FROM THE CHAIR

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Leadership, Culture and Work Environments

Workplace strategies turn workplaces into a leadership tool. Strategic thinking has changed cost-driven workplace discussions into ways how to foster culture, productivity and creativity. Nowadays, corporate executives are more interested in workplace issues than ever before. This phenomena has also raised interest in EuroFM researchers (e.g. eFMi Issue 41, June 2017).

Based on various research space can be effectively utilized as a tool to communicate and build cultural identity (e.g. Airo, 2014). On the other hand, when redesigning work environments, the need for change in organizational (work) culture and the effect of social reference groups is often neglected (Matvejeff, 2017). It is often assumed that organizational (work) culture changes as a result of the redesigned space, even research indicates that "the old way of working" continues also in the new space. Therefore, investments in redesigning work spaces may be even useless (Rothe, 2017).

Recent studies confirm the connection between the indoor air quality and decision making (Harvard University, 2016; MacNaughton et al, 2017). It is evident that The Green Building Certification as a sign of a building enables people to work efficiently. These research also prove the importance of buildings in relation to our overall health and wellbeing. An optimal level of humidity is also important for cognitive abilities and behavior in the space (Naava, 2017). Neglecting indoor air quality and organizational culture (new way of working) in the redesigned space may also result in the increase of symptoms in personnel and absence at work.

The objective of my own PhD research (University of Lapland, Finland) is to make visible and understand the use of power and decision making in public organizations. The study tries to interpret and understand the phenomena and consequences, when behavior of those exercising power is guided by their social reference group, attitudes, biases or other interests. As a "side product" of my research, the influence of organizational culture and work environment (spaces) on decision making and practiced leadership are analyzed. Social reference groups create their own sub-cultures, which have their special preferences to work environments. Social reference groups also have an influence on individual and group behavior in work environments (Matvejeff, 2017). Modern theories of decision making distinguish between two systems of cognitive operations: intuitive and reflective. Lack of intellectual effort, influence exerted by emotions and non-analytic processing of premises without conscious control are typical features of intuitive system.

Biased decision making and behavior is a result of these intuitive judgements. We also have a strong tendency to favor our social reference group. When these heuristics and biases are not recognized, the invisible "social contract" and group pressure leads to subjective assumptions (Gilovich, Griffin & Kahneman, 2002).

The preliminary research results show that management doesn´t always recognize and/or admit the influence of organizational culture and social reference groups on behavior of individuals in the organization. Spaces and redesigning work environments may also be used to exercise power. Investments in redesigning work environments often fail, when changes in ways of working and behavior are not simultaneously supported (Matvejeff, 2017).

EuroFM shares knowledge and research on FM-related topics from many perspectives. Based on various research within the EuroFM member universities, human centric design of space and providing services in these spaces are essential for productivity and overall health of individuals utilizing spaces. Leadership culture is very often hindering these developments.

"The problem is not the culture of hard work, but the need to pretend that you are doing it. A real change in the work culture is needed" (Sanchez & Sanchez, eFMi Issue 41, 2017, p.7).