Available Theories. Considering the organizational relevance of physical settings, material actors, and embodied practice.

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In this paper I focus on the empirical options that can be opened up, by some of the theoretical contributions that are now available in the rapidly expanding field of research focussing on the organizational impact of buildings and space. How can these theoretical contributions throw a light on the data that is to be collected in a long term empirical research project on a number of buildings-in-use of Utrecht University? I shall not only rely on data derived from observation and interviewing performed in the here and now but on historical data as well, while I intend to keep focused on the materiality of buildings. What concepts are available and which data do I need?

The research project

The research project I am talking about is focussed on a number of buildings that are occupied by Utrecht University, in the middle of the Netherlands.

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Some of them are very old, others are recent constructions. I am going to focus on these buildings as buildings-in-use. Moreover, I am not only going to relate them to their present uses but shall also include the uses they have been put to in the past. The cases I selected date from the various historical periods this university has lived through. They represent various disciplines and functions associated with university life.

1. *The Academy building*. This building is explicitly related to the medieval heritage of the city, and also related to the founding of the University. It is basically centred around an old and spacious meeting hall which has been built in 1462 and was donated to the university shortly after 1636, the year of its founding. Since then, the building has been reconstructed various times to accommodate the various changes that have affected the University over time. The old meeting hall is now in use for the university's ceremonial meetings (www.uu.nl, May 8 2009).

2. *The Buys Ballot lab*. A laboratory building which, at the year of its founding in 1875, was distinctly associated with the nineteenth century expansion of the experimental physical sciences. At present it houses an institute that is related to the social sciences and to law: the University's School for Public Governance, but it was erected as a part of a university expansion that started in the second half of the nineteenth century. This expansion involved various laboratories and some elaborate complexes housing the university's academic hospital and its veterinary school. Most of these buildings – among them the laboratory - have remained intact to this day.

3. *Transitorium 2*. In the late 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, most departments of this university – among them its veterinary school, its physical science departments, and most of its social sciences – moved out of the city centre, to a so-called 'campus' at the outer edge of the city. The university's administrative centre moved there as well. This campus was called the External Space (*Uithof*) and, at the time, it presented a variety of new buildings. Among them are not only the so-called Centre buildings (*Centrum-gebouwen*) that present a 'human scale', but also some concrete high-rises, among them *Transitorium 2* which shall be the focus of my current research. It houses the Utrecht General Social Science Department that was considered quite innovative, at the time.

4. The *Educatorium*. This External Space has been regarded for a long time as the university's outback (Ibelings 2009) but this opinion was reconsidered, when the academic hospital left the city centre, and moved to this External Space as well. From the 1990's onward, some quite spectacular buildings were constructed in the area, among them the *Educatorium*, built in 1997 by Rem Koolhaas (see OMA/ Koolhaas 1987-1998) to house some very large auditoria and a restaurant to support university life on campus. This building seems to attract many visitors for its striking aesthetics, and will take part in my research.

These four buildings not only represent the various episodes of this university's development, they represent a variety of physical structures as well. But, if they were to be representative for the diversity of university functions and disciplines, some other cases should be added to this list as well. In the following sections I shall develop an empirical-theoretical strategy that enables me to compare these various cases. I shall draw empirical illustrations from the observation material that has been collected on the 19th century lab (Gastelaars, in press).

An material starting point

To provide myself with a material starting point, I have started my research with the essentially descriptive concepts Stewart Brand once proposed to conceptualize the durability of buildings (Brand 1994, 12-13; see Gastelaars, in press). I have focused on a number of material aspects that any building might have and that are summarized by brand through six concepts beginning with S. The first two concepts denote a building's Site (or its physical location) and also its Skin (or façade). These two material characteristics can specifically be interpreted as taking part in this building's presentation to the outside world and also in it's connected-ness to its physical environment. (See also Yanow 2005)

Second, I focus on a building's Structure (denoting the load-bearing elements of the building), its Space plan (which denotes the physical distribution of its space through walls and floors) and its Stuff (which denotes all movable objects that are present in a building; see also Yanow 2005). They can specifically be expected to materialize the spaces and places that take part in the day to day practices that are locally performed. The sixth concept Brand introduces, the concept of Service, does not so much

denote the face to face interactions that can be associated with the services an organization may provide (Gastelaars 2009) but rather this building's material infrastructure that ranges from its plumbing to its IT. As a rule such facilities are considered quite indispensable to the functioning of the building's occupants, not to mention that of the building, itself.

These material aspects may prove a valuable starting point because they can be assumed to be simply there. At a practical level, they can for instance be observed to 'keep randomness from invading [people's] minds' (Csikszentmihalyi 1993: 22). But, apart from this essentially passive 'being there', they can also be observed as active participants in various processes that can be relevant to the organizations that occupy these buildings. Here, I draw on Latour's (2005) definition of material actors (and *actants*): 'anything that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor – or, if it has no figuration yet, an *actant*' (Latour 2005, 71). Latour specifically encourages us to observe these various material aspects of a building as participants in everyday practices that involve people as well.

But even if we can make sense of the movements of people's bodies in time and space, this way, we might still wish to be able to make sense of these people's actual experiences, and of the various ways in which they, themselves, may present these embodied practices, themselves. Paraphrasing Mol and Law, we then not only are to assume that people *are* bodies; they *have* bodies as well and they can also be expected to *do* their bodies. This last verb is introduced by Mol and Law to indicate that people can also be expected to actively take their bodies into a given context and have them take part in activities together with the various other actors that may be present, rather than being 'just' an object or 'the' subject that is actively involved (Mol and Law 2004, 45; 57). As a consequence, we should not only try and make sense of the actual experiences of people moving

through a building, we should also be ready to relate the material aspects of a building to their embodied repertoires, and this includes the various ways in which they may actually manage these material aspects to connect with the (parts of) their bodies, in the everyday practices they perform.

But second, it is not accidental that I intend to also make use of historical data. Of course such data might relate to local practices as well, but, most of the time, such historical data might also be selected because of the light they might be able to throw on the wider societal context. Latour does not accidentally insists, that the non human *actants* we mentioned before could very well be observed as actors in a specific sense of the word, i.e., as active participants in a variety of social networks (Latour 2005, 71). To me, Latour's concept of 'figuration' does not only relate to the local context that may be relevant to the established practices that can locally be observed, but also to the 'institutional' environments in which these various human and non human actors can be found to take part, both in the past and in the present (see also Dale and Burrell 2008, 208). And yes, these various parts of a building may also be shown to take part in the much more abstract spatial arrangements that constitute society at large.

For this purpose, many authors, among them Dale and Burrell (2008) rely on Lefebvre's conceptualization of the '(re)production of space' ([1974]1991) For instance, Lefebvre has argued that, in order to be able to address the various distributive issues that may be quite essential to his concept of the '(re)production of space', one does not only need a concept of local physical practices. One is also in need of concepts that specifically help us establish the impact of these local negotiations on a wider context, and *vice versa*. To Lefebvre ([1974] 1991) 'space may be said to embrace a multitude of interactions, each with its assigned location' ([1974] 1991, 33) but the wider societal context is also addressed, and at the same time. So we are not only

in need of a conceptualization of this 'lived' spatial practice that allows us to observe its performance on 'particular locations and spatial sets' (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 33). He is particularly interested in the relevance of these spatial practices to specific historical and social formations, however local these 'lived' practices may seem at first sight.

To conceptualize this wider impact, he introduces a concept that he labels 'representations of space' ([1974] 1991, 33). It relates to the 'received' (or 'conceived') spatial practices that can practically be attributed, not only to specific historical episodes (such as the various stages in the development of a city) but also to specific institutions (such as for instance education, universities and schools). He suggests that such 'institutionalized' spatial practices denote 'a means of living in that space, of understanding it, and of producing it', for instance in our day-to-day negotiations (Lefebvre [1994] 1991, 47-8) In my specific context this may for instance mean, that it may not only be worth our while to find out how teachers and students are locally performing an education process, in relation to a building, but that we should also realize that 'everyone knows' what going to university implies, and also what it means, to be a student or an instructor, not to mention that one is expected to take exams. Dale and Burrell who also draw on Lefebvre's work in this respect, associate this notion of 'conceived space' with 'given' organizations and organizational forms (Dale and Burrell 2008, 4-23).

Third, Lefebvre insists on discussing the so-called representational spaces as well (Lefebvre [1974] 1991,33) To him 'this is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlaps physical space, making symbolic use of its objects' (Lefebvre [1974] 1991,39) Lefebvre, himself, appears to be particularly interested in the interpretation of monuments but, to mention one example, to Dale and Burrell (2008, 4-23), the concept may also relate to any other

way in which spatial practices, or buildings, may become 'cultural' in that it becomes infused with symbolical meanings. To me, it relates to these essentially symbolic aspects as well. It has become increasingly difficult, nowadays, to approach a building without paying attention to these various expectations (cf. Kornberger and Clegg 2003; Dale and Burrell 2008). Buildings can for instance be expected to physically represent an organization's current ambitions (Van Marrewijk 2009). Managers and architects may very well associate a glass Skin with the transparency of their organizational affairs. As far as the work floor is concerned, they may expect open spaces to encourage communication (Dale and Burrell 2008; for a practitioner in this field see Vischer 2005). Even if these associations may not turn out to be practically true, they do sort ideological effects.

So, first of all, I shall assume that, as far as the human actors are concerned, the notion of embodied practice may serve as a stepping stone for some of my interpretations. Moreover, I intend to also deal with the assumption, that these local spatial practices may very well be relevant (and *vice versa*) to various 'institutionalized' networks. They may even be observed as taking part in the much more abstract and often even 'imaginary' networks involved with the (re)production of space on a global level. Accordingly, and in analogy with the reasoning concerning the body as presented by Mol and Law (2004), I would like to argue, here, that in this specific context buildings cannot only be observed as *having* spaces and places, or a location. They can also be observed as *being* a set of locations, in that they materialize spaces and places themselves. But it may very well be true that they can also be observed as *doing* locations, in the sense that, not unlike humans and their bodies, they may also be observed to physically relate (some of) their material elements to the various other – human and non human – actors present, while performing a process that can only locally be observed.

I The societal relevance of a building-cum-organization's Site

According to Brand a building's Site amounts to 'the geographical setting, the urban location, and the legally defined lot, whose boundaries and context outlast generations of ephemeral buildings' (Brand 1994, 13). To him it is relevant that this setting is simply there and will keep being so, even after the buildings on it have gone to ruin. However, and as much of the present literature about buildings and spaces suggests (Dale and Burrell 2008; Gastelaars 2009) a building's site may very well be a matter of concern before the building is actually constructed. For instance, the terms that Brand seems to introduce as 'self-evident' himself – geographical location, urban setting, legal lot – may even relate to worldwide institutional networks, both of the practical and of the imaginary kind.

Decision-making concerning a building-cum-organization-to-be. We tend to for instance forget that, once a building is physically there, a lot of decision making processes may have preceded it, where the actual production of the building must have been at stake. In the empirical cases I am presenting here, the starting point of these decision making processes may for instance have been produced by educational policies, both of the university itself and of the national government and all other institutions involved with them. This starting point may also be provided, however, by the worldwide development of the physical sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences. These networks generate decision making processes that may even help a building-cum-organization to legitimize its existence, long after these decision making deeds have been done.

The choice of the building's site may also involve a number of legal and

financial considerations and it may even touch upon the planning concepts of the surrounding city and of the region as well. In some cases this decision making may even concern some world wide networks consisting of the financial partners, developers, and representatives of the real estate that may be involved with the development of a given building (Lefebvre[1974] 1991, 228). Another decision-making network shall be presented in the following section; it involves the actual creators of a building, from its architects to the builders, themselves.

Once it has been chosen, and once the building is there, a building's Site is very relevant to the determination of the occupying organization's symbolic position, in the surrounding city and in the world at large. A so-called A-location in terms of real estate may always retain its symbolical value. The status of a building may also be affected by a location that is perceived as 'central' or 'peripheral', to a city's core or to an administrative centre. (Cf. Erkoçu, E., and C. Buğdaci (2009), 79) In fact, the appreciation of a given site in these terms may even change over time.

At one point in time the 19th century building could very well be observed as being part of a 19th century city expansion which also brought the university to the fore. But, after the physical prominence of this 19th century era had become obsolete, it became much more relevant to point out that this very same building is located at the edge of the city's medieval centre. For some reason the status impact of this definition has not been affected by the fact that, at present, the building is located at a relative distance from the university administration that is now established in this University's External Space. (Gastelaars, in press)

No wonder that such symbolical considerations may also affect the decisions of those who claim to speak on behalf of the future inhabitants of the building. However, one should assume, once again, that the actual physical movements performed by people in space and time may or may not be conform to these expectations. Whyte ([1988] 1990) describes, for instance, how New York companies that moved their corporate headquarters to more remote areas in the US, found that their lesser dependents apparently felt

quite obliged to visit these distant locations, but that their more powerful business partners invariably seemed to balk at the prospect: 'Nobody would come' (Whyte ([1988] 1990, 292).

In a similar vein, a building's site can also be expected to physically connect the organization that occupies it, to its directly available local environment, and that this may include the movements of its inhabitants as well. Accordingly, a building may for instance be presented as an attractive place to external visitors who are not primarily interested in its functional characteristics. This may very well be true for some of the more spectacular pieces of contemporary architecture, but it can be relevant to their predecessors as well.

A city planner who is currently involved in the re-development of a 'city campus' for Utrecht University appears to particularly relate these buildings to this city's medieval context: 'Utrecht used to be a city consisting of walled-in convents and of communities within the community'. He would particularly like to open up the green and leafy inner courts these medieval buildings present, to the local population of the city: 'Why should a University library or a faculty building be exclusively accessible to its students and staff? A campus should not be turned into a fortification' (Gastelaars, in press)

And it can also happen the other way around: a building's human occupants may certainly appreciate a given urban environment.

The walk to the Institute is a beautiful walk through a park bordered by a canal, on the one hand, and, on the other, by some beautiful houses and gardens that may also have been built in the beginning of the 20th century. The seasons are very visible throughout the year. There are snowdrops to announce the end of winter. Narcissus bulbs flower each spring. Cow parsley and buttercups announce the approaching summer, and so do the flowering chestnut trees. After summer, there will be plenty of chestnuts and other seeds crunching under one's feet, on the footpath. In winter, most trees will have lost their leaves. (Field notes)

But the building itself may not participate in this, at all.

II The expectations performed by a building's design and Skin

But let us, first, look at the outward appearance of the building, as it is presented by the building's design. A building's design does not only concern the building's Skin but also the building's Structure and Space plan, not to mention its Services. Interior decoration provides the Stuff. The decision-making that is involved, here, does not only affect these physical characteristics, imaginations are involved as well.

The networks these decisions involve rely on such actors as architects and designers, not to mention the developers and construction companies that are expected to do the physical work (Dale and Burrell 2008, 23-6). It is often assumed that architects can claim a privileged position, here, as 'imagineers' (Dale and Burrell 2008, 29) although it is also suggested that, once a project gets going, their specific concerns may be overruled by those of the more practically oriented others (Gastelaars 2009) The symbolical aspects that seem to be relevant here are of a different nature from the ones discussed in the above. They mostly focus on the organization's current aspirations, and this includes its aspirations concerning the work that needs to be performed 'inside'. In most cases the Skin plays an essential part.

A lot of contemporary architecture can be presented as exemplary of such expectations, although there is no reason to assume that similar considerations were absent in medieval times or in the 19th century. Quite a few buildings that date from the 19th century can for instance still be presented as institutional buildings in a specific sense of the word. According to Brand, such institutional buildings usually intended to make an enduring impression on the outside world. To him, they still 'act as if they were designed specifically to prevent change for the organization inside and to convey timeless reliability to everyone outside.' (Brand 1994, 7).

The building's Skin presents a dark brick surface. At the front of the building, the lowest row of windows is situated above eye-level, making it impossible to look in from the outside. The front of the building is also marked by two elaborately carved and very heavy wooden front doors; only one of them is usable, as the other is fixed in place. Next to this one entrance are two banners indicating the institute's current name and also relating it to Utrecht University; a prominent sign commemorating the building's respected past as a rather famous lab is also affixed to the building near this door. (field notes)

To Richard Sennett, such institutional buildings often seem to be 'sited as though [they] could be anywhere' (Sennett 1974, 13). They present themselves as definitely standing apart from their city surroundings.

But the Skin does more. Richard Sennett for instance suggests that these institutional buildings even look like they are able to provide an inner sanctuary to their occupants, 'separating their "inner life" from the busy street life outside' (Sennett 1991, p. 32).

III Performing accessibility and public-ness through a building's entrance and public spaces

The Skin usually presents those people who wish to enter the building, with a properly functioning door. But, after this has been successfully negotiated, one is usually presented with an entrance hall, as well. It presents one with a space you need to go through whenever you want to go in to look around, do your business, or just pay a visit. Like some of the other public places that are materialized by the building, this hall may materialize some other options as well.

Very often, the material presentation of an entrance hall reminds one of a non-place, of the kind that was theoretically conceptualized by Augé: 'If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or

concerned with identity will be a non-place' (Augé [1992] 1995, 77-8). Moreover, and to Augé, such non-places are not as undetermined as they may seem. He even argues that they may be intentionally 'formed in relation to certain ends' (Augé [1992] 1995, 94). But, even if this intentionality has been absent, an entrance hall may turn out to be quite functional in a number of ways.

An entrance hall may for instance give access to a building's front office which, in its turn, may present an organization's central information point where visitors from outside can be informed about what is going on inside the building. Second, an entrance hall may also serve as a waiting area. Given this function, it could also be framed as a 'liminal space' (Van Gennep [1908] 1960), in the specific meaning of this word that was once proposed by Van Gennep. To him, liminality denotes the situation 'in between' two states of being, for instance between being young and being adult. In this intermediate stage, the people undergoing a *rite de passage* would often be held for a while 'in anticipation' of things to come. Those visitors who are asked, by the front office, to take a seat in the entrance hall to wait for their appointment may very well experience this waiting area as a liminal space.

Moreover, and third, Augé would definitely argue that such non-places are often also there to show visitors the way. He observes that they are usually 'defined … by the words and texts they offer us ... which may be prescriptive ("Take right hand lane"), prohibitive ("No smoking") or informative ("You are now entering...")' (Augé [1992] 1995, 96). As the examples show, they may even serve a moral purpose.

And, finally, some other authors apply the slightly different notion of liminality (Dale and Burrell 234, 238-41) which does not only apply to the hallway, but also to the corridors and stair cases, and even to the elevators

that may be provided to a building. A building's restaurant may also serve as a public space of this kind. To quite a few authors, such open and undefined spaces provide room to casual meetings involving the organization's professional staff and management (Vischer 2005; Verstegen 2009). Some other authors accentuate that they may actually provide the essentially informal meeting places 'back stage' or even 'under the stage' where decisions and power relationships can be (re)negotiated (Kunda 1992: 157; Bailey 1977). To Kornberger and Clegg such relatively undefined spaces may even put in place an organization's capacity for innovation (Kornberger and Clegg 2003: 76). I shall return later to this point.

When we try to make sense of the actual movements of people through such spaces, we may actually rely on the kind of observation that delivers the groundwork to Bill Hillier's space syntax. This is part of his configurational theory of architecture (2007) in which he explores 'the inter-relations of space and movement at different scales' (Hillier 2007, VI) both within and around a given building. Although he aims at an intentional design, himself, he considers the patterns that can thus be observed as 'self-organising systems' (Hillier 2007, VI) William H. Whyte presents similar observations in his book on the design and management of public places – his own favourite pattern being the 'prolonged goodbyes' that finalize casual meetings in a street or in a corridor. (Whyte ([1988] 1990, 342). But these patterns may also be related to a kind of embodied experience that can only be reproduced 'from within'. A space may or not be experienced as crowded (Cf Yanow 2005; Hall [1966] 1969) Spaces-in-action can be physically observed, the actions-in-space can be audible, the material elements that are present can be touched by the people present.

As Bloomer and Moore (1977; see also Pallasmaa 2005) have argued, such experiences may also draw on what they call our 'elementary physical

experience' (Bloomer and Moore 1977, 33) of a buildings' spaces and places. We seem to for instance experience the height and depth of its corridors and halls in a particular way and we also seem to have a haptic sense (Bloomer and Moore 1977,34) through which we seem to experience how our bodies move through three-dimensional spaces (Bloomer and Moore 1977, 37). Although many of us may actually deny having any of these experiences at all (Golledge 1997), these experiences may for instance affect when and where we may 'choose' to stand still or to sit down, or lean against the wall of a building (Bloomer and Moore 1977,72). They may also provide us with places and spaces we would rather avoid.

IV The (re)production of places and spaces to perform

According to Brand, a building's Structure is often quite synonymous with its physical durability: 'The foundation and load-bearing elements are perilous and expensive to change, so people don't. These *are* the building' (Brand 1994, 13). Together with a building's Space plan, it may not only confirm an organization's accessibility to visitors coming in from the outside world, but it can also be expected to somehow take part in the 'management' of its institutional activities. Moreover, the Space plan should be included here as well. To Brand this space plan relates to 'The interior lay-out – where walls, ceilings, floors and doors go' (Brand 1994, 13) and it may in fact materialize the places and spaces where an organization's clients and staff can come together to physically perform their work. They can also relate, materially and otherwise, to the institutionalized networks I mentioned earlier and to society at large.

Here, again, I start with Augé. To him, the concept of place can be understood as designating 'a culture localized in time and space' (Augé

[1992] 1995, 34, 80-1). Accordingly, it can be seen as a specific kind of space, with well-defined properties, and associated with well-defined activities. By contrast, the determination of a 'space' usually relies on parameters that are much more abstract or undetermined. As a material concept, a space is considered much more open to a variety of activities, by definition. To some, this notion of more or less undefined spaces may currently accentuate the flexibility of an organization (cf. Scott and Spicer 2007; Kornberger and Clegg 2003). To others, however, among them Lefebvre and his followers, the presentation of such an 'abstract space' does nothing but conceal the power effects involved with these flexibilisation efforts (Lefebvre [1974] 1991: 49). These 'others' are even inclined, to re-establish the relevance of place (Vischer 2005).

Moreover, the various places and spaces produced by the building's Structure and Space plan help us to present these local activities as essentially embodied, at the same time. Theoretically, the notion of embodied practice is quite often associated with the physical arrangements provided by buildings in a quite straightforward manner (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 40; see also Dale and Burrell 2008, 104, 203). This notion of embodied-ness can, first, be related to the actual movements of people through time and space as they can be observed in relation to a specific building. It can also be associated with the bodily experiences that I have presented in the previous section. But, third, the notion can be related, as well, to the mental and physical 'incorporation' of practical competence that may be part and parcel of some established (and even institutionalized) professional practice (Gastelaars 2009). However, people can not only be observed, here, to *have* bodies. In fact they can also be observed, here, to *do* (their) bodies (Mol and Law 2004), in the sense that - together with other actors - they are bodily engaged in the situated practices that their profession requires them to perform. Although most authors would agree with Dale and Burrell that 'the

relationship between identity, work, and space is multiple, ambiguous and shifting' (Dale and Burrell 2008, 102), it may very all be true that this concept of embodied practice might also incorporate a sense of identity. Dale and Burrell argue that: 'identity […] needs to be enacted by human bodies in social spaces on a daily basis' (Dale and Burrell 2008,110). But let us now look at some of the institutional practices that could be discussed.

Teaching. The various empirical cases that I am going to analyze may involve a variety of institutionalize activities. The Academy building is dedicated to ceremonial meetings of various kinds, the large auditoria and restaurant created by Koolhaas shall present institutionalized activities of another kind. We may assume, however, that many University buildings will be dedicated to teaching and research. These are the institutionalized practices I shall discuss.

I shall start with teaching because, at present, this kind of activity seems to be quite compatible with the 'production of people' described by Dale and Burrrell (2008, XII, 99-134) as a part of the aspirations that are currently quite often presented in relation to buildings under (re)construction. They themselves for instance present a case (Dale and Burrell 2008, 111-6) involving a new office space that is expected to materialize local cooperation of the organization's employees through the implementation of its shared IT, but also through open spaces and lots of glass (Dale and Burrell 2008, 114) They also investigate how this organization's internal communicativeness and its obvious aspiration to be welcoming to visitors is to be materialized by the physical characteristics of this building (Dale and Burrell 2008, 114). Another author who described a number of cases in similar terms is Jacqueline C. Vischer (2005). My present data on the 19th century building suggest that such aspirations may also apply to buildings dedicated to teaching (Hertzberger 2008; Verstegen 2009).

The Institute's policy objectives in the educational realm amounted to a preference for 'small scale interaction' and aimed at the development of a 'variety of competences' as far as the students were concerned. Seminars were to support the Institute's 'inductive teaching methods' that would largely rely on 'the students' initiative'. These educational objectives were explicitly presented as having governed the building's renovation (quoted in Gastelaars, in press).

Such principles are quite often turned into practice, nowadays, as a part of an organization's attempt to redesign the processes they consider essential to their daily work, under the guidance of 'client quality standards', 'innovative' professional aspirations, or new managerial prospects (Gastelaars 2009). An example is presented by the recent refurbishment of the 19th century lab.

The wood paneled classrooms with long 'demonstration tables' that must have been quite effective for the laboratory of the past were refurbished to provide: 'A variety of class rooms; One lecture hall only; Ample space for interaction; Rooms for self study & group work' . (Power Point 2006) The solidity of the building's original structure, however, prohibited changing other spatial arrangements dating from this earlier period. The single large lecture hall accessible directly from the entrance hall, for instance, provides an amphitheatre as of old, its demonstration table down below reinforcing one- way communication only. In another example, the new tables in the larger classrooms are attached to the floors, as these tables were to provide the students with sockets to connect their laptops to the wired network that was put in place to support the new Intranet that was to be provided. These tables remained fixed to the floor in spite of the now prevailing, newer, wireless communication. The smaller rooms designed for individual study and workgroups, however, seem to enact the Institute's innovative educational approach in a more straightforward manner. By offering round tables in the middle and individual working surfaces along their sides, they provide the relatively open spaces that can accommodate a variety of small-scale activities, ranging from student group meetings to face to face coaching and consultation.

None of these data can establish whether any of these aspirations are actually made true. The actual physical experiences of being a teacher and being a student are also left out of the equation. These various embodied practices might even require a specific material context, as far as the practitioners themselves are concerned and the same may very well be true for their students. Each individual representative of these parties may even experience these places and spaces in a different way.

Moreover, the places and places materialized by a building may interfere with the sense of territoriality that, to some, is usually quite relevant to the more permanent inhabitants of a building. Jacqueline Vischer expressly introduced this concept to denote 'the demarcation and defence of space' on the basis of one's personal attachment to it but also on the basis of a person's status considerations and his or her sense of control (Vischer 2005, 52). Thus, territoriality is specifically related to the power effects associated with the 'ownership' of a specific place, even if a building does nothing but provide a home base to activities that are mostly performed outside (Vischer 2005, 76). I shall return later to the concept of 'home'.

A very specific issue relevant to an organization's institutionalized activities seems to be their visibility (and invisibility) to an external observer. For instance, and specifically where teaching and learning are concerned, glass walls are often expected to materialize the 'open minded-ness' associated with these activities (Hertzberger 2008). The same is true for some of the buildings investigated in this research.

The sliding doors of coloured glass that replaced the solid walls of the former teaching labs render visible the physical efforts that are going on inside these rooms, to anyone who might pass by in the building's corridors. According to the interior architect, these glass sliding doors are simply there to 'allow some daylight into the otherwise quite dark , but students and teaching staff must now somehow cope with the physical visibility these glass sliding doors produce, although they were made soundproof to ensure that auditory privacy can be maintained. (see Gastelaars, in press)

But, again, visibility may not always be as desirable as it seems. An new art school in the middle of the Netherlands found, for instance, that the open spaces it had expressly created for its classes, was appreciated by the dancers, but not by the actors-to-be who were very quick in their taping up of these glass walls with paper. Contrary to the designers' expectations, the development into being an actor turned out to be a much more introverted

process than learning how to dance (Verstegen 2009, 56). And, although this may not seem to be relevant, all the time, visibility may very well be experienced as surveillance by an organization's employees (Dale and Burrell 2008; Vischer 2005).

Moreover, the presence of glass walls does certainly not prevent people from performing some of their activities 'out of sight'. The preparation of the classes, both by teachers and students, may for instance be performed behind closed doors or somewhere outside the building. The inevitable coordination and supportive services are even more performed 'out of sight', by definition. They often materialize in 'back offices' that are often also quite 'obscure' to an organization's inmates, but they are certainly not be visible to an outside observer (see also Gastelaars, in press).

Research. The act of rendering some activities visible at the expense of others, may even seem to establish institutional priorities.

A comment made by an external Ph.D. student who visited the building draws our attention to another effect that is produced by the glass walls: 'You seem to have these glass cubes all over the place, and they all seem to have to do with teaching. Do you people actually perform any research?' (see Gastelaars, in press)

But we might as well have a closer look and ask ourselves: What *does* it mean when an organization's institutional activities seem to be hidden? The least visible physical activity in an academic institute may very well be presented by its research.

To an astute observer the Stuff presented by a building may very well betray its presence.

An observer may notice the masses of paper being printed out on the various copying machines (available to 'staff only'). Among these piles of paper one might find a number of e-mail message printouts that could also provide evidence of this Institute's research. In a glass case in the entrance hall, some of the books published by Institute staff are on display.

The institute's staff can quite often be observed sitting behind their computers. There are specialized research meetings where staff and visiting scholars come together behind the glass walls I discussed. The building also houses the occasional scientific conference. (field notes)

But most research activities seem to be quite invisible, indeed, although one might feel very much inclined, once again, to rephrase this initial observation. Quite a few of the embodied research activities may in fact be performed 'elsewhere', with the organization's building serving as a home base. It seems to be their absence rather than their invisibility that counts.

This may certainly be true for the scholarly networking activities which are often considered quite essential to any research effort that is to be taken seriously. These networking activities are quite often performed in the 'absent presence' (Gergen 2002) that has become quite common in academia nowadays as a consequence of the current prevalence of electronic communication. The building provides the infrastructure and the researchers are visibly working on their computers, but they are focussed 'somewhere else'. Moreover, the person to person networking that is usually considered of equal relevance to scientific performance is usually even performed physically elsewhere, with a given building serving as a home base to some. This absent networking may very well be performed on a global scale.

But, surprisingly or not, a similar absence may also apply to the work involved with the production of scientific data. Of course there are the physical experiments that would be visually accessible to an outside observer (see also Latour and Woolgar ([1979] 1986). There is also the kind of positivist social research that actually relies on questionnaires and other tangible proof associated with doing research (Van El 2002). However, it has also be established that even these physical research activities may be performed by world wide networks (Knorr-Cetina 1999; see also Gastelaars,

in press). But there is also a lot of the fieldwork that may also be performed outside the building. This is particularly the case with those disciplines which rely heavily on the interviewing and observation work that is generally associated with the interpretive versions of qualitative research in the social sciences. Again, the building may serve as a home base to people who are habitually occupied somewhere else.

But, last but not least, scientific work usually also involves the activity of writing up research results. In Latour and Woolgar's famous *Laboratory Life* ([1979] 1986: 45), the scientists observed appeared to rely so much on computerized appliances that 'inscribed' their data that they could also be physically observed assembling their publications. With other fieldwork data most of the writing up is performed out of the office or, whenever the researchers are on site, behind closed doors (Van El 2002; see also Gastelaars, in press).

These closed doors thus may not only relate to people's 'sense of territoriality'; they may even be seen as an essential prerequisite to the *solitude* or 'physical thinking space' that, at least according to Westin's (1980) famous essay on the subject of privacy, most people seek out whenever they need to think something through. Scientific reflexivity may very well be produced in conversation with colleagues or by the active networking described earlier, but making up one's mind about the meaning of one's data appears to be truly supported by the other extreme of the communicative spectrum: a building should materialize 'places' or 'spaces' where one can particularly expect to be left alone.

And yet, there is a lot of 'material imaginization' available where such essentially innovative activities as research are concerned, and which actually insists on the reverse. An example is provided by Kornberger and

Clegg (2003) but they certainly do not stand alone, when they argue very strongly in favour of 'a generative building'. They specifically argue that such a building enhances scientific innovation' in that it 'allows and encourages plurality, contradictions and dissensus through its spatial organization.' (Kornberger and Clegg 2003: 78) To Kornberger and Clegg, such buildings cannot but enhance an organization's creativity through their materialization of so-called organizational *folds*, i.e., 'pockets [...] where the established order is reversed' (Kornberger and Clegg 2003, 76) or of organizational *heterotopias*, i.e., spaces 'where the dominating grammar is questioned and invented anew' (Kornberger and Clegg 2003, 79). The material key-word seems to be 'undefined', here, rather than the 'open' and 'transparent' we encountered in the educational realm. The relatively undefined spaces I discussed earlier may even materialize these wishes.

Like any assumptions concerning any institutionalized activity in relation to a building - they might prove wrong to the extent that such conditions need not necessarily be met by one single location. A local building may very well limit its 'generative' impact to providing a home base to researchers who are permanently abroad.

V Organizations and infrastructure

To many contemporary students of organizations and management it may very well seem that, till now, I have skipped most of what they consider essential to organizational life. Till now, I have mostly talked about these university organizations in terms of some of their institutionalized activities, and, accordingly I have focused on the impact of the various material aspects of their buildings, on these organizations' primary processes. I also talked about the impact of buildings on these organization's external

presentation and on the various decision making processes that may precede their actual construction. But I do not appear to have talked about the associated organizations.

For instance, when we talk about organizations in the material and physical terms I now present, we might, first, talk some more about the various infrastructural arrangements a building presents, and the impact they may have on the various actors that are present. And, second, it would not be fair if we would limit the actual presence of managers to the various decision making processes we have presented in the above. Their relevance may also be substantiated by their physical presence. And, third, and particularly for those of us who are quite sceptical about the centrality of these managers' specific efforts to what is locally going on (see also Visscher 2005), it might be worth our while to investigate how the material opportunities a building and its infrastructure may help these managers, to actually turn an organization into the 'community' they so often aspire.

We have thus far been able to observe how building provides the infrastructure to an organization's institutionalized activities, for instance by providing computerized support. As we have seen, an organization's staff may very well spend a substantial part of its time on serving the computerized systems involved with teaching and research; to this may now be added that IT formats and other 'material actors' of this kind may also contribute to the coordination of these various processes and also to the performance of their external accountability (Gastelaars 2009). Accordingly, Bowker and Star's ([1999] 2000) suggestion that such material actors should definitely be included when we discuss the Services which, to Brand, are the 'working guts' of a building (Brand 1994, 13).

Like all other infrastructural arrangements, they essentially remain hidden from view, to the organization's participants and to an external observer alike. In fact, the same may also turn out to be true for the numerous operational managers and coordinating staff who are actually involved in their operation, and who are quite often delegated to the back offices that are provided by the building-cum-organization as well (Gastelaars, in press). Of course, the local management may expressly relate to these human participants and to the various formats their computerized infrastructure presents, but it may amount to a relevant question, once again, what it means that they tend to remain quite invisible, themselves.

The reverse may be true with the managers that are locally involved, at least at first sight. Of course, it is usually assumed that managers are supposed to be visible to the external world, and that they are there to publicly represent their organizations. Inside the organizations, however, the managers are often allowed to occupy specific rooms that may actually reinforce their status (Taylor and Spice 2009). On the one hand this may quite often mean that they are 'encouraged' through the building's structure and place plan, to operate at some distance from their work floors (Van Marrewijk 2009; Vischer 2005).

On the other hand, and this is the case in the 19th century building I present, they may also be presented by their buildings as locally quite visible and as accessible as well.

The organization's central management is physically concentrated on one single place. These managers occupy adjacent rooms on the building's ground floor. Next to these managing professors' rooms are the financial and executive managers' offices, as well as an office for the representative of the university's personnel department. The management's secretarial support is also concentrated there. These managerial quarters are situated at the far end of a relatively dark and very long hallway, but, in spite of this, they are particularly easy to reach for people arriving from the outside. Some of these managers' doors are even left open most of the time.

The informal meeting spaces I discussed earlier may also reinforce this local visibility, as far as the managers are concerned.

One can observe the managers and other staff occupying this 'compound' in conversation at the end of the corridor, next to the printer that has been located there exclusively for their usage. Casual meetings among these actors can also be observed in other parts of the building, particularly on the flight of stairs that connects this end of the ground floor to the building's restaurant and its upper floors.

However, a building may also accommodate the so-called present absence I mentioned before, of people who, on the one hand, may seem to be glued to a local computer, but who, on the other hand, are actually engaged somewhere else. Moreover, it may very well be true that the privacy effect that can generally be associated with closed doors, is also relevant to managers, for instance where their organization's internal decision making is involved. Again the issue of privacy amounts to a right to be left undisturbed, in order to allow for such power struggles as may be involved in such local decisions (Bailey 1977).

The absent networking that I introduced in the previous section my apply to this managerial work as well, and this particularly affects the organization's external decision. We can for instance observe how an academic institute's representatives take part in their university's general decision-making at locations outside the building. This may also be true for most of the professional committees that currently organize most research practices, and whose networking efforts may very well exceed the national level. Governmental policies affecting higher education can be expected to be developed elsewhere as well. The fact that these managers operate at some distance from their own physical location may provide them with some advantages – such as keeping the power struggle out of sight of the occupants of their own organization. Needless to say, however, that it may also affect their position in a negative way.

Generally speaking, managers are often tacitly presented as the true owners of the organizations they represent. But, internally, this may also affect the way they deal with the negotiations that perform their organization's design. They may not only present themselves as quite instrumental to a straightforward application of some of the more 'rational' principles of design (see also Hillier [1996] 2007 and Whyte [1988] 1990) although they may also be held responsible for the effects of its actual implementation. Moreover, they may also be inclined to present themselves as the ultimate advocates of the various imaginizations that may be involved with the (re) construction of a building (Vischer 2005; Van Marrewijk) but, again, they can be held responsible, as well, for these dreams' actual materializations.

For instance, quite a few managers may actually found to also identify, themselves, with the presentation of their organization as a community, a village, or a street, as a part of the organization's physical restructuring and redesign, although there may be no reason at all to assume that it will practically work out this way as well.

For instance, another metaphor that is often favoured in this specific context, that of the family feeling that should also be reinforced by a building's physical presentation, could very well be denied by the organization's day to day practices, once they are physically realized as a part of the building. For instance the personal Stuff that might be treated as part of the personalization of such places may very well be treated as 'matter out of place' (Douglas' ([1966] 1991, 2).

On a tour of the building led by the interior architect who had been responsible for their design, the smaller student rooms were presented as 'cosy Dutch living rooms' – drawing on a key component of Netherlands culture, *gezelligheid* – with 'lampshades above their round tables in the middle'. This homey metaphor, however, may not necessarily apply to the actual professionals' and students' activities that are to take place there. In fact, some paper notices posted on the walls deny any suggestion of homey-ness by insisting that any personal stuff that is left behind shall be moved away. (field notes)

In this context, however, it might also be of some interest to point at a number of material elements that can be associated with Brand's notion of Service – or infrastructure – as well. For instance it could be interesting to point at those infrastructural arrangements that are even quite indispensable to the most businesslike of organizations. They are often tacitly assumed to be there, but, at the same time, they are actually held responsible, at least to an extent, for the organizations' inhabitants physical health and well-being. But, more importantly to the point I am now trying to make is that their tacit but inevitable presence of such essentially material provisions as electricity, central heating, plumbing, wash basins, kitchens and restaurants may even be associated much more strongly than we tend to assume with their capacity to 'organize' the human aspects of organizational life. There are quite a few organizational stories available nowadays that address the unmistakable social functions that can be associated with such essentially physical administrations as are provided by coffee machines, water closets, and so on.

An organization's restaurant is often even presented, this way, in a quite straightforward manner. It may not only be presented as a rather well defined place that provides people with counters, tables and chairs, not to mention the food and beverages one may need, to survive till the end of a work day. It may be expected to contribute to the organization's 'community life' as well. And in some cases, the designers' aspirations may even go a little bit further. Then they may even present it as a 'home away from home' (Verstegen 2008: 65).

At the outer edges of the restaurant provided by the refurbished 19th century lab there are some small round tables with colourful stools and settees available. The architects claim that they are there to encourage the students to feel at home and chill – or at least to remind them of such well-designated places they may call home themselves. (Field notes)

Thus, a restaurant may even be presented as the materialization of a much deeper sense of belonging – although it remains to be seen whether this will ever be confirmed by the experiences of the people who are involved.

VI Conclusion: What can we say that buildings do?

The observations that can be made using Brand's six S's help us to visualize the complex and varied interplay of materiality and those institutional practices that may constitute an organization's life (Gastelaars, in press). I can paraphrase Latour's argument, here, that 'in addition to "determining" and serving as a "backdrop for human action"' (Latour 2005, 72) a building's various material aspects may impact, take part in, make visible, present, provide, organize, and materialize an organization's physical presence and its institutionalized activities. They may even be observed to actually take part in a wider social context. But they do not act on their own.

The main question that, to me, emerges from this exercise revolves around the following issue: How can one address the complexity of the processes in which these material aspects participate and yet focus on a wider context? How can one, for instance, take into account the actual experiences of the people who are involved? How can we make sense of the embodied practices they are expected to perform, and take into account their interaction with these non human actors?

The most difficult part, however, is presented by the local impact of the wider social networks involved in the world wide processes related to 'the (re)production of space'. For instance, it may seem quite appropriate at first, to dig up another one of these intriguing quotes provided by Lefebvre, and

argue that analysis of this wider social space may bring out many differences, indeed, and that these differences may very well 'involve levels, layers, and sedimentations of perception, representation, and spatial practice which presuppose one another' (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 226) Or to state with Dale and Burrell that 'The built world we inhabit tells us narratives, stories about ourselves and the societies that we live in' (Dale and Burrell 2008, 43) apart from the fact that 'it simultaneously influences what we do or do not do through structures that can be described by the most mundane of terms: "walls", "doors", "windows", "corridors", and "steps"' (Dale and Burrell 2008, 43) It still amounts to a very good research question, I think, precisely how these wider connections are locally (re)produced?

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