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ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUAL THROUGH DESIGN PROCESS

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ABSTRACT
Due to rapid changes in technologies and the market, institutions are not only changing their activities, but also their physical environment. Leadership tends to lead organizations by means of its structure and activities. In this study, due to weakened cultural uniqueness after changing the physical environment, a design school was searching for ways to improve its own personality and creative activities. This research questions how an organizational identity can be enhanced through an internal design process. Case study was needed to exemplify the theory in practice and examine the design process. Participatory observation and archival studies have been used to learn how the self-managed design process can be introduced to lay design process as a consistent discourse.
In this case, the Department of Product Design is challenging students, as design consultants, to cultivate the institute's creative environment and identity. Students are encouraged to involve the stakeholders and to facilitate interactions in their environment through physical items. Throughout the process of trial and error, students have challenged both their personal opinions about the space they occupy as well as those of the other inhabitants. To analyze the findings from the students design process, organizational identity (OI) theory was used. Furthermore, the article analyzes the design process in relation to OI theory in order to study how designers can use concepts of embodied knowledge as an OI construal in the problem space and solution space exploration.

Keywords: Organization identity, embodied cognition, design process.

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, higher education (HE) has been exposed to pressures and attempts to change both the content and efficiency of education. In order to move to a "knowledge-based society and economy," [1] the key role of the university is to cultivate capacities required of the flexible, "lifelong" learner, focusing on critical thinking and inquiry-based learning. The fast changing technologies demand different approaches to learning and different models of education that will be enhanced through complementarity of formal, non-formal, and informal learning [2].
Efficiency-wise, there is an attempt to translate commercial practices to HE that are more common for private business sector such as organizational forms, technologies, management practices and values [3]. Over recent years, HE in the UK has developed towards a mass educational model of provision [4]. From 1995 to 2003, HE in the UK experienced a 39% growth in the number of students on full-time and part-time courses [5]. Consequently, for many courses, changes followed in the student–staff ratio. These changes can influence space and routines, as well as merging entities, reorganization of administrative and academic staff, and physical movement of whole departments. These changes demand that organizations be more adaptable to change and, therefore, they need to be robust in renegotiating the meaning of the needs of students and employees. These changes can also, inevitably, lead to confusion about expectations from students and staff as the curriculum is in constant development. Identity refers to the enduring beliefs, values, motives, and experiences that are characteristic of individuals who enact the same professional role [6]. Values and identity are part of the change, and in order to sustain them, continuity is essential for an organization [7]. As design is becoming a tool for intervention in service, businesses, and organizations [8], it becomes relevant to explore what design can do for design schools in the context of volatile changes in demand from both management and students. This article explores how a constant design process can bridge the problem of lack of sustained continuity in values and identity. Leadership tends to see organizational identity (OI) through organizational structure and activities [9]. However, if design thinking is important then

design process should be embedded in a consistent discourse in the organization. Within design school campuses there are huge differences in the schools' visual identities and emotional bonding from its users.

2 ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY (OI) AND EMBODIED COGNITION

According to Harquail and King [10] "Organizational identity is defined as what is central, distinctive, and enduring of an organization, and is vital to members' efforts to make sense in and of organizations in ways that facilitate effective action." These experiences and their qualities are not only subjective, but also construed, and reside in member's bodies as embodied knowledge (EK) through the process of embodied cognition (EC). They argue that through this process information is interpreted, so that learning happens through a range of sensorimotor physical capacities that are directed toward particular kinds of information. These capacities are bodily–kinaesthetic, visual–spatial, temporal–aural, and emotional. The bodily–kinaesthetic capacity interprets experiences within an organization that engage the movement and stasis of an individual member's body and the interaction with other bodies or physical efforts to transform or construct materials. Visual–spatial capacities are the members' interaction with all elements of the organization's built environment. The temporal–aural capacities concern the members' interpretation of sound, as well as information about the relationships between sounds and events. Finally, a member uses *emotional* capacities to perceive, interpret, and express their own feelings, the feelings of other individuals, and the emotional tenor of a situation or context. This interpretation process happens through "off-line" and "on-line" components of EC. On-line components are the more physical, proximal processes of the body; off-line components shape abstracted knowledge of remote, distal, or even imagined experiences using sensorimotor resources [11]. EK is, therefore, an interpretation of the individual's abstract concepts, after they are incorporated and reflected upon, which is, thus, individual and subjective.

2.1 OI construal and self-construal

"A member identifies with an organization when they experience a concordance between their OI construal through embodied knowledge and their self-construal. In addition, they draw from their construal of the organization's identity a sense of how they might define themselves within the organization [12]." This concordance enables explaining how an individual may employ embodied capacities to assess experience, express an organization's identity or feel attracted to it. These embodied capacities and the member's OI construal may influence the member's personal identity and allow for recognition and claim within the organization; "There is a link between the "self" aspects of identity and the discourses to which they relate [13].” Therefore, OI construed through EC offers an explanation about how individuals may experience pleasure in the activities of construing OI and construing their own self-identity within the organization. According to this, it is not the achievements of an OI construal that members enjoy but the process of construing OI that is ultimately fulfilling for its members [14].

There is a lot of research on OI and identity design; however, there is very little research on the use of a design process within the organization as a tool for constructing or enhancing OI. There is a need to explore how this motivation of construing OI can be harnessed by an organization, and to explain the way in which the production of an organization's practice can influence it. There is also a need to address these processes in the light of design actions and study them as an outcome of the design process around OI construal. Therefore, the research question is: How can an organizational identity be enhanced through an internal design process?

3 METHODS

Case study was needed to exemplify the theory in practice and examine the design process [15]. Participant observation [16] and archival studies have been used to learn how the self-managed design process can be introduced to lay a design process as a consistent discourse. Project participants were interviewed to learn about their personal experiences of taking part in the project [17]. To frame and define the research question, OI theory [10] was used as a theoretical and methodological principle. The EC construal of OI offered the best framework for OI because of its focus on bodily experiences around OI, which is centrally explored in this article. To analyze the findings from the students' design process, the perspective on creative design process’ is deployed [18]. This perspective comments on

design as a process through the OI by defining what is central, distinctive, and enduring of an organization, and what is vital to its members.

4 THE CASE STUDY OF THE OI OF DEPARTMENT OF PRODUCT DESIGN

The subject of this case study is an attempt from the Department of Product Design Institute at the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, to strengthen and reconstruct its identity after resettlement and reorganization through the process of merging local colleges for optimized administration services and cost reduction. The product design study has its roots back in 1917, and was originally providing teacher education based on design, arts, and crafts. From its foundation to 2003, it was located in an old fortress build to protect against invasions from the Swedish army. Most students lived in student apartments on campus, as the site was in a remote area. The school had good workshops and strong relations to arts and crafts. These conditions certainly led to a unique OI.

The new campus is sited in Norway's largest research area, located on the outskirts of a small city, half an hour from Oslo. Originally, the building was intended for the national telecommunications company's research centre. However, after being partly rebuilt and extended, it now offers high quality classrooms, teaching facilities, and one of Europe's best school workshops. However, the physical buildings and learning spaces suffer from a lack of personality, and significant logistical changes became apparent. Most of the students now live in the capital and even though the institute provides studio space for all the students, social and academic activities after school hours have decreased. The department's curricula has also steadily evolved, and after the introduction of Masters studies the stress was on academic- and research-based education, resulting in materials and crafts losing some of their distinctiveness in OI.

4.1 Student project for identity revival

The initiative to revive OI emerged from different perspectives and motivations within the organization. Facilities and room layouts do not sufficiently support learning forms and activities. Interior, exterior, and physical space do not reflect the core activities of students and staff. There is lack of attitude and motivation among students for activities and exploration. These insights led to the decision to challenge students as design consultants to cultivate the institute's creative environment and identity. The approach was an implementation of a series of student projects named "claiming the space" that will annually deploy problems revolving human-space interaction at the institute. Students were encouraged to involve organization members and facilitate interactions through probes, such as interfaced environments or physical items, and were given the design brief to bring in line institute's identity with its environment. The first student group concluded their work early in 2015. It was a group of four second-year Bachelor students.

The group set out to investigate how the current environment could be made more suitable, indicative, and appropriate for fellow design students. They started using introspection, observations, and a probe to collect information about how other students experience the space at the institute. The group tried to find out how the others related the expression “pride” to the institute through a probe. Some of the insights were: It is a lot of mess here; It doesn't look like a place for product designers from the outside; What does the institute stand for?

The first concepts emerged around observations of student activities and dignifying and refining architectural details through humour and enabling student activity. The numerous ideas were presented at the first meeting with staff, from famous design quotes as stickers on the ceiling to twister game stickers on the floor for a quick exercise after long sitting hours. One approach for both humour and a starting activity was placing a poster in the elevator. The poster heading said "Unpleasant atmosphere in the elevator" and offered a series of questions to enhance interaction between users. This generated many conversations and received positive feedback at the institute. Simultaneously, the group also considered changing the façade as well as the staircase leading to the studios as a separate concept, without any connection with the rest of the efforts.

At this point, the group needed focus and they were discussing what would have the biggest impact on identity and what would be a feasible solution. In this effort, they interviewed their subjects by taking them to different places as they described: "We did not, however, conduct normal sit-down interviews, but took our interviewees for a walk to the different places we wanted to hear about." These interviews led them to think about the process of arrival and departure from the building. The department's working space has two possible entrances. Both visitors and in-house people use one, while only

students and staff use the other (Figure 3). This in-house entrance was found to be one of the most important spaces to change. This was due to it being the building's first daily meeting point for most of the organization's members. Furthermore, this space is currently quite chaotic giving the members a dubious impression. In addition, the group focused on the organization's members' journey, covering the exterior of the building (Figure 1), the entrance area, the interior of the entrance area (Figure 2), followed by the staircases and the elevator. The group made a proposal to the staff: "We advised them to choose the entrance as a focus area, since we think this would have the biggest impact on changing the identity." The concept that was finally presented focused on the entrance, the entry area, the staircase, and the elevator leading to the studios.

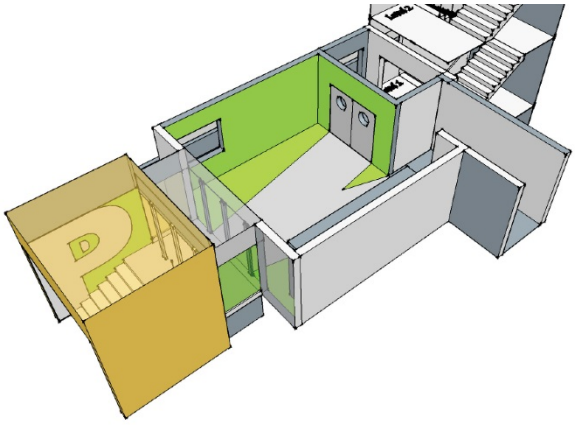

Figure 1. New exterior *Figure 2. New Members' journey* *Figure 3. Old exterior*
Figure 1.-3. all displays the in-house entrance

5 CREATIVE DESIGN PROCESS

According to Dorst and Cross [18] a creative design process is described as a problem-solving activity that relies on the interplay of problem and solution space in which both are developed simultaneously. This study describes how the creative design process constitutes unstable and fixed periods of problem solving. The unstable period is exploratory in which problem and solution spaces are evolving and prone to changes due to discovery and the "clustering of information" [18]. The temporary fixed period happens when a problem–solution pair is framed forming a bridge between problem space and solution space. Therefore, the creative event is defined as the moment of insight in which the "problem framing" [19, 20] takes place.

Therefore, the interplay between the problem and solution space happens through iterative processes of development, refinement, formulation of a problem, ideas for a solution, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

5.1 Exploratory process

In the case study, the group was clustering information about the problem space by learning about the existing OI construals from fellow students as subjects. As part of their initial research, students focused on gathering information about different EC capacities through introspection, probe, and observation. The introspection was important for their design process as two of the group members' claimed that the biggest motivation for this project was that it enabled them to actively influence their environment. The introspection allowed them to put into words their own OI construals as they discovered early on that the word "pride" was essential for the problem space. Their next activity was to install a probe to explore how pride was interpreted by the subjects' OI construals. As the problem space was not clearly defined, the group started exploring solutions space, which proved to be useful. They discovered possible solutions and tried to reframe the problem by evaluating the impact of these solutions to OI.

This led them to take their subjects for a walk to places within the school that the subjects related to and then asked them to comment on their experiences. They asked them to interpret what they saw in order to understand crucial aspects of the EK of their subjects. Bodily–kinesthetic, visual–spatial, temporal–aural, and emotional capacities were used as stimuli for the interviews in order to examine off-line and on-line components to learn about EC and describe EK. Based on their research, the

students interpreted these insights into the expressions of humour, activity/interaction, and pride. In the description of each design insight, students were justifying their design decisions around the discrepancy between their OI construal and visual–spatial compliance of the institute.
The group defined humour, activity and interaction as central, distinctive, and enduring elements within the organization, and described visual–spatial-, bodily–kinaesthetic- and emotional capacities as being stripped from this quality. They were looking at ways to translate them as desirable EK expressions for the rest of the institute. They experienced a lack of concordance between the subject's OI construal through EK and their self-construal of pride. Subjects were prevented from feeling pride by the lack of stimuli of spatial–visual capacities of EC. This is how subjects defined it through the probe: "You don't feel like you walk into a design school when you walk into the entrance."

5.2 Bridging the solution and problem space

The entrance area is characterized by messiness and an uninspiring interior. The interviews showed that when members of the organization passed this area they felt that their OI was weakened. It did not create the feeling of entering a creative environment. That is the reason why the students found the most distinctive lack of concordance between the EK of pride and their OI construal. While the EK of humour and interaction needed enhancement, the EK of pride needed substantial change. The group managed to create the bridge between the problem space and the solution space by framing the problem of EK through a scenario of arriving and leaving the organization. They believed this experience would have the biggest impact on the change of EC by putting it more in concordance with, or even changing, the construed OI of most of the members. They have chosen this because the entrance is used only for organization members, and leads directly to the workshops and classrooms. By doing this, the construed OI concerning the institute from the inside is expected to reflect the EK of the arriving experience in a better way. The result was affecting both bodily–kinaesthetic and visual–spatial elements with the intention of influencing the emotional EC capacity, and the created situation was accessible only to members allowing them to share a unique experience. The concept covers exterior and interior changes to the building and in-house entrance area.

6 OI DESIGN

OI often seems to be designed by coincidence; however, even if it has been designed with intention it seems to be done without respect for the members' OI construal. There is a value in transferring responsibility and authority for decision making to the organization members. These values are about increased ownership as well as the emergence of the similarities across members' construals. The adaptability of the OI to the volatile changes can, therefore, be seen through an iterative design process that makes an organization aware of members' OI construals and EK. This is important as each member's personal identity and contribution depends on their ability to recognize and claim their role within the organization [13]. The design exploratory phase can make visible member's EK through information clustering techniques, and different interpretations of EC can create discrepancies between an individual's OI construals. This phase also allow members to reflect on the discrepancy between OI construal and their EK, which is difficult to achieve from the outside. The exploration of the problem space can pinpoint the most effective actions for change in OI construal. In this case, it gave new meaning to the existing experience that only members of the organization understood, like the act of arriving at and leaving work.
"Leaders must remember that an organizational change initiated through new rhetoric about OI will need to be substantiated by members in their embodied experience, since abstract constructs do not motivate action as effectively as embodied constructs [21]." The tension between changes in the organizational process and changes in the members' descriptions of their organization's identity happens because organizational routines and social interaction patterns evolve, adapt, and shift over time [22]. The study shows how the design process might be valuable, because the simultaneous analysis and evaluation of problem space and solution space enabled the discovery of what is going to have the biggest impact for members' OI construal. The study implies that organization members own the problem and solution space and therefore are key resource for OI construal. As the study was limited to observation of deployment of design methods on EK it is challenging to discuss to what extent the OI construal can be intentionally created through design process. There is therefore a need for further research on how a design process can influence OI, especially if designers build their design strategy around the OI theory. Accordingly, designers could have a role as educators of a

process owned by members of the organization. In contrast to the service designer that would focus on customer experiences, the OI designer would work with bodily–kinaesthetic, visual–spatial, temporal–aural, and emotional touch points, which would bring similarities to members' OI construals.

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