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Middle Managers at Activity Based Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aim of this study is to identify how middle managers work in Activity Based Workplace (ABW), the challenges that a new workplace represents to the management team and the organisation and the effects of the space on leadership.

Theoretical framework: This study is based on three theories: first the classic managerial work theory since its focus is on managerial activities on a daily basis; second, the space, organization and management theory in order to understand the space where the middle managers execute their activities and the effects of space on the management team and the organisation; lastly the leadership and space theory to understand how mangers use leadership in the new space of activity based workplace.

Methodology: The qualitative approach is used in this study since it encouraged the participants to share their stories about how they work and what they do in this specific and growing way of working. Two methods were used to collect the data, shadowing and semi-structured interviews.

Results: The results of this research showed that managers in ABW have the same responsibilities but it has changed the number of spaces that they can use to perform their activities. However, middle managers face new challenges when managing and leading their teams, this study shows some of those challenges and the way how the participants deal with the situation in order to adapt and to take advantage of this new working environment.

Key words: Managerial work, management and organisation, physical space, Activity Based Workplace (ABW), flexible workplaces, leadership, collaboration, communication and middle managers.

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

To understand the context of Activity Based Workplace (ABW), it is important to emphasize that a changing world has created a variation in organizations. New technologies, diverse age and ethnical workforce and different work styles have changed the companies' needs related to workplace (Barber et al. 2005). There are different kinds of workplaces that are used by companies nowadays; they can be divided into seven kinds of offices according to their type. The first five types are offices where every employee has their own workstation but in different spaces; the cell office or single room office, the shared office where two or three people work, the small open plan office which is shared by 4 to 9 people, the medium-size open office where there are 10 to 24 people per room and the large open landscapes offices where the room is shared by more than 24 people. The sixth type in the list is the flex office where the employees do not have their own workstation and the workplace is an open plan office. The last type is called Combi office where the employees are used to work in teams and they use their workstations less than twenty per cent of the time (Bodin Danielsson & Bodin, 2008).

Activity based workplace belongs to the flex office type. This type of space is characterized by not having an assigned workstation; instead it is divided by diverse spaces according to the activity that the employee wants to perform such as concentrated work, meetings, phone calls, resting time, etc. In these kinds of offices the employees choose freely the common workstation that they want to use according to their necessities at any time. In addition, high technology amenities are needed, both outside and inside the office, in rder to facilitate the flexibility that is required for these kinds of offices to be successful (Bodin Danielsson & Bodin, 2008). Practitioners of AWB promote flex offices as a way to create a home feeling in the office, where people leave behind the "me" mind-set and become a "we" culture. They describe it as a broader workplace where employees have the opportunity to choose from a variety of activity areas according to task they need to complete (Malkoski, 2012).

Workplaces have evolved over time. In the 80´s the focus was based on individualistic work and the workplaces were cell offices where every person owned their own room. After that, the 90´s arrived with the idea of saving money, which led to the development of open landscapes where workers owned their workstation but shared the room with others. In the

new century flex offices started to appear to further reduce the costs to companies and enable the workers to choose their own place to sit. Nowadays, ABW arrives as an improvement of the flex offices, combining the reduction of cost with employees' satisfaction an idea left behind for the last twenty years as the focus was only to save money (CMB, 2014).

The reason that companies have for implementing ABW is to increase employees´ satisfaction, reduce cost and take advantage of collaborations, making the teams and managers affront new challenges adapting to this new way of working. According to Ropo et al. (2013) physical conditions create different reactions. This means that places have the power to facilitate certain actions from people which produce different outcomes, different ways to do things and different feelings and behaviours. In addition, Bodin Danielsson et al. (2013) indicates that the office type may have an impact on the managerial leadership. The purpose of this study is to identify:

How do middle managers work in Activity Based Workplaces?

Doing that by using the following sub-questions: What kinds of activities do the managers perform and where do they perform them? How are the management and the organisation affected by ABW? And, how do they lead their team at the new workplace?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Activity-based workplace is a growing topic in the literature and this is one of the reasons why it is interesting to contribute to it. There are some characteristics that are positive of these kinds of offices claiming that ABW create organizational improvements in terms of productivity, performance, engagement, employees' wellness, flexibility, collaboration, work and family balance, among others. In contrast, there are other characteristics that have negative effects for the organization like high propensity to be distracted, low fit with the organisation´s culture, low privacy levels, among others.

On the one hand are the characteristics that support activity based workplaces. The ability to hire and retain key employees, to increase productivity and to save money are seen as advantages with ABW. Schriefer (2005) affirms that companies that do not respond to the changes in the work environments are expected to suffer considerable difficulties because the workforce is changing and with it the working patterns. Today's workforce has established the necessity of mobility and the ability of forming and splitting teams quickly, for this reason traditional offices are not efficient anymore (ibid). Szeréna Zoltán (2014) encourage the companies 'necessity of environments that support different kinds of activities at the time, offices with flexible furniture, diversity in spaces and efficiency in IT solutions Furthermore, Schriefer (2005) also mentions that today's companies have a large portion of their workforce working virtually. This further establishes the necessity of flexible offices with the correct infrastructure and culture that support the effectiveness and the efficiency that the companies with virtual teams require.

More research in favour of flex spaces confirm that flexible offices with more and better workstations, zones that support informal gatherings and spaces for spontaneous face-to-face interaction are the answer to the global trends that companies affront nowadays (Barber et al. 2005). Collaboration is a trend where companies are willing to integrate their employees even when they are working in different areas in the company to get a high level of shared knowledge and frequent communication. Flexible space supports collaboration because there are more spaces for meetings, and the office is designed to have spontaneous chats - people sit next to different co-workers every day (ibid). Working from home is another tendency of today´s society. Szeréna Zoltán (2014) and Barber et al. /2005) affirm that flex offices supports the balance of work/life in a better way. Employees have the flexibility to work from home a few hours per week, reducing their time in transit, because it is not always essential to

be present at the office. Flexible offices like AWB are design to take into account that not all the employees are at the office at the same time. This makes it possible for companies to reduce costs in physical infrastructure. The last trend is telecommunication and technologies. Barber et al. (2005) and Chan et al. (2007) affirm that IT solutions have become, in the last years, a solution for companies to improve the effectiveness of their activities. Appel-Meulenbroek et al. (2011) also refer to this trend when it is said that ergonomics and IT equipment are beneficial for the flexible office as it supports the concept and the design of the new working environments. However, they also mention that if the concept is not used correctly, it can create undesirable problems in the office climate.

On the other hand are the disadvantages on the implementation of flexible workplaces like ABW in organisations. One of them is the high propensity to be distracted affecting like this performance at work. Purdey and Leifer (2012) affirm that working areas are more social and open. For this reason some employees can experience that the office does not provide an effective environment to focus and work; one way ABW try to deal with this disadvantage is with the implementation of silent spaces in the office, but is not always enough. Appel-Meulenbroek et al. (2011) also mention as disadvantages the possibility of decreasing productivity due to low concentration and privacy levels. In addition they stated that ABW can create employees' dissatisfaction when the companies do not carry out an extensive training and coaching in the implementation process.

Another critical point about flex offices is that modern furniture, equipment and facilities are not the only factors to have a successful office, identity and culture are also important (Becker, 1982). Van Meel and Vos (2001) affirm that the flexible offices, also called 'fun' offices, are only a good solution for some companies depending on culture, demographics and work processes. This means that not all people want to work in those kinds of environments and for that reason creative office design may not be effective all the time. For instance introvert employees may not feel so comfortable working in such social environments and this creates dissatisfaction, low levels of motivation and reduction in productivity. Critiques of ABW have also been published in the media: Kadhammar (2015) describes some of the consequences that employees experience when working in these kinds of workplaces in Swedish companies. For instance, employees go to work earlier with the objective of getting the place that they like the most in the office. This point is also discussed by Appel-Meulenbroek et al. (2011): they mentioned that employees seem to have preferences about certain types of workplaces in the office. Those spaces with better

ergonomics and technological facilities tend to have a higher demand when starting the working day. The lack of privacy in conversations, the low number of quiet areas and not being able to personalise the workspace with photos or personal belongings are also topics that the media has brought to consideration about ABW (Kadhammar, 2015).

The studies that are mentioned above have been done from both organizational and individual perspectives. The organizational perspective has focused on identifying the advantages and disadvantages of these "new" offices for the companies that adopt this way of working. Individual perspective studies have focused, mostly, on the employee level; identifying the impacts of the ABW in employee's performance, working life, interaction between co-workers, among others. It is important to extend the knowledge about Activity based workplace from the perspective of those that have the responsibility to lead others and to influence the performance of the companies, the middle managers; since they represent a key factor into the organisations´ success. For this reason, this study aims to explore the impact of this growing working environment from the management level perspective.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Managerial Work Theory

Because the focus of this study is to understand what managers do in activity based workplace and knowing that the managerial thinking is affected by the space as it is mentioned above in this paper, this study uses the Managerial work as one of theoretical approach to analyse the data of this project. The managerial work theory was introduced by Carlson in 1951 and further developed by Mintzberg in 1973 (ibid), it is relevant for this study because it focuses on managerial activities in the daily bases.

To have a better understanding about the managers' work at ABW will be the aim of the data analysis, two conceptualizations of the managerial theory developed by Mintzberg (1973) will be adopted in this paper: the managers´ working roles and the managerial job types. The first conceptualization is *"a set of managerial roles and the requirements of these roles lead to certain common work characteristics"* (ibid, 55). In this way, the activities that the managers perform are divided into three groups according to certain characteristics. The first group is called interpersonal roles which are related to the status and the special position that the manager has, the second group is called informational roles which is characterized by the unique position that the manager has; to get information and the third group is called decisional roles which show the authority and the strategic position that manager has (ibid). The table below shows the ten managerial working roles in a clearer way.

Table 1 Managers´ working roles (Mintzberg, 1973)

Group	Managerial Roles
Interpersonal Roles	*Figurehead: Manager as a formal representative of the organization* *Liaison: Interaction with peers and other people to obtain favour and information* *Leader: relationship with the subordinates (motivation, staffing, etc.)*
Informational Roles	*Monitor: Receiver and collector of information* *Disseminator: Transmission of special information into his/her organization* *Spokesman: Dissemination of the organisation´s information into its environment*
Decisional Roles	*Entrepreneur: Initiate change* *Disturbance handler: takes control when the organisation is threatened* *Resource Allocator: Decides where the organisation will expend its resources* *Negotiator: Deal with those situations where he/she is required*

The second conceptualization is the managerial job types that according to Mintzberg (1973) are natural groupings that come up depending on the roles that they perform most often in the organisation and which facilitates the development of managerial theory. He presents eight job types, three of which are very similar to those job profiles presented by Stewart (1988) who is another author who has developed the managerial work theory. In order to better understand this approach a table will be presented below with the eight job types and their characteristics and the key roles that are related to them.

Table 2 Managerial job types (Mintzberg, 1973)

Job Type	Characteristics	Key Roles
Contact man	Spend much of their time outside their organisation	Liaison, Figurehead
Political manager	Explain the actions of the organization to special interest parties	Spokesman, Negotiator
Entrepreneur	Seek opportunities and implement changes	Entrepreneur, Negotiator
Insider	Maintain internal operations on smooth-running	Resource allocator
Real-time manager	Ensure that the day-to-day operations continue without interruption	Disturbance handler
Team manager	Preoccupied with the creation of a team	Leader
Expert manager	Centre of specialized information. Does more desk work	Monitor, Spokesman
New manager	Is the one with a new job	Liaison, Monitor

This is a classic theory within management studies that continues to be relevant through the years. Tengblad and Edvin (2012) have brought together different studies that use this theory as a theoretical approach; these studies are divided into three periods. Their overview includes the early studies which took place from 1951 to 1969, these studies showed an image of a fragmented and interrupted work and the management of several contact as the main activities that where handle by the managers at the time. The mature studies comprising those studies from 1970 to 1989 showed the use of management technics that were structured, the evolution of emerging strategies to cover the lack of the long-term strategies and the importance of different dimensions like political, gender and ethnical; in the managerial slog. The last period mentioned by Tengblad and Edvin (2012) are the recent studies which include studies from 1990 to date. These studies are bringing into consideration how managers handle ambiguity and uncertainty and how managerial environment has an impact on managers and their response. This overview of studies on managerial work and

managers behaviours gives this current study a clear idea of how the theory has been active over the time.

3.2 Space, Organisation and Management Theory

To understand the managers and their performance in the organization, it is important to understand the space where they execute their activities in the daily bases. This space is characterised by different elements that change every time there are changes in the physical office; affecting the employees, the managers and the organisation. When companies implement activity based workplace, they change their space, which affects the organisation and management. The space, organisation and management theory is relevant in this study to understand how managers perceive the change in the space and how this affects them and their performance.

Chanlat (2006: 17-21) presents seven elements that characterise the organisational space in relation with management. The first element is the division of the space, which involves all the objects that separate the areas (offices, meeting rooms, cafeteria, etc.) where the employees perform their work; these boundaries in the space have always been the management´s traditional understanding of space. The second element is presented as the controlled space, which means the checks and controls that are done by the organisation over its employees in order to make sure that the work is done. This kind of control is traditionally done by visualization. The third element considered in this theory is hierarchical space, which means that in every organisation the space is divided in such a way that follows hierarchies. This is evident in the difference of the size of the office, the number of windows, the decoration and the furniture that the office has; in other words as more important is the position in the organization better is the office of the person. The fourth element that Chanlat (ibid) mentions is associated to the productivity of the space, which is related to how suitable is the place where the organisation performs in relation with the goals that are planned. The fifth element in the list is the workplace as a personalised space, which refers to the willingness of people to set a personal meaning to what they "own". This process is call appropriation and it is carried out by having particular decorations like flowers, photos, a name on the door, among others. The sixth element is the space as symbolic, which is related with the culture of the organisation. The physical space is one of the components that creates the identity of one company, in other words the workspace is one of the symbols that represents who the organisation is to all its stakeholders. And the last element of the space,

organisation and management theory is the space as social, which refers to the social environment that the organisation has developed in its interior. It is the social interaction of the people that perform their activities inside this space.

3.3 Leadership and Physical Space Theory

Leadership is one of the most important skills that all levels of management should have (Bass, 2008). To understand how mangers use leadership in the new space of activity based workplace, it is important to include a theory that relates leadership with physical space. Bass (2008: 840) talks about the proximity between the physical space and leadership though the interaction of individuals in a workplace. The way the space is distributed and how it is used make a big impact on the communication process in the workplace, for instance physical barriers tend to reduce the interaction of the individuals in any office.

Physical space is affecting how leaders interact with their followers. Proximity in the workplace is one important fact to be considered when leading people, Bass (Ibid, 841) states that the greater the distance between a manager and his/her team, the more likely it is that the manager uses punishment instead of rewards. This is a consequence of a lack of proximity, in or a lack of interaction, friendship and physical arrangements. It is also mentioned in this theory that the distance in the workplace affects communication. This means that the greater the distance between the leader and the followers, the less is the communication they have. However modern technology helps to compensate for the negative effects that distance has on the relationship between supervisor and subordinates. In addition, the theory affirms that the physical location has an important role in leadership. People who have the best locations in the office may have a better chance to influence others as those people have the opportunity to reach several groups from the physical position in which they are situated. Furthermore, when supervisors are physically available in the workplace they have the opportunity to help their subordinates in different activities. For example, they can aid in overcoming critical moments or influencing subordinates in reaching their goals (Ibid, 842).

The theories presented above will help to generate a better understanding of what the middle managers do and how they use the ABW to perform their jobs. The managerial work theory helps to answer what kinds of activities the managers perform, where they perform them and what kind of roles middle managers execute at work. The space, organisation and

management theory helps to understand how the management and the organisation affected by the implementation of ABW and how middle managers deal with the changes. Finally, the leadership and physical space theory supports the understanding of how middle managers lead their teams at the new workplace and the challenges they have with ABW.

4. METHOD

The way middle managers work in a growing work environment like the activity based workplace requires further exploration since the efficiency of their job is key for the organisations. The qualitative approach use in this project is appropriated for the study because it encouraged the participants to show and share their experiences about how they work and what they do in this specific way of working. With this kind of approach the researcher was able to collect data in the field, enabling a closer understanding of the reality of ABW. In addition, the two qualitative methods used in this study facilitated a holistic view by taking in consideration different experiences of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

4.1 Empirical Data

The empirical data for this study is middle managers in different companies that have implemented ABW in their offices located in Stockholm, Sweden. Middle managers have a more direct effect than any other position in the organization. According to Heneberg (2010) middle managers are the instruments to good results, are in constant contact with the rest of employees and play an important role in the performance and future of the company. That is why it is important to explore the impact of new environments, like ABW, in the way they work.

The purpose was to collect information from multiple perspectives and experiences until reaching data saturation, which occurs when the new data that the researcher was observing in the shadowing session and hearing in the interview started to be repetitive (Grady, 1998). For this reason the sample of this study reached the amount of six middle managers, three women and three men with different operational roles. The researcher chose the companies with the purpose of having as much diversity as possible regarding economic activity, size, time working in ABW and sectors (public and private). The companies that were part of the study are divided as follows: (2) construction, (1) facility management, (1) health care and (1) municipality. The size of the offices and time working in flexible workplace varied from company to company, the smallest comprising 30 employees while the largest has 1200 employees. The longest time working in flexible workplace is five years and to the shortest is six months. Lastly, two of the companies are from the public sector and three of them are from private sector.

4.2 Data Collection

The data collection was carried out using two methods: shadowing and semi-standardized interviews.

4.2.1 Shadowing

Shadowing is a qualitative technique where the researcher makes what Czarniawska (2007) calls a direct observation in the field of practice. According to Eager and Oppenheim (1996, cited in McDonald, 2005) observation is relevant to look at behaviours in a realistic way as it focuses on what is actually happening. There are different ways to use observation as a qualitative method in the field of practice; observations may be indirect, when the researcher is not the observer and he or she is informed by others, or direct, when the researcher is involved in the observation process. Direct observation may be done in two ways. First, it can occur while the observer is doing the same activity as the person that is being observed, which requires observation and action at the same time, this is call participant observation. Second non- participant observation occurs when the researcher is only observing without being part of the action. Lastly, non-participant observation is also divided into two approaches; the stationary observation, when the observer stays the whole time in the same place when carrying out the study, and shadowing, when the observer follows the person who wants to be studied around different places she or he goes (Czarniawska, 2007).

The shadowing technique is the most appropriate method for this study, as it allows the researcher to move around the activity-based office and observe the managers and their activities when they are performing in this kind of environment. The researcher followed every participant when they were working at the office, in total were 35 hours following all six middle managers. Simultaneously to the shadowing, the researcher was taking notes about all what she sees: the activities and roles that the managers perform, the people who the managers interacted and the places where they performed (Walker et al. 1956, cited in McDonald, 2005). For this purpose, the researcher used a shadowing guide to collect the same kind of information with each manager and facilitate the coding at the time of analysing the data (see Appendix I). Additionally, the technique permits the researcher to show respect and sympathy for the managers without losing an attitude of outsideness as it is mention by Czarniawska (2007), facilitating the natural atmosphere during the interviews that were done after the shadowing sessions.

4.2.2 Interviews

To fill in empirical gaps of the shadowing technique and to assure reliability of what it was observed, interviews were carried out after the managers were shadowed (Johnson, 2014). The interviews help to understand more what the researcher saw and to explore more about for the managers´ perceptions and experiences working in ABW. The strength of this qualitative research approach is the capability to access straight into what it is happening in the working life of every manager and access how they work on a daily basis (Silverman, 2006). There are three different formats to carry out interviews: structured interview where the interviewee is asked a standard list of questions in a certain order without opportunity to get out of the arrangement, semi structured interview where the interviewee is asked also a standard list of questions but there is space for the interviewer to explore the answers if it is necessary or to add other questions that may be relevant for the project, and the unstructured interview where the interviewer is free to ask any question without using an standard structure (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010).

Semi structured interview is relevant for this project because it contains some predetermined questions (see the template of the interview guide in Appendix II) that allow to collect specific information, like experiences, thoughts and perceptions, relevant for the project as well as the interviewer and the interviewee to include freely other themes relevant during the time of the interview but are not incorporated in the interview guide (Berg, 2009). This kind of interview helps to avoid asking questions that have been answered by the interviewee already during the interview, so that the interview does not become repetitive and tedious. The length of the interviews was between 26 and 38 minutes. The questions listed in the interview guide were not given to the managers in advance to allow the free flow and authenticity in the answers.

4.3 Data Analysis

Before analysing the data the researcher gathered together and summarized the field notes taken during every shadowing session. She also transcribed and edited every interview protecting the identity of the participants and the name of the companies. The analysis of the field notes and the transcriptions of the interviews were done using the method presented by Creswell (2013) to analyse qualitative data, "The Data Analysis Spiral" (p. 183) (see Appendix III).

The first step in the process was to organize the data by transcribing the recordings of the interviews and dividing them into document files and consolidating the shadowing templates by type. The second step was to go through all the transcripts and field notes, reading them several times and initiating the process to explore the information that was collected (Creswell, 2013). With the information organized and with some ideas in mind, the third step was to interpret the data and create themes and codes according with what was said and observed; this allowed the researcher to describe in detail the most relevant topics that the participants in the project had in common. Finally, the selected data is represented in a tree diagram/matrix in order to display what it was interpreted, compared and described in the coding process (ibid). For this analysis process, three theories were used to approach the gathered data: the managerial work theory, the space, organisation and management theory and the leadership and physical space theory (see above in the theoretical framework session).

4.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were considered during the entire study, especially when conducting the interviews and the shadowing technique because they implicate intense and extensive interfacing between the participants and the researcher (McDonald, 2005). Ethical considerations like ensuring that the participants were taking part of the study voluntarily as well as ensuring the existence of mutual trust among the participants and the researcher (Silverman, 2006), were managed by contacting the participant personally (without using intermediaries) and booking a time for the meeting(s). In addition, the researcher also assured confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and the companies where they work so the privacy and the rights of the participants and the organizations were protected (Berg 2009). To assure this confidentiality, the researcher explained to the participants at the beginning of every session that the information they provide for the study would be confidential and that the recording would only be listened to, transcribed and analysed by the researcher and only used for the purpose of this study. Finally, the researcher guaranteed anonymity by making sure the information used for analysing the data did not expose any of the participants and their companies. This was achieved by editing personal information and critical evidence in the transcriptions and in the field notes that may have exposed them to the public.

4.5 Limitations

During the time of the study, some limitations had to be considered, one being the negotiation of access as it was challenging to engage managers in the different companies to be part of the study. Some potential participants declined their participation due to the discomfort of having someone around them the whole time, the possibility of intrusiveness and disruptions and the risk for interventions in the participants´ daily work. The time for collecting the data can also be considered as a limitation considering the techniques that are chosen for the study; some potential participants expressed not having enough time to be part of the project due to a tight schedule. This introduced bias in the project, as not all the invited managers were willing to participate, reducing the chances of having a broader diversity of experiences. This limitation was managed by contacting a larger amount of people than the one planned at the beginning of the project.

In addition, personal points of view and different interpretations of reality could also be seen as a limitation in the study because the researcher was in direct contact when conducting the shadowing session and the interviews. However, the researcher tried to leave aside as much as possible her opinions and previous knowledge in order to decrease the bias in the study. Lastly, the language barriers could also be considered a limitation in this project, as that the researcher and all the participants had to express their ideas and opinions in a second language, reducing the quality of the information collected. However both, the participants and the researcher did their best to explain their ideas and create a good communication between the parts.

5. FINDINGS

The findings of this project were divided into three themes according to the theories that were used to analyse the gathered data (see above Theoretical Framework). The first part presents where and how middle manager performed their activities. The second part of the findings presents the experiences and changes that managers and organisations experience with the ABW. The last part of this section evidences the effect of the space on the participants´ leadership.

To have a better understanding of the dynamic of the themes and codes, a code tree was used when organising the data (see appendix IV). After this, the information was structured in code matrices that show the codes of the information that the participants had in common and give the examples that were found at the time to interpret the field notes and the interviews. As a result of this process, the most representative examples from the matrices list were used to present the findings of this study.

5.1 Findings about managerial work

5.1.1 Performed Activities

When shadowing the participants, the researcher found the following the activities as the ones performed by middle managers:

Formal meetings: meetings that were schedule with anticipation are the most representative activity that middle managers perform during the day. All the formal meetings were conducted in the booked meeting rooms. Most of the meetings were with their teams, some of them with colleagues and only a few of them with other stakeholders like suppliers or clients.

Deskwork and emails: this is the second most representative activity that middle managers perform in their daily work. This activity is conducted most of the time in the open area, where manager can choose the place they want to be. Most of the time, during the shadowing session, the participants chose to sit in a desk that had a screen. The deskwork and the emails are often performed in parallel, managers work with their tasks while simultaneously checking their emails.

Pauses: Eating lunch, taking a coffee or having an active pause are activities included in this pauses section. These activities are done mostly in the office´s kitchen or even outside the office. During the time of the shadowing sessions, all these pauses were conducted in the

office and in some cases in the restaurants that were located at the same building of the office.

Informal meetings: These are those meetings that are more spontaneous and that were not booked with anticipation. These meetings are usually about work related topics that subordinates or colleagues need to talk about in order to carry out their job. The meetings are conducted in small meeting rooms available at the moment or in the open areas depending of the formality and the level of privacy of the topic.

Sudden talk: In flexible spaces like ABW people have the tendency to talk to each other in a more spontaneous way even if it requires interrupting the other person´s job. There were not specific places for it; it happened all over the office. The following comment of one of the participant exemplifies this activity: "We talk a lot over the desk, just dropping by. It is a lot of informal chat".

Phone calls: Participants received or made phone calls during their working hours, either private or work related ones. The calls were not so long (around one to three minutes) and were taken most of the times in the open area. In very few opportunities the participants made use of the phone rooms available in the office (if available).

Touring around: Looking for their team or for colleagues is the least often activity that managers performed. But, even if it was not too often, all participants were followed to look for someone around the office. Most of the time they found who they were looking for and the few times they did not, they were looking for someone and had used another method, for example a phone call.

5.1.2 Managerial roles and job types

When performing their activities, middle managers have different responsibilities; these responsibilities involve those roles regarding information and contact with their stakeholders. Field notes (see appendix V) and interviews were used in in order to identify those roles that middle managers performed.

5.1.2.1 Role as leader

When managers have subordinates in charge, the researcher observed that they needed to coordinate training, transfers within areas when needed, motivate their team to achieve their goals, review their performance and their salaries, among others. In the interviews they also expressed some events related to their responsibilities regarding subordinates:

"I have coaching meetings to develop my group, my individuals, all the time. We see what kind of individual goals we put up on the team members"

"I have couple employees that I am responsible for, for their working environment and of course their development"

To coach their team, motivate then and set goals are some of the responsibilities middle managers on a daily basis. It is also evident that taking care of the environment where subordinates work and to help them to develop professionally is also part of the roles as a manager.

5.1.2.2 Role as Liaison

Another responsibility is to be in contact with peers and other employees around the company in order to share information that is beneficial for the company. This is called, in ABW, collaboration; and it is carried out in a more informal and spontaneous way with all the employees in the company.

"The cross organisation and collaboration, that I meet more people by coincidence but we always exchange small bits of information is an advantage of ABW. So the collaboration and information exchange are a very strong aspect of this environment"

The cross communication that employees experience in ABW is considered an advantage because all the employees can collaborate and exchange information with each other. This gives the company the opportunity of using its human talent in a more effective way, all employees can collaborate in different projects that initially were not part of their departments.

Besides the contact to other employees in the company, managers also have responsibilities involving outsiders such as clients or suppliers. When observing the participants´ meetings with customers, potential customers and potential suppliers; middle managers used meeting rooms and, in some cases, gave a tour around their office and talked about the way they work in ABW. One manager made the following statement in the interview:

"I have some customers and clients that come a visit here at the office or I visit them at their office"

To interact and meet with customers and suppliers, either in the office or outside the office, is a responsibility of middle managers to make sure all the parts are satisfied and can collaborate with each other.

5.1.2.3 Role as Monitor

Managers have also the role of being the centre of information, both internal and external. They communicate news and topics of interest to their teams and to other stakeholders when is required. They employ different ways of sharing information, some have periodical meetings, for instance some breakfast meetings; others use emails, phone calls and social media to share the information.

"I take care of emails or questions or some documentation from projects and put together presentations or make statistics of some sales numbers in my responsibility"

Receive and collect information that is coming from different stakeholder, subordinates, high management or customers, for later present it to those that need it is a role that the participants performed every day in their companies. . This information can be collected using different communication channels like emails, sudden talks, meeting, letters or phone calls.

5.1.2.4 Role as Entrepreneur

Reviewing and making improvements of processes is an important part of the middle managers work. It was observed that managers have several meetings where they review the on-going projects that they oversee. In these meetings the managers together with their subordinates and/or colleagues evaluated the status of the projects, the weaknesses and the strengths of each of the projects as well as identified ways to improve both current and upcoming projects. The participants also expressed in the interviews some examples of their review activities:

"We have quarterly meetings where we review objectives, plans and development plans; so we sort of discuss general big questions"

Participants used formal meeting to review their projects and generate improvement in those areas were needed. This is a responsibility that middle managers have on a daily basis.

5.1.2.5 Role as Disturbance Handler

Corrective actions and reactions to crises situations are also part of the managerial work. The managers that participated in this project were observed by the researcher when they were approached by their subordinates in order to find answers to problems that emerged in their jobs. Managers support their team's members when something goes wrong in their activities by listening and then and trying to come with suggestions to approach the issue. Lastly, managers have the responsibility of allocating resources such as economic resources, human resources and time and location. The researcher had the opportunity to observe managers scheduling meetings, allocating their subordinates into different projects and/or activities and taking care of the budget (when applicable).

5.2 Findings about the space, organisation and management

There were seven elements that characterise the organisational space in relation with management. This study has considered all of them and has found some interesting results regarding middle managers who work in activity based workplace.

5.2.1 Division of the space

The division of the space in these kinds of offices is done in a diverse way compared with other office types; companies have different places for every activity performed at work for example meeting rooms, silent areas, creative areas, telephones rooms, among others. When interpreting the data, the researcher found that some middle managers experience the variation of divisions in the "new" office, in comparison with the office they work before, as a positive:

"It is really good that we have different divisions that satisfy different needs. We have different zones and all the zones are adjusted to different activities. Every department has their own home zone, and there are some departments that have special needs like for example HR, they have their home zone that fits with their necessities"

To have different spaces for different activities is a big advantage of ABW in comparison to open landscapes offices and it is appreciated by middle managers. However, for those that used to work in a single room office before adopting a flexible office have been more difficult to deal with it:

"To have fewer divisions is difficult. It is challenging. Before we had our own offices and now we need to share the work area with each other"

The study shows that those middle managers who had an open landscape office before the ABW were positive about the change in divisions of the new office; they enjoyed having more special boundaries that fit the activities they performed at the moment. Having specific spaces, such as creative areas, telephone rooms and cafeterias, facilitated their managerial jobs. However, those middle managers that used to work in single room offices before ABW seemed to have the opposite opinion; they perceive that the ABW reduces the divisions or the workspace which creates a challenging situation when performing their job because the new office forces them to be surrounded by people all the time.

5.2.2 Controlled space

An important activity that middle managers execute in their activities is controlling or supervising their teams. This is another element to be studied in the relation between management and space.

"To not have visual control puts a higher demand on the manager to work well with certain aspects like objectives and listening and so forth, You do not get a lot of chances to do things right, if you sort of miss something it will really take time until you realise. I usually use objectives and try to follow up on them and then I attend to use feedback from stakeholders closer to the people a lot, to try to listen to them and try to find improvement suggestions in the feedback"

Since the control cannot longer be done by visualizing the subordinates and controlling the number of hours they are in the office because the employees are not sitting at the same place every day and in some cases they are not even present at the office. Middle managers use objectives and follow up meetings to measure their teams´ performance.

5.2.3 Hierarchical space

Hierarchical space is also an important element in relation to management and space. During the interviews the middle managers were asked about the impact of the ABW in the company´s hierarchies. The answers were divided; some of the participants have not realised any changes in the hierarchies in the "new" office as the companies were quite flat from before:

"We are not very hierarchic and it was not very hierarchical if you look back at it. I don't know if that is a big difference"

Some other participants affirmed that the office facilitated the reduction of hierarchies in the company:

"If I compare with the last office I did not see the top management so much because they had their own rooms and own offices but now we are meeting them and I think that is a good thing. I think that is a good start to reduce the hierarchies in the office".

It was a big difference in answers. For those companies that had adopted a flat organisation since before the changes in the space has not changed much. However, for those companies that there were hierarchies before adopting ABW, the experience is different. Employees perceive that they are able to meet and to talk to the top management more often in the "new" office because all the employees are sharing the same facilities without exemptions.

5.2.4 Productivity of the space

Regarding productivity, the opinions of the managers were divided. Some think that ABW supports productivity:

"I think that this office encourages more creativity and cross boarder dialogues that should be good for productivity and performance, which is difficult but important part of our business since we are working with development".

One of the participants believes that working in ABW affects productivity in a negative way:

"I think it is negative for the productivity because you will be interrupted every day more or less. Then I need to choose to sit home or sit in a private room if I have a dead line, I cannot sit in the open area because my productivity goes down"

ABW can create both effects regarding productivity, positive effects and negative effects, depending on each individual. On the one hand the office encourages creativity, collaboration and supports different kind of activities, which is seen as positive for productivity and performance. On the other hand the office experiences higher levels of noise and interaction which is seen as distracting and generates negative effects on productivity.

5.2.5 Personalised space

One other element that was researched in this study is the personalisation of the space at the office. Quite often, people like to personalise the space they work with a picture, a flower or something characteristic of their personality or with tools that facilitates their job. However,

when a person no longer has a workstation, it would be difficult to do this. These were some of the answers:

"I do not think it has affected us. I think is a matter of get used to it"

"We have this kind of office tool that you can personalize but we are not using them so much anymore. But we can personalize our computers and our phones. Some people were wondering about it before but it has not been an issue. It is so much better when there are clean nice areas and everyone feels welcome wherever you go"

When it comes to decoration of the space, the participants affirmed that not big impacts have been generated. Employees have the tendency to get used to it quite fast and use other methods to personalise their space like using their computers and phone for it. However one of the managers added an interesting point regarding personalisation of the workstation, relating to some special needs for the workers:

"The only thing that can be difficult is if the technology does not work and if the ergonomics do not work. If someone has a special solution, that someone maybe needs to have his/her workstation. So from the ergonomic perspective it is difficult"

When it comes to ergonomics and special needs, ABW can be challenging. If there is a person that needs a specific solution to work, for example an ergonomic keyboard, to change work station every day is not an ideal situation.

5.2.6 Space as symbolic

The sixth element that was researched was the space as a symbol for the companies and for the employees. Regarding this aspect the managers were all positive about the effect that the office brings to the company´s identity:

"I think this is the modern way to work. So I think this is good for our culture. It is welcoming and nice to work here because is modern and representative. I like to take my potential new customers here to show our office"

The participants like the fact of working in a modern office. They feel identify with the companies culture and in some cases use their office to introduce the company to potential customers. One interesting argument one of the managers stated is:

"Maybe the office is ahead of the company sort to say. The culture this office represents is not exactly the same position where the company is but we hope we will arrive to the same level. But I think that this office is ahead of the company and it pushes the company´s culture in a good way"

One of the participants' experience is that the office is not representing the present company´s culture. Instead is representing what they hope they will achieve in the future. The office is ahead of any statement that the company has at the present time but it pushes the employees to adopt a new culture.

5.2.7 Space as social

To finalise this theory, the space as social place was also studied, the results were the following:

"I think it has contributed that we talk to each other across borders in a better way now, in between teams. You can say that you talk to your team less frequently but with people in other teams more frequently. You need to have a structure for meeting up in the team".

All the managers agreed that ABW helps to develop a cross communication between different areas and teams in the company. However, this way of working also reduces the frequency managers meet with their teams. Participants affirm that they need to be more structure now in order to meet their teams because they are not meeting as often as before.

5.3 Findings about the leadership and physical space

5.3.1 Proximity

Physical space affects how leaders interact with their followers. Proximity between the leader and the followers in the office is one of the components that was found when interpreting the data:

"I want to be a near manager, a near leader; just one call away. I think it is important that they can get in touch with me. So I am close when they need. And this landscape is not optimal for that"

The results show that leaders in the ABW consider important the proximity with their teams. Being close to their subordinates is a key aspect of their leadership styles in order to follow processes and results and to be able to react on periods of crisis. However this kind of office

is not supporting this proximity. Managers are not as close to their teams as they were before adopting ABW.

New ways to be close to their teams need to be developed, like for example:

"I need to be more structured with information and having regular appointment with employees and making sure that I am close to everyone. Because if I am sitting in that corner every day and someone else is sitting in the balcony every day we won´t meet that much you know. So you need to track when you need to meet people and make sure you meet everyone and talk to them".

To be more structure and arrange meetings with their teams are responses to the lack of proximity that ABW has. To have a more formal contact with the subordinates becomes crucial to succeed as a near leader.

5.3.2 Communication

Another important aspect in relation to leadership and space is communication. How the middle managers communicate with their teams in ABW and the impact of the office in the communication process has been researched in this paper and these are some of the findings.

Ways of communication:

"We use lot phone calls, emails, we have physical meetings and we also have skype meetings. We communicate every day, all the time".

"I think it is important to have different communication ways, more when you have subordinates that work different kind of duties and different availability here in place, and also because I myself am not always available in the office all the time either. So I think that communication is the key to very much. To give information in different ways is important, you can email as one way but you can also have different types of meetings, meetings that are structured".

To communicate in different ways it is important in flexible environments. Participants use phone calls, emails and different kind of meeting in order to communicate with their teams. Effective and diverse communication channels become a key point for the interaction between managers and subordinates, even more when there are spatial barriers.

5.3.3 Modern Technology

Alongside an effective communication and the diversity of communication channels, comes the effectiveness of modern technology that is implemented in the ABW. On this topic, the middle managers who participated in this project stated:

"I think the use of screens in all the rooms and also the link phones are really good and become really important in this environment. We use very frequently the web meetings, I would say every day between one and ten times. Video meeting we do not use enough. Still a bit of technical problem to make it work, and they are not in all the rooms but everybody has skype".

New technologies were high appreciated by the participants. The facilities that ABW has, gives the managers the opportunity to work in a different way. Web meetings and creative spaces with screens and phones facilitates their job. However, it also challenging:

"IT solutions become really important or these functions become more important because when you have your own seat you can make sure that your seat works and that is fine. Now you need to work everywhere which makes it more complicated and that is of course a weakness, that you cannot have control of your own space".

When people do not have their own space, it becomes more difficult to make sure that all the work stations work as they should.

5.3.4 Availability

Lastly, the availability of the managers in a place has always been important for the employees to feel safe and supported. However, that availability has been affected by the flexibility of the modern workplaces. What the participants think about it and how they manage this situation is presented below:

"For me as a manager it is quite easy to be in contact with a lot of people in a quite efficient way and it is also easy for the employees to catch me. They can tell by where I am sitting if I am available or not and that is a good thing, at least for me. If I am, you know, in the quiet zone you know that I want to be alone. That it is a difference comparing with half a year back when I was always available if I was here. If I was sitting in my spot, I was always available"

The good used of the space help the managers to send messages to their subordinates, depending on which room the manager use the subordinate can tell if it is possible to reach the manager or not. Additionally, the availability become more virtual:

"I had a virtual team sitting is Oslo, Helsinki and Malmo which I also have now and it is the same way. So it is not something new or strange. The availability becomes a little bit more virtual even though we are in the same house. . I have to work even better at understanding expectations between the company and the employees here because I see them less often"

Virtual teams are more often in todays´ companies and the availability is no longer physical. ABW support the virtual leadership with different facilities and managers need to change their methods to approach their teams in order to have clear objectives and expectations. This is a starting point for virtual availability.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Discussion about managerial work

6.1.1 Performed activities

The managerial work in ABW follows the same structure as in other offices. As stated by Griffin (2013), the manager´s job is a combination of fragmented activities like meetings, phone calls and deskwork. What changes in activity based environments is that the managers have the possibility of choosing different spaces to perform their activities. For this study middle managers expended most of their time, in either formal or informal meetings. To have a specific space with the appropriated tools for all of those meeting becomes essential to ensure the quality of the results and the comfort of the participants. Meetings are considered, according to Butler (2014), a mechanism to gather different kinds of information, share ideas, make decisions and communicate changes. Since middle managers are an intermediate between the top management and the employees to achieve the goals of the company, the meetings become an important instrument to perform their job.

Another activity that is of importance for the managerial work is the deskwork. In this activity the emails are also included as managers combine them simultaneously. For instance, they are working in a document but they change to email when they receive a notification, or they check their email which suggest they make some changes to a specific document they do it instantaneously. For this kind of work, managers count with more areas available in ABW; they can choose a workstation with one or two screen, a creative area, an individual sofa, high tables, the silent area or even in the kitchen, rather than of having only their own workstation the whole time. However, individuals often chose to sit in the same place every day during the whole day, so the opportunities that ABW offers are not fully exploited. An additional activity that middle managers perform in ABW is sudden talks; it is related to collaboration between areas. Managers and employees are more susceptible to talk with others about work related and non-work related topics in a more spontaneous way, which increases the chances of collaborating with each other. This means that employees can communicate more often and share more knowledge when they are working in these kinds of flexible environments (Barber et al. 2005).

6.1.2 Managerial roles and job types

Mintzberg (1973) presents three groups of managerial roles that are carried out by different levels of managers in companies. This study has identified those roles that middle managers

perform at work. From the interpersonal roles, the middle manager participants were identified with the "Liaison role" when the managers shared information with other people within their own companies. One of the ABW´s strengths is the ability to collaborate with each other even within different areas because they are sitting next to different people every day. The participants were also identified with the "leader role" because they have permanent contact with their subordinates. They perform diverse kinds of activities in order to motivate, control and lead their team. From the informational roles, the "monitor role" and the "spokesman role" were related to the middle managers work because they receive information from different stakeholders such subordinates, clients and suppliers and from there they make decisions and disseminate the information to the right people in order to create positive results for the company. Lastly, the middle managers were connected to three out of four of the decisional roles. They take control of critical situations in order to support their team and for this reason they are "disturbance handlers". The middle managers are also in charge of reviewing their process and creating changes and improvements which related them with the "entrepreneur role". And as "resource allocator" the middle managers are in charge of time allocation, distribution of human resources into projects and had control of their teams´ budgets.

With this first conceptualization of what the middle managers in this study have as managerial roles, the next step in the Mintzberg (1973) managerial work theory is to relate those roles that the managers perform with the managerial job types. The researcher realized that the middle managers represent a mix of at least five of the job types presented by the theory´s author, for this reason a new job type will be created in order to integrated all the characteristics that a middle manager has in today´s organisations.

Job Type	Characteristics	Key Roles
Multi-role middle manager	Ensure that the day-to-day operations are performed without interruptions and in a smooth-running way at the same time being responsible for the success and wellness of his/her team is one of the characteristics of middle managers. He/she is responsible for getting and distributing information to the right stakeholder in addition to collaborating with others in order to create positive result for the company. Furthermore, follow up on processes and implement changes and improvements are also required of this job type of manager.	Disturbance Handler Resource Allocator Leader Entrepreneur Monitor Spokesman Liaison

6.2 Discussion about the space, organisation and management

6.2.1 Division of the space

Visualization was a traditional method to control the subordinates in traditional offices (Chanlat, 2006); it refers to the fact that managers were able to see their subordinates the whole time at the workstation, giving them the chance to say whether their teams were working or not. However it cannot be used when the workers have a flexible environment like ABW as every person sits in different places and the managers are not able to see their subordinates every day. For these reasons, managers use other methods to supervise their team, all the participants of the study agreed that they use goals and objectives as a way to measure their team´s performance. Caldwell (2000) affirms that after the objectives are established it is important to follow up on the process of achieving them and the final result. And that is exactly what the managers who participated in this project affirmed when they were shadowed and interviewed, they expend a large part of their time having meetings with their team reviewing the process, following up the goals, setting new objectives and supporting their activities when needed. In other words performance management is how managers in ABW control their subordinates.

6.2.3 Hierarchical space

The way organisations´ space is divided used to follow hierarchies, made evident by the position of the workspace and its decoration (Chanlat, 2006). The higher the position in the company, the better the place that the person got. However, the situation is changing. Some companies are becoming flatter and making less physical differences to distribute the workplaces. When working in ABW, organisations are perceived flatter by their own employees because all employees, regardless of their positions, use the same space and have the same privileges. Companies no longer do distinctions in the space; every person has the freedom to choose the place that better fits his or her preferences and their jobs´ activities regardless their position in the company. Additionally, people perceive that they are able reach the top management easier when the workplace is organised in this way.

6.2.4 Productivity of the space

Productivity of the space as an element in space, organisation and management theory refers to the suitability of the workplace in order to support the workers to achieve their goals (ibid). The study did not show any representative answers regarding this topic, the opinions among managers were varied. Some of them think that the environment support their activities and

facilitates their job in order to be more productive, others hesitate about their answer and think that the office can either enable or disable productivity depending on the team and their job. Still others were more negative, it affirming that they get quite easily distracted which makes them lose focus and affects productivity. However, all agree that it is good to have different environments in the same office where one can choose to work according to activity. The challenge is getting used to the office and learning to use every space in the right way. It seems as if suitability of the space changes from person to person depending on how they use the installations.

6.2.5 Personalised space

According to Chanlat (ibid), people are willing to set a personal meaning to what they "own" and try to appropriate their workstation. Mager (1998) also mentions that the physical enclosure that an employee has with his or her workstation has an influence in the employee´s well-being. But when companies adopt ABW, the employees do not have their own desk and this appropriation or enclosure cannot be done in the same way. The study has shown that even if this was one of topics in consideration, once the companies started in ABW, the managers and their teams have adapted to the fact that they cannot personalize their desk as they did before. The managers mentioned two ways that have been used for dealing with this: the first is to not care about it anymore and some of them even like the fact of having a clean desk every morning. The second way is to use their electronic devices to personalise their space, for example, their phones and computers. However, one of the managers expressed that when the worker needs to use a special chair or tool due to health reasons, it is more difficult to adapt to an ABW environment and it represents a big challenge for the person to make use of all the spaces that the ABW offers.

6.2.6 Space as symbolic

Managers agreed with what Chanlat (2006) affirms, the physical space creates the identity of every company. It is a symbol that represents the culture a company has created over time. They like the fact that it is a modern environment and that is a welcoming office; it is a place that supports diversity and openness within people. One of the managers´ opinions caught the researcher´s attention when he/she mentioned that the office is ahead of the company´s culture; the manager believes that this is positive because, in a way, the office incentivizes the company to move forward and to develop. It is interesting how the place helps people to be more creative and open, which generates the companies' progress. The culture of companies is also being shaped by the environment where they are performing on a daily

basis. This allows ABW to make a big impact in the companies and in the people where these kinds of offices are implemented.

6.2.7 Space as social

This element refers to the social environment that the organisation has developed in its interior, the way people interact to each other on a daily basis (ibid). ABW supports collaboration and communication with those people that are not part of the same team because employees are sitting next to different people every day. The new office provides the opportunity to both managers and employees to have a more holistic view of what is happening in the organisation. However, the social environment in every team is affected by the implementation of the ABW. Managers communicate less with their own team and the team itself is expending less time together compared to offices where the teams are sitting together in a specific space. None of the managers mentioned any specific consequences, but they expressed this fact as a bit challenging as the managers had to put more effort into gathering information and supporting their teams when is needed.

6.3 Discussion about the leadership and physical space

6.3.1 Proximity

Being close to their subordinates is a key aspect of their leadership styles. As Bass (2008) mentions, the greater the distance between the manager and the team, the more difficult is to know the progress of the process. When a company implements ABW, the employees can choose their place to sit and the teams are not meeting as often on a daily basis. The challenge is greater for the leader to keep the proximity with his or her followers. Having regular meetings with their teams and with every subordinate, listening more actively, being present somewhere in the office and letting their team know that they can contact them any time, are some of the tactics that participants suggested when working on these kinds of environments. These methods help the managers to be close to their team even when the conditions of the office are not most optimal for it.

6.3.2 Communication

The distance between leaders and followers in the workplace affects communication, when the leader is not close to his or her team the communication process is more challenging and is done less often (ibid). The managers working in ABW see their teams less often however they affirm that the office supports communication in other aspects. In other words, even if the communication is less frequent because the managers and the teams do not see each other

as often as before, the quality of communication seems to increase because there are more and better spaces available to have conversations, especially in the moments that are needed (for instance crisis situations). According to Harris (2014) the inability of people to have effective communication with their peers and subordinates has a big impact on the work as a team, the delegating process, the job structure and planning, the type of leadership, how the management process is done and the people´s motivation and satisfaction. For this reason the communication process needs to be done using different channels to increase its effectiveness in ABW; the managers expressed that they use phone calls, video conferences, physical meetings and emails in order to understand their subordinates´ interest and to follow their team´s objectives.

6.3.3 Modern Technology

According to Bass (2008) the smooth functioning and proper use of technologies helps to compensate for the negative effects that distance has on the relationship between the supervisor and the subordinates. When the offices are as flexible as the activity based workplaces the IT tools become really important not only because it facilitates the communication between the leader and the follower but also because the success of the flexible tasks depend largely on office´s functionality. ABW counts on many different environments and IT solutions like computers with one or two screens, telephone speakers in every meeting room, big interactive screens in the creative areas, different types of cables to connect different kind of devises, wi-fi in the whole office, among others, that support people´s necessities. Some of the managers expressed that they are still having difficulties with the IT tools at the office, as anyone who owns their own space seems to be motivated to fix any problem when it appears. Another aspect that affects the technical facilities in ABW is that the offices are not always built to be flexible work environment; often the offices are in old buildings that are altered to fit ABW landscapes. The IT equipment is one of the benefits of the flexible office; however, if the concept is not used correctly, it can create undesirable problems in the office climate (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2011).

6.3.4 Availability

Managers have more opportunities to help their teams in different activities, for instance overcoming critical moments or influencing in reaching goals when they are physically available in the workplace (Bass, 2008). In environments like ABW, this availability is considerably reduced, but it does not mean that managers cannot be supportive. Employees can reach their manager by using the IT solutions they have or by walking around in the

office and looking for him/her, this was an often performed activity during the shadowing sessions. The space even gives the chance for the worker to determine if the other person is available or not, by the zone of the office where her or she is working. For example if the manager is at the quiet zone, employees know that it may not be the best time to reach the manager as long as it is not an emergency situation.

When a company has adopted such flexibility in its culture that people work virtually, perhaps from another city or even another country, the physical availability is even more challenging. Some of the participants of this project experienced this situation and expressed that the ABW is helping them because they can use different IT solutions to be available when not physically present. The leadership becomes virtual and the availability is improved by the use of tools like virtual meeting or phone calls. However, it was expressed that the managers had to put forth a bigger effort in communicating expectations as the contact with each other occurs less often.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on results of this research, it can be concluded that managers in ABW perform the same activities as any other manager who works in any other kind of environment. What has changed is an increase in the places where managers can perform their job, which improves the effectiveness and facilitation of their job. ABW offers different kinds of environments that support the diverse types of activities that managers have. In addition, this study has contributed to the managerial work theory by presenting a suggestion of a new job type that represents middle managers in today´s companies. This job type is characterised by the variety of roles that middle managers execute on a daily basis.

This research also illustrates the impacts of ABW in the management and the organisation. For instance, how managers control their team has changed from the traditional visualization method to follow up meetings where they review the processes and the achievement of the goals. The social environment is affected by ABW allowing the managers to communicate more with peers and other employees who are not related to their area but reducing the contact within their own team. This study also show how flexible environments have an impact on the reduction of hierarchies, the companies' culture and identity, the change in divisions and how employees personalise the workspace.

Furthermore, this study provides an overview of the challenges middle managers have when leading their teams in ABW and the ways they deal with these challenges. It is revealed that physical availability and proximity with the subordinates presents two challenges when adopting this kind of flexibility in the workspace, as teams do not meet as often as before, and in some instances, the team members do not even work in the same physical location. Middle managers are obligated to become virtual leaders and use different communication channels and IT solutions that the ABW offers in order to be supportive and available for their teams.

Finally, this research has two suggestions for further research. The first suggestion is regarding the relation between space and management. More studies need to be done related to this topic because it is interesting to see how middle managers perform their activities in different kinds of environments not only in ABW. For instance, a comparative research about the managerial work in different kinds of offices can be relevant in the near future. The second suggestion is regarding the activity based workplace. This is a topic that, over time, has increased in popularity and is implemented more often. For this reason it is necessary to

also give it importance in the academic world. More studies regarding this growing way of working need to be done from the organisational perspective and not only from the architecture and real estate approach. For example, a case study about how ABW has affected all the levels of the company in terms of culture, productivity, leadership, satisfaction and employee participation or a study about how and why the ABW is becoming a managerial fashion focus in the Swedish organisations, could be relevant.

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Appendix I: Template for the Shadowing Guide

	How is the time spent?		
	How often?(Duration/time	Where?	Who?
Critera	start time/finish time	Silent room (S) Meeting room (M) Resting room (R) Phone room (P) Open area (O) Creative area (C) Kitchen (K) Scan & Copy (SC)	Boss (B) Pair (P) Subordinare (S) Client (C) Family/Friend (F) Supplier (SU) Alone (A)
phone calls			
Formal meeting			
Informal meeting			
deskwork			
checking emails			
touring around			
Resting Lunch Coffee/Tea Active Pause			
Sudden Talk			

	Roles
1	Representative of the organization, symbolic head
Notes	
2	Activities involving subordinates (motivation, taining)
Notes	
3	Activities involving outsiders - networking (mails)
Notes	
4	Center of internal and external information (mails, periodical news)
Notes	
5	Forwarding mail in the organization for info purposes
Notes	
6	Transmit information to outsiders, board meeting
Notes	
7	Strategy and review sessions, improvement projects
Notes	
8	Responsable for corrective action, when crisis
Notes	
9	Responsable for allocation of resources / Scheduling
Notes	
10	Responsable for major negociations
Notes	

Appendix II: Template for the Interview Guide

INTRODUCTION

Hi, my name is Melissa Erazo. I would like to express my gratitude for taking your time and participating in this project. I am studying a Master in Strategic Human Resource Management at the University of Gothenburg and I am interested in how the managers work in the Activity-based workplaces. This is a six months project in order to write my Master Thesis. I think that your experience and opinions are interesting since you are actively working in this kind of environment.

I would like to ask you some questions regarding this topic. Before proceeding, I would like to ask you, it is fine with you if I record the interview? It will only be used for the purpose of this project, to be transcribed and analysed by me later on in the thesis process. I want to remind you that the company's name and your name will remain unknown when writing the thesis paper.

 1. EXPERIENCE/BEHAVIOUR

- What is your formal position in the company?

- Could you, please, tell more about your responsibilities?

- Could you please mention the activities that you perform in your daily work? Percentage (Mails, desk work, interaction with the subordinates, interaction with outsides (networking), meetings (informing others about projects), problem solving, strategy meetings)

- Do you have subordinates in charge (team)? How many?

Let's talk about the work place (office) where you work.

- How long have you been working in an Activity based Workplace? What kind of office did you have before this one?

2. IMPACT OF ABW (Space)

- How do you like the office?

- How do you perceive the fact of having less division in the working area?

- How do you experience the reduction in the hierarchies in the new office? Has it changed? What kind of effects has it had?

- Do you perceive the new workplace as less private? (ex. Managers are more visible)

- How has it affected you and your team that you cannot personalize (photos, name on the door, etc) your workplace since you do not have your "own" workstation? Have you found other ways of personalized your office?

- In your experience, How has this office contributed to the culture of the company? Do you think, this office represent the values and the culture of the company? Or do you think the space and the culture are not related at all? Why?

- How does this office affect the social environment in the company? Do you talk more or less frequently with your team? Do you talk more or less frequently with other people that are not part of your team(ex: co-workers form other areas, suppliers, clients)?

- Have you or your team experienced high propensity to be distracted? Affecting for instance the performance

- If you compared with the previous office, does this office facilitate (make it easier) your job? Why?

Let's now talk about you role as a manager in an Activity based Workplace.

3. THE ROLE AS A MANAGER IN ABW AND THE TEAM

- How do you lead your team on a daily basis?

- Have you realized any difference in the way you lead you team in the ABW compared with the previous office? How have you adapted your leadership?

- Do you consider that this office encourage you to highly direct (tell them what to do) your team? Or instead does the office encourage the spirit of delegation?

- Do you consider that this office encourage you to highly support your team? How?

Before you mentioned that you have subordinates in charge,

- Where are they based? (At the same office or somewhere else)

- How do you communicate in your team? (E-mail, Phone, Skype, Web-meetings, Physical meetings other, Formal/informal) / How often)

- Does this office facilitate communication? Does the office encourage formal or informal communication? How? Can you explain?

- How do you control or supervise you team in an Activity based workplace? In you experience, Is it more or less difficult to supervise you team when you do not have visual control of your team?

- In your experience, how does this office affect productivity? In a positive or negative way?

- Do you think this kind of office facilitates (difficult) your role as a manager?

To sum up, can you mention 2 or 3 strengths and 2 or 3 weaknesses that you think ABW has.

4. BACKGROUND

Personal

- Could you, please, tell about your educational background?

- What were you doing before you got this position?

- How long have you be in this position?

 Office

-When did the company implemented Activity based Workplace?

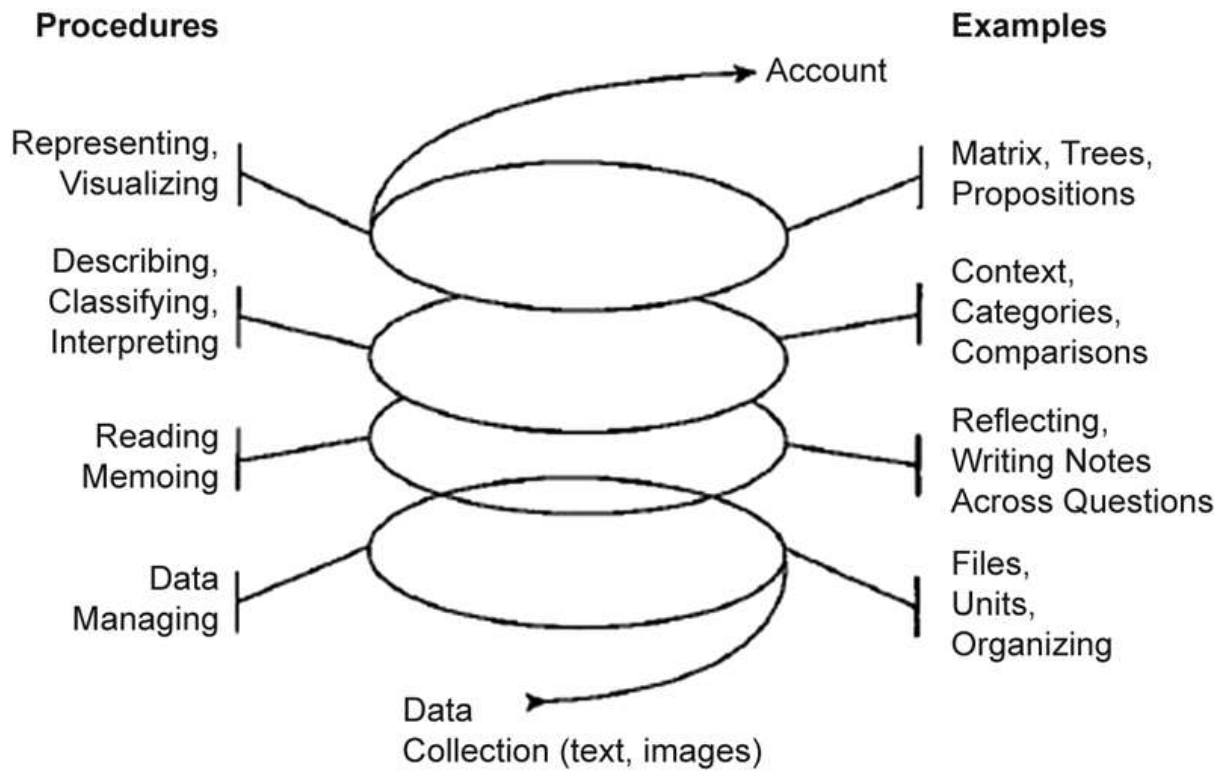- How many people work in this office?

5. CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

- Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss about the shadowing session or what we have been talking in this interview?

- Would you like to ask me anything?

Thank the interviewee.

Is it possible to contact you if we have any questions during the transcription process?
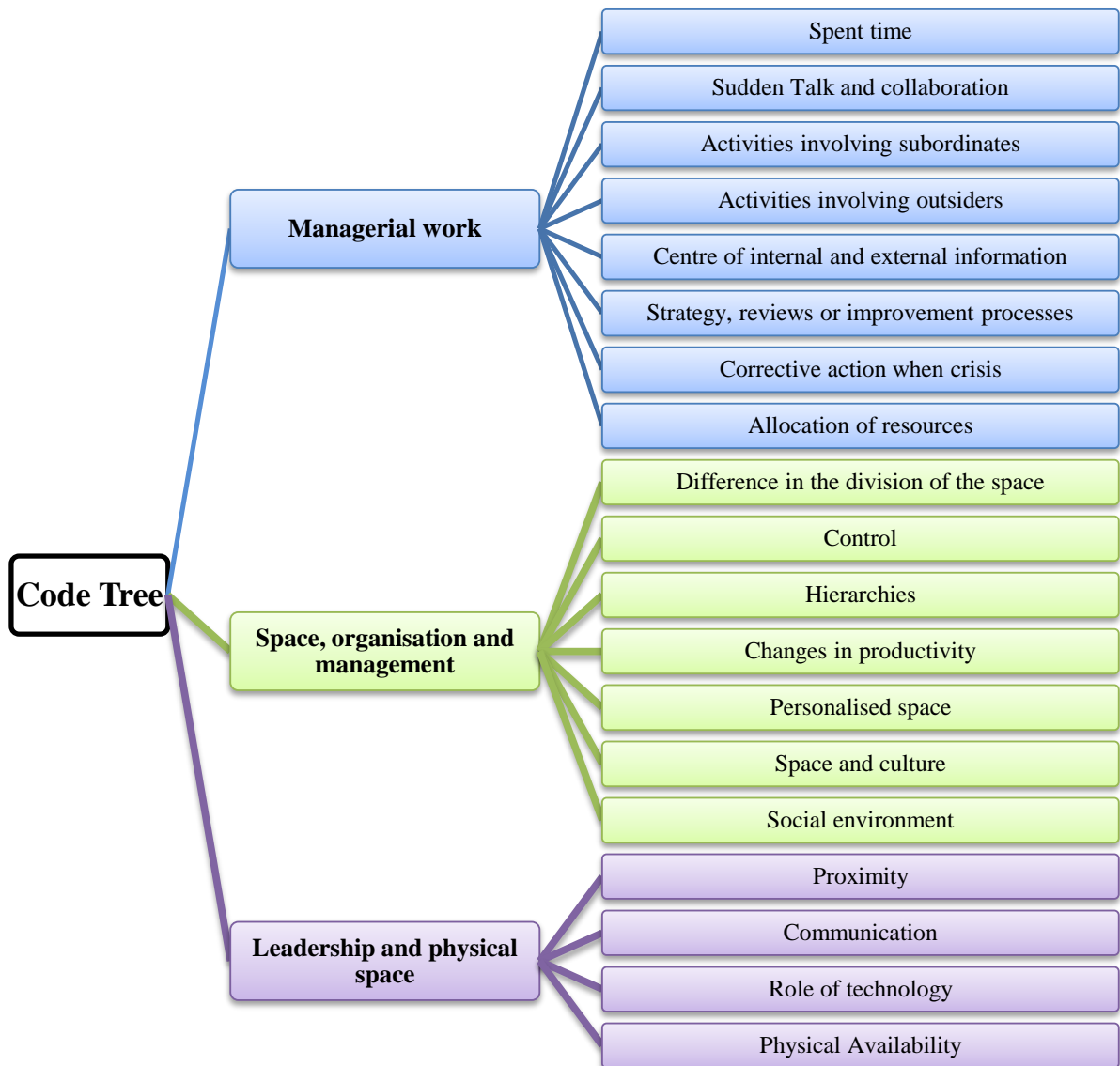
Thank you so much and have a nice day!

Appendix III: The Data Analysis Spiral

Procedures

Representing, Visualizing

Describing, Classifying, Interpreting

Reading Memoing

Data Managing

Data Collection (text, images)

Account

Examples

Matrix, Trees, Propositions

Context, Categories, Comparisons

Reflecting, Writing Notes Across Questions

Files, Units, Organizing

Source: Creswell John (2013)

Appendix IV: Code Three

Appendix V: Field notes about the managerial roles

Activities involving subordinates	• Coordinate the transfer of one subordinate to another area within the same company. • Meeting for salary reviews • Looking way to train and motivate the team. • Motivate and follow employees´ performance
Activities involving outsiders	• Meeting customers and potential customers • Contact the customers and suppliers for new deals • Welcome potential new suppliers.
Centre of internal and external information	• Communicate the periodical news via email, meetings or skype • Organize a periodic breakfast meeting to communicate important news or topics of interest. • Manage information in social networks about events and news regarding his/her area. • Send emails with a resume of the project before every meeting, some the attendants know about every topic.
Strategy, reviews or improvement processes	• Meeting for review on-going projects. • Meeting to review the processes and give suggestions for improvements. • Meeting to share the status of every project. • Be part of a review session to identify strengths and weaknesses. Create improvement in future projects. • Look for new ways of selling and generating incomes.
Corrective action when crisis	• Discuss with a subordinate the way how to solve a problem with an on-going project. • Support his/ her team because something went wrong. • Is asked for answers when a problem occurred.
Allocation of resources	• Another area needs one of his/her subordinates for a project; he/she arrange a meeting to allocate the human resource needed. • Schedule meeting and allocate his/her team into new projects. • Schedule periodical meetings. • Give new assignments to one intern • Coordinate the budget of the projects or sites