

Flexible open-plan offices have surfaced as a trendy office design sweeping across all kinds of organizations. Most often rationalized as saving costs, flexible open-plan offices have spread under the guise of stimulating interaction and creativity, reducing organizational hierarchy, facilitating flexible work arrangements, creating a light and airy atmosphere, and appearing modern and fashionable. This trend has mushroomed much faster than academic research has kept up with, and as a result, managers and workers alike question how do flexible open-plan offices influence my work?

This dissertation examines how one group of people, academics, do work and make sense of their work when situated in a flexible open-plan office. The iconic image of an academic is at her desk, surrounded by her books, papers, and coffee is disrupted with such an office, but how and in what ways? Does she become someone different? Does academia as a profession change? Might academics use these changes to their advantage? With an ethnographic case study of academics in such an office, this dissertation begins to answer these questions.

The findings of this dissertation emphasize the importance of space when it comes to work, managing, and organizing, but does not assert physical arrangements determine outcomes. Even so, it calls for researchers and managers to take space seriously by highlighting how it is wrapped up in defining who we are, what we do, and how we do it. As space continues to be experienced in different ways due to technology, this dissertation is only the start of a much needed body of scholarship.