticism about official intention to level the hierarchy.
former employees of X-En enjoy the <i>‘buzz’</i> of Troy House.

Table 8.7 Observations made by FirstService employees about Troy House

Apart from two respondents who had joined FirstService directly from X-En, all other respondents suggested that the combined organisational and spatial change that had taken place with the move to FirstService and Troy House had led to a marked deterioration in their implicit contract. This resulted from the control of their work through business

processes, the centralised managerial arrangements, and the physical environment of Troy House. In the analysis of these changes, it has been difficult to disentangle the use of space from these other elements, since they appeared to work together. Respondents did not present the new arrangements as explicit attempts to regulate or manage their identity. However, many of them commented on the way in which the new work environment appeared to reflect back on them a new version of who they should be when at work. As Ross commented, *'you see around you a world that is designed around making the optimum use of you as a unit of money making 'this is how we want you to behave and we will remind you of that'... constantly'*. The new organisational and spatial environment was interpreted by many respondents as reflecting a work identity which was pared down to the job role defined by the sum of the business processes they were now responsible for enacting, so that the work could be performed as efficiently as possible and profit could be maximised. For instance, as Ross put it, *'you need to be someone who can be, for the working day, very process driven. If that's in your nature you're going to be OK. But if it's not in your nature you need to be able to play at doing that'*. As Luke similarly stated, *'[y]ou are scripted to behave in a certain way'*. Former aspects of their work which were no longer required by the new roles were then difficult to include as part of the work process. For example, one respondent expressed regret over the loss of the ability *'to be spontaneous'* and another suggested that he was starting to lose his interpersonal skills because the environment made it easier to use the computer to communicate with colleagues rather than going to see them. According to these accounts, employees had to instantly enact changes to the processes, including a change from one job role to a completely different one (i.e., a change to the entire set of processes). Some respondents commented that the comparative austerity of the environment also reflected this type of cut-down role back on its occupants, as Chloe suggested, *'it's just that you leave your personality and character at the door. ... When you come through the door, it's that identity bit that goes. So if you haven't got your identity, it doesn't really mean as much'*. These comments imply that employees were responding to what they saw as changes to their implicit contract by a withdrawal of commitment to the FirstService. This outcome does not reflect the predictions about how the move to Troy House would affect employees' perceptions of their employment relationship made by the WIT – either of the engaged, mobile, masculine worker, or of the realistic, altruistic but nonetheless engaged employee.

5.3 The relationship between settlers and hot-deskers

In Enterprise House, the spatial structure of relationships broadly reflected the structures of

the various managerial hierarchies in the strategic centre. In contrast, the spatial structure created in Troy House appeared to divide into people who settled in one spot and people who hot-desked, with time of arrival being the principal way of securing the same desk on a daily basis. The people who settled presented this as an innocuous and useful daily routine. Settling meant that there was continuity of proximity to particular colleagues and useful artefacts could be kept at hand. Settling was thus an habitualization which freed the employee from having to repeat basic preparatory tasks and so '[opened] up a foreground for deliberation and innovation' (Berger and Luckmann 1966:71). For the settlers, as Lefebvre (1991) suggests, this particular spatial practice '[ensured] continuity and some degree of social cohesion' (p.33). The value placed on the retention of these habitualizations by settlers suggests that, if used exchangeably as was officially intended, the environment of Troy House fell short of properly supporting their work. Settling can also be understood as an attempt to 'reinststate' parts of the individual identity not represented in the job role, as Elsbach (2003) and Warren (2006) argue in their discussions of 'squatting' and 'nesting'. And, as Goffman (1961) also points out, as well as being the materials from which we build our identities, personal artefacts can also obstruct attempts to manage us. In his discussion of the relationship between staff and inmates of asylums, Goffman (1961) suggests that 'the ease with which [the inmate] can be managed by staff is likely to increase with the degree to which he is dispossessed' (p.76). Goffman bases this conclusion on a discussion of a washable, all-in-one suit used in one asylum, which could be adjusted to fit any inmate and which bore appropriate flaps and vents facilitating his rapid processing through the physical events of the day. Therefore, as well as enabling the continuation of useful habitualizations and acting as an expression of employees' individual identities, there may also have been an element of old-fashioned resistance in some of the settling behaviour in Troy House.

For hot-deskers, however, there was less continuity and social cohesion. On a daily basis, hot-deskers had to re-invent activities which would normally be habitualized (such as finding a desk), a process described as '*faffing about*' by one respondent. Faffing about was thus spoken of as *inefficient* because it involved tasks that should not have been necessary. This situation created a rather awkward relationship between the people who could settle and those who could not. Settling was officially not legitimate, but it was nonetheless an enduring practice to which FirstService managers appeared to turn a blind eye; it appeared to be an 'indulgency pattern' (Gouldner 1954:45), a concession made by managers in return for other demands that they might make. This created a predicament for the hot-deskers. If they used a desk that was settled, this could be seen as an impolite infringement of space informally 'belonging' to another employee. If they chose not to use a settled desk, the hot-

desker might then have to wander round in search of a vacant one, feeling a sense of irritation that so many spaces were already 'claimed'. Most of us will at some time have dealt with similar situations when using public spaces. For instance, many of us will have felt irritation when, having queued to pay for our lunch in a café, we find that there are no seats available because they have all been 'reserved' by companions of the people behind us in the queue. Or perhaps a neighbour of ours reserves the parking space outside his house by placing an object in it, or by getting their spouse to park in the centre of a wider space, who then moves their car along to make room when the neighbour arrives home. In Troy House, although the hot-deskers appeared to fulfil the official intentions of the move away from 'one person, one desk' in SCC and exemplified the ideal of the 'full non-territorial environment' designed around the needs of business processes which Allen et al (2005) claim is the ultimate stage in the evolution of office space, they also appeared to be disadvantaged in both practical and emotional ways. For the hot-deskers, the combined spatial and social environment of Troy House was 'slippery' (Buchanan 2005) in that it '[hurried] the postmodern subject onwards like a slippery slope' (p.19). As I have suggested, however, this 'hurrying' was more like 'trudging' – far from the images of speed evoked by notions such as the 'space of flows' (Castells 1996) and even Buchanan's (2005) notion of slipperiness, which suggest swift, purposeful, unimpeded movement. What produced this slippery quality was not the exchangeability of the desks or a managerial intervention forbidding settling. Rather, it was competition for space created by the high ratio of staff: desks that appeared to force hot-deskers to keep moving. The task of sharing desks, a scarce resource in the crunched building, was in effect given to employees to manage between themselves. The situation is reminiscent of the withdrawal of line managerial control and the creation of 'self-managing teams' described by Ezzamel and Willmott (1998) which was experienced as divisive when former colleagues were turned into informal supervisors of each others' work.

As well as seeming to introduce a new division between settlers and hot-deskers, the everyday experience of hot-desking appeared to imply a different employment relationship for the hot-deskers. Compared with settlers and with their former situation of occupying conventional workspace, it was obvious to the hot-deskers that a desk was loaned to them by their employer, and only for the duration of their work session. The reversibility of their employment relationship was thus more apparent in their use of space (as well as being indicated by the instantaneous change made to some people's job roles, and the withdrawal of roles for the people made redundant). With conventional workspace, we tend to feel some sense of ownership over the space (Brown 2009) and are, for instance, able to welcome visitors to it as if it is 'ours'. This sense of ownership was illustrated by Annabel,

the high status networker in Enterprise House, who reported her sense of pride when guests to the building appeared impressed by its contemporary features. Dale and Burrell (2008) consider the combined social and spatial relationship between hosts and guests created in tourist attractions. In this relationship, they argue, the host 'holds the power of the space: the guest enters to the extent and at a pace dictated by the host' (p.53). For the hot-deskers, there appeared to be a shift in their relationship with the workspace, from 'host' to 'guest' that accompanied their experience of the slippery workspace. This shift in meaning may be worth further exploration. For instance, guests do not have the entitlement to alter the space – this is the host's privilege. Guest status is reversible - guests may be invited today, but may not be invited again tomorrow. And, as Duncan (2005) shows, guest status is characteristic of the use of public space, not the private space in which we can relax and 'call our own'. The spatial change from host to guest may therefore imply a changed, more temporary and precarious status for employees.

Both the new offices can be understood as examples of abstract space (Lefebvre 1991) designed to cater for abstract labour. And, as Kallinikos (2003, 2004) advises, abstract labour is designed as non-inclusive job roles which are selective, mobile and reversible. In Troy House, this feature of organisational design appeared to be given a high priority. The spatial dimension of this type of relationship was evident in the exchangeable space, which could be used more or less intensively and upon which employees could easily be reconfigured. The space was used exchangeably, even though this was inefficient and irritating for the people who complied with the official policy. Lefebvre (1991) argues that abstract space is first and foremost 'a medium of *exchange* (with the necessary implication of interchangeability) tending to absorb *use*' (p.307; italics original). The way that the workspace was used in Troy House appeared to exemplify this principle: that the exchange value of space 'trumps' its use value. This relationship may explain why, as Cairns (2002) points out, the users of work buildings are rarely if ever consulted in the design process; there is little value in consulting with people who may soon be substituted by other people. If the trend towards the exchangeable use of space continues (as Elsbach (2003) and Allen et al (2005) predict) then the likelihood of future employees being consulted over workplace design may reduce still further.

So far in the conclusion, I have highlighted the distinctive features of the emergent spatial structures in the two office buildings. I now examine two aspects which were common to both: the existence of a separate space for the 'top' group, and the condition of constant visibility which occupants of the offices experienced.

6 The private space of the top group: 'the top stratum and the rest'

In both Enterprise and Troy Houses, the group of staff who were positioned at the 'top' of each official hierarchy also occupied a separate space in their building, thus giving an impression of a new structure consisting of a '*top stratum and the rest*', as Elizabeth had put it (p.x). In both buildings, this spatial arrangement appeared to have been established early on. The maintenance of the Councillors' area as a private space in Enterprise House had been noticed by the organisation designers only a few weeks after the occupation of the building, and in FirstService, CMT managers immediately occupied the subtly enclosed 'room' on the top floor of Troy House. Possession of these separate areas seemed to be part of the way in which both groups maintained themselves as members of the highest status social category within their part of the organisation. In each case, this spatial relationship built upon pre-existing organisational structural relationships. In all local authorities, Councillors have a different role from officers, and in Enterprise House some Councillors had argued that they had a unique requirement for a private space in which confidential discussions could take place. In FirstService, there did not appear to be a similar justification for the spatial separation of the CMT members from the other senior managers and staff who occupied the open, busy floorplates. The CMT's occupation of the enclosed 'room' appeared to be noticed by the staff, but my impression was that they were not supposed to notice it or refer to it.

In both cases, these semi-private areas seemed to function as 'power spots' (Gieryn 2000:475), places from which control could be exercised and which were relatively inaccessible to others. As Ross suggested, the CMT 'room' was regarded as '*the dark corner where they all meet and have the real discussions ... and just tokenise the actual flattening [of the hierarchy]*'. As well as enabling control over everyday activity, in both buildings, these separate 'power spots' were associated with the episodic exercise of power, in which occupant(s) would emerge and exert open and possibly brutal discipline, before retreating back into the private area reserved for high status members. These episodes appeared to be instances of old-fashioned sovereign power (Foucault 1977), characterised by periodic but unpredictable visits made by the sovereign in order to discipline offenders and to remind the wider population of who is in charge. It is perhaps not surprising that these events were widely talked about, since they took place in the visual, open plan offices of those being disciplined. In their analysis of inequality of space, Ferguson and Gupta (2002) argue that the clearest illustration of the way in which different spatial practices produced

organisational hierarchy was the 'surprise inspection', in which higher officials would arrive unannounced in villages to publicly evaluate the performance of locality workers. In turn, the village workers learned to anticipate the surprise inspection by looking out for the giveaway sign of a plume of dust raised by the approaching Landrover. When this appeared, they would hastily compose an impression of orderly compliance in time for the arrival of the inspectors. Similarly, in both of SCC's new buildings, the rare but dramatic appearances of members of these 'top' groups created a heightened awareness of their presence, so that as Elizabeth put it, *'now everybody is aware that there are members ... we see the ripple effect of what members **require** ... but we haven't got the two-way bit in'*.

Ferguson and Gupta (2002) do not comment on the significance of the separate space from which the inspectors emerged and to which they returned once the surprise inspection had been performed. Examination of the same phenomenon at the much smaller scale of the offices, in which people of all statuses were supposed to be based together, reveals something about the significance of this 'somewhere else'. In these contexts, the private space enables the discipline to be enacted because without it, the senior manager or Councillor would have to remain with the people they had disciplined and would become the focus of intense, if covert observation by staff across the floorplate. As Thomas said, having to remain in proximity to a person who has just been given a bad appraisal is *'bad for you and it's bad for them'*. Further, in the offices, when the members of the top stratum emerged, they appeared not to follow the hierarchy in their exercise of control, but approached the staff member concerned directly. While the members of the top group appeared to consciously maintain their hierarchical position, they appeared to disregard any intermediate lower rungs of the same hierarchy when taking 'disciplinary' action; although they were at the 'top', it was all network 'out there'.

7 Visibility: the ecstasy and the agony

7.1 The visual formant and the body

In both of the new offices, being visible appeared to be a condition that could be experienced as pleasurable or oppressive. In 2004, James and Marcus had originally commented on its potential to encourage self-regulation with respect to the office etiquette, as well as a general sense of responsibility towards colleagues. Rory, the architect, had expressed doubt about whether being constantly visible was 'better', but suggested that in

time, people would accept visibility as normal and stop actively looking at others (as he argued they do on nudist beaches). In the second phase of fieldwork in 2007, rather than being a situation that was taken for granted, visibility was something that people seemed to notice and often remarked on. Some accounts of visibility were positive, for example, as Elizabeth remarked, visibility created '*much more acknowledgement of one another and acknowledgement of self*'. Many occupants suggested that they paid more attention to their dress and appearance, and for some, this seemed to be a pleasurable activity. But there were also many expressions of dislike of constant visibility. Earlier I discussed the experience of lower status team members whose constant exposure to managerial surveillance (whether intended or not) led to a situation in which they were always acting 'in role'. In both buildings, there was nowhere to go if people were upset, and nowhere to go '*and just be*', as Julie had put it. Thomas, the Head of Communications, expressed a very strong reaction to being looked at when he was engaged in what he intended should be a confidential discussion. Thomas appeared to be very accomplished at self-presentation and wore flamboyant, raffish clothing. He did not appear to be reluctant to draw attention to himself, yet reacted savagely to the staff who looked at him during what should have been a backstage activity, describing them in graphic terms - '*they smell fresh meat ... the eyeballs follow you into the room ... the meerkat response*'. And the visibility of both Enterprise and Troy Houses appeared to be consciously deployed by managers executing the redundancies in FirstService to secure control in a high risk situation. The outcome of this approach was that shocked, upset employees were forced to march compliantly back to their desks in Troy House before leaving the organisation altogether, in full view of their colleagues.

When I first read Lefebvre's (1991) polemic against the visual formant of abstract space, I regarded it as somewhat exaggerated. Lefebvre talks, for example, of the violence of visual space, of the 'intense onslaught of visualisation' (p.261) through which:

That which is merely seen is reduced to an image – and to an icy coldness. ... space has no social existence independently of an intense, aggressive and repressive visualization. ... The rise of the visual realm entails a series of substitutions and displacements by means of which it overwhelms the whole body and usurps its role. (p.286).

I now see the visual formant as a key dimension of abstract space which acts by creating pressure for individuals to present themselves in what is regarded as the appropriate way, through the intense visualization that Lefebvre (1991) identifies. Visibility thus enforces the rules of place by acting on the body. In the new offices, the appropriate way of presenting the body appeared to be to show it as active, positive and attractive. As is often the case in

Lefebvre's (1991) work, he assumes that the visual realm can only be a constraint, so that, for instance, it 'overwhelms the whole body and usurps its role' (p.286). In SCC's new offices, however, visibility could also represent an opportunity, and appropriate, stylish self-presentation was spoken of by some respondents as an enjoyable, positive choice. But for people who were upset or unwell, having to present themselves in an upbeat way was spoken of as extreme pressure. In this situation, abstract space did indeed seem to 'usurp' the body, and through the visual formant repressed (for instance) crying in appraisals, expressions of outrage in relation to the redundancies, the death of Henry's wife, the brain tumour, (and so on), so that orderly productive co-operation could be maintained.

7.2 The visual formant, hierarchy and gender

At a late stage in the production of the thesis, I noticed the significance of gender in the way that visibility was experienced, and began to speculate about the implications of this difference in terms of the way that organisational hierarchies are produced. When conducting the fieldwork and the initial analysis, I did not regard gender as an important analytic category, even though, as Massey (1995) indicates, gender and class divisions are implicated in spatial divisions between conception and execution. In SCC, a high proportion of senior managers and some Councillors were women, and many of them seemed to enjoy participating in a social arena where they could display their beautiful clothing and good taste, and where tiny differences in attire proclaimed significant status differences. In this organisation, gender divisions did not appear to coincide with spatial divisions and it therefore seemed different from the male-dominated manufacturing firms and science parks studied by Massey (1995) and Massey et al (1992).

As Lefebvre (1991) argues, however, visual abstract space 'overwhelms the whole body' (p.286) and the body is socially constructed differently for men and women. Initially, when conducting fieldwork, I too enjoyed taking care over my own appearance, although as time progressed I found this degree of self-consciousness burdensome. When talking to male students in breakout areas, I became accustomed to the way that the student's attention might temporarily wander as his gaze alighted upon a young woman traversing the walkway. These walkways were very long, so that the man's opportunity to view the woman might continue for many seconds and it was almost possible to see his inner dilemma involving a wish to watch the woman, but also not to appear rude. In this sense, the new buildings seemed to elicit similar behaviour to the nudist beaches analysed by Douglas and Rasmussen (1978) where the men consciously and systematically observed women. And in the new

offices, the women were of course aware of this everyday observation. One interviewee spoke of her embarrassment when suffering from hot flushes; another said she did not like to eat lunch in her breakout area because it was too 'overt'. One explained how the young men on her bench had ranked female candidates attending for interview in order of attractiveness. Two complained of their distress when they had been visible when in tears in a small meeting room. One pointed out the indignity of having to go down on all fours to rearrange the cabling before using a desk in Troy house. It seems, then, that women may have experienced greater extremes of the pleasures and burdens of being visible.

The heightened observation which women experienced contrasted with the 'civil inattention' (Goffman 1971) which was the normal manner when passing near to strangers in the new offices. As Goffman (1971) points out, civil inattention is a form of courtesy, in which the other is first acknowledged, followed by polite withdrawal of interest. However, as West (1996) argues, civil inattention is complicated by gender because it is considered legitimate and even a sign of healthy masculinity for men to stare openly at women. The relationship between the distinctive patterns of looking and being looked at experienced by men and women and organisational hierarchy may be worth further investigation. As Ferguson and Gupta (2002) argue, asymmetrical patterns of movement in which 'superiors' can traverse the space of their subordinates, but not the reverse, produce and sustain organisational hierarchy. Although in their study it was male inspectors who 'swooped down' on female village workers, the gender dimension of this pattern is not noted explicitly by Ferguson and Gupta (2002). In the new offices I studied, there appeared to be what we might call 'inequality of looking' in which there was a difference in the extent and way in which men looked at women, which was exaggerated in comparison with conventional offices because of the large visual realm created by the big open spaces. I therefore think that the relationship between these gender-related spatial practices and organisational hierarchy is worth investigating further.

8 The spatially transformed organisation

8.1 Equality and inequality in spatial reconfiguration

In this final part of the discussion I want to step back and consider the wider pattern of spatial reconfiguration that was made across the organisation between 2004 and 2010. As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the reconfiguration that took place can

legitimately be considered as a transformation, since the spatial and organisation structures that exist now in SCC bear little resemblance to the ones that pre-dated the acquisition of Enterprise House. In 2004, when the new strategic centre had just been occupied, the justification for the strategy which subsequently produced this transformation was the restoration of equality between the workspaces used by employees across the organisation. As James pointed out, the existence of the strategic centre risked producing '*a sense of an 'us and them'*' because of the huge disparity between the material quality of this building and others owned by SCC. And his colleague Marcus also observed that the new building risked widening the gulf between the small strategic group brought together in Enterprise House and the people excluded from it, who would have '*seen that 4% get better accommodation and be more élitist and more integrated with each other, not with them outside*'. Thus, the organisation designers argued that the people left outside the centre would not be able to adopt the flexible, network-based ways of working used by strategic staff and this would limit the organisation's ability to develop what James called its '*wider leadership role*' with the public. These two themes of material quality and 'new ways of working' were taken up in the Property Strategy of 2004 and again in the plans for Public Service Villages issued by the WIT in 2007. 'Equality', in terms of the material workspace and the way in which people were expected to work, thus dominated the official justification for this massive programme of acquisition and disposal of buildings, and spatial and structural reorganisation.

The pattern of spatial reconfiguration adopted in SCC, with separate buildings for strategy and various elements of operations, reflects the trend in the UK private sector identified by Massey (1995), in which strategic functions are performed at HQ, and other plants manufacture components and assemble finished products. As well as the official hierarchy of line management, Massey (1995) argues that this way of defining tasks, allocating workers to them and placing different groups of workers at different sites forms a second, implicit hierarchy 'which represents different degrees of removal of job control and deskilling' (p.69). Likewise in SCC, similar implicit hierarchies could be seen operating in the strategic centre and 'back office'. In Enterprise House, the 'higher level' staff seemed to have more control over their work processes and so resembled the strategic staff studied by Massey (1995), who 'dress differently, may not have closely defined work schedules, and have considerable latitude to decide for themselves what they should be doing' (p.143). In contrast, in Troy House, employees were '*scripted to behave in a certain way*' by the tight control over their work that was exercised using business processes. The rationale for Duffy's (1997) 'design logic' is that such spatial divisions should reflect pre-existing requirements for autonomy for different groups of staff. In SCC, however, it appeared to be the case that the level of autonomy was constructed partly through the emplacement of staff groups into separate

buildings. The existence of a separate building for FirstService staff perhaps made it possible for managers to initiate their relationships with staff in a way that emphasised their managerial authority. As Alex described it, the initial encounter between Telecom and their new staff in FirstService appeared to say to them '*we've got the power, we've got the money, we tell you what to do and you be grateful for it, and you do anything we ask you to do*'. It would probably have been much more difficult for the FirstService CMT to have acted in this way if FirstService had shared its workspace with other local authority staff whose employment relationship was not being reinitiated in this way. As Lefebvre (1991) points out, '[v]isible boundaries such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity' (p.86-87). And as I have sought to show, the relationship between FirstService staff and the Local authority from which they were seconded was highly ambiguous, with the staff still feeling that they 'belonged' to their public sector employer, while being treated in an entirely different way as workers in the context of the PPP. In this case, then, rather than seeing the spatial division between the strategic centre and 'back office' as a way of accommodating the needs of different staff groups, I see it, as Massey (1992) suggests, as '*instrumental in the construction of social status and differentiation*' (p.2; my italics).

Massey (1995) argues that regional spatial separation between 'headquarters' and 'branch plants' is often used to limit workers' awareness of the contrasts between the beautiful, enclosed environments enjoyed by the research employees and the dirty, crowded conditions experienced by production staff. With regional separation, inter-site contact can be avoided and unproductive feelings of envy do not spread. In SCC, however, regional separation between the strategic centre and the back office was not made, and the uncomfortable contrast between the different material environments and types of control used was clearly visible. This was expressed vividly by employees on both sides of the 'divide' using terms such as '*the Dark Side*' and '*the poor relations*' to represent FirstService. As Massey (1992) argues, the existence of a strategic hub implies the existence of operational periphery in which '[t]he undeniably good conditions for the few are not generalisable to the majority' (p.11).

8.2 The future's slippery, if you're in the periphery

In addition to the two hierarchies of line management and degree of autonomy over work already recognised by Massey (1995) within the predominant conception-execution spatial division, there appeared to be a third implicit hierarchy operating within the reconfiguration

in SCC. What seemed to distinguish these interconnected spaces, in addition to their relative positions in the managerial hierarchy and the gradient of control over the work, is the slipperiness of the space. In Enterprise House, although the office space was exchangeable, it was not used in this way. The outcome of this was that employees settled at their allotted desks and sociospatial relations were structured in a recognisably bureaucratic hierarchy, with a 'top stratum' of Councillors in their private area, and hierarchies of managers and officers in the rest of the building. In this context, Muetzelfeldt's (2006) suggestion that 'space itself does not carry, let alone impose, rules, meanings, invisible boundaries or relationships of surveillance' (p.125) seemed to be fulfilled. The sociospatial structure in Enterprise House did not appear to spring from the materiality of the site itself but rather, as Muetzelfeldt (2006) argues, 'from the cultural categories that are enacted and reproduced through the discourse, memories, beliefs and practices of organisational members' (p.125). The situation in Enterprise House appeared to be comparable to the new Chinese factory studied by Rofel (1991) in which attempts to reshape spatial practices were met with 'polysemous histories of past spatial relations' (p.95). In the new factory, memories were not erased by the introduction of the new material environment, a situation which leads Rofel (1991) to question the existence of a homogenising modernity. Similarly, in Enterprise House, hierarchical spatial practices were recreated in the new workspace, even though it had been designed to shape non-hierarchical work processes. Negotiations between managers and their team members enabled managers to partially reclaim some of their managerial spatial privileges. This was not achieved by managers creating '*six foot stacks [of paperwork] around them*' as James had originally feared, but through the institutionalisation of new place-based rules of civility.

Apart from the members of the CMT who had taken root in their semi-private office, FirstService employees appeared to have a more precarious hold on their space. In the 'sweated' offices of Troy House, the workspace was experienced as slippery by the hot-deskers, who were obliged to keep on the move as a consequence of the 'crunching' of the building and the competition for space which this set up. Employees could be moved via the 'restacking' that accompanied changes in their roles. And several of them were removed altogether at short notice when they were made redundant. In Troy House, therefore, abstract space appeared to play a role in the 'homogenisation and pulverisation of everyday life', as Brenner (1997:143) suggests.

The employees further out in the organisational periphery, who were previously based in locality offices but then moved to PSVs after my fieldwork had ended, appear to be in a different situation. With the decision to implement the programme of outsourcing

recommended in StF in Spring 2011, these staff may be moved *en bloc* as outsourcing and competition for contracts takes place. As Caroline, the WIT manager, predicted in 2007, the exchangeable space that now exists across all the Council's office accommodation enables provider organisations to be substituted for each other in the ongoing competitive process. Many of the employees now working for SCC as part of the large organisational hierarchy will then become members of private sector agencies which can be 'turfed out', brought back in house, and turfed out again in the flexible, virtual Council, exactly as the WIT manager explained.

In place of a single large public sector hierarchy, by spring 2011 there will be a small strategic core dealing with commissioning and evaluating services, connecting with the 'back' office via a contract with the PPP, and connecting with a range of private or voluntary sector delivery agencies, again via contracts. While all of these office environments have the same material capacity for slipperiness, the actual slipperiness (a product of social relations, not just the physical properties of the space) appears to differ across these separate, but interconnected spaces. The high status managers and staff in the strategic centre appear to be able to put down roots in their HQ. There was more pressure on back office staff to move, and their hold on their space and their jobs appeared more precarious. Councillors in the strategic centre and the CMT members of FirstService both settled, and from these fixed positions they planned and articulated the movement of others.

This situation does not, therefore, seem to have fulfilled the intention to restore equality of accommodation expressed by the organisation designers in 2004. On the contrary, it seems to exemplify Massey's (1995) argument that the spatial division between organisational centre and periphery 'does not reduce spatial inequality. Rather, it requires it and reproduces it' (p.288). This is because, Massey (1995) argues, the very existence of a strategic centre requires production only outposts, so that the centre then occupies 'a position of structural dominance in comparison with, *and in relation to*, other [buildings]' because it is 'the prime locus of control, of strategic planning, of finance, of the resources for research and innovation' (Massey 1995:3; *italics original*). In a more general analysis of centre/ periphery relations, Giddens (1984) argues that the general tendency is for social 'centres' to maintain, not reduce, their superior status over time. Those who occupy spatial centres, he argues, establish themselves as having control over resources and employ a variety of forms of social closure to sustain difference between themselves and those in peripheral regions, who are effectively treated as inferiors or outsiders. Consequently, centre/ periphery divisions tend to endure over time (p.131).

I will finish the main discussion with a little speculation. To do so, I return to the idea that, as well as shaping our everyday routine practices and sets of meanings, the configuration of space also shapes the way we think and in so doing opens up possibilities for future action (Brocklehurst 2006, Guillèn 1997). As Lefebvre (1991) argues, abstract space tends to open up particular possibilities, while ruling out others, because it has the ability to bring about 'a reduction of the 'real' ... to a 'plan' existing in a void and endowed with no other qualities' (p.287). Brocklehurst (2006) too talks of the process of gridding space as the reduction of the three-dimensional landscape endowed with particular topographical features 'into a piece of graph paper' (p.83). And with the exchangeable space of new offices, it is much easier than before to move people around on the graph paper. The way that WIT staff noticed and seized upon new possibilities for organisational flexibility in which employees could be crunched, restacked, and turfed out may illustrate, as Kallinikos (2004) argues, the power of organisational artefacts to:

.. embody human experience, inviting particular modes of understanding and action that involve both the *framing of the reality* to be addressed, *the determination of particular tasks* and *their sequential patterning*. (p.19; italics original).

I wonder if this may have wider implications for public sector organisations. In her analysis of the spatial division of labour, Massey (1995) argued that her analysis applied only to the private sector because public sector organisations such as local authorities were place-based, i.e., had to be located near to where services were actually provided. However, the growing trend in the public sector towards the conception-execution division (Hoggett 2005) and in particular the separation of 'back office' from 'front line' services creates 'back office' units which need not be place-based, as Massey (1995) originally suggested. Accordingly, there appears to be a move to relocating some 'back office' services (or 'business processes' as they are referred to) to cheaper locations overseas, for example to India (Dossani and Kenney 2004). This may appear as a logical move for private sector partners such as Telecom involved in the provision of 'back office' services to local authorities. Doing so, however, will take to a new extreme the state's paradoxical role within capitalism (Brenner 1997) in which it is required to provide grids of space on which capitalism can be grounded and also to try and repair the fragmentation to social relations which result.

9 Where next? Limitations and future writing

One of the most useful insights from the project has been establishing the connection between the everyday use of space and the production of hierarchical relations. Gupta and

Ferguson's (2002) observation about the 'inequality of spaces' which produces taken-for-granted hierarchical state relations seemed to apply on a comparatively small scale, such as the segregated space for the topmost group and even ephemeral gestures such as looking or being looked at. It seems regrettable, however, that in some of the analysis undertaken in the later stages of the fieldwork, the people in these elite groups were not represented. To put the problem in Gupta and Ferguson's (2002) terms, there were plenty of data relating to the people being 'swooped down' upon, but a relative paucity from those doing the 'swooping'. An exception to this was Thomas, the Director of Communications. Thomas expressed the discomfort he experienced when having to sit opposite a member of staff straight after a difficult appraisal and this helped to formulate the idea that people who 'swoop down' need a place to retreat to following the exercise of managerial discipline. The fieldwork started out with unusually good access to the most senior managers in the local authority at a time of great confidence and optimism, and I was later disappointed to be 'thrown out' by the successor managers at a time when it might have been most interesting to talk to them. The absence of data from any of the senior managers in FirstService is a particular limitation, since some of the analysis (for instance, of the way the redundancy exercise was handled) is implicitly critical of their actions. However, it was never likely that I would be able to interview FirstService managers. The new PPP was part of a Telecoms giant and the initiative formed a key part of its strategy to secure a foothold in the public sector. In this sense I was fortunate to secure access to Troy House at all, and I therefore have to rely solely on the accounts from FirstService staff.

Although there were limitations in terms of access, stumbling on the project itself was an enormous stroke of luck. When I began the fieldwork in 2004 I conceptualised it as an investigation into culture change for one group of staff in a building which at the time was a very unusual one, especially in the public sector. When this triggered the organisation-wide property strategy the case study mushroomed and unfolded into a range of buildings, places, organisational and occupational groups. This enabled me to understand the buildings as 'the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny' (Massey 2005:9) and to analyse relationships across these overlapping portions of space. My involvement in the organisation at the outset of this process seems to be an instance of being in the right place at the right time which might not happen again in my research career.

Although the research focused on two 'new office' buildings, I visited many other buildings spread across the County during the fieldwork. Many of these buildings on the old campus and in localities have since been abandoned; these were the places which senior managers

construed as producing an organisation that was 'behind' other authorities. When visiting such places I noticed how affectionately they were spoken of by their occupants. Many people told stories about events in these buildings, such as the annual growing of tomatoes on the patio outside one Social Services office, or the man who came into another office to report that he had 'lost his horse'. A woman working in a rather shabby daycare centre for learning-disabled adults always baked a cake for the committee meetings she co-ordinated (evoking the 'warm culture' that Gouldner (1954) tells us existed before the arrival of the modernising new management in the gypsum factory). These employees expressed strong 'place attachment' (Gieryn 2000) or 'place identity' (Manzo 2003) which may not be formed in the new Public Service Villages to which many of the staff will now have moved. Parker's (references) studies of angelic hierarchies and circuses provide us with a refreshing alternative to the almost constant focus on the corporate and the 'new' in organisation studies. Analyses of these old-fashioned but well-loved places could add to this focus on alternatives to the mainstream.

These 'other' buildings in the organisational periphery included one which the public was perhaps not supposed to see. I conducted one interview at the Records Archiving Unit, which was located in a small dilapidated business unit on the extreme outskirts of Easton, downwind from the sewage works. The business unit was difficult to find and when I arrived there I was unsure of whether I was in the right place. The place looked as if it had been abandoned. There was no 'Southern County Council' sign on the building and no one in the reception. The situation was reminiscent of Gupta and Ferguson's (2002) attempt to locate one of the anganwadi (village education) centres, where similarly, the ethnographer walked right past the building because there was no indication that it was anything to do with the organisation. However, I sneaked a look at a pile of unopened letters left on the desk and found that one was addressed to the RAU in unit 5. I ventured cautiously round the back of the building, found unit 5 and knocked. The door opened a crack and a voice uttered '*welcome to the shithole!*'. This was where all the files that had been removed from the new strategic centre in the 'de-cluttering' exercise were stored. The man I interviewed was able to describe his entire work process in eight short statements, since it involved storing files that came in and making a note of their location, and retrieving them when they were requested, again making a note of where they were. This place was the other side of the clean, modernist look of the new offices, and seemed to have a correspondingly 'opposite' status, with not even a sign (in contrast to all the media attention and exhibitions in Enterprise House). But it was this visit that suggested to me that this was where all the 'bureaucracy' (paperwork) had gone – it had not been eliminated, but merely removed from sight.

I will finish with a word on what doing the project has done for me. Before joining Nottingham I had not studied sociology. I realised that I might have become a sociologist on one morning in early January 2009. I was walking my son to his primary school with other parents, mostly other mums, taking their young children to school. The pavement was coated in a thick shell of pitted ice, formed by several layers of snow which had been compacted by pedestrians and then re-frozen overnight. We teetered along uncertainly on the uneven, treacherous surface. My friend's four year old daughter Clementine slipped over on the hard ice three times in a fifty meter stretch and started crying. On the road adjacent, the surface had been salted and the ice was crushed into a paste, like grey, gritty sand, enabling traffic to advance slowly but steadily. There was a remarkably sharp boundary between the road, which had been gritted, and the pavement, which had not. Aha, I thought to myself, this is abstract space (Lefebvre 1991:49) which extends over all of social space, and is fragmented and hierarchical. And as Massey (2005) argues, proximity within space does not equate with inclusion or togetherness, but rather, there are always 'others' in proximity, 'not least, though not only, 'women' and 'nature' (p.93). So, the road is 'the economy' and the pavement is 'women'. I hope, then, that this might be the beginnings of the spatial consciousness (Harvey 1973) which I have sought to achieve.

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Appendix 1: photographs



Photograph 1

Enterprise House. The dark shape reflected in the windows adjacent to the tree on the left is Troy House.



Photograph 2
Enterprise House



Photograph 3

Troy House. The staff entrance is on the left of this end of the building.



Photograph 4

Troy House. The windows along this side of the building give onto rows of meeting rooms, so that natural light does not pass into the floorplates.



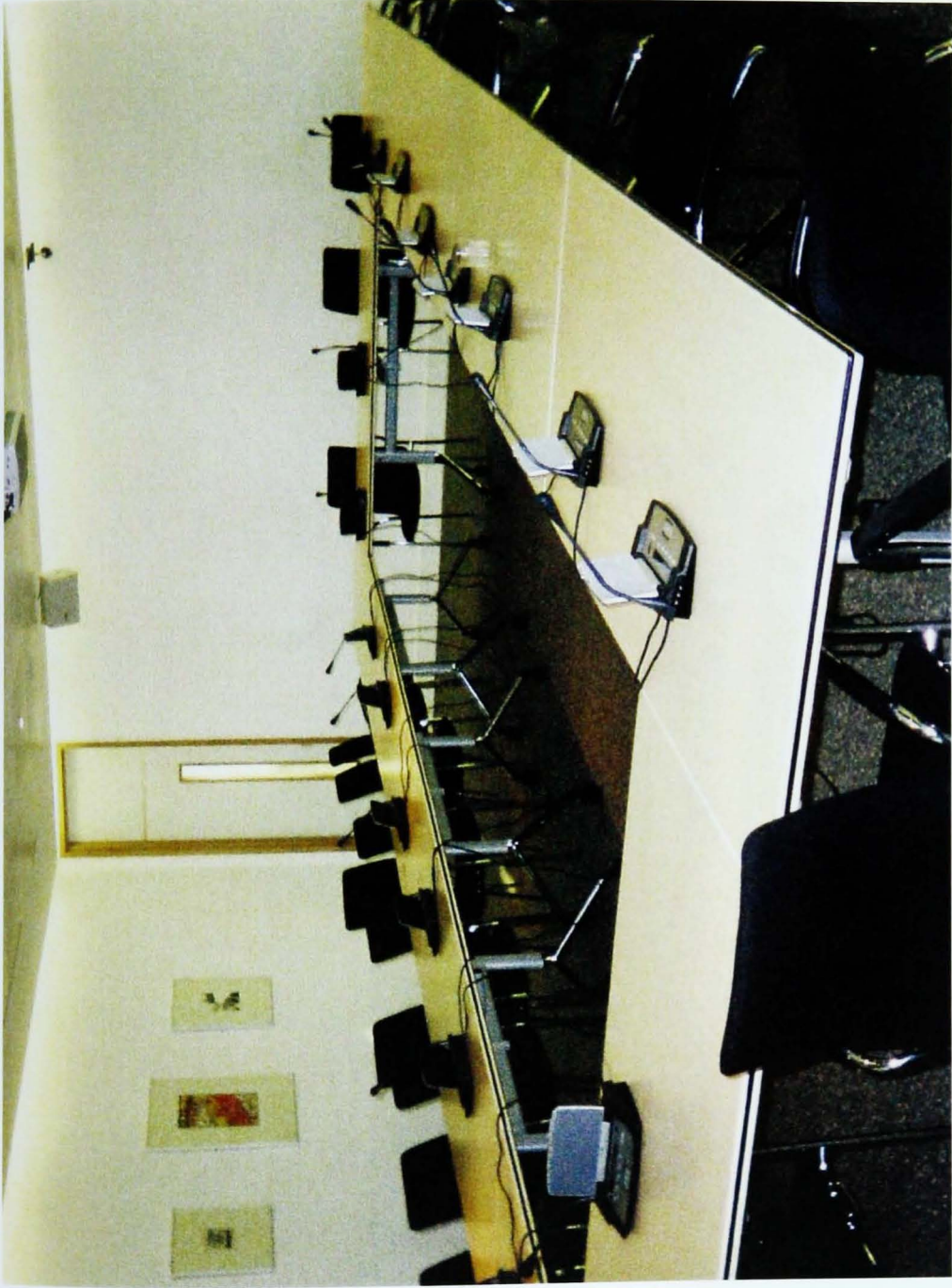
Photograph 5

View from the public entrance, across the holding pen towards Green Block. The reception desk is on the right. A bridge spanning the atrium is visible at the top of the photo. The glass lift encasing is to the left.



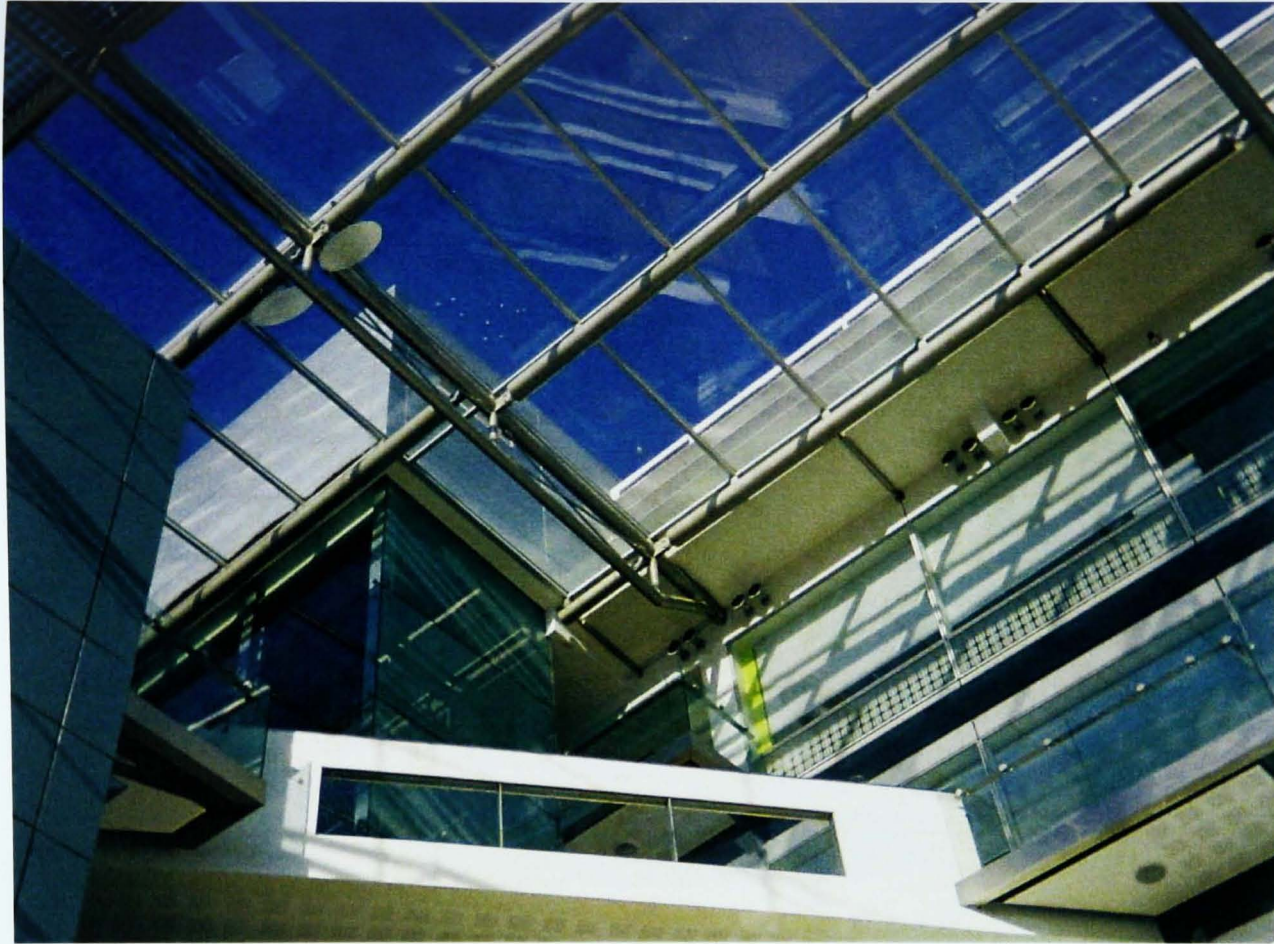
Photograph 6

View looking down into the holding pen from the end of the walkway on the fourth floor. The dark area at the bottom right hand corner of the image is the carpeted public entrance area. The holding pen contains circular white tables with dark armchair seating. The large TV screen is mounted on the white wall to the left. The glass exterior wall of the building divides the inside from an outside paved area where birch saplings have been planted. The circular shadow towards the bottom right of the photo is the shadow of one of the large parasols placed in the County lounge on the fifth floor.



Photograph 7

One of the medium-sized meeting rooms on the ground floor.



Photograph 8

View looking upwards from the holding pen. The bridge spanning the atrium on floor five is visible.



Photo 9

The view across the holding pen, showing the windows separating the office areas from the atrium. The blinds are down to keep the sun out.



Photograph 10

The ground floor of the atrium, looking towards the public entrance. The white shapes at the top of the image are the bridge and walkway on floor one. The photo also shows the open tread staircase connecting the first and second floor.



Photograph 11

The view along the atrium from the public entrance, looking towards the restaurant.



Photograph 12

The ground floor restaurant, showing the water feature and the girders supporting the cafe ('the oil rig'). The view in the far distance is the Borough Council office which was built two years after Enterprise House.



Photograph 13

View from the fifth floor, looking along the atrium towards the holding pen. Purple block is visible to the right, and Green block to the left.



Photograph 14

View along the atrium from the fourth floor.



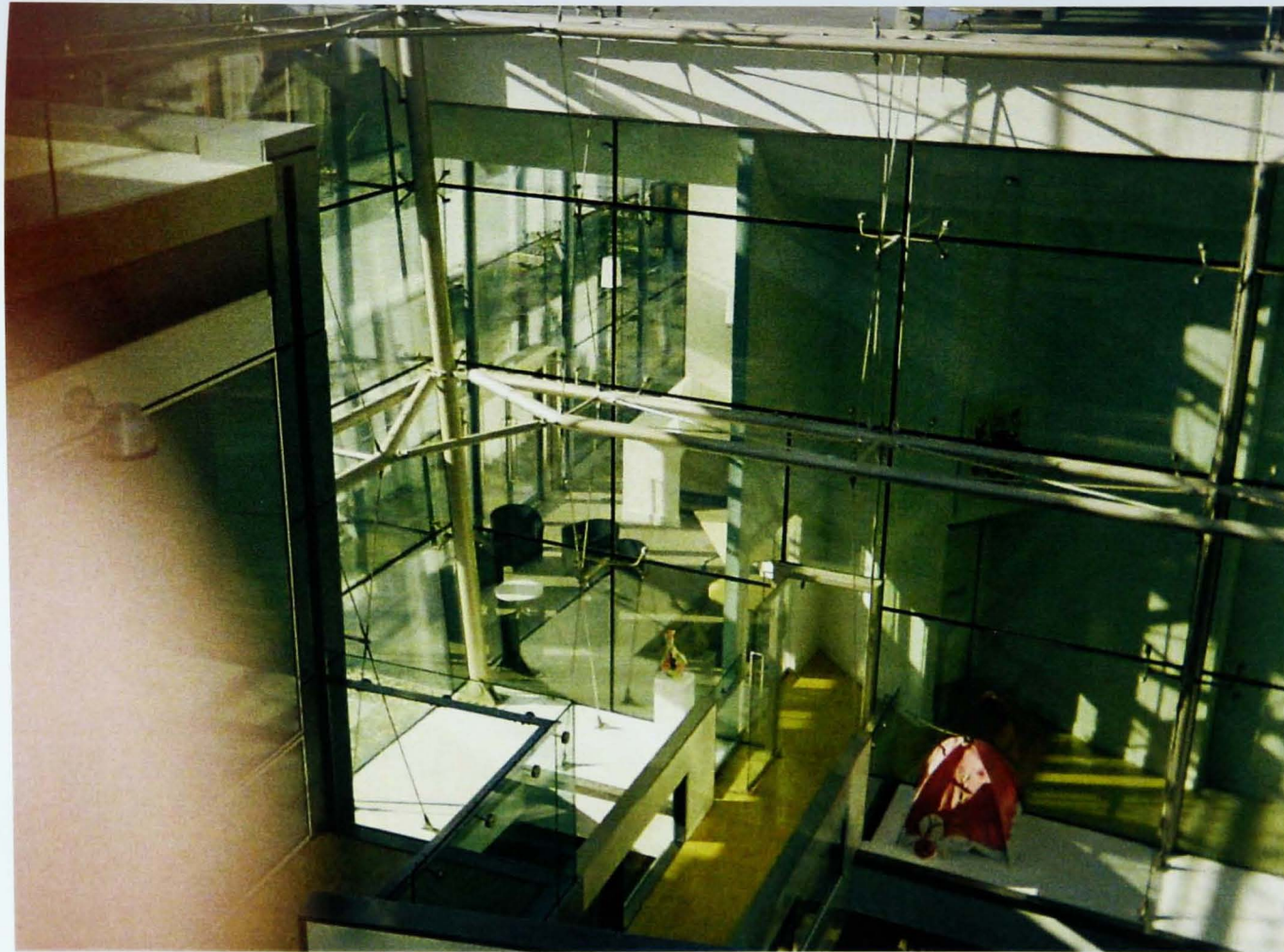
Photograph 15

View across the atrium on the third floor.



Photograph 16

View across the atrium from the fourth to the third floor.



Photograph 17

The external wall of the Council chamber seen from a bridge spanning the atrium on floor 4. The decorated tent is pitched outside the chamber.



Photograph 18

Gold block, floor 2.



Photograph 19

Inside the Libraries and Heritage office area. The photo shows a settled but tidy bench. The view extends across the atrium to Gold Block on the opposite side. The image shows a man ascending the stairs next to Gold Block and two people moving along the walkway. The inside of the office on the opposite floorplate is just visible.



Photograph 20

Two adjacent small meeting rooms in the Libraries and Heritage office area.



Photograph 21

The Council Chamber.



Photograph 22

The County Lounge on the fifth floor.

Appendix 2: interview schedule used in phase 2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introduction

Reminder about aims of the project and approach used. I'm interested in the relationship between the built environment and the work itself, so I'll be asking about both of these aspects.

Explain confidentiality.
Option to be recorded or use notes.
Recordings will be transcribed and then deleted. The material will be changed to protect confidentiality, with no quotes going to the employer and pseudonyms used in academic writing.

Section A: Background on your workplace

First I just need to make a note of where you're based.

Q1: For those located in 'central' buildings:

Q1.1 When did you move in to Endeavour/ Constantine House?

Q1.2 Where were you based before that?

Q2: For those located elsewhere:

Q2.1 Are you expecting to be relocated at some point?

Q2.2 Where is that likely to be?

Section B: emotional and aesthetic responses to the building

First I'd like to talk about your feelings about the building - how you feel about the way it looks, its atmosphere and so on.

Q1: Thinking back to your first day, or perhaps your first week here, what were your first impressions of it?

Q2: How did you feel when you approached it from the outside for the first time?

Q3: What was your first experience of entering it?

Q4: What are your feelings about it now that you have settled in?

Remember to ask for examples or critical incidents.

Section C: The political and cultural environment

Next I'd like to hear about the organisation and the changes that are taking place here, from where you're standing.

Q1: First can you tell me a little about your job?

Q2: How do you see your main priorities at the moment?

Q3: Obviously this is a very big and complex organisation with lots of different groups and coalitions. I am interested in how this works from your point of view.

Who, for you, are the most significant people or groups?

Can we try and map them?

(This could include those who you rely on; people you have to tread carefully around; people who may share common aims - and so on).

Q4: When you join you've got to learn the ropes. If you met someone tonight who was coming to work here tomorrow for the first time:

Q4.1 What would you tell them about the place - how would you describe it?

Q4.2 What would your advice to them be?

Q5: As you know local government has been changing. I'm interested in your take on these changes - again, what you see as significant. I'm going to ask about this at three 'levels' - the national, the County, and locally from the point of view of your role.

Q5.1 What do you think have been the most significant changes nationally - coming from central government, or changes that have affected local government across the board?

Q5.2 And within Suffolk itself (things which may or may not have also made themselves felt in other local authorities)?

Q5.3 The biggest changes for your work, or your department's work?

Section D: new ways of working in Suffolk

Next I'd like to talk about how your daily work practices have changed as a result of your move to this building (or how you expect them to change).

Q1 Can you think of any examples of the way you've changed the way you go about your work? (Try to get a 'before and after' picture).

Q2: What's your view of these changes? Are there aspects which you think are improvements on your previous ways of working? Are there things which are possible now that were not previously?

Q3 Are there aspects which are now more difficult to do, or no longer possible?

Section E: tour of the building

I have a checklist of specific places within the building and would like to know how you respond to them.

Entrance, reception	'Holding pen'
Atrium	Décor and art
Café and canteen facilities	Lifts
Walkways, stairs, bridges	Breakout areas
Office areas	Your bench
Your desk	Toilets
Small meeting rooms	Council chamber
Medium and large sized meeting rooms	Smoking area

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me that I haven't asked about?

Thank you for being so generous with your time.

What will happen now: respondents will see preliminary report and have the chance to comment on it before it goes to the WEP.