Call for papers

SPACE, PLACE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

WORKSHOP
June 4-5, 2020
Aalto University, Otaniemi, Espoo, Finland

Keynote speakers:

Prof. Karen Dale: ‘Embodying the Economy: Themes in the Spatial Negotiation of Productivity’
Lancaster University Management School, UK

Prof. Silvia Gherardi: ‘Coloring the Ephemeral Space of Practices’
University of Trento, Italy

Prof. Chris Steyaert: ‘Relational Space and Affective Atmospheres’
University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Dr. Ari Kuismin: ‘Exploring Organizational Space as a Process’
Aalto University School of Business, Finland

Researchers have for long recognized that place and space affect organizational change and processes such as learning (Beyes & Michels, 2011), leadership (Ropo, Salovaara, Sauer, & De Paoli, 2015), inclusion (Dale & Burrell, 2008), and institutional reforms (Rodner, Roulet, Kerrigan, & Vom Lehn, 2019). While place refers to defined buildings and settings located in a fixed geography (Gieryn, 2000), space is a more abstract concept that focuses on boundaries, movements, relationships and scales (Massey, 2005). Organizational research on place and space has become salient as work is increasingly being performed outside of the physical buildings of organizations (e.g. Stephenson, Putnam, Kuismin, & Sivunen, 2018). Specifically, new technologies, precarization of work, and growing expectations of the contemporary workforce blur work and non-work boundaries, link people and things in novel ways, and extend workspaces to nearly everywhere. These developments raise new questions about organizational change. For example, how does learning take place among geographically dispersed (gig) workers? How do leadership, managerial control and strategic thinking enter into new areas and neighborhoods?

This workshop focuses on questions as such by offering a ‘collaborative space’ for researchers examining place and space in organizations. In particular, the workshop is an opportunity to discuss the multiplicity of ways in which place and space interface with a wide array of organizational and management themes including change, strategy, gender, politics, sustainability, technologies, identities, and institutions. In so doing, the workshop seeks to bridge the gap between the social and the material in studies of organizing (Gherardi, 2016; Katila, Laine, & Parkkari, 2019) and to further develop lines of research
that explore place (e.g. Fabbri, 2016; Nash, 2018) and space (e.g. Best & Hindmarsh, 2019; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012) as dynamic and processual phenomena in organizations and organizing. These lines of research invite us to move from treating place and space as stable containers of work activities towards examining their practiced, processual, rhythmic, embodied and affective qualities (Mengis, Nicolini, & Gorli, 2018; Michels & Steyaert, 2017; Riach & Wilson, 2014). From the latter perspective, researchers are less concerned with identifying which office arrangement will result in particular organizational outcomes; instead they concentrate on how certain spatial arrangements are an active part of day to day organizing.

The workshop will be organized around keynote talks, round table discussions and collaborative activities through which we seek to build ground for new theoretical, methodological and analytical approaches for exploring organizing, place and space, especially with regards to organizational change. We invite, and hope, that both experienced and young scholars will join us in this collaborative pursuit.

**Abstract submission**

If you wish to participate in the workshop, please submit an abstract of no more than 800 words to space.workshop.2020@gmail.com by May 4, 2020.

We welcome contributions that explore place and space in organizations from various theoretical and methodological perspectives. Researchers might what to examine how:

- changes in organizing are connected with changes in organizational space
- workers learn from each other and share information despite being geographically dispersed
- leadership and management unfold in multi-locational organizations
- strategy work affects and is affected by organizational place/space
- creation, maintenance and change of institutions are embedded in space and place
- organizations control their employees as work is being performed nearly everywhere
- changes in places and spaces of work influence occupational identities
- workers in the ‘gig economy’ arrange their work, experience their workspace(s) and resist managerial controls from distant locations
- employees navigate work-life balance when their organizations expand into homes, summer houses and other traditionally non-work spaces
- places/spaces privilege or marginalize specific genders, bodies, and ethnicities
- technologies, and access to them, constitute organizational places/spaces
- to empirically study place and space in organizing
- to theorize the relationships between place, space and organizing

Authors will be notified of acceptance by May 8, 2020.
Organizers

Dr. Saija Katila, Aalto University School of Business
Prof. Johanna Moisander, Aalto University School of Business
Dr. Ari Kuismin, Aalto University School of Business
MSc. Alice Wickström, Aalto University School of Business

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The workshop will be organized at Aalto University School of Business (Ekonominaukio 1, 02150 Espoo, Finland).

The workshop is free of charge. The attendants are kindly requested to make their own travel arrangements and hotel reservations.

References

Fabbri, J. 2016. Unplugged - “Place as spatio-temporal events”: Empirical evidence from everyday life in a coworking space. M@n@gement, 19(4): 353-361.