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Organizational space, place and civility

Michael Muetzelfeldt

mailto:michael.muetzelfeldt@vu.edu.au

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Michael Muetzelfeldt
Victoria University
Melbourne Australia
<Michael.Muetzelfeldt@vu.edu.au>

> … [the harpooner] is not only an important officer in the boat, but under certain circumstances (night watches on a whaling ground) the command of the ship's deck also is his: therefore the grand political maxim of the sea demands, that he should nominally live apart from the men before the mast, and be in some way distinguished as their professional superior; though always, by them, familiarly regarded as their social equal.
> Herman Melville *Moby-Dick* 1851

Organizational life depends in no small part on civility between its members. This is explicit in accounts of organization that emphasize trust, shared vision and congeniality as organizing principles. But it also applies in those accounts that emphasize market-like or power-based transactional relationships, where civility is the unacknowledged but still crucial lubricant for these more instrumental engagements. Civility's complex and contradictory features include constraint and interpersonal attunement, drawing on sentiment as well as reason, to govern relationships with others who are both allies and competitors. These features are characteristic of organizational life as well as of society at large.

This chapter explores the role of space in producing and reproducing organizational civility. Spatial arrangements in organizations establish distinctions and express meanings about organizational power and authority, but do so in ways that appear independent of the people as actors, who can then present themselves as familiar social equals. This applies to large spatial arrangements, as well as small scale organizational spaces such as private offices, semi-public meeting rooms and public areas. Each has its markers, its rules of interaction, and its place in reproducing civility within authority by mediating their contradictory features and by providing resources for people to manage their difficulties.

Civility as an organizational virtue

There is a steady stream of literature espousing the virtues and benefits of leadership styles based on trust, respect, personal credibility and integrity, where staff and colleagues are respected, and valued not only for their capacity to contribute but also for their capacity to be different and bring diversity into organizational decision making and practice. Much of this literature is in texts on effective leadership (eg Freeman 1990; Maister et al 2000), which has a strong theme of improved leadership coming from self-improvement, with Covey's (1990) *Seven Habits* book being a leading example. There are also popular business magazine exemplary stories. For example, the cover story of *The Australian Financial Review*'s monthly magazine *AFR* Boss recently featured Gordon Cairns, CEO of the large brewer Lion Nathan, who is described as a 'born again CEO'. The story says that five years ago Cairns was 'demanding, insensitive and extremely task oriented, with an aggressive/defensive leadership style. … [He] scored highly on perfectionism, while taking an oppositional stance to colleagues.' After five years of effort sparked by 360 degree feedback, he now tries to model himself on Nelson Mandela, and 'despite occasional lapses … [his] high scores are in the constructive leadership style area, with more emphasis on people skills and self-actualising. He remains a competitive leader, but one who is more sensitive and caring, driven

less by power and conflict than by achievement' (Fox 2003, p. 41). As a result, Lion Nathan is 'a better company, and a better performing company' (2003, p. 42).

The values espoused in this leadership and management literature are very much the values of civil society, of which Putnam is the most prominent advocate. He defines social capital as those features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks, which can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions, and he treats network density as the most direct indicator of social capital (Putnam 1993a; 1993b). Social capital is productive, and can best be measured in its productive effects, such as through spontaneous cooperation. His subsequent work and resulting debates emphasise the importance of good neighbourliness, social trust and a high level of participation in a range of institutions, organisations and practices in civil society, including participation in the state as the decision making arena of civil society (Putnam 1995). The organizational virtues of trust, respect, reciprocity, participation and accountability, etc are the same or analogous social virtues that Putnam associates with social capital.

Following Putnam, we could easily speak of an organization's social capital, measuring it by the diversity and density of the networks and associations between its members, including both its horizontal and its vertical or cross-hierarchical networks and associations. These horizontal and vertical associations are indicators of the capacity or potential for shared or joint action, beyond the actual instances of such action. They include not only open channels of communication, but shared values that may underpin trust up and down, as well as across, the organization. Within organizations, trust is said to reduce transaction costs, foster spontaneous sociability, and facilitate adaptive forms of deference to authorities, provided it is prudently wary, reserved and adaptive to the environment rather than naively accepting (Kramer *et al* 2000; Kramer 2003; Sievers 2003).

Institutionalizing organizational civility

Much of this literature on civility as an organizational virtue draws on social psychology, and does not clearly recognize the routinized social practices, apart from personal participation in networks, through which these virtues are produced and reproduced. That is, it lacks an emphasis on the institutionalization of civility. So it is easy for questions of power and authority to be inadequately dealt with in the social virtues arguments. With a limited recognition of power and authority, Putnam and others see social and organizational virtues, and social and organizational civility, arising apparently spontaneously from the good intentions of good people who are self-organizing into collaborative networks. They consider that the state competes with or constrains civil society – that state and civil society are competitive sources of power – and so assume that civility thrives in spaces that are not occupied by the state. To correct this deficiency, in this section I consider approaches that emphasize the institutionalization of organizational civility, and in particular the place of power in its institutionalization.

Kramer (2003) notes that, as well as being based in personal knowledge and experience, in organizations there can be depersonalized presumptive trust based on societal categories or organizational roles. Category-based trust, drawing on beliefs about the trustworthiness of others because of for example their gender or ethnicity, illustrates the possibility of depersonalized trust, but it does not provide a basis for generalized trust in contemporary organizations where diversity is common. However, role-based trust, which draws on expectations of the conduct of others because they occupy particular roles, is based in shared understandings about 'the *structure* of rules regarding appropriate behavior and the extent to which these are perceived as binding' (2003, p. 347, original italics).[1]

Manville and Ober (2003) propose that organizations will get the best from their people if they implement a model based on the Athenian model of democracy. They consider that this programmatic model should be 'as much a spirit of governance as a set of rules or laws' and be harmonized with the corporate culture. It should follow three ideas from the Athenian model of democracy: shared values of trust and dignity that shape the relationships between people; participatory decision-making in self-managing teams; and a full set of practices of engagement to ensure widespread participation of staff. Athenian democracy has been asked to do much, probably far too much, work on behalf of those who advocate more participation and engagement in response to the perceived limitations of representative democracy. But Manville and Ober do usefully note that civility between people requires more than just proclaimed values. Importantly, it also requires practices of engagement and participation – that is, a degree of insitutionalization – that underpin and contribute towards reproducing those values.

The literature on civility in society at large generally assumes that civility can only thrive where there is not a strong state as a countervailing power to compete with or constrain it. Krygier (1996a; 1996b) counters this by noting that states may not only be weak or strong – they also have the separate feature of tending to facilitate or inhibit civility. He argues that only states that are both strong and facilitative can provide the social, legal and economic infrastructure that supports and empowers civil society. From his liberal position, he identifies strong facilitating states as having not only law but the rule of law, they support liberal democratic (not popularist) politics, and they provide the institutional, social and cultural basis for trust between the state and the people, and among the people (1996a p. 28-29). Kumar (1994), Walzer (1995) and Muetzelfeldt and Smith (2002), among others, make similar cases. For example, Walzer argues that the state 'both frames civil society and occupies space within it' (1995: 169). In short, the power that is institutionalized in the state may facilitate or inhibit horizontal and vertical trust in society. This suggests that there is an analogous relationship between institutionalized organizational power and trust in the organization.

Offe (1999) elaborates this relationship between trust and organizational insitutionalization. He is concerned with the relationship between state institutions and civil trust, but the general argument also applies to the relationship between institutionalized decision making and regulation in organizations, and trust between members of those organizations.

He argues that formal institutions are not suitable repositories of all sources of trust, for two reasons. On one hand, they are incomplete, ambiguous and do not provide necessary processes for every possible situation. On the other, they are contested, depending upon their personnel for the appropriate implementation of the rules in particular situations. Hence, `[formal] institutions, well entrenched and time-honoured though they may appear, depend for their viability upon the supportive dispositions and understandings of those involved in them' (1999, p. 69).

He then argues that if we trust formal institutions – or, more accurately, trust the actions of the personnel within them – we do so because of the institutionalized value systems within which they are embedded:

> institutions are, first of all, sets of rules. But more than that, they provide normative reference points and values that can be relied upon in order to justify and makes sense of those rules. Institutions in other words, are endowed with a spirit, an ethos, an implicit moral theory, an *idée directrice,* or a notion of some preferred way of conducting the life of the community. My thesis is *that it is this implied normative meaning of institutions and the moral plausibility 1 assume it will have for others which allows me to trust those that are involved in the same institutions - although* they are strangers and not personally known to me (1999, p. 70, original italics).

Formal institutions – and here Offe is particularly concerned with the formal institutions of the state – may facilitate trusting in two ways. First, they have the potential for a `discursive self foundation', a `moral plausibility' that I as well as others understand and can make sense of. These institutions carry, enact and so reproduce the trust generating values of truth telling, fairness, promise keeping and ultimately solidarity. Second, by regularizing the truster's interactions with their personnel, they reduce the risk the truster takes in trusting them. Offe argues that consequently they generate trust between strangers and that institution, and amongst strangers themselves. In other words, they generate trust between citizen strangers and the institutions of the state, as well as amongst citizen strangers themselves.

Authority, that is, legitimized power, is one of the bases for and effects of institutionalized rules and values being trusted. So Offe's argument suggests that legitimation is integrally tied to civility. This fits with the analysis of Krygier and others discussed above that a strong facilitative state – which is a state that has legitimized power – enables and sustains civility. Later in this chapter I will argue that designed spaces in organizations embody power in ways that legitimize the authority relationships in the organization, and so contribute to producing and reproducing organizational civility.

Applying this analysis to organizations, civility is predicated on and emerges through trust, mutuality and a sense of interdependence among its members. Social capital (as indicated by associational and network density) is an important but secondary expression of this civility. An organization that enables a strong civility within itself absorbs social and individual risks in positive and constructive ways. Through doing this, it builds trust, mutuality and interdependence, and so makes it possible for civil society to thrive, and for its members to act in creative and productive ways. So civility is a basic feature of a strong organization that is both sustainable and capable of responding to and generating change.

It is worth noting that there is some recent and in many ways parallel work, coming from the Eliasian school, that aims to apply Elias' work on civilizing processes at the social level to the organizational level. Elias identifies civilization as self-constraint in conduct and sentiment based on: social constraint; being attuned to others because of shared complex and contradictory interdependence (potential allies and competitors); foresight and rationalisation (mutual assurance); and sentiment plus reason, based on 'the way people are bound to live together' (Elias 1982). Taking an historical approach, he argues that 'the transformation of the whole of social existence is the basic condition of the civilization of conduct' (Elias 1982: 254).This has been applied to organizations by van Iterson and others (2002). Their interest in the civilized organization and its benefits parallels my interest in organizational civility. The Eliasian concern with figuration parallels the concern with networks and association discussed above, and Elias' anti-dualistic approach to social relations, together with his emphasis on the social interdependency of insitutionalization and emotions, fits well with the approach based on Krygier, Walzer and Offe that I have outlined above. The Eliasian account of the disciplining of knights and chieftains to produce well mannered civilized modern courtiers mirrors the folksy account given above of the transformation of the CEO as warlord to the CEO as caring and emotionally sophisticated leader, and can add useful resonances to Offe's account of the emergence of trust. Apart from that, Elias' emphasis on historical development, while analytically important, does not seem to add much to the interests of this paper.

Space in civil society

In his semiotic analysis of practices of space in the city – in New York, to be precise – de Certeau (1985) argues that, both physically and metaphorically, being high up gives a panoptic bird's eye view that is not reciprocal. Down below 'practitioners employ spaces that are not self-aware; their knowledge of them is as blind as one body for another, beloved, body

… [these spaces] elude being read' (1985, p. 124). 'The language of power is "urbanized", but the city is subject to contradictory movements that offset each other and interact outside the purview of the panoptic power.' (1985, p. 128)

> [T]the city enables us to conceive and construct a space on the basis of a number of stable and isolatable elements, each articulated to the other. In this site organized by "speculative" and classifying operations, management combines with elimination: on the one hand we have the differentiation and redistribution of the parts and functions of the city through inversions, movements, accumulations, etc., and on the other hand we have the rejection of whatever is not treatable, and that constitutes the "garbage" of a functionalist administration (abnormality, deviance, sickness, death, etc.). … [And so] rationalizing the city involves mythifying it through strategic modes of discourse.' (1985, p. 127)

This Foucauldian panoptical approach is fine as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. New York of the 1980s may have appeared to be dominated by administrative powers that aimed to manage people by policing and enforcing compliance, and eliminating all that could not be managed. However, by reducing the functions of power to management and elimination, any sense of the civility of everyday life, in the big city or elsewhere, passes unnoticed.

In addition, there also needs to be recognition of the capacity of state power to construct civility through providing a context of social relations and of identities within which people experienced their spaces as ordered and ordering, and experienced themselves as participating in and contributing to that order. One might have expected that Foucaludians and many others should be comfortable with this perspective. Discussions of the public policy role of the state in constituting public spaces tend to focus on how to manage social problems in those spaces, that is, whether users of those spaces should be empowered or controlled (eg Atkinson 2003). So the possibility of the state facilitating the civility of everyday life is again downplayed in favour of debating its functions of management and elimination. In terms of the distinction drawn above between strong facilitative states and strong inhibiting states, New York in the 1980s may have seemed to be dominated by a strong inhibiting state, but even there the lived experience of civility was strong.

The main point that is relevant to this chapter is that, in the context of a strong facilitative state, social civility takes specific forms in specific sites or spaces, and that these site-specific forms contribute towards reproducing the specific civility of interactions that take place in those spaces. For example, the civility of mutual disinterest that characterises pedestrians passing one another in the street is different to the civility of limited engagement that characterises 'polite turn taking' at a busy shop counter, where customers pay sufficient attention to others and to who was there first, so that they can defer to those in front of them in the informal queue while not allowing those behind them to 'push in'. And both are different to the civility of limited assistance that people might show towards someone who, for example, slips over in the street. These site-specific and context-specific forms of interaction between strangers contribute towards reproducing civility in two ways. First, these interactions make immediate statements about the interpersonal order, and so make implicit claims on others to participate in that order in the same way. But also, they allude to the broader context of state power and authority within which they happen, by displaying a level of trust that is based in the knowledge that state power is liable to be invoked, with more or less effectiveness, if the rules of social interaction are pushed over the brink into possible illegality. (For example, the appropriate physical contact with a stranger who has fallen in the street might be considered assault under other circumstances.)

Despite these limitations in his analysis, de Certeau usefully identifies three practices through which practitioners constitute the city and themselves in it:

- Space in use – selective 'walking' so as to make certain places, things and practices (eg 'window shopping') familiar and appropriate, and to make other places, things and practices inappropriate and so generally not done publicly (eg 'graffiti writing').
- Naming a site and its appropriate practices, and in effect constituting the site through that naming (eg this is 'the bus stop', so people standing here are not 'loitering')
- Memory and belief ('believabilia and memorabilia') about sites, lead to the 'local authority' of sites and to their habitability (eg this is where 'we always meet for Saturday breakfast').

Each of these, while relevant in the reproduction of immediate civility, does not speak to two underlying issues:
- The place of trust and the associated assessment of risk that practitioners make when using public spaces, and
- The assumptions about the nature of state power that explicitly or tacitly frame their civil engagements in these spaces.

These five factors all contribute to the production and reproduction of public spaces. For example, memory about, and the meanings carried through, sites may be produced through complex interactions of state and civil institutions and practices (Belanger 2002). Taken together, these factors suggest an empirically usable heuristic for examining organizational spaces, as illustrated in the next section.

Space and place in organizations

Architectural power
What counts as appropriate civil conduct in any particular situation is highly contextual, and the physical organization of space is part of that context. Hierarchy and authority are inscribed in physical arrangements, as testified by the tradition of King Arthur's round table as an embodiment of Arthur's egalitarianism, and by the well-worked metaphor of the panopticon as not only a mechanism of surveillance, but an embodiment within subjects of their experience of being under surveillance. I call this architectural power, and emphasise that it includes but extends beyond panoptic surveillance. Civility includes appropriate acknowledgement of hierarchy and authority, including the hierarchy and authority expressed through architectural power. To be appropriately civil, subordinates should show not too much subservience (which would be considered obsequious), nor too little (which would be considered pushy or insubordinate). Equally, superiors should show an appropriate level of dominance, avoiding the extremes of being considered arrogant, or of being considered faint-hearted or lacking in confidence.

A well known example of architectural power is the physical arrangement of a seminar, tutorial or lecture room. This arrangement always invites some types of conduct, and discourages others. Students are more likely to engage with one another, rather than only with the lecturer, if their seating is arranged in a semi-circular pattern, rather than in rows. In a conventional lecture theatre they are more likely to keep an eye on the lecturer: if they withdraw from the teaching/learning process they typically withdraw into themselves without attracting or distracting others, and importantly without challenging the authority of the lecturer. In such a lecture theatre, attending too closely to other students who are engaged in the learning process is understood to be uncivil. By contrast, in a semi-circular 'horseshoe' theatre students have ready eye contact with one another, and can visually communicate amongst themselves and be more participative. Here, attending to other students without disrupting them is civil, a mark of the 'community' of learners. The lecturer has less passive authority, less capacity to achieve students' passive compliance, but potentially has more dynamic authority, more capacity to lead students to engage with one another and with the material within constraints that s/he considers constructive for their learning.

Another example is the arrangement of an office. It is widely recognised that the position of the desk in relationship to the door and to the visitors' seating area speaks to the occupant's openness to prospective visitors. But note that these physical arrangements are resources that may be flexibly employed in the exercise of authority and hierarchy. A visitor entering an office whose occupant imposes a gaze of surveillance upon them from behind a desk facing the door experiences the occupant's claimed authority, which may or may not be consistent with their hierarchal position. However, a visitor to that same office, met by a person who stands up and moves from behind the desk to share space with them, experiences a confident and open colleague whose effective authority is enhanced regardless of their hierarchal position. The physical arrangement of this office still carries architectural power, but that can be accentuated or diminished by the conduct of its occupant.

Case study – space and power in a school
Similar mechanisms apply in less concentrated spaces. Figure 1 shows the layout of a relatively small school. Most obviously there are physical arrangements that organize activity. The classroom teaching zone on the left is distinct from the administrative and collegial zone on the right. In this case, and perhaps surprisingly, the transient teaching areas (library, computer laboratory) are in the 'adult' administrative/collegial zone rather than with the classrooms. This means that students routinely move in and out of the 'adult' zone. This might be seen as disruptive for staff and visitors. However, in this small school it is instead understood as an opportunity for interaction between students and staff who know one another. It is an expression of their shared participation in the school community. It also means that students moving through this area can be watched by staff in the reception office. Given the school's small size, this is an efficient arrangement. A larger school would be more likely to have full time librarian/resource centre staff to manage students using those facilities. Also, a larger school with this layout would have many more students moving through the staff area. Staff would know and so greet fewer of the students, which would make it more likely that students in the 'adult' zone would be seen as disruptive. So typically in a larger school, physical arrangements would separate routine student activity from the 'adult' zone – an example of architectural power that constrains both students and teachers in their casual civility towards one another.
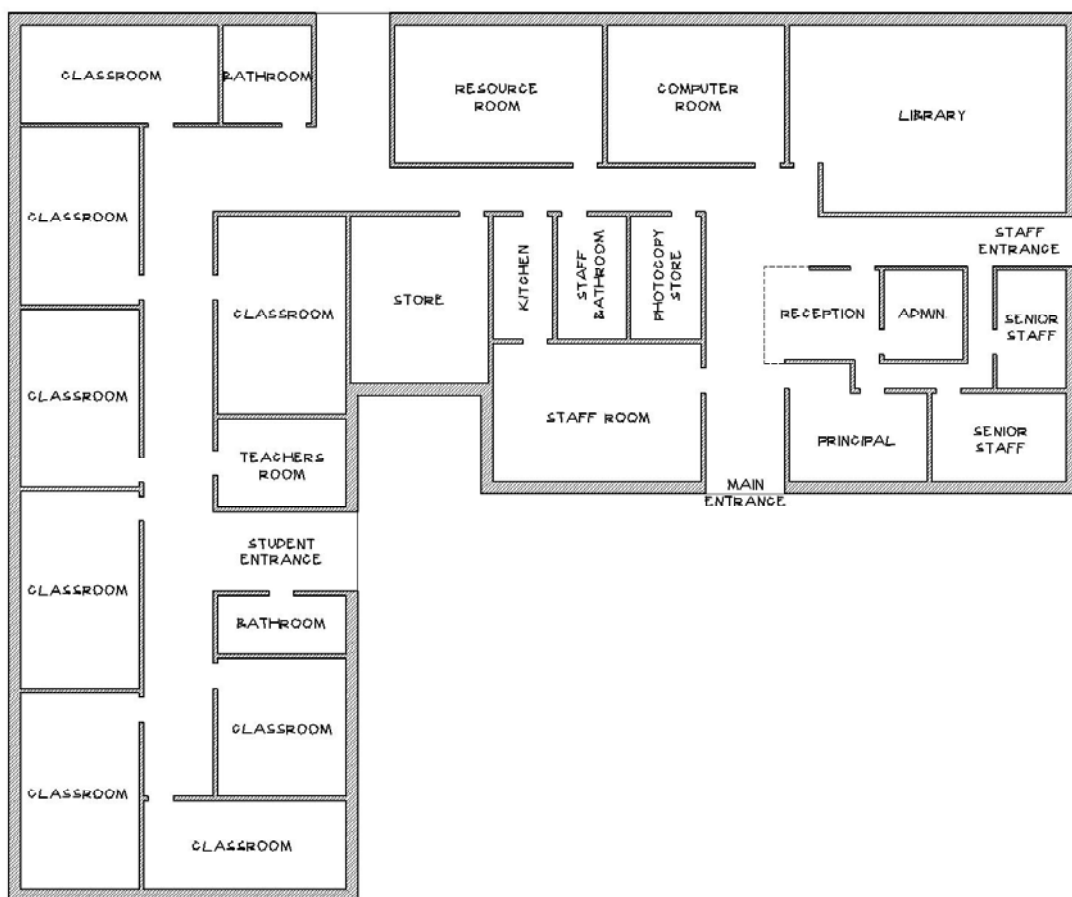
Figure 1 – Community primary school

The activity of staff and visitors is also organized by the physical arrangement of the main entrance, reception area, Principal's office and staff room. This arrangement is convenient for visitors, but also makes it easy for reception staff to manage them. It gives the Principal the opportunity to go out to greet visitors, or have them brought in by reception staff. This invokes similar relationships to those described above for visitors to an office. It gives privacy and discretion to the comings and goings of the Principal and other senior staff through their back corridor.

These physical arrangements also provide resources that may be creatively deployed in conjunction with other resources to physically and culturally organize staff, students, parents and other visitors. The Principal might adopt an 'open door' policy, which might be understood as expressing a real openness to staff and parents. Or it might be understood as a way of keeping an ear on activity in the staff room. How staff understood an 'open door' policy would depend on other aspects of the Principal's style and conduct, and his or her instructions to reception staff. The Principal might tell reception staff each time s/he came in or left through the back corridor, or might not tell them and so undermine staffs' sense of partnership with the Principal and their capacity to act confidently with the Principal's visitors and to make decisions about appointments.

Students are told that they are not to use the main entrance or staff entrance, or go to the staff room unless taking a message to a teacher, so there are invisible lines (running east-west and north-south from the reception office) that mark the boundaries of students' shared participation in the school community. This is a spatial representation of the multiple social boundaries (of knowledge, discipline, authority, power, etc) that limit students' autonomy and participation in the school. Here there is less direct architectural power, but architecture still resonates with other more salient expressions of power.

There are other boundaries that apply to staff, parents and other visitors. Teachers are expected to not be in the back corridor without reason (such as to visit senior staff), although – unlike the students – they have never been explicitly instructed not to be there. Other boundaries shape the activities of parents. These are potentially more ambiguous, contextual, negotiated, and specific to particular individuals. A teacher might welcome some parents into their classroom, and discourage others. There may be understandings – and misunderstandings – about what parents might do, say or notice when in a classroom, and whether the same rules and expectations apply in the corridors and playground. A parent might be invited to read to a group of students, or support their own child if s/he is having difficulties, or assist the teacher in preparing activities, or even lead activities. Each of these might be possible, or not, depending on the teacher, the parent, and their relationship. On top of this, some activities are authorized or prohibited by school or government policy, or by law. Parents have a right of access to their child, but have no authority to discipline other children in the class, regardless of the relationship between the teacher and the parent.

The physical arrangements of space reflect and shape the civility of the school in its context. The context is itself multidimensional, including the external authority structure (the state through law, and the Ministry of Education through policy), the school's authority structure, its possibly contested history and culture, and its prevailing factions and styles of leadership and resistance, and its dominant personalities. Architectural power may variously be a resource or a constraint in the broader exercise of power and authority, and in the enacting of the school's civility.

To conclude this section, I extend the analysis in two directions, to indicate the breadth of organizational scale, as well as to the scope of types of spaces, that it can be applied to.

Space and large organizations
First, in terms of scale, this type of analysis applies to large complex single site and multi-site organizations, as well as to small sites such as the school discussed above. Large complex organizations, particularly multi-site ones, have multiple invisible boundaries that limit who can go where. Those boundaries may coincide with geographical space (for example, the administration building being distant from the factory, head office being in another city), but they remain social as well as geographical boundaries, even if not consciously felt as such by most organizational members most of the time. Indeed, whether organizational members consciously feel limited by such boundaries is not the point. 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. Indeed, in large organizations the most senior people often make a point of conspicuously travelling to all organizational sites in the name of good management and leadership, and expect kudos for doing so.

As well, geographical scale and complexity amplifies the discretion of superiors to use space in ways that may empower or disempower subordinates, as discussed above for the school Principal. With increased scale, the most senior people in the organization have more opportunity to be generally unseen, and are better able to stage-manage the locations and occasions in which most members of their organizations do get to see them. So potentially they have more control over the knowledge and meanings that they are liable to pass on or withhold from others through their presence or absence. Increased scale affects the capacity for surveillance in complex ways. On one hand, the most senior people do not have ready direct access to most staff, and so they depend on middle managers, and administrative systems such as key performance indicators, for their information about staff. On the other hand, staff continue to have the experience of being within the organization's critical gaze. They may associate that gaze as coming from their direct managers rather than from

executives, thus letting executives play 'good cop' to the managers 'bad cop'. In this play of power and presence, middle managers have an important role as managers of space relationships. They are in the middle – and are required to mediate – not only hierarchy, but also space.

Space and place
Second, the analysis can be extended in scope to include more complex types of spaces. So far I have discussed spaces as if each had a fixed and unproblematic form, purpose and meaning, and so embodied stable and uncontested rules of conduct and power relations. The 'Principal's office', 'staff room' and 'class room' are distinct spatial categories not only on the architect's plan, but in the meanings and practices of all organizational members and nearly all visitors. They are social places that are culturally identified with physical spaces. However some spaces are set up as sites in which multiple meanings, practices and power relations can be enacted. For example, a conference room may be used for formal strategic meetings of the organization's executive group, for making presentations to major external customers or stakeholders, for decision-making by middle management teams, and for motivational sessions for production or marketing teams. Here, the space itself does not carry let alone impose rules, meanings, invisible boundaries or relationships of surveillance. The middle manager who yesterday confidently chaired a team meeting in the conference room may today enter it with excitement or fear when called before a meeting of the Board.

Many spaces have stable names that are widely and tacitly accepted, and that are associated with relatively coherent sets of rules, practices and levels of trust. But this does not imply that all this comes from the materiality of the site itself. Rather, it substantially comes from the cultural categories that are enacted and reproduced through the discourse, memories, beliefs and practices of organizational members. For some sites, their physicality is resonant with the routine practices enacted there – for practical reasons, a bathroom is a good place for ablutions, and a lecture theatre a good place for addressing large groups. This speaks to the success of design in concretely expressing the material requirements and cultural expectations of specific practices, and in concretely expressing power relations. However, most organizational sites do not particularly constrain or shape practices in this material way. The invisible boundaries in the school, office and organization are features of social place that are incorporated in physical space.

It is not the physical spaces, but rather the social places, in which we enact organizations, and in and through which our practices are organized. Physical spaces are expressions of social, organizational and personal power and agency; they are social and organizational places in material form.[2] Architectural power is a concrete expression of underlying social power, and this underlying power is substantially legitimated through our experience of its effects on our conduct through the medium of the practical design of spaces in which we engage with others. This could be analysed more thoroughly using Clegg's (1989) model of the circuits of power. In Clegg's terms, architectural power expresses and fixes in material space the rules of practice of underlying dispositional power (such as the institutional authority of the lecturer), and this shapes and constrains the causal power that is exercised through the agency of those in that space (including the agency of the lecturer, whose teaching methodologies will be limited by the design of the space).

The legitimating process of architectural power facilitates our tendency to act civilly within such power-infused places. We live and work in places as if we were living and working in spaces, and in this chapter I have for the most part talked about places as if they were spaces. Physical space and social place are often treated as if they were synonymous. This should not be taken to mean that the materiality of spaces is a thing that, in and of itself, generally has much social and organizational force, apart from that designed into it. Rather, it is a mark of the cultural and organizational achievements through which organizational places have been materially and culturally rendered into organizational spaces.

While spaces such as the conference room can at different times quite readily be home to different places, the re-placing of space is in some cases more complex. Churches may be trendily turned into restaurants, but this requires ritual deconsecration before material refurbishment. And for them to be commercially successful after refurbishment also requires newly fashionable cultural acceptance of secularism. The re-placing of space may also be contested. For example, inter-organizational competition might be expressed through social movement and political contests over land use – will practices at this site be organized by the local parks authority, or by a waste disposal company? And industrial contests within organizations may concern re-placing organizational spaces – what sort of place will this be if manufacturing operations are re-engineered? Such complexity and contestation is the occasional demonstration of the power, authority and cultural force that is always involved in rendering place in space.

Space, civility and organizationally effective authority

Organizational life is achieved despite the wide range of divergent and competing interests and the exercises of power that pull at it, both vertically and horizontally. Communication lines are kept sufficiently open, and joint action planned and more or less successfully carried out, between organizational members who are in very different positions within systems of interest and power. Organizational civility, and in particular prudent trust, is an important factor in accomplishing this. In this chapter I have argued that organizational space facilitates and is employed in achieving this civility. Authority is materially manifested through architectural power. As well, organizational space provides material frames, carries meanings, and supplies resources for organizational players to exercise collegiality without undermining their authority. The civility of conduct in most organizational space most of the time speaks to the legitimacy of the power embodied in it. Organizational space expresses distinctions and meanings about organizational power and authority, and it does so in such concrete form that organizational participants easily overlook it while they get on with the job as if they were familiar social equals.

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[1] Many taken for granted rules are most visible not when they are followed, but rather when they are violated. Violations of role-based trust often appear as the personalized hurt of individuals, and are sometimes described as violations of the 'psychological contract' – a misnomer that focuses on the personal experience of the violation rather than on the structural basis of the rule being violated.

[2] See Arantes (1996) for a related discussion of urban space and social place.