

THE WORKSPACE AS A CREATIVITY TOOL

how to support creativity with the facilities and interaction of the physical environment

ZIGZAG

In a nice space it is more pleasant to work, which helps you to believe more in the worth of your ideas and to feel less held back to exploit initiatives.

It is pleasant to look around from time to time and have a view outside. To this end it would be very nice when the available room is relatively spacey and there is a nice view.



Having enough light is experienced as pleasant. Especially natural light.

02 03 10

"People who enjoy what they do, come up with more ideas"



"I need lots of space to work in"

A view on nature and the usage of natural materials and elements is pleasant and has a positive effect on creativity. A view on nature is sometimes difficult to realise, but alternatively real plants can be put into the room. Rougher materials have a more apparent effect than neatly finished materials. When using rough materials it must be considered however that the appliance remains suitable for its function.

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Some people are more easily distracted than others and also some circumstances that are by some experienced as distracting are valued by others.

the sound of building mechanical systems or office equipment, and sounds coming from the street through open windows. The same sounds may be euphony for some people but noise to others in the workplace, depending on the individual and the situation. Unlike some work environments like facto-

"Music is very important but it has to be right."

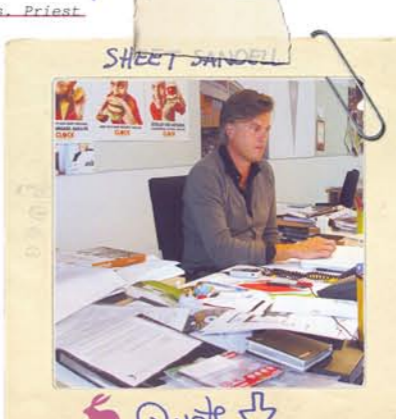
"I hate background music."

Some people are more easily distracted than others and also some circumstances that are by some experienced as distracting are valued by others.

Ego!

follow the reference rabbits

To experience a space as pleasant it is important there are as little uncomfortable or annoying properties present as possible. This concerns both ambient properties like temperature, light, sounds and smells and physical properties like furniture and inspirational materials.



"My workplace is open-plan and messy. That's how I work best."

"I think the most inspiring thing is when your desk is tidy and you have a white sheet of paper in front of you."

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It is nice to have a generous amount of facilities available like cold bottles of water or fresh fruit. These facilities do not directly support work related activities, but do make people feel more at ease and comfortable.



PASSION

Certain locations have a positive influence on a passionate attitude. A passionate person does not want to create something good but something great. A passionate team is extremely motivated about the project and collectively pursues a shared vision with as little concessions possible.

Locations with an established reputation can motivate you to become more inspired about a project. A good example are the Hansa studios in Berlin, where David Bowie recorded three successful albums in the 1970's. Since then the studios have a huge appeal to other artists and many recorded successful albums at the studios.

"This room saw the beginning of U2's big international success and a lot of that was about the atmosphere of the city and the atmosphere in the studio,"

Tom Mueller

The possibilities that an environment offers can motivate someone to become more enthusiastic about a project and revise one goal upwards.

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Creative teams collectively personalize their work areas with artefacts that are reflective of team goals and achievements. This is a good method to support the team spirit and the possibility to do so should be supported by the environment.

"Every member of staff was allowed one word top put on the wall. It had to be a word that was close to their 'soul' to tie in with our name"

Judy Bird



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An environment can bring about a feeling of pride to work there, making people more passionate about their work. This happens when spaces have a special or unique appearance.

Flow

Flow is a necessity for creativity. Someone in flow is fully immersed in what he is doing, is highly active and enjoys what he is doing. If a room is not tuned to someone's needs it is hard to get in flow.

In the environment all materials and tools that may be needed are available and easy to find. It should be prevented that someone needs to look for something for too long or is not able to find something at all. This can be very annoying and can cause someone to get out of flow.

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"You can be in flow without being creative, but you cannot be creative without being in flow."

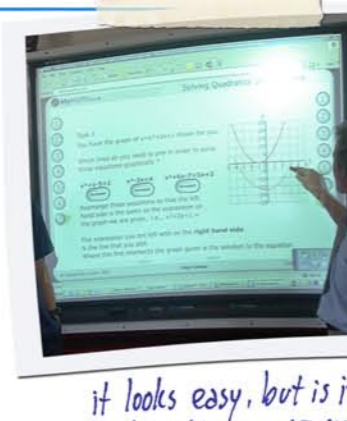
Carsten Lehmann



Facilities should stimulate usage through their appearance and particularly not discourage people to use them. The appearance of a facility should clearly communicate that people are allowed to use them without any scrupulous. To this end facilities should not look too new, pricy, complicated or scrappy.

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Annoyances with regard to facilities must be prevented. One substantial source of annoyance is malfunctioning facilities, or facilities that do not meet expectations in another negative way.



Information is a special consideration of facility. For information the same considerations apply that were mentioned for other facilities. Information is a necessity for creativity. But as a result of the sheer amount of information available through sources like the internet, information is a potential source of distraction, taking away the flow out of a process. How much information is available, when and how it is presented should be carefully considered.

"Information is the live blood of creativity and collaboration"

Spencer & Smead 1999

A space needs to be carefully tuned to the requirements of the users. These requirements are partly of a general nature, partly personal and partly dependent of the intended usage. Therefore the requirements will differ from project to project and also during a project. To stay tuned to these varying requirements the space needs to be flexible.

- There are a number of ways for a space to be flexible:
- 1) Multiple rooms with specific functions are available. So the room that matches the activity best can be used.
 - 2) One room can support multiple functions.
 - 3) A room or part of a room can be adjusted and used in various ways.

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"Best insights need periods of reflection as well as periods of exposure and communal activity."



"There is only one way to get a good idea and that is through hard work"

W. Edwards



1. On different moments during a project different facilities are needed. To anticipate to this facilities that are not needed can be put away or switched off.
2. If a room is large enough, it can be divided into multiple parts or one smaller part can be screened off. This can be done with curtains, walls on wheels or more exotic solutions.
3. By making the setup of the furniture flexible the room is easily adaptable. When for instance it is easy to move the tables they can be moved aside when some open space is needed.
4. To many people music is an important feature of their environment. Next to being experienced as pleasant, music can also have a functional impact on work. Music can be used to indicate and stimulate different phases in a process.
5. Light is essential to work well and can also cause people to be more wakeful and active. There are various ways to realise this and can be used on various moments during a project.

During creative work you switch between working in a group and working alone and between active and more relaxed moments. These different working methods require different conditions of both the person and their environment. Switching should be easy and fast. Below some directions are presented with regard to these different modes of work.

Group vs. Solo

To support flow in a group, teamwork needs to be smooth and efficient. Most important aspect of teamwork is good communication. Good communication is supported by making ideas explicit with written down text, drawings and prototypes.

Facilities need to be suited for group work. Among other things enough facilities need to be available to prevent that people have to wait for each other. And the facilities should be big enough for team usage.

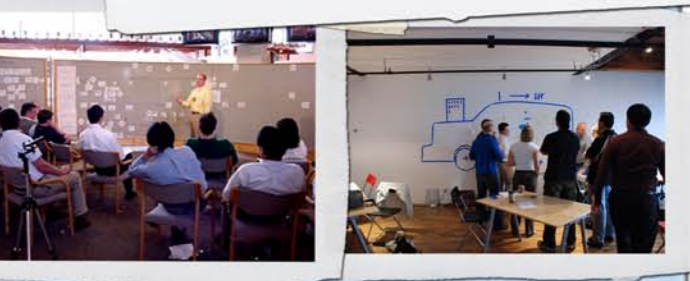
When the bigger group splits up in smaller groups or when people go and work alone, enough facilities must be available for every smaller group or person to work well. An example is that enough space and tables need to be present for every group to work on its own spot.

Active vs. chill

The environment should stimulate users to be active. This is done by motivating people to stand, move around and work on something by hand to create something tangible.

"Sometimes motion becomes essential to the thought process"

Tracy & Sanders (2006)



More relaxed moments are mainly used for contemplation. Contemplation is something what is often done solo and has some typical demands regarding to the environment. Piece and quiet: Contemplation is typical an activity done in solitude. Being alone with ones thoughts without (distracting) external input. Physical relax: Contemplation is often linked to physical relaxation. Stimulate all senses: Stimulating the senses can have a stimulating effect on ones thinking processes. (Tassouli 2004)



"I do my best thinking on the toilet"

V. Maguire

Original

The environment can trigger curiosity and new thinking patterns. An important part of creativity is breaking with existing mental barriers and approach situations in new, original ways. In a team original ideas come into being by combining ideas and continue on others' input.

Change is an important tool to realise creativity. Change can trigger new ideas and insights. This is supported with the environment by literally switching surroundings or realizing a change within a space. When you work in a space on a regular basis or for a longer amount of time, the space needs to be updated regularly to prevent it from becoming a fixed artefact.

02 09



A visual interesting environment is a possibility to motivate people to go and explore. Examples are complicated constructions and ornaments.

"The more the better"

McGee & Stone (2002)

The way in which people behave is linked to their surroundings. In order to break with normal everyday behaviour the surroundings should deviate from well known environments with clear functions like meeting rooms.

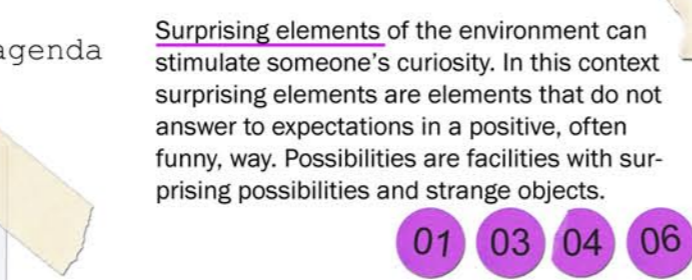
A creative space is a special place where normal rules do not apply.

"If you give people a table and an agenda they will have a meeting"

Christa Fortmann

"Variation works for me. I find it almost essential to vary my surroundings if I want ideas to come, especially when I get stuck."

A. Smead



"I get inspiration from seeing things that are out of context."

P. Smith

The presence of novel facilities or the absence of standard facilities can trigger people to deal with a project in novel ways.

When the appearance of a space becomes too dominant it can put its stamp on the direction of thinking.

"The setup of a room should always be the means, never a goal"

G. Giffney & R. Spalding



"To invent you need a good imagination and a pile of junk"

P. A. Smead

Many designers surround themselves with inspirational materials like old products. These products represent old ideas and are a potential source of new ideas.

A characteristic of creative group work is that ideas are thrown out to the group and developed further. Externalising causes a person to move from vague mental conceptualisations of an idea to more concrete representations providing a means for others to interact and react to these ideas. The means to share ideas should be supported with facilities.



SENSIBLE

Creativity is always goal-orientated. Creativity is about making sense and about creating something sensible. In order to make sense it is important to know where this sense refers to, what the project intend is.

The space needs to provide the facilities to focus and refocus on the sense of the project. Below a list is presented with typical information used in creative projects.

"After the session there is a lot of work to be done!"

A. Smead

if the group members don't have a clear, shared vision of where they're going, no amount of creativity and effective project management will get them "there," since they're not sure where "there" is. On the other hand, if everyone has a

Spencer & Smead

- INFORMATION Lifestyle
- Trends
 - Interviews
 - Questionnaires/Surveys
 - Polls
 - Direct Design Experience
 - Think Aloud
 - Direct Observation
 - Focus Groups
 - On-line Information
 - Probes
 - Participatory Design Techniques

- MATERIALS
- Sketches, Photos, Storyboards, Videos
 - Text, Images, Collages
 - Audio
 - Diagrams
 - Diagrams
 - Experiences, Stories
 - Videos, Audio
 - Audio, Video
 - Notes
 - Video
 - Internet Sites
 - Collages, Moodboards, Drawings
 - Stories, Photos, Games, Prototypes

To make sure the process still makes sense afterwards. The process needs to be carefully documented. This is done either by the team members, the facilitator or automatically.

