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**SPACE FOR COLLABORATION FROM NON-WESTERN
PERSPECTIVES: COMMUNICATION IN AN ORGANIZATION**

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Abstrak

Perbezaan ontologi dan epistemologi antara 'Occident' dan 'Orient' merupakan titik permulaan bagi menghurai penerangan mengenai 'Orient', masyarakatnya, budaya, dan minda. Khususnya, perbezaan tersebut membentuk asas falsafah yang berbeza bagi konsep ruangan dan masa antara Timur dan Barat. Merujuk kepada kajian Eurosentris dalam bidang organisasi yang telah dijalankan, kebanyakan konsep ruangan telah dikomodifi dan dirasionalkan secara mutlak (absolut) bagi tujuan pentadbiran and kawalan; konsep ini bertentangan konsep ruangan dari Timur yang berasaskan kerelatifan. Akibat dari intelek imperialisme, kajian atas Timur yang menggunakan paradigma dan hasil pengetahuan dari Barat adalah tidak wajar. Kekurangan resonansi bagi paradigma bukan-Barat (*Non-Western*) dalam kajian komunikasi merupakan satu jurang ketara yang perlu dikaji. Oleh itu, kajian ini bermatlamat mengkaji kemampuan organisasi ruangan untuk kolaborasi daripada perspektif bukan-Barat. Kerja lapangan etnografi telah dijalankan di sebuah syarikat dalam bidang Teknologi Maklumat dan Komunikasi selama enam bulan. Data telah dikumpulkan melalui kaedah pemerhatian turut serta, temu bual separa berstruktur dan tidak berstruktur dengan 42 penganalisis berbangsa Cina bersama dengan sumber dokumentari dan artifak material. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa terdapat lima jenis nilai yang bukan berasal Barat dalam andaian komunikatif berkaitan dengan nilai utama keharmonian yang menekankan perhubungan antara satu sama lain, saling kebergantungan dan kebersamaan. Penemuan turut membentuk pandangan kitaran bagi organisasi ruangan serta menunjukkan kemampuan organisasi ruangan dapat menjana nilai kemasyarakatan dan sosial untuk menjadikan ruangan sebagai 'destinasi' bagi kebersamaan dan kesepaduan. Dapatan kajian ini juga menyumbang kepada kajian atas ruangan untuk mengkaji ruangan dari pandangan kitaran bukan-Barat dan bukannya representasi linear yang telah lama digunakan.

Kata kunci: Organisasi ruangan, *Non-Western*, Harmoni, Komunikasi, *Henri Lefebvre*

Abstract

The ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Occident’ has been largely accepted as the starting point for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, culture, and mind. Particularly, such distinction has led to a fundamentally different philosophy of space and time in East and West. In most of the Eurocentric organization studies, space has been commodified and rationalized as absolute for the pursuit of governance and control which stands a sharp contrast to the East relativism perspective of space. As a result of intellectual imperialism, placing East in the West paradigm through borrowed material and the eyes of others is impractical. The lack of resonance of non-Western paradigm in communication study is an apparent gap to be filled. Therefore, this research aimed to examine affordance of organization space for collaboration from non-Western perspectives. A six-month ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in an ICT company. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interview with 42 Chinese research analysts, documentary sources and material artefacts. Findings identified five underlying key values in non-Western communicative behaviour pertinent to Chinese cardinal value of harmony which emphasized on interrelationship, interdependence and mutuality. Results also demonstrated a cyclical view of space and the notion of spatial affordance afforded sense of community and sociality which making space a ‘destination’ for togetherness and cohesiveness. Lastly, the research contributed insights to study spatial production from a non-Western cyclical view rather than the long (mis)representation of linear way.

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Keywords: Organization space, Non-Western, Harmony, Communication, Henri Lefebvre

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Space and time are always at the central in human activities. Yet, its epistemology and ontology views raised uncertainty in whether space and time exist independently one another; does the future exist and wait us to meet; what is space; what is time; where is the past, are among the common ambiguities in them. There are fundamental different approaches to view space and time in the observed world (epistemology) and the existed world (ontology). Studying the two entities from the epistemological and ontological aspects and Occidental-Oriental worldview would contribute in constructing different roles of space and time in organization practice.

Although space has been studied in a rich body of literature from organization and environmental psychology discipline for more than 30 years, changes in today's workforce caused by the advancement of technology, coupled with the evolution of organizational structure and societal ideas, call for a reconsideration of the importance and role of space in work setting (Hua, 2010; Sailer, 2010; Peltonen, 2011; Wapshott & Mallett, 2011). More contemporary research is needed to not only reflect the current trajectories for space, as well as investigate the present workplace communication pattern and behaviour.

'Bring space back', mentioned by Clegg and Kornberger (2004) and Fayard and Weeks (2007), clearly suggested a need and interest in reconsidering spatiality for

organization social behavior for its conceptions are fragmented, and the discussion of spatial production leans towards a ‘petrifying’ take. Most researchers have reified the triad model of spatial production into three facets, rather than as a totality (Zhang & Beyes, 2011; Zhang & Spicer, 2013). To attend the organization of space in a systematic way, Taylor and Spicer (2007) made an effort to construct spaces into ‘organization space’ which may be categorized into three forms, namely space as distance; space as materialized power relations; and space as experience. The interplay between these three dimensions may be summarized in terms of space as empowering resources to promote and/or inhibit desired behaviour and interaction (Allen, 1997, 2007; Binyaseen, 2010; Serrato, 2001; Stryker, 2004); maintain and reinforce social order and social relationships (Beckwith, 2009); and encourage organizational power relations (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Zhang & Beyes, 2011).

Communication is always at the heart of management; it is the blood stream of an organization. However, the drastic changes in communication style in most of the modern organizations today have threatened the traditional workplace practice and communication pattern. The heavy use of tools of information and communication technology (ICT), high dependency on mediated communication and establishment of virtual team have shifted boundaries between home-and-work across space and time. Collective behaviour which requires intensive coordination and frequent face-to-face interaction to enhance organizational productivity is now becoming more challenging in virtual space. Hence, it is imperative to examine the current function, view and value of ‘space’ in organization.

The need to study space from a non-Western perspective is primarily driven by the current predominance of Eurocentric nature in communication discipline. Theorizing about communication from the dominant perspective, which means placing the East in the West paradigm, is impractical, problematic and irrelevant. Such incompatibility is mainly caused by the West epistemological and political constitution and their intersections within the non-West social structure; it is also one of the consequences from intellectual imperialism. More manifestations of these problems can be found in academic dependency, imbalanced knowledge production and a rising of captive mind which encourages imitation, mimicry, repetition and dependency because of the obsession and belief that Western knowledge is more superior and reliable. Therefore, an advocate of the idea of centering Eastern perspectives should be drawn on for intellectual necessity and to broaden the horizon of existing organizational communication studies.

Last but not least, the fundamental cultural and philosophical differences between the East and West, from its ontological, axiological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of human communication must be examined to investigate how comparable the existing findings from Western-centric study would be in a fair summation across cultures.

In conclusion, this research aims to examine the influence of space on communication and collaboration from non-Western perspectives using Henri Lefebvre's triad model of spatial production and James Gibson's concept of

affordance in scrutinizing the affordance of socially produced and cultural concerned organization space for collaboration.

1.2 Problem Statement

First and foremost, there are two aspects of the world highly pertinent to human activities: the observed world (epistemology) and the existed world (ontology). While time and space are two essential concepts in questioning the nature of the observed and existed world, the perplexity is around the confusion of “do the past and future really exist?”, “where are the past and future?”, “is time or space absolute in the universe or not?” (Ma, 2003).

A vast variety of definitions is found for time and space. Ma (2003) explained the characteristics of the observed (measure) and existed (duration and extension) in time and space through several references from dictionary. For instance, time is known as the sequential relations that any event has to with any other, in the past, present or future; it is the continuum of experience in which events pass through the past, present and future; its indefinite and continuous duration helps to define in which events succeed one another; it is also the measure of duration, a particular part or point of duration. While space is the limited extent in one, two-, or three-dimension yet it is also a boundless or incalculably great three-dimensional realm in which all objects are located and all events occur. Space is also an extension; the internal between points or objects.

Epistemological speaking, the observed world is more related to empiricism, idealism, mentalism, immaterialism, spiritualism, subjectivity and measurement. As for the existed world, it is more to ontology of naturalism, materialism, physical entity, and existence. In most of the Western studies, both from science or social science perspectives, concerned more on measured and mechanistic view of time and space using a clock and a ruler for observation and mathematical calculation (Hawking, 1996; Ma, 2003; Cairns, McInnes & Roberts, 2003). It places time at the epistemological or empiricism level while ignoring the existed time and space.

According to Ma (2003), the absolute and relational theories of space and time vary from diverse scientific notions and different schools of thought. Scientifically, classic Newtonian mechanics position space and time as one of the fundamental quantities in physics where both are at definite positions and condition. Meanwhile, Newton's time and space concept is absolute from ontology angle; both are independent dimension. The assumption made is that time always flows in one direction-forward and space stretches from infinity to infinity, nothing in the universe affects the time's flow. On the other hand, Ernst Mach and Albert Einstein weaved time and space together into the very fabric of the universe where Einstein proposed that the laws of physics should be based on the principle of relativity and supposed that space, time and motion are relative to one another to cause momentum or consequences and mathematically combined into one object called '*spacetime*'.

Philosophically, the above absolutism and relativism perspectives are also two common struggles found in the West and East scholarship. Communication studies

from the Western viewpoint would usually put emphasis on an atomistic and mechanistic view which rejects relativism and between-ness. Unity is not necessary as everything is a discrete unit present in an independent sequential; which has little commonality to the East holistic view that considers the universe as a greater whole. From the East viewpoint, everything is relative and everything is perceivable only in relation to one another; unity is desired in the infinite process of interaction in generating different and diverse interpretations. Reality constructed in Eastern study is non-dualistic, they are plural.

One of the old Zen parables could be referred to show that time, space, and mind are related. Two men were arguing about a waving flag. The first man said, "It is the wind that is really moving, not the flag." The second man said, "No, it is the flag that is moving, not the wind." A Zen master, who happened to be walking by, "Neither the flag nor the wind is moving," he said, "It is your mind that moves." For the East, realities are open for interpretation; relativism is present as knowledge is not absolute. With this, Buddhist view of reality and *Bhartrihari's Vakyapadiya* view in linguistic meaning possess the concept of relativism for placing communication at a spontaneous level and on the notion of process which transcends time and space boundaries in the dynamic world; things are constantly becoming and perishing in the processual nature of life without fixed and absolute knowledge. The East knowledge is then, very different from the knowledge generated by scientific methods under Western positivist philosophy.

The same conceptions of space and time can be found in organizational literature as well. Modernist theories usually assume that spatial and temporal resources are pre-existing ‘natural’ resources that provide a setting for human action (Cairns, McInnes & Roberts, 2003). This assumption is evident in most of the organizational studies where they see space/time relations in the context of human thinking/acting; space is expected to be manipulated in order to attain more organizational outputs in a singular, unidirectional and linear-quantitative time (Hassard, 1996). In the sense, space and time are treated as *a priori* categories that have been commodified, rationalized and considered deterministically for control and manipulation. It then develops a complex understanding of how time and space, as resources, enable and constrain organization action.

Having said that, space would be allocated as a measureable setting for organizational practices and subjected as a structure for governance and control while time is absolute, true, linear and mathematical-based available as a commodified resource for planning and control (Goodsell, 1993; Baldry *et al.*, 1998; Chia, 2002). It is apparent that contemporary organization is endlessly trying to control both context and actors within it through the “...creation, reconfiguration and destruction of spatial and temporal resources.” (Cairns, McInnes & Roberts, 2003, p.127).

Such ontology view of time and space as an absolute existed world fails to capture the complexity of its roles in organizational practice (Hassard, 2002). It is important to understand that space and time are socially constructed through the interplay

between the space (physical setting) and social interaction (emotional response) in numerous times existed within the organizational context, from the past to the present and future. Space and time are more than mere resources, but also possess social meaning (Hassard, 1990). For example, Ford and Harding (2004) found that while non-managerial employees conceive of the organization as a place from the material territory which they worked; managerial employees (such as managers, directors, chief executives) would see organization as space based upon a sense of an immaterial space occupied in the organization for control and identity construction. Besides, Cunha (2004) study on organizational time revealed a dialectical view of time in organizations that synthesizes opposite perspectives based on different strategic orientation to the 'dependent', 'independent' and 'interdependent' perspectives of the environment. Generally, 'Action' strategies which rely on event time to handle scheduling view time as linear. 'Planning' strategies use even time to handle scheduling, impose their internal pacing upon the environment would view time as cyclic. Last but not least, 'improvisational' strategies which use 'even-event' time to handle scheduling synchronize via 'internal- external' pacing would then hold a spiral view of time. Therefore, it is worth considering epistemologies of space and time from the East and West perspectives and their impact on the understanding of organizational space.

Secondly, according to Lefebvre (1991), philosophical thought of space and social space depreciated and attenuated with the growing recognition of treating space scientifically. Ever since the word of 'space' had gained its geometrical meaning and mathematical concept; speaking of 'social space' was then a strange idea for

mathematics emerged as the proprietors of science which clearly detached from philosophy. The decisive point of turning the concept of space to its mature form was the rise of Descartes thinking. Descartes logical and mathematical style of investigation in separating mind from body, material from non-material brought to an end of Aristotelian tradition which enumerated space and time as two out of the ten categories which facilitated the classing of the evidence of the senses. The proliferation of mathematical theories is doubtful for its ability to justify and explain the transitions from mathematical spaces to nature, followed by practice and thence to the theory of social life; not to mention the space of (energy) flows or the Chinese idea of *Qi*, the vital energy that forms the essence of all materials. This is assuredly the fundamental problem of knowledge construction. Nevertheless, in the eyes of proponent of Cartesian rationality, epistemological-philosophical thinking still failed to furnish the basis for a science, even 'generate a discourse of space, cannot ever give rise to knowledge of space' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.7).

Lefebvre (1991) also talked about the idea that capital and capitalism would influence practical matters relating to space, such as the construction of the buildings, distribution of investments and the worldwide division of labour. While many may reject his idea of influence of capitalism on space, Lefebvre (1991) committed to his viewpoint by explaining the multifaceted of capitalism ranging from the most common aspects of commodities, labour, capital, and land to the less common aspects such as knowledge and hegemony - these are what together constitute capitalism. The concept of hegemony is more than an influence, more even than a dominant power but it is exercised over society as a whole, generally

through human mediation (leaders, intellectuals and experts) in all aspects including culture and knowledge. It is therefore exercised in both thoughts of institutions and ideas; its effect is pervasive. One of the consequences was the dominance of Western art and philosophy in the form of the city and town and more importantly, the egocentric thinking of Western intellectuals in demonstrating 'space' as something 'real' (Rogers, 2002).

In addition, Lefebvre's production of space induced a 'unitary theory' to discover and construct a theoretical unity between fields - the physical, the mental and the social aspect of space. Such interrelationship is concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice and the space occupied by sensory phenomena and imagination. For him, '(social) space is a (social) product' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.26). The key rationale was the assumption of that physical space has no 'reality' without the energy that is deployed within it. And social relation exercised among the actors within it. Meanwhile, to study and understand the production space, the coming-together of all field of space must be considered.

While Lefebvre views space as a product of social relations and as a process of coming-together through the triad model of conceived-perceived-lived; many current discussions on space in management and organization have divided the triad into three different parts, rather than a whole (Zhang, 2006; Zhang & Spicer, 2013). Space tends to be atomized (Taylor & Spicer, 2007) and being reified into three different modalities (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011). It focuses only on a singular aspect of space (Watkins, 2005) or the combination of the second and third approach of space

(Zhang, Spicer & Hancock, 2008). The crux of the issue here is the existing research has ignored the importance of seeing the three phrases (conceived, perceived and lived) in the spatial triad model as simultaneously and irreducibly affecting each other to ensure the levels of cohesion in the production of space (Dobers & Strannegård, 2004; Watkins, 2005; Löw, 2008; Haan & Leander, 2011).

Besides Lefebvre's triple concerns on spatial production, Fayard and Weeks (2007) also proposed Gibson's theory of affordance to study organization space more than a linear way of causality. The concept of affordance provides an integrative theoretical approach to study a property relative to the properties of some other perceiving and acting entity (Keane, 2014). Affordance then has become a useful way to understand space from its physical qualities while also taking other social elements into consideration. For instance, incorporate symbolic and cultural meaning of space interpreted by different spatial users into the investigation for richer understanding (Gieryn, 2000). Therefore, organization space should be given close examination through its affordance for allowing or shaping behaviour, rather than its impact on determining the occurrence of interaction event (Fayard & Weeks, 2007). As such, this research employed theory of affordance as a complementary model to better understand Lefebvre's production of space through the coming-together of the triad space, as suggested by Zhang and Beyes (2011).

Throughout the reading of Lefebvre's work, some of his arguments have shown a less rigid European perspective and thus, it provides an opportunity to study his triad model of spatial production from non-European viewpoints. Among the arguments

are: (1) the rejection of defining space in a strictly geometrical and mathematical form for it would place space as absolute and fixed which subject to manipulation and control; (2) rejection of epistemological-philosophical thinking in scientific knowledge construction; Lefebvre questioned the appropriateness and applicability of the only accepted paradigm for it must be clearly detached from philosophy; (3) the idea of hegemony found in all aspect of society usually exercised from the more powerful to the less powerful had constructed a dominant power over the construction of ideas and institution; which mostly dominated by the West; (4) the 'unitary theory' in considering all interrelated fields in the production of space are coming-together, be it in material or nonmaterial form such as physical space, social space, social practice and even the flowing energy in space. The above arguments construct a holistic view of spatial production which permits plural conception of reality. It somehow echoes a similar philosophical stand from the East. Also, the concern of culture is a *sine qua non* for the social production of space as explained by Lefebvre (1991), "...it is not at all clear *a priori* that is can legitimately generalized. Whether the East, specifically China, has experienced a contrast between representations of space and representational spaces is doubtful in the extreme." (p.42). In his book, *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre (1991) claimed that:

Each society offers up its own peculiar space, as it were, as an 'object' for analysis and overall theoretical explication. I say each society, but it would be more accurate to say each mode of production may subsume significant variant forms, and this makes for a number of theoretical difficulties [...] How much can we really learn, for instance, confined as we are to Western conceptual tools, about the Asiatic mode of production, its space, its towns, or the relationship it embodies between town and

country - a relationship reputedly represented figuratively or ideographically by the Chinese characters?(p. 31-32).

Meanwhile, the lack of resonance of non-Western paradigm is difficult to reflect the production of space and realities in other parts of the world, especially non-West society, accurately.

Thirdly, picturing space as a frame or container is impractical and also a big mistake to treat an office building as having no other purpose than housing people in a three-dimensional territory, a factor known in Cartesian rationality philosophy (Clegg & Kornberger, 2004). Imagine a walled building with eye-catching flooring, modern ceiling design, innovative design of individual office space and interactive team space equipped with advanced communications technology; it remains in its furnished architectural features until at least someone entered the building, used the space, experienced the space, assigned meaning to the space and perhaps named it as 'office'. Therefore, space is a mental and material construct (Elden, 2004) which enables space to be interpreted and seen, and hence be lived in by inhabitants within their particular preferences. This is very much akin to Lefebvre's view of space as social practice and social relation. Lived experiences and social meanings are thus evolved from the struggles between the idealism and materialism in space and between conception and perception of space. As such, space serves as both medium and outcome of the social activities which offers a range of exciting possibilities for social construction within it.

Among the possibilities, social implication of space is one of the key ideas which have long been studied in organizational social behaviours such as interaction, collaboration, face-to-face communication, and knowledge sharing. These collective behaviours are vital intellectual capital and resources that associated to organization productivity especially in today's knowledge-based hybrid workspaces (Hecker, 2012; Hua, 2010). However, the growing popularity for virtual teams or virtual organization across boundaries of time and space via modern computer-driven technologies, not only provides organizations with unprecedented level of flexibility and responsiveness; it also challenges the traditional communication pattern and preference for collaboration (Ebrahim, Ahmed & Taha, 2009). Today, we have moved away from working with people who are in our visual proximity to working with people around the globe; as such, it gives even more impact over the traditional value of space (Johnson et al., 2001). Hence, there is a need and interest to reconsider the roles of space in modern organizations (Hua, 2010).

Fourthly, the acknowledgement of space in understanding management and organization has produced a burgeoning interest in organization space across a great diversity of disciplines (Tyler & Cohen, 2010). However, as Hubbard (2012) tried to encourage researcher to 'thinking spaces, differently' (p.1); he commented that the demand and efforts to link the discussion of space to the subjects across social sciences and humanities is still needed to generate theoretical knowledge that corresponds to the multiplicity and complexity of communicative experience.

One of the apparent issues in the existing communication studies is the problem of irrelevancy and disconnectedness by placing the Orient in the Occidental paradigm (Merican, 2005a). This is primarily driven by post-colonial intellectual imperialism. The almost exclusive influence of the West could be seen in the knowledge system where the intellectual works on ideas, models, problem selection, research priorities and academic curriculum have remained firmly Euro-American in character (Gunaratne, 2010). Such imbalanced knowledge production and academic dependency facilitate a neglect of indigenous historical and philosophical tradition as sources for developing non-Western social theories (Alatas, 2006). Moreover, studies with Eurocentric orientation have shown their limits and have begun to face challenges and criticism from other cultural groups for the East and West have very little commonality in their worldviews, knowledge production and their respective ontology, axiology, epistemology and methodology assumptions, especially in human communication. There are at least four fundamental differences distinguishing the East from the West; discriminating the Oriental scholarship from the Occidental.

First, the inclusion of the East's philosophical-religious tradition in knowledge production and human communication studies is crucial. Descartes's scientific system of Cartesian dualism and rationalism work in concert with the West's capsulation of religion and thus stands a sharp contrast to the East paradigm (Ishii, 2003).

Second, the East upholds an ontology theme of holistic and circularity where mutuality and interdependency between all beings in the universe are most wanted. However, the West's atomistic view of linear communication has rejected relativism and interpenetration between all beings and substances (Chen, 2011).

Third, Chinese axiology of harmony shows a definite contrast against the Western axiology of freedom and control is believed to cause difficulty in reflecting the genuine communication discourse and reality of the East for the reason of Eurocentric scholarship may 'disregard, downplay, or overshadow certain values and elements that have been historically embraced in' non-Western culture and communication (Miike, 2010, p.3). In addition, while most of the Eurocentric organization studies stressed the major role of physical environment or organization space is primarily for governance and control (Cairs, McInnes & Roberts, 2003; Elsbach & Pratt, 2008); Elsbach and Pratt (2008) questioned the extent to which findings from previous Eurocentric studies can be generalized across cultures, especially from the Chinese art of space arrangement – the ideas of *feng shui*. *Feng shui* represents a traditional Chinese worldview which emphasizes harmony, particularly the harmonious relationship between human beings and the environment; harmony can only be achieved through a searching process, rather than creating (Chen, 2007).

Fourth, the West's way of treating time and space as absolute has developed a single reality for all through a linear, clear, analytical and manipulative process of communication and knowledge production. It is in contradiction to the East's reality

which is always open for interpretation for its approaches of non-linear, ambiguous, ritual and accommodative pattern of communication and cyclical worldview that advocates processual nature of life via mutually defined relationship of all. All these fundamental differences found in the East and West worldviews encourage careful and critical engagements of non-West scholars with their own cultural tradition and beliefs to develop local, native and indigenous study by placing the East in the East, not inserting the East in the West paradigm.

Fifth, the large majority of Chinese Malaysian may not be intellectually familiar with Confucian philosophical teaching as they have been influenced by their respective culture and religion traditions in Malaysia's multi-ethnic society; the influence of Confucianism has indeed left its deep imprints at every level of Chinese society today, including Malaysia (Wong, 2008). The first generation of Chinese who settled in Malaysia may not well-school in the Confucian classics but they still live under the influence of Confucianism as their forefathers did since many generations ago. Till today, there are many of us who still practice Confucian teaching without realizing it (Wong, 2008). Besides that, the 'miracle' made by the Asian countries, particularly Japan and the emergence of four Asian tigers - Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea - who marked exceptional economic growth through the late 1970s and 1980s as well as the "Rising Asia" - China and India, who witnessed high economic growth rates in the last two decades; has generated popular and academic arguments on Confucianism, the core Asian cultural values, as an explanation for the miracle growth (Raghuram, Noxolo, Madge, 2014; Nair-Venugopal & Lim, 2012). Thus, there is a growing interest in Confucian thought

and studies, including in Malaysia aimed to better understand the Chinese community (Wu, 2000). Among the Confucian philosophy, cardinal value of harmony in social context and the principle of finding a balance between the needs of the individual and the orderly society are known as intrinsic to Asian values and the most predominant intellectuals and philosophies that have penetrated all strata of Chinese society and have heavily influenced the thought and behaviour of people in Asian countries (Yun, 2012; Nair-Venugopal & Lim, 2012).

Furthermore, to compare value clusters of people from the same ethnic group living in different circumstances and conditions, Soontiens (2007) conducted an international project covering Chinese youth from East Asian countries (Hong Kong, China, Malaysia and Singapore). Despite the findings indicating a significant overlap in values between most countries, there were also prominent differences. For example, Singapore and Malaysia overlap with Hong Kong's society and environment cluster, while Singapore, Malaysia and China generate a cluster around the value of maintaining a balanced life. However, there are remarkable differences reflected in each country. For instance, Singapore has a more materialistic focus; Hong Kong values lifestyle the most; China is the only one has a clear cluster reflecting the importance of family life; and Malaysia is said to be relationship oriented. The minor divergence of Chinese value in each country, especially in Malaysia, shows that studying Chinese in Malaysia may lead to a different outcome compared to research studies on the Chinese in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China, as these countries are predominantly Chinese in ethnic composition (Loo, 2011). Chinese in Malaysia represent less than 25% of the population and live

in a multiracial country where Malays, Chinese, Indians and other minority races coexist in a single social system (Department of Statistic, Malaysia, 2012). Malaysian Chinese is thus a significant group to be examined in terms of how they negotiate the use of space to strike a balance of harmony in a multicultural country with a rich mix of ethnicity and historical influences.

Lastly, as specified by Becker (2007), one of the challenges in examining organization space is that there is often a wide discrepancy between self-reported behaviour and use of space versus to what is observed by researcher. Such phenomenon has been known as methodological difficulty in studying space as pinpointed earlier by Yanow (2006). Hence, the use of observation should be employed to observe, identify and understand how people use the environment to generate a thorough investigation of spatial use (Fritz, 2014; Giuliani & Scopelliti, 2009; Chan, Beckman & Lawrence, 2007).

To study social research is indeed complex and sophisticated. In analyzing the ‘double social life of method’ or the multifaceted of methods, John (2010) claimed that although many agreed in employing research methods to answer social research question for it is a technique to learn about social world and allowed the researcher to describe it for practical purposes, the problem is we may frame the dynamic social world in a particular and technical manner. Methods and research findings are somehow both embedded in the social world and they can’t be easily separated but we must also understand each of them have a life of their own too. The two assumptions are: (1) methods are social because they are shaped by the social world

in which they are located; (2) methods are also social because they in turn help to shape that social world. These assumptions are based on the basic arguments of: (1) methods don't come into being without a purpose; (2) they also don't come into being without sponsor; (3) they draw upon the existing resources, methodological, cultural and social.

He listed out four examples to explain the two-facets of methods. First, when the states wanted to know about their population in the late eighteenth century, censuses (rather than other methods) were conducted by classifying and categorizing the characteristics of individuals and then, aggregating them. Second example refers to the notion of 'population' was aligned with techniques of sample statistics in the twentieth century. For instance, sample surveys on education inequality became crucial to the policymaking that led to the growth of comprehensive education and the establishment of universities in the UK survey in 1960s. Moving to 1970s, sample surveys had then become a core tool for knowing the society; a tool that was indeed shaped by the social. Third example suggests the importance of studying colonized people qualitatively, in 'their own terms' using anthropological ethnography. The reason being is that it was important to understand the difference between the West and the rest. However, as post-colonized studies always relate to the ideas of imperialism, governing, civilizing and controlling; it was equally important to understand the logics of the colonized. Since the connection was inescapable, it is necessary to understand from both stands. The fourth example refers to the technique of focus group explored by Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton to evaluate a radio programme during World War II. John's (2010) concern

on focus group is that what does the talk in a focus group actually tell us; does it tell us about their attitudes or does it tell us something about how people negotiate and make positional arguments because of the power relation?

The idea of presenting the above four examples is to demonstrate that all these techniques - censuses, surveys, ethnography and focus group - have been socially shaped according to the research purposes; methods are social, they are shaped by the social world in which they are located. On the other hand, the story of focus group also tells us that methods may be shaped in ways that do not reflect the concern of the research sponsor or research purposes. Hence, perhaps the biggest contemporary social science challenge is 'how to handle methods being shaped in places that don't share the critical concerns of social science?' (John, 2010, p.3).

As a response to it, ethnomethodology is particularly significant because it concerns the ways which actors explain (describe, criticize, and idealize) specific situations based on their past interactions and during interaction with others in order to provide multiple perspectives to make sense of its physical, cultural and practical dimensions (Peltonen, 2012) and a subjective reality of interaction (Garfinkel, 1967). By suspending the preconceived notions of how the social order is maintained, we are then able to witness the actual social order in real-time production, which may be different from what is expected. Ethnomethodology asks for not how order is possible but how sense of order is possible in everyday situation (Garfinkel, 1967).

1.3 Research Aims

First and foremost, the research intends to respond to the predominance of Western-centric study in communication discipline by centering the non-West perspectives and philosophical assumptions in studying organization communication and organization space. The core aim of this research is to examine space for collaboration from non-Western perspectives through the investigation on communication pattern and behaviour in an organization.

The motivation of studying space from non-Western perspectives is mainly driven by the fundamental differences between the East and West from their respective approach in knowledge construction and paradigmatic assumptions of human communication. The impact of intellectual imperialism and globalization have created a state of agitation in every aspect of human society (Chen, 2011) where on one hand, the issue of academic dependency instigates the need for a strong self or individual identity since understanding ourselves through borrowed material and through the eyes of others are impractical. On the other hand, globalization provides an opportunity for different ways of life to be integrated since the distinct worldviews are colliding as people began to communicate closely to different people in the world.

Nevertheless, the fundamental paradigmatic assumptions (ontological, axiological, epistemological and methodological) of human communication between the East and West perspectives remain unchanged. Since the lack of resonance of non-Western paradigm in the communication study is an apparent gap to be filled; it is crucial to

study the epistemologies of space and time from a non-Western perspective and examine their social implication in organizational communicative and collaborative efforts. Besides, Henri Lefebvre's triad model of spatial production is also employed to bring space back into organization studies by joining its physical, mental, social and cultural construction. Furthermore, a careful investigation is required to revise the current reified notion of spatial understanding, while Gibson's theory of affordance is used to avoid the idea of determinism and linear causality view of space-collaboration relationship.

More specifically, the research aims to first examine the non-West communication pattern in the organization through the method of interviewing and observation. From the data collected, the researcher would explore the underlying philosophical roots of the observed communication pattern, whether there is any prominent constitution of non-Western philosophical principles or values within it. Of all, the cardinal value of harmony in social context is given emphasis for it is inseparable from the most influential non-West philosophy - Confucianism. Also, emphasizing on non-Western social harmony and social relationship is the most appropriate aspect in human communication, if one has to study the main differences between the East and West perspective on communication (Yum, 1988).

Next, by identifying the underlying or constitution of non-Western philosophical principles or values in the everyday situations; the research would further examine and investigate the construction of organization space based on the participants' common-sense knowledge, procedures and considerations to gain an understanding

of, navigate in and act on those situation, as proposed in ethnomethodology - which views the meaning of events as products of common understanding and shared agreement produced through the socially standardized process of user's experience and interaction (Garfinkel, 1967).

Through observation, interviewing, documentary sources and material artefacts, the research will be able to examine the spatial production from a non-Western perspective and also be able to identify the spatial and social requirements for communication and collaboration. Discovering the requirements or pre-conditioning for collaboration assists the analyzing efforts in identifying the affordance of space for workplace collaboration as well as preventing a linear view of causality between space and communication. In sum, the core aim of the research is to construct a non-Western view of space for organizational collaborative effort.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the fundamental paradigmatic assumptions (ontological, axiological, epistemological and methodological) of human communication between the East and West and the employment of non-linear causality model of Lefebvre's spatial production and Gibson theory of affordance; the research intended to answer the following:

- (a) Based on the participants' communication assumptions and communication pattern in everyday situation, is there any prominent underlying non-Western philosophical values or principles constituted in it?

- (b) What is the structure or component or composition found in the organization space? How does it work?
- (c) Referring to the identified constitution of non-Western philosophical principles or values in the everyday situations, as stated in (a), in what way, it relates to the triad model of conceived-perceived-lived production of space?
- (d) How did the non-Western philosophical rooted principles materialize its paradigmatic assumptions in the process of coming-together of the triad?
- (e) Tracing from the non-Western views of communication pattern and spatial production, what are the social and spatial requirements conditioning the communication and collaboration efforts among the participants?
- (f) What is the affordance rendered by the organization space to initiate, motivate, enhance or even strengthen the collaborative efforts?

The above research questions lead the research to achieve its core aim in examining the production of space and affordance of organization space for collaboration from non-Western perspectives.

1.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the approach from the East and West in viewing space and time in the observed world (epistemology) and the existed world (ontology). The distinct approach by the East and West granted an opportunity, particularly in considering epistemologies of space and time, from Occidental-Oriental perspectives. Also, the absolutism view of space and time as mere resources to be manipulated in order to enable and constrain human and organizational action, give

rise of relativism view of space and time in treating both entities a socially constructed interplay between the space (physical setting) and social interaction (emotional response) rather than being singular. Study on the renewed conception of space is particularly imperative in today modern organizations that growing with more and more virtual teams; it possesses a threat to the traditional view and value of space.

Moreover, the role or function of space in promoting collaborative effort and the production of Lefebvre's triad spatial model should be studied in a relativism view of interconnected process. Each of the triad, conceived, perceived and lived, shall overlap each other and come together to produce organization space. Investigation into the affordance of space using Gibson's theory of affordance helps to identify the role and function of organization space in a multifaceted way.

Besides, the need to uncover non-Western communication theories is mentioned by comparing the very distinct worldviews of the East and West. However, intellectual imperialism resulted in placing the East in the West paradigm is impractical and reasoning the East using the West's scientific system of Cartesian dualism and rationalism shall be avoided too. Hence, it is crucial to understand the production of space from non-Western perspectives to expand and broaden the horizon of existing organization space and organizational communication literature.

The qualitative turn in organizational communication studies which suggests to understand people from their everyday situations in which they use their common-

sense knowledge that accord with their societal rule in maintaining consistency, order and meaning in their interpersonal lives and work relationships, is said to contribute into a richer knowledge base.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will first discuss the discourse on the formation and development in social science research in the East and West. The predominance of Western-centric study, academic dependency, captive mind and imbalanced knowledge production will be analyzed in a post-colonial discourse. By identifying the causes of and consequences from intellectual imperialism, the weaknesses of placing East in the West paradigm will be discussed from four aspects - the dominance of the West's worldview and philosophy; absence of religion issue in communication studies; neglected cultural differences between the East and West and the (mis)representation of Orient and Oriental.

Through the writing, the ignorance and oversimplification of the fundamental cultural differences in most of the Western-centric research will be deliberated from the ontological, axiological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of human communication. The chapter also employed various non-Western worldviews and philosophical principles as examples in the discussions. Cultural differences between the East and West will be discussed mainly from their dissimilarities in axiology foundation where the East stresses on the Chinese cardinal value of harmony in interpersonal relationship and communication.

Next, the chapter continued by focusing two main components of the environment - space and place. The relations between text and building will be briefly discussed for its functions in labeling, dividing, organizing and signaling power and value. Yi-Fu, Tuan conceptions of space and time will be presented followed by the characterization of Eastern polychronic system of time orientation and Western monochronic system of time orientation.

This chapter will also offer a platform of theorizing organization space through a historical trip of organizational communication. The discussion will be commenced from classical approach in organizational communication and explains how Hawthorne studies served as a springboard that moved physical environment from mechanistic views of classical theories to human relations approaches. Then, a newer conception of space extracted from Taylor and Spicer's (2007) 'umbrella construct' of organization space will be presented. Three types of spatial dimension will be discussed further: space as physical dimension; space as materialization of social possesses; and space as lived experience.

Although Henri Lefebvre's (1991) triad model of perceived-conceived-lived space has been acted as the major source of inspiration in defining organization space; a reification of Lefebvre's triad space has been identified. To overcome this atomization of space, dialectical materialism is proposed as an approach to capture the dynamic process of space making and Gibson's theory of affordance is chosen to complement the study. In the light of rising demand for virtual team, not only it

changes the definition of organization space; it also endangers the need of space and workplace collaboration.

2.2 Discourse on the Formation and Development in Social Science Research

All human knowledge is historical and hence, studying social science can never be done in present tense (Merican, 2005). Social science is a major category of academic discipline; it consists of a wide range of aspects concerned with society and relationships among individuals within the society. It often includes anthropology, psychology, sociology and communication. Since communication is the lifeblood of societies, one must understand forces of history which construct the intellectual inquiry of communication. Unfortunately, until the mid-twentieth century, writing of world history was largely concerned with the acts and civilizations of a relatively small minority of the world's population namely, the inhabitants of Europe and North American while the largest part of the world's population has always been located primarily in Asia and Africa (Adler & Pouwels, 2015). China and India are two of the prominent examples of Asian country which have evolved over many centuries producing rich and complex civilizations through complex communication concepts and understandings and orders of procedure (Dissanayake, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to uncover Asian communication theories to enrich the field of communication studies.

However, we have been facing a problem of relevance and disconnectedness in studying literature of social science and communication emerging from non-Western society (Merican, 2005). According to Merican (2005a), such irrelevancy is

primarily derived from the West epistemological and political constitution and their intersections within the non-West social structure; this has made communication theories no longer exclusive to oneself and also, there will be a gap between the received communication knowledge and the existence of the recipient. The following discussions would deliberate the issue of relevancy and disconnectedness mainly focused on a post-colonial discourse emphasizes on intellectual imperialism, academic dependency, captive-mind, imbalanced knowledge production and predominance of Western centric knowledge paradigm.

The presence of continuation of the colonial period's legacy is found in many areas that were once colonized or controlled by Western European (Banerjee & Iyer, 2005). Many non-Western nations, although are now free of colonial rule, they are still affected by the past imperialist policies in most aspects involving multiple issues ranging from human rights to governance as well as the alignment of the state with social science such as anthropology, geography and mass communication (Gunaratne, 2010). While most of the phenomena of imperialism in sociology centred in political, economic and societal aspects; there is a growing need to consider intellectual imperialism too (Alatas, 2006). Imperialism refers to the *'subjugation of one people by another for the advantage of the dominant one [...]* Intellectual imperialism is the domination of one people by another in their world of thinking... *[It] is usually an effect of actual direct imperialism or is an effect of indirect domination arising from imperialism'* (Alatas, 2006, p.24). Postcolonial criticism shifted our attention from commodity production to knowledge production where it reveals how Western values and worldviews are tied to the development

studies of the colonized (Gunaratne, 2010). Such debate has been discussed widely and intensively by many prominent scholars from the East in 1970s and 1980s such as Edward Said, Ibn Khaldun, Jose Rizal, Syed Hussein Alatas and Wimal Dissanayake.

If we would to scrutinize the critique of the impact of post-colonialism in building intellectual imperialisms, we may examine the evidence in relation to its praxis. In the following discussions, two aspects of practice - the white man's burden and the rise of captive mind will be expounded as part of the process of intellectual imperialism. First of all, the imperialist interpretation of the white man's burden as expressed by Rudyard Kipling proposed that it was the so-called white man's burden to 'civilize' nations in Asia and Africa and it was also the white man's moral obligation to rule non-Western societies, be it in their political, economic, cultural, education system and social progress, until they are able to manage their own affairs independently (Adler & Pouwels, 2015). However, many non-Western countries remained underdeveloped after decolonization because of the control - primarily economic - that the former colonial powers continued to exert over; such disadvantages and discrimination practices are usually called neo-colonialism (Banerjee & Iyer, 2005). Therefore, the direct and/or indirect colonial power is omnipresent for rationalization of civilizing mission and also, for the continued maintenance and expansion of domination, not only in the affairs of science and wisdom, as well as from the way in which knowledge is produced and reproduced. (Alatas, 2000; Merican, 2005; 2005a).

There are six main traits of intellectual imperialism which are also parallel to political and economic imperialism that lead to phenomena of servility, docility and intellectual bondage among non-Western societies (Alatas, 2000).

The traits are as the following: (1) Exploitation refers to the utilization and control by the subjugating power over the less powerful people. As for social science research, many nations in non-West has been treated as raw materials and informants in providing insightful experiences and valuable data to the West in generating new theoretical framework from the West perspectives. Hence, most of the non-West history and development were written by scholars from abroad. The lack of originality in knowledge paradigm known as a form of exploitation where non-Western is not being a knowing subject of the study (Merican, 2005a). Even if a research centered non-Western in the study, we will still be treated as a passive, non-participant, non-autonomous object (Sardar, 1999). Presence of non-West is merely a respondent for data collection; our engagement and participation in the study are then limited and constrained. (2) Tutelage cues the need of protection and guidance from the subjugating power on the colonies. This echoes the white man's burden where independence could not be granted to non-West because we are generally weak and dependent; we could not be relied and would ruin the country if we govern ourselves. With the above mentioned exploitation and tutelage system, it incites the third trait, (3) Conformity implies the subjugating dominant power expectation on the dominated people to conform and employ Western patterns, organizations, rules as well as intellectual and academe landscape. The expectation on us to follow without questioning and justifying its validity brings the fourth trait, (4) Secondary

role played by the dominated people; the high intellectual and academic dependency lead to a downplaying of the role of native, local, indigenous, home-grown non-West scholars. This can be seen from the setting up of schools, research centres or universities in non-West by the West, employment of Western-centric assessment and evaluation, recognition of international publications and journals which rarely managed by regional scholars and strong academic dependency to the West.

Furthermore, there are seven types of academic dependency advocated by Alatas (2003, 2015): (1) dependence on ideas, (2) dependence on the media of ideas, (3) dependence on the technology of education, (4) dependence on aid for research and teaching, (5) dependence on investment in education, (6) dependence of scholars in developing societies on demand in the knowledge powers for their skills, and (7) dependence on recognition.

All the mentioned acceptance of imperial intellectual power has placed the subjugated people in a secondary and peripheral role. It encourages obedience, increases sense of dependence, stifles creativity and impedes genuine and creative assimilation between the West and non-West. These conflicts of uncritical adoption of Western paradigm and dominance of elitist perspectives extended the reception of white man's burden in the fifth trait of intellectual imperialism (Alatas, 2000), (5) Rationalizes the civilizing mission and promotes untrue idolization as shown in the sixth trait where, (6) The subjugated country is very often run by inferior talent of scholars from their home country and therefore, they may not be as superior as we thought of.

Another relevant praxis from the above discussions is the rising of captive mind which originated by the Malaysian sociologist Syed Hussein Alatas. He explained a peculiar phenomenon in the developing world where the dependent scholar acts as a passive recipient who is obsessed with imported theories of knowledge at the levels of relevancy to their own society, experience and intellectual traditions (Alatas, 1972, 1974, 2006). Earlier, such intellectual dependence and servility were known as a natural corollary of colonial power. However, even today, many universities of the globe will still pay obeisance to social science research theories and methodologies prevailing in Western academic circles (Alatas, 2001). Moreover, a large number of social science studies are still being taught in a Eurocentric manner in most of the Third World and non-West countries (Alatas, 2015). As a result, most of the present-day social science research in non-West countries are *'nothing more than the mindless study and re-study of the dead corpus of sociological knowledge generated'* within a West-centric framework (Alvares, 2011, p.1). Hence, majority of existing communication studies in the East literature are said to be captive of the 'White Studies' framework (Merican, 2005a) - an application of West paradigm into non-West research without appropriate adaption of the imported techniques to a local setting. It is also a denotation of continuing dominance of Eurocentric (Alatas, 2001).

On the other hand, the high demand for knowledge from the West came into non-West academe probably caused by the desire of non-Western scholars in maintaining self-esteem independent of the objective utility of such knowledge (Alatas, 1972).

The global spread and reach of Western knowledge commonly branded as prestige and esteemed for its ability to influence and is often treated as dependable and reliable for non-Western to learn from. It then conditioned a mental captivity where the concepts of imitation, mimicry, repetition and dependency emerged because of the belief that Western knowledge is superior (Merican, 2012a & Alatas, 2001).

Captive mind is defined as an *'uncritical and imitative mind dominated by an external source, whose thinking is deflected from an independent perspective'* (Alatas, 1974, p.692). The external source usually associated to the West and its influence and impact may expand to a variety of scientific areas such as problem selection, problem solving and problem analysis (Alatas, 1972). The deficiencies of uncritical imitation without a base in resident scholarship resulted in generating irrelevant and redundant findings of the West scholarship; misinterpretation of the significance of basic assumptions, abstraction and data; inadequate familiarity and negligence of local pertinent fact, history and tradition (Alatas, 1972). All these contributed to the characteristics of captive mind which shows limited creativity to raise original problem, inadequate ability to devise analytical methods, inability to identify major societal issues and local problems.

Captive mind is prevalent as it is a consequence of Western dominance over the rest of the world, particularly in non-West countries (Alatas, 1974). Nevertheless, the crux of the problem here is not about the presence of the West's monopolistic control of knowledge but the psychological problem of mental captivity - intellectual imperialism. The key questions are "How truthful can a West-made knowledge

represent us and how authentic we can be represented in a West-centric paradigm?” “What can we learn from the borrowed material dished up by another culture, yet we call it our own?” (Merican, 2005a) The validity and equivalency of existing human communication research which have been one-sidedly diffuse by the West-centric paradigms and blindly respected and accepted as etic, pancultural and universal, have thus being academically questioned by an increased number of non-Western scholars, especially from East Asian (Ishii, 2006).

2.3 Placing the East in the West Paradigm: Critiques of Eurocentrism

Along with the above academic phenomena and the dissatisfaction with the idea of wholesale adoption of Western models of communication in explaining Asian communication process; participation of scholars, educators and practitioners from East Asia are urgently needed to “de-Westernize” the existing literature. Scholars are urged to go beyond Western settings and embrace empirical phenomena in their home countries as well as indigenous philosophy, religions and intellectual tradition in order to enrich contemporary research paradigms with more alternatives, perspectives and practices from non-West (Ishii, 2006; Chen, 2001; Miike, 2002, 2003; Yum, 1988; Dissanayake, 2009).

The dynamic of today globalization not only provide an opportunity for different ways of life to be integrated, it also opens door for scholars from different disciplines and geographical areas challenge the mainstream paradigm of philosophy which has been dominating the world intellectual landscape for decades (Chen, 2011). Hence, there has been a growing awareness of the limitation of Western-centric studies for

its inadequacy in neglecting, oversimplifying and silencing the “rest” of the world (Alatas, 2015; Shome & Hedge, 2002).

With regard to contemporary Western-centric communication research, there are weaknesses, which need to be critically and fairly discussed and investigated (Miike, 2007; Ishii, 2001; 2006; Said, 2003; Merican, 2005; Dissanayake, 2009; Nair-Venugopal & Lim, 2012; Ayish, 2003). Asante (2006) correlated the Eurocentric domination to Western triumphalism, which can be examined from at least three aspects: aggressive individualism, chauvinistic rationalism and ruthless culturalism. First, self-reliance, autonomy, independence and individual liberty are some of the key characteristics of aggressive individualism that commonly implanted in Eurocentric paradigm. Second, chauvinistic rationalism refers to the recognition given to Europeans scholars for they are generally known as more rational than others in approaching and defining reality. Third, Eurocentric studies celebrate and utilize Western idea the most for they reckon it as the most correct form of human society which eventually led to marginalization, suppression, silence and exclusion of non-European paradigm (Chen, 2011). To overcome the above mentioned inequalities, the weak point in Eurocentric study must be identified and continued corrective actions must be taken.

The following writing will discuss the weaknesses of Eurocentric studies from four perspectives namely, dominance of West’s worldview and philosophy; absence of religion issue in communication studies; negligence of cultural differences between East and West and (mis)representation of Orient and Oriental.

First, each cluster of people from the earliest origins of civilization has evolved a worldview; however, most of the existing communication research is inherently controlled and constructed by the West's worldview and philosophy (Samovar & Porter, 2003; Ishii, 2006). Worldview is one of the most fundamental qualities of communication in defining the way people characteristically look out on the universe (Spradley & McCurdy, 1980) and a lens through which people view reality and the rest of the world (Paige & Martin, 1996). Meanwhile, worldview is a systemized set of assumptions about the world and how it is ought to be organized (Helve, 1991; Emerson, 1996). It shapes culture and serves to distinguish one culture from another which must be given priority in communication and cultural studies for it provides a frame of reference to understand a society's ways of perceiving, thinking and speaking as well as the society's orientation towards ontological matters (Klopf, 1998; Ishii, Klopf & Cooke, 2003).

Redfield (1953) proposed 12 general conceptions constituted in worldview which he argued that the conceptions are more or less the same for every culture's interpretation of worldview. They are: (1) the self or principal actor on humankind's stage; (2) the others, those within the purview of the self; (3) other people - the unidentifiable mass; (4) differences between men and women; (5) distinctions between "we" our own people and "they" other people; (6) distinctions between what is human and what is not; (7) invisible beings, forces, principles; (8) animals; (9) concepts of human nature; (10) spatial orientation; (11) temporal orientation and (12) ideas about birth and death.

many anthropologists have extended the conception of worldview elements towards salient characteristics such as God, nature, life, death, the universe and other philosophical issues that related to the meaning of life and “being” (Samovar & Porter, 2003); while some psychologists and sociologists perceive worldview in an East-West dichotomy. For example, Gilgen and Cho (1979) compared the East-West worldview in several proportions as follows. In the East, human beings live in the realm of nature while spiritual-physical and mind-body are perceived as one. Since humans have to stay oneness with the nature, human should feel comfortable with it and try not to control it. Therefore, science and technology merely create an illusion of progress. As such, enlightenment is the way to remove differences and bring oneness with the universe. In contrast, for the West, humans are always distinct from nature, mind, body and soul. Hence, humans have to manipulate and control the nature to survive and should value the actions competitiveness in spirit. For them, science and technology are at utmost benefit which could provide a good life and there is not such belief on enlightenment.

Dodd’s (1987) grouping of worldview elements in comparing East and West shared some commonalities with the above proportions. Four out of nine groupings of worldview elements advocated by Dodd (1987) echo a similar comparison. First, Secular/Spiritual - Eastern spiritual culture emphasizes on intuition while secular Western culture believes in analysis and logical reasoning. Second, Humans/Nature - the East accentuates oneness and harmony between humans and nature while the West separate humans from nature. Third, Doing/Being - for the East, humans are

meant to live harmony, become oneness with nature, being rather than doing but for the West, humans are expected to control and do things for survival. Fourth, Fatalism/Control - to the Eastern fatalist, things may happen beyond one's control while the West views people as the masters of their own destiny.

Not only worldviews influence a society at a deep and profound level; Woelfel (1987) found that the Eastern and Western way of thinking or "models" of the world would eventually influence each region's perspective toward communication too. He divided the "models" into four segments; the earliest period, usually called the pre-Socratic period, consist a comingling Eastern and Western thought known as (1) the Common model, which tended to look for universal principles to explain the whole of nature; (2) the Aristotelian model; (3) the Cartesian model and (4) the Relativistic model. Till today, many communication scholars have been trained under the arts and philosophy of Aristotle's rhetoric while most of the current research (both theoretical and applied) are essentially constructed by the dualism of Cartesian philosophy (Woelfel, 1987; Ishii, 2006; Copleston, 1961). Hence, there has been an increasing voice of questioning about the applicability of an essentially Western model for Eastern, who being generally indifferent to non-Aristotelian and non-Cartesian philosophies (Ishii, 2006).

First, zooming into Aristotelian model, much discourse on Aristotelian has associated the domain of philosophy to logic, formal analysis of thought and action as well as categorization (Copleston, 1946). At the heart of Aristotelian logic, Aristotle enumerated ten categories to describe all the possible kinds of thing to be

either the subject or the predicate of a proposition such as substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action and affection. Meanwhile, Aristotle's categories of attribute are discrete classes to which an object belongs to or not.

Aristotle contended that one can acquire new knowledge only through the senses and experiences to sense the particular perception. Later, use reasoning powers to perceive and form knowledge and skill (Copleston, 1946). He also questioned the unity of human and non-human phenomena by arguing the distinction between the body and soul and replaced the attention to ethics, practical morality and political thought (Guthrie, 1975). Aristotelians and his empiricism which stress on the sensory experience as the source of knowledge forming developed a system of critical reasoning in order to differentiate right and wrong and maintain an unwavering commitment to organize and systematize the problems of philosophy. Placing Aristotle model of logical, analytical and categorical thinking in communication studies, it eroded Eastern spiritual culture on intuition and introspection as irrational and illogical. Discussion on the compatibility of the East in Aristotelian model and Western logical tradition based communication studies is calling for attention (Ishii, 2006; Merican, 2012).

Cartesian model refers to René Descartes's philosophical and scientific system of Cartesian dualism and rationalism. Descartes, one of the founders of mathematical style of investigation, accentuated that the mind stands apart from and operates independently of the body; where the material is separated completely from the

nonmaterial universe (Copleston, 1994). Descartes insisted that the material worlds could be comprehended by mathematical formulas which are entirely apart from the human mind. Knowledge could be acquired through the intellect alone while intellect could be used to acquire knowledge about everything there is to know (Adler & Pouwels, 2015). Descartes believed the reason alone is able to determine knowledge and this can be done independently of the senses since our senses sometimes deceive us and can be the cause of illusions and so, it is doubtful.

Proponents of rationalist philosophy also believed that humans are born with innate *a priori* ideas and knowledge can be derived through deductive reasoning (Jeong, 2006). Therefore, Descartes best known philosophical statement “*Cogito ergo sum*” (English: I think, therefore I am) became the fundamental element in Cartesian model. It means that a man can secure a foundation of knowledge based on his complete possession of reason and rationality as proof of the reality of his own mind with no ground of doubt (Jeong, 2006). In particular, Cartesian model stresses on a clear, unambiguous, certain and systematized comprehension of the world through the use of reasoning which comes from our very own knowledge of reality (Minimah, 2013).

Compared to Western philosophical tradition, as exemplified by Descartes, some Eastern philosophies provide alternatives to knowledge where the universe is seen as a harmonious organism, there is a corresponding lack of dualism in epistemological patterns (Woelfel, 1987). Meanwhile, instead of perceiving knowledge analytically, the East would rather knowing thing synthetically (Kim, 2003). The ultimate aims of

knowledge for the East are the unity of all by transcending the apparent contrasts and “see” the interconnectedness of all things rather than compartmentalized, fragmented and detached things from the fuller totality of reality as advocated by the West (Kim, 2003). Looking at the separation of human from nature, Cartesian philosophy of material-spirit dualism and mechanistic worldview which have been incorporated in today’s Western thought and Western-centric communication literature; it possess a sensible pathway of enquiry that allows Asian scholars exploring Eastern entities to understand the East perspective of communication.

Second, an absence of religion issues in current Eurocentric intercultural communication studies. Religion is a deep and pervasive determinant of worldviews which has substantial influence on formation and development of culture, belief, cognition and value (Emerson, 1996; Ishii, 2006; Helve, 1991). Religion shapes reasoning and provides meaning and importance for different social arrangements (Ishii, Klopff & Cooke, 2003). While the West classified philosophies such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism as religions; the East does not attempt to make a distinction between philosophy and religion (Merican, 2012). Philosophical-religious traditions have been permeated in Asian societies for hundreds of year and are one of the ideal commencements to discover the East fundamental communication behaviour (Yum, 1987). Not only would its substantial practices entail the significance of a communicative act; it also lends deep insights beyond the superficial view of human communication (Miike, 2004). Hence, inclusion of the East’s philosophical-religious traditions in communication studies is crucial and the

West's capsulation of religion is then in sharp contrast to the belief of the East (Ishii, 2003).

Eastern and Western religions may share similarity considerably, such as the presence of sacred writings, possession of authority figure, ritual embodiment, forming of speculation and constitution of ethic. Yet, they are fundamentally different from one another. Ishii (1990) characterized Eastern and Western worldview into East's polytheistic and West's monotheistic as illustrated in the following *Figure 2.1*.

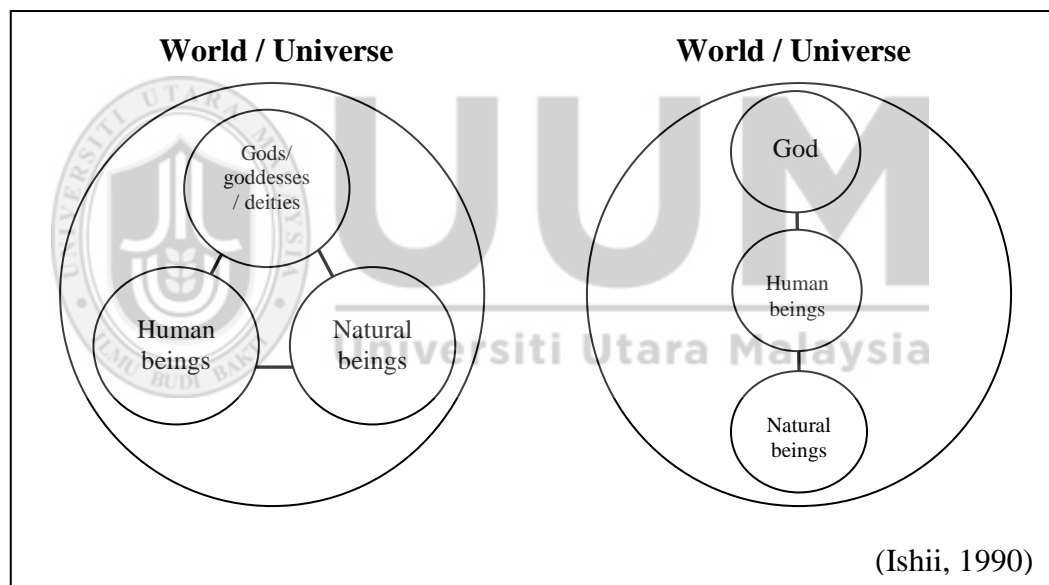


Figure 2.1. Contrastive worldview of East's polytheistic and West's monotheistic

In the model of East's polytheistic worldview, the gods/goddesses/deities, natural beings and human beings are all relative to one another. The three entities are locked in a triangulation relationship where their positions are not absolute or rigid but interchangeable. There is no hierarchy between them; they are relative yet flexibly connected within the universe circle (Ishii, 2003). On the other hand, the West is monotheistic; they believe in one God and for things belong to God and religion are

sacred. So, the existence of God is placed at the highest ranking above all else in the hierarchy; followed by human beings and natural beings at last. The three entities are not relatable to each other and their positions are absolute and unchangeable locked at a vertical ranking within the universe (Ishii, 2003).

The two distinct religion worldviews are clearly at odd to one another although worldviews collide as we communicate closer to different people in the world (Dodd, 1987). Religion issues must be taken into consideration in communication research for it consists of different level of ethic, belief and epistemology. Since non-West religion philosophy possess disparity from the dominant, philosophy in non-West is usually seen as not rational and being peripheral (Merican, 2012).

Third, ignorance and oversimplification of the fundamental cultural differences between the East and West in West-centric research. Every culture has its own specific traits, perspectives and thinking patterns, the differences between the East and West are fairly apparent. This can be examined from their ontological, axiological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of human communication as follows (Miike, 2004; Chen, 2011).

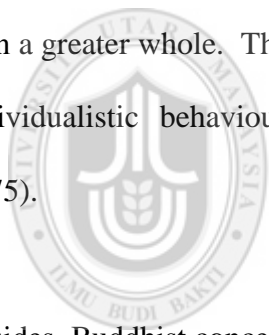
Ontologically, the East believe that everyone and everything are interrelated across time and space and thus, both object and subject or human and non-human are mutually interpenetrated in the great whole universe. The holistic view of Eastern encourages collectivism and unity in the endless process of social interaction. Whereas Western ontology traditionally has been dominated by the theme of

individualism and independence where all components in communication process are separated in a linear way while human beings are treated as an independent entity in the universe. Meanwhile, the East's sense of "self" tends to be rooted in the web of human relationships and relationship with non-human rather than the West's sense of ego in controlling the nature (Dissanayake, 1996). The atomistic view of Westerner has demurred interrelatedness and interdependence in a linear way of human communication (Chen, 2011). Furthermore, the East's theme of circularity emphasizes the "transcendence" in space and time also offers a sense of relatedness of the present to the past and future and a sense of interdependence of the life world to the whole universe (Miike, 2004) which have a very little commonality to the West.

The holistic view of the East is prevalent in Hinduism, Buddhism and Chinese philosophy. To examine from Hindu perspective, we shall first examine the teachings in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, the oldest religion Scripture which also regards as the oldest surviving text of humanity. *Vedas* focused on ritualistic traditions of edifying the gods and wisdom in revealing the depths of life in gaining worldly goals (Koller, 2012). While the *Upanishads* engaged in a radical rethinking of the nature of self and reality; it is more philosophical and knowledge-focused than the *Vedas*. However, for the most parts, personal experience of what is claimed is taken as sufficient evidence for the truth of the claim.

Brahman (supreme power) was recorded in the *Upanishads* as a search for the ultimate reality of external world. Hinduism is a family of religions with the main

philosophy centering on *Brahman* (supreme power), *Jeeva* (living being) and *Maya* (ignorance) (Mahadevan, 1975). The search for ultimate reality is eventually the search for the ultimate self, a matter of going deeper into the foundation of human existence (Koller, 2012). *Upanishdic* worldview sees soul as a living being part of the great soul of supreme power. The soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere (limitless) but whose centre is in some body (Mahadevan, 1975). The ultimate aim of an individual is to merge the soul in supreme power, thereby assisting the individuals overcome their ego. Only by separating the ego from an individual can an individual be selfless and care for other living beings. It shows a holistic view of everything is eventually interrelated and the sense of self or ego is less significant than a greater whole. This collectivism mindset encourages individual to exhibit less individualistic behaviour and portray more collectivistic conduct (Mahadevan, 1975).



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Besides, Buddhist concept of *yuan* (dependent origination) is also very much related to interpersonal life and human communication, particularly in conflict resolution and human relationship (Chang, 2002). It is variously translated as conditioning factor, secondary factor, secondary causation, referring to conditions created by a plurality of causes that necessarily co-originate phenomena within and across lifetime (Kalupahana, 1975); it clearly shows that all events exist in mutual and constant relations.

Particularly in the formation of interpersonal bond, concept of *yuan* functions in initiating, maintaining and terminating relationships in East Asian cultures. It has

been widely interpreted as a predetermined relationship with other things or humans that are far beyond one's control (Yau, 1994). For instance, in the formation of connection, Chang (2002) pointed out that, *yuan chi* is the mutual-condition for the appearance of relation as *chi* signifies the notion of beginning. Yang (1988) also referred the initial stage of relationship development as *you yuan*, which means having predestined relation, as *you* means having. Meanwhile, *yuan chi* is a sign or condition of initiating a relationship while *you yuan* signals the continual of the initial stage of relationship development. Such occurrence does not happen for a single concept of *yuan*; *yuan* only referred as a condition produced by the interplay between several beings such as the environment, the people, the individual's trait and personality, the *karma* of people involved (Marek, 1988). When these conditioning factors disintegrate, *yuan* is said to be end (*yuan jing*) or *yuan* is disappear (*yuan mie*) (Chang, 2002).

Hence, the relationship would be stopped from functioning or terminated as the condition has disallowed it for any progression. Thus, part of the development of interpersonal relationship is said to be relied on the condition provided by *yuan*; be it the commencement, the continual and the termination of relationship. This stands a contrast to Western paradigm which characterizes development of relationship in a continuous process by stages such as placing relationship growth in stages like contact, involvement, intimacy, deterioration, repair and dissolution (Devito, 2014).

While the West associates various types of factor in justifying the damaged relationship (such as dissatisfaction, uncertainty, dissimilarity, conflict); the concept

of *yuan* would attribute the deterioration in relationship to *wu yuan* (no predestined relation) and *wu chang* (impermanence) and *wu wo* (no self). This practice avoids self-blaming and indicates that nothing is fixed and everlasting; the universe is always in a process of changing through the interplay of all beings, conditioned by time and space, occurring and disappearing. Such Buddhist teachings materialize a holistic view of ontology in human communication which demands between-ness and interconnectedness of all.

Another example is the doctrine of *samsara* (wheel of life) which tied to the *Karma* theory in liberation in Hindu religion such as *moksha* and *nirvana*; it is the force that connects all the moments in life to each other and all things to one another in a continuing cycle (Koller, 2012). As in human communication, it indicates for an endless cycle with no real beginning and ending; it then correlates to relationality and circularity (Chuang & Chen, 2003). The relation to liberation places human aim to *moksha*, which mean “to release” or “to free”. In *Upanishads*, the highest self and true self, the *athman*, is beyond physical and mental realms. It is not separation but self-realization, in realizing one’s true identity with *brahman* (supreme power), the ultimate power of all realities. Such integral view of human existence in universe requires one to achieve first three human aims, *dharma* (moral duty), *artha* (wealth) and *kama* (enjoyment) before reaching the final aim of *moksha*.

In agreement with this conception of human nature, we can see the emphasis on spiritual nature in human life; relationality - which infers that interdependent and interrelated network make human beings a meaningful existence and circularity -

where there is co-existence of life and death, made up an integral view of all human existence cycle through *samsara*.

In a nutshell, it indicates that human communication becomes meaningful only in relation to other beings and such mutually dependent interrelation is beyond the temporal and spatial limitations that penetrate the boundaries of different worlds of existence - human beings, natural beings and supernatural beings (Miike, 2002; Ishii, 2001).

Axiologically, the theme of harmony plays a significant role in Eastern communicative life; it is used to regulate a never-ending communication process and featured as the ultimate goal of human communication (Chen, 2011). Achieving oneness with other human beings and nature is at the centre value to cherish (Jensen, 1992). Harmony is the cardinal value in Eastern philosophy such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Taoism (Ishii, Klopff & Cooke, 2003). For instance, in China, the ultimate goal is generally creating a harmonious society; in India, the ultimate good is forming harmonious relationship between individual and the course of nature (Oliver, 1971). While the West aims to resolve and overcome problem through confrontation using direct, expressive, dialectical, divisive and sermonic communication styles; the East intends to attain cooperation through sincerity and mutuality which dictates an indirect, subtle, adaptive, consensual and agreeable interactions (Chen, 2011). Although the West may gain and exercise control over human beings and nature for the materiality benefit of humanity, the traditional views of the East rejected the conquest of nature; but the interrelatedness between

humans and nature is stressed and humanity shall not separable from the environment (Miike, 2004). Such distinct axiology assumptions between the East and the West would definitely create discrepancy, and one must examine the appropriateness of existing Western-dominant studies for Eastern thinking.

Japanese concept of *hanashiai* mirrors a similar assumption to Eastern axiology. *Hanashiai* (mutual talk) is a form of communication rooted in the period between 1603 and 1868 in the history of Japan (Edo Period) and was developed in farming villages aimed to resolve individual differences to reach a group consensus (Nakazawa, 2000). Working together, communal concern, mutual understanding and cooperation are the prominent leading characteristics in *hanashiai*. *Hanashiai* literally means talking together, primarily face-to-face and verbal co-production; it also connotes conversation, discussion, consultation, accommodation, negotiation and resolution (Miike, 2010). Its features including mutuality exchange, mutual understanding, agreement and a particular type of social arrangement where the interactional goals are to stay harmonious and construct shared understanding and cooperative trust (Nakazawa, 2000). Hence, *hanashiai* places a premium on face-work and relational-work to achieve group's objective and develop group identity (Carbaugh, 2013).

Today, *Hanashiai* is still in everyday use in Japan, its common forms and functions can be seen from speaking in a sincere and informative way to resolve a conflict in a mutually satisfying way. The main difference compared to the West is its system of communication that aims to avoid direct confrontation between two parties but they

are required “to share a particular space and spend a certain amount of time, talking over things together” (Miike, 2010, p.204). In order for consensus to emerge, the skill of listening plays a significant role as harmonizer (Nakazawa, 2000).

Other than that, Chinese cardinal value of harmony which governs the Chinese way of life is also a key to understand Chinese communication (Chang, 2007). The concept of harmony is in Chinese cosmology, which views all elements in the universe as interdependent and one must co-exist peacefully in an equilibrium state to achieve harmonious relationship (Chang, 2001). Harmony is highly related to mutuality, interdependence and relationship-centered which in turn, correlates to collectivism as suggested by Hofstede (1980). Another core meaning embedded in Hinduism and Buddhism teachings that narrates value of harmony is called *Madhyamaka* (the middle way).

The centrepiece of *Madhyamaka* thought is “emptiness” (*shunyata*) which means that existence is empty of self-existence and permanence; everything is connected to everything else and is constantly changing. It is also named as the “middle way” because it is the midway between two extreme views of existence: (1) existence is permanent and (2) nothing really exists, all appearance of things is merely an illusion (Koller, 2012). In *Madhyamaka*, interdependence arises as emptiness in order to overcome the tendency of separation between two things as permanent entity; things exist as process, continuously arising and ceasing in dependence on each other to reach the middle path - emptiness (Garfield, 1995).

In the sense, the practice of *Madhyamaka* in human communication manifested in two features of East Asian communicative lives; they are: emotional control and avoidance of aggressive behaviour (Chen & Starosta, 2003). A more reserved communication style is desired for maintaining harmony in the process of interaction. Aggressiveness and confrontation violate the principles of the middle way and harmony. Hence, Chinese adopt selective communication according to the social group they are interacting with to practice *ke qi* (polite communication) and regulated by *li* (propriety, rules of conduct) which is also deeply rooted in the notion of harmonious relationship (Fang, 2014).

Epistemologically, the East believe that everyone and everything become meaningful only in relation to each other. Eastern's sense making heavily depends on the between-ness; concepts such as interconnectedness, interdependent and interrelated are the highest core in generating genuine knowledge. Since everything is perceivable only in relation to one another, there is no single thing or single individual in the universe can be evaluated without reference to the whole (Cheng, 1987); for that is particularly close to Chinese's holistic view of ontology. For this reason, there is no fixed and absolute way in generating understanding and there is also indefinite ways of interpretation; such non-dualistic reality of interrelationships in human communication develops a sense of reciprocity, mutual dependence, group-oriented and associative which are contradictory to Western view of independence, individual-oriented and achievement in the process of human communication (Chen, 2011). Eastern culture-bound indigenous concepts which echo the similar conceptions will be discussed below.

Bhartrihari is regarded as an influential principle in writing for communication philosophy especially the word (*Vak*) (Adhikary, 2008). Dissanayake's (1988) work on *Bhartrihari's Vakyapadiya* demonstrated consonance between thinking in *Vakyapadiya* and modern communication studies. Studying from communication perspectives, *Bhartrihari* views communication as a process of an inward search for meaning which leads by self-awareness, freedom and finally reaching true self and brings a person to *brahman* (supreme power). The emphasis of process-oriented is very different from the West, especially the model of Aristotelian's categorization. Buddhist's view of reality through ever-changing and dynamic nature of life and mind as well as cyclical nature of existence is akin to Hindu philosophy of processual too.

The interrelatedness and interconnectedness found in the nature of processual alike with the concept of *dharma* (moral duty) in exploring Hindu communication. Saral (1983) argued that *dharma* has a crucial place in Hindu life because communication in Hindu's concept of universe is based on *Virat Purusha* (cosmic Man). Its principle lies on a great whole where all beings are united in one another. The universe is 'a single body where each element lives for all and all live for one.' (Saral, 1983, p.54). Therefore, it emphasizes on reciprocity and mutuality but de-emphasizes competition and manipulation as the latter are unnecessary.

From Japanese perspectives, *amae* has ever since become one of the key words in understanding Japanese cultural values and communication behavior after Takeo Doi

(1973) introduced the concept of *amae* and its implication where all interpersonal communication among Japanese have the emotional undertone of *amae*. According to Doi (1956), *amae* can be translated as “to depend and presume upon another’s love” (p.92). It connotes to a distinct feeling of sweetness; although it is usually used to express a child’s attitude towards an adult, especially to the parents, it can also be applied in any types of interpersonal relationship between adults with some kind of longing for dependency or belonging.

Amae also documented in Japanese communication literature as nonverbal emphatic orientation, a fondness for unanimous agreement, ambiguity and hesitation of self-expression. This can be seen from Japanese tendency of having many short breaks in their conversations to feel out one another and assess the situation. For Japanese, it is important to reassure they are in a mutuality based upon *amae*. Hence, Japanese verbal communication is always accompanied by nonverbal communication because they are sensitive to the atmosphere pervading human relationship. They will try to soften the atmosphere or at least, they will not mess it up in order to reach unanimous agreement. For Japanese, attaining unanimous agreement is also an important social function because it means mutuality of all parties has been preserved and it is also a token of satisfaction of *amae*. To contradict or to be contradicted and having to say “no” are not favourable among Japanese since they dislike their opinions being divided at the first place. Therefore, Japanese fond for hesitation or ambiguities of expression for they fear of what they have in mind might disagreeable by other. In sum, the association of the above features of *amae* to

mutuality, group-oriented, “we” rather than “I” approach, and staying harmony rather than to confront, stands a clear contrast from the West.

Methodologically, the non-linear cyclical view of universe from the East has led its approach to a subjective, non-linear, ambiguous, ritual and accommodative pattern of communication. These approaches endorse mutually defining and depending relationship, also it constructs less rigid paths in reaching a mutually defined destination between all beings (Chen, 2011). On the other hand, modern and contemporary Eurocentric communication ethics have depended heavily upon the Ancient Greek and post-Enlightenment philosophy of reasoning and Cartesian dichotomous model which have separated ethics from religion (Ishii, 2008). Hence, approaches based on objective, linear, clear, analytical and manipulative characteristics will be given priority in supporting the West’s logical reasoning and dualism view of philosophy. All the above sharp contradictories give a prominent role to distinguish the East as holistic, dynamic and spiritual from the West as dualistic, materialistic and lifeless.

In conclusion, the intuitive style of communication influenced by Buddhism, non-linear approach of thinking in Hinduism’s cyclical worldview and Confucian’s preoccupation of conventional knowledge have rejected Western’s linear way of thinking pattern. Both abstraction and conceptualization are denied in the East methodological assumption which prefers “to feel” than “to analyze” the process of human communication (Suzuki, 1960; Chen, 2011). All the above comparisons of paradigmatic assumptions between the East and West served to encourage and

motivate researchers from looking into unique aspects of communication in non-Western culture.

Next, the (mis)representation of Orient and Oriental is the fourth weakness found in current studies which has been dominated by the West. As discussed earlier, the main conundrum of intellectual imperialism is not merely of its empire and imperial power of domination, persuasion and influence over the non-West but it was the psychological problem where we are uncertain and puzzle in perceiving ourselves through the knowledge mostly dished up by the West. How precise can the borrowed material able to portray who we are? How genuine our reality can be represented using the West paradigm? Glorifying the West as the only source of knowledge thereby subjugate our very existence and make us a society of narrative lost (Merican, 2005; 2005a). At this point, little did we know, Orient was almost a European invention; Oriental is man-made (Said, 2003).

In his book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978, 2003) defined Orientalism as a term of the Orient based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience throughout the colonization and civilization period. The Orient is by no means part of the European material civilization and culture; most of the general meanings of Orientalism can be found in the academic tradition where scholars and researchers write and research Orientalism academically through its original doctrines and theses. Soon after, the scope of study expanded to studying Orientalism as a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinctions made between "the Orient" and "the Occident". Later, starting roughly in the late 18th century,

Orientalism was being discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution by making statement about “the Orient”, describing it, teaching it, settling it and ruling over it. Orientalism is then a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over “the Orient”. To investigate if “the Orient” is man-made, we must first understand the term *discourse*. *Discourse* is about the production of knowledge through language and is a way of representing a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. All aspects and meanings in social practices would be written and referred to understand the representation of “the Orient” (Merican, 2005).

The West and East tend to be a historical construct rather than geographical construct. History opens door for us to see how a society is developed, industrialized, urbanized, secularized and modernized in variety aspects such as politically, economically, socially and culturally (Hall, 1996). However, a large portion of our early history was close to colonization, civilization and followed by post-colonization; there was a close correlation between the Western colonial powers and the ex-colonies for every piece of these histories. Most of the interrelations lingered around colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and globalization; regardless which stages we are from, non-Western mainly understand ourselves under the West influence. In addition, urged by the pressure of imbalanced knowledge production, at the end, it would be the West logic and thought that dominate and inform us about ourselves. Said (2003) even claimed that the Orient has helped to define the West from its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience. Stuart Hall identified four ways of classifying the West and non-West in the discourse of the “West and the Rest” (Merican, 2005).

Firstly, there is a particular structure of thought and knowledge tied closely to distinguish 'Western' and 'non-Western'. Secondly, a set of representations represented by verbal and visual language serves as a tool to characterize the West and non-West. For instance, the West generally correlates to image or representation such as urban, developed, scientific and industrialized while the East commonly associates to characteristics such as rural, underdeveloped, traditional and agriculture. Thirdly, we use the West's standard or model of comparison to compare different status of society. It is used to identify the extent of differences between East and West; whether the East is "close to", "far away from" or "catching up with" the West. Fourth, the West serves as a vehicle of ideology where the criteria of evaluation against other societies are provided. It stipulates information and knowledge about a subject and attitude towards certain positive and negative feelings cluster. For instance, West would be clustered around with criterion such as developed, good and desirable while East is underdeveloped, bad and undesirable

Social science is always an outcome of history; it is vital to understand that the history, environment, formation of society would shape human knowledge and inform us on our nationalism and identity (Merican, 2004). Such historical forces will then constructed the media as an intellectual inquiry and will also constructed non-Western identity through construction of colonial knowledge via media. With the presence of power and control, it created imagined communities as introduced by Benedict Anderson (2006) where he believed that a nation is a community, it is socially constructed and imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of

the group. However, the 'imagined' community does not indicate that the nation is false, unreal or to be distinguished from 'true' community (Hague, 2004). It is imagined because the nation is constructed from popular processes shaped by political and cultural institution (Anderson, 2006). For Orient and Oriental, we can be an imagined community since the understanding of the Orient is mainly derived from the knowledge which is borrowed from and internalized by the West. At the end, the way of the East understand and construct identity of themselves is merely an extension of the colonial; Oriental man is a product of European culture of Orient and the Orient was Orientalized (Merican, 2005; Said, 2003).

Merican (2012) suggested that the East's idea of themselves has followed a McLuhanian mode of knowledge construction where our idea of ourselves and our existence is an extension of the colonial worldviews. Based on Marshall McLuhan writing on space and environment in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964), he was very much interested in media and has been labeled as a technological determinist who was a proponent in causal connections between technology (media) and societal development. Technology determinism is a belief in which a person thinks that technology drives and determines the development of a society's structure and cultural values. The causal relationship in technological determinism not only assumes a one-to-one connection between the causal agents and its effects; it also conceives a simple, unilinear model of causality between the mutually exclusive causes and effects under a neatly arranged structured order (Merican, 2005). This has oversimplified the complexity between culture, technology, media and communication. Although technology and science are

everywhere, there is no determinism anywhere (Merican, 2005). In addition, McLuhan's ignorance of political role in media has raised demurral for his silence on political-economy relations particularly in post-colonial studies (Miller, 1971). All the above mentioned issues have called for a re-examination of McLuhan's writing in term of the methodology pluralism, multi-perspective theories and dialectical perspective in communication research (Grosswiler, 1996).

Although McLuhan highly valued the existence of media and treated it as a crucial determinant of the social fabric (Carey, 1967), he suggested a society must understand media world in order to change the media by increased human freedom and human autonomy (McLuhan, 1964). Some scholars were then documented a shift from a positivist, behavioural science perspective to critical and cultural perspectives with a diversity of theoretical and methodological assumptions (Monahan & Collins-Jarvis, 1993). To McLuhan, the "grammar" of a medium is able to alter one's social reality through a structured human sensory response to it (Angus, 1993). Furthermore, McLuhan also proposed that all media, from printed to electronic media, work on us over completely, be it in personal, political, economic, aesthetic, moral and ethical level; nothing on us is untouched. It is therefore imperative to have knowledge of the way media work as environment to understand social and cultural change. Since then, he positioned media (or the technology) as an environment contributes to the writing of history and context of the growth of West civilization (Carey, 1967); affects the mind and society (Czitrom, 1982); shapes human consciousness, social values and power structures and brings in new sets of

cognitive belief system (Kroker, 1984); these have led to a new form of cultural interpretation using McLuhan's defined media (or technology).

In short, all media, from phonetic alphabet to computer, are the extension of man; it is an extension of bodily senses and bodily parts into the environment which causes deep and lasting changes in the man and environment; it is not in isolation but in relation to the whole psychic and social complex (McLuhan, 1964). There is media in all things and all things are media; while we use the media as our environment, we are at the same time used by them unconsciously (Strate, 1998). McLuhan noticed that for any changes rising from new media as environmental is invisible to people because water must be invisible to fish; the central nervous system would appear to anesthetize it from conscious awareness of what's happening to it (McLuhan, 1969). In other words, people are completely immersed within the invisible media environment and unaware of the psychic and social effects of the media. This is particularly true as it is hard to separate human from the environment since the environment is sometime "within" us (medical technology), "beside" us (telephone, television), "outside" from us (satellite) or even, sometime we inhabit it (an open concept of office workstation) or it inhabits us (a pacemaker); environment and human are said to be mutually related and are rarely unidirectional (Menser & Aronowitz, 1995). Hence, not only we understand ourselves through the West theoretical and conceptual framework, most of the post-colonial studies are also conducted in many ways a reaction and extension to the colonial.

In such context of East-West relations, it was “the gaze of the West” that led Western hegemony penetrated into various spheres of the East life. The “gaze” originated from the concept of spatial arrangement by Jeremy Bentham and it is about ‘the act of seeing’ which has instilled social pressure, usually from the powerful to the powerless. As such, the West is said to gaze upon the East from all aspects of life and the application of colonial method of knowledge construction also has made the East an Orient, an object of the otherness, either benignly or otherwise (Nair-Venugopal, 2012).

Placing the West (Occidental) and East (Oriental) in Michel Foucault’s notion of discourse, we may find a representation of the two in their knowledge production and interpretation. The East and West fit together in a discourse because they are relevant to one another in certain extent while no one is imaginative. From Foucault’s discourse of cultural analysis, Edward Said explained how Orientalism is controlled and circulated through a distribution of knowledge formation from the West which aims to control, manipulate and even incorporate. It is also apparent that communication acts are so diffuse in Western society that any human communication activities will be influenced by it and thus, we would find the West holds a position which seems to be more superior than us, the East. Such discourse permits us to “...*understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, military ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.*” (Said, 2003, p.3). It also depicts how European culture

gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient and how did Orient and Oriental were Orientalized, an invention from the West.

Additionally, Foucault's power relation also materializes in the discourse of "the West and the Rest". Foucault's work focused on the concept and nature of power in society and its relation to knowledge/truth; he believed that knowledge is always a form of power (Barker, 1998) and hence, he referred the relation as power/knowledge. The Panopticon was a metaphor that allowed Foucault to explore the relationship between the systems of social control and power-knowledge concept. According to him, power and knowledge come from observing others and such surveillance would result an acceptance of regulations and docility (Foucault, 1977). Despite power and knowledge are known as different entities, both are integrated with one and other while each incites the production of the other (Foucault, 1972). Therefore, Foucault's principles propose that power cannot be exercised without knowledge and knowledge cannot be engendered without the presence of power too (Foucault, 1980).

Foucault (1980) described power a coextensive with social body; which is multiple in forms and interwoven with many kinds of human relations. Power relation is served because of its capability being utilized in a wide range of strategies and so, power is everywhere, not only because it is all-embracing, it comes from everywhere too. However, power only exists in circulation as it produces effects in inducing the formation of particular knowledge that potentially constitute a range of possible responses. Everyone and every single entity occupy various types of power in the

multiple positions of power/knowledge grid. From the discourse of “the West and the Rest”, the knowledge (political, economic, philosophical, cultural and social) construction flows from the West to the East is one of the forms of power exercise in knowledge. The flow is not necessary a one-way flowing from the more powerful to the less powerful uniformly; not obligated to evaluate if the knowledge is true or false, right or wrong but the significance lies on the effect or impact between the two entities (Foucault, 1980).

The essence of mobility and circularity in Foucault’s power relations open up possibility of changes for any types of knowledge formation; it doesn’t mean that the newly formed power/knowledge would put the less powerful or the affected one being trapped or condemned. It is because the awareness and alternation of the circumstance is always present. Power/knowledge always exists and there is no “final” solution but continuing struggles to unsettle the gaze (Foucault, 1980). In a sense, the domination of Eurocentrism in the current literature is an outcome of the power/knowledge derived from the earlier white man’s burden, intellectual imperialism, captive mind and the prevalent Western hegemonic social science modes and methods over the East context in particular. However, de-Westernize is possible with the presence of consciousness among the non-Western scholars in pinpointing the heart of the problem, proposing alternative models and charting possible future direction, to establish more intellectual dialogue and foster recognition for Eastern philosophy and perspective.

Of all, Edward Said's work on *Orientalism* (1979) is one of the most prominent effort in de-Westernize the existing Eurocentric narratives of the praxis of East found in most of the social science literature. Orientalism advocates a need to re-look the prevalence of Western sociological, academic and intellectual hegemony by refashion the intellectual traditions today and offset existing Western intellectual bias through revival of non-West philosophy and sociological themes and theories (Alatas, 2006). The unjust intellectual stance of Western scholastic landscape has been discussed earlier on post-colonial discourse, so did the weaknesses and limitations of the contemporary Western-centric communication research. Orient and Oriental are said to be a West invention, they are man-made and hence, possess little relevancy and disconnectedness to indigenous non-West regions and societies. Making sense of ourselves through borrowed material based on the West interpretation is analogous to Marshall McLuhan's idea of - media is the extension of man - where Orient and Oriental is the extension of the colonial (the West) world view. It fails to generate a genuine reality; it was merely an imagined community of the East by the West through the gaze of the West and Foucault's power/knowledge relation. Of this, there is a renewed urgency calling for re-examination of current Western-centric studies and re-position the East epistemology and ontology view in communication studies for the presence of marked contrast between East and West philosophy.

2.4 Cultural Approach in Communication

Referring to the above differences found in the East and West paradigmatic assumptions, it positions the role of culture as an influential element in constructing

different approaches in communication process. Culture is an active process of communication which relating to human and social development (Dua & Manonmani, 1997); culture breathes through communication process. According to Chen and Starosta (1998), communication serves for not only a delivery of message but a carrier of culture; what, where, and how we should talk is regulated by culture. Thus, culture conditions our thinking and also manifested in our communication patterns. Since communication is fundamentally a social process, Yum (1988) stated that communication pattern will be influenced by the philosophical foundations and value systems of the society.

In studying space from non-Western perspectives, the most vital philosophical view is the Eastern axiology of harmony that marks a sharp contrast to the Western axiology of control (Miike, 2004). Derived from this axiology assumption, both cultures show dissimilar attitudes towards nature and human being. It indicates a 'doing' orientation of Westerners accounts for a need to command and control over the nature while Chinese people's 'being' orientation explains why Chinese are always aiming to achieve spiritual harmonious state with the nature, human, and the universe. Chinese are then encouraged to live harmoniously with the nature and the physical world rather than attempting to control these forces as what Westerners believe in (Miike, 2002).

In face of the different communication foundation in the East and the West, it is necessary to first understand the impact of Chinese cultural value on Chinese interpersonal communication approach. As mentioned earlier, if one has to examine

the differences between East and West communication pattern, harmony in social context would be the crucial value to be given emphasis (Yum, 1988). Harmony is recognized as one of the cardinal values of Chinese cultures that govern the Chinese way of life and thus it is the key to understand Chinese communication (Chang, 2007). The concept of harmony is in Chinese cosmology, which views all elements in the universe as interdependent with each other and one must co-exist peacefully in an equilibrium state to achieve harmonious relationship (Chang, 2001). Harmony is highly related Eastern axiology view of mutuality, interdependent and relationship-centered which in turn, correlates to collectivism as suggested by Hofstede (1980) and Malaysian Chinese cluster of relationship oriented which found in Soontiens (2007) study on Chinese youth in East Asian.

In Chen's (2001) study on Chinese communication theory, he stated the human communication in Chinese approach differs from Western approach in at least three ways. First, harmony remains as the ultimate goal for communication rather than the means of human communication. Second, Chinese view human communication process as never absolutely completed, as communicators continuously adapt and reposition themselves to cooperate and collaborate, while Western scholars treat it as a process in which communicators direct the interaction in their own favour for specific purposes. Third, Chinese approach includes a sense of duty for cooperation between communicators and provoke a sincere display of whole-hearted concern between each other during the communication process.

The above three Chinese approaches are cognate with Miike's (2012b) propositions on human communication which is based on the five elements of non-Western worldview: circularity, harmony, other-directedness, reciprocity and relationality. The first proposition is that communication is a process in which people remind themselves of the interdependence and interrelatedness of the universe. It echoes the themes of relationality and circularity where everything becomes meaningful only when they are in relation to another. The second proposition is that communication is a process in which people reduce their selfishness and egocentrism. It is again in consonance with relationality and circularity in interpersonal communication. This viewpoint shows a contrast with Western presumption that communication is a process to enhance self-esteem and protect self-interest (Miike, 2008).

The third and fourth propositions view communication is a process where people feel the joy and suffer of all sentient beings and, people receive and return their debts to all sentient beings. These two perspectives highlight the theme of other-directedness where people need to have emotional sensitivity to maintain humanity in communication practices and also ought to feel obligated to remember and repay debt of gratitude as part of the communication conduct. Last but not least, communication is a process which people moralize and harmonize the universe without uniformity. From the perspective of achieving harmony, intercultural communication is a means of integrating differences without creating sameness. Harmony recognizes diversity and integration and thus, harmonization is beyond a unity of sameness but differences. Without difference, harmony is impossible (Tu, 2006).

Based on some notable comparative studies, Lee (2011) also relates the major value differences between the West and the Chinese in four ways. First, Chinese value harmony more than competition and as a result, Chinese tend to be less aggressive and more conservative working for collective decision and actions. Second, Chinese are generally less individualistic and more hesitant in the pursuit of self-interest for them value conforming in order to maintain harmony. Third, the pursuit of harmony aimed to contribute to a stable social hierarchy of social relationships. Fourth, the value of hierarchical relationship contributes to the value of paying respect to the authority. In a nutshell, Chinese's pursuit of harmony distinguishes us from the West's pursuit of individual happiness in many of our life and communicative practices.

While many take harmony as one of the core concepts in Chinese communication which leads to greater cooperation, less confrontation, more other-oriented communication behaviour and more collectivism, however, there exist two major limitations as stated by Chang (2001) and Chang and Holt (1991). First, current literature has ignored the superficial level of harmony. Second, many studies treated social harmony as given and overarching in Chinese cultural life. Chang (2001) suggested there is more than one way to recognize the idea of social harmony. For example, while we are constantly relating harmony to less confrontation behavior, conflicts are still common in Chinese family or even in larger social units (Gabrenya & Hwang, 1996). When the communication rules are violated, conflict in the Chinese society can be even more violent and fierce (Chen, 1998). Besides this, as

examined in Chinese history, Chinese have been known as skillful in using clever language involving irony or metaphor to criticize other (even the emperor) for self-protection from punishment and death (Chang, 2001).

To explain the inconsistency between external traits and its internal emotional foundation in Chinese culture, an underlying assumption on how social harmony may be conducted only at a surface level has been made (Chang, 2001; Chang & Holt, 1991). Despite the value of harmony strongly affects Chinese behaviors and desire to establish a conflict-free interaction, it will be irrational to denote Chinese society as perfectly peaceful with the absence of conflict. When dealing with one another, maintaining harmonious relationship and adopting less-confrontation interaction style would be the preferable communication patterns. Respecting the face needs of others is also as important as using indirect mode of communication during negotiation (Ting-Toomey, 1988). Still, harmony is the core value in Chinese culture. However, considering with other aspect of norms such as *guanxi* (interrelationship), *mianzi* (face), seniority and authority; some may exercise harmony in a superficial level for other purposes. For instance, as discussed by Chang (2001):

The need for face wants is universal, thus giving rise to ubiquitous politeness strategies which serve to avoid face threatening acts. The goals of protecting mutual face wants and not imposing on others shape the form and content of messages. Hence, even without the well-articulated concept of Chinese 'social harmony', it is unlikely that people would customarily issue aggressive or imposing messages to others without certain redress, since protecting the face of participants in social interaction appears to be a tacit universal concern applicable to various encounters (Chang, 2001, p.173)

Hence, Chang (2001) explored how Chinese conduct “social harmony” as performance to lead a greater cooperation in a surface level to communicate competition and dissatisfaction. Social harmony highly values the impact of social dynamics on the choice of communication pattern. Data from Chang’s (2001) ethnographic interview showed that in Chinese interaction, social harmony is not given in nature but both communicator would assume its existence and thus, customize their communication approach and verbal message to maintain a harmonious state. One of the practices is Chinese will employ selective communication to whom they interact with. It moulds the Chinese interpersonal relationships to be more particularistic than universalistic (Chang, 2001). Chinese regulate relationships and communicate according to the level of intimacy, the power and status of the person involved in particular context to achieve state of harmonious. Chinese seldom apply a same social rule and communication guideline to everyone. On the other hand, instead of being particularistic, North Americans treat each person with general and objective rules. For Americans, applying different rules to different people is a violation of equality. Below is a common situation:

“It is quite common in America for people to say "Hi" or "Good morning" to anybody they encounter during their morning walk, or to strike up a conversation with another person waiting in line. If you said "Hello" or "Good morning" to a stranger in Korea, you would be looked upon as a rather odd person., The East Asian approach suggests that it is most humanitarian to consider the particular context and the persons involved in understanding the action and behaviour rather than evaluate them according to generalized rules which to a certain extent are impersonal.” (Yum, 1988, p.81).

Therefore, to say Chinese emphasis on social relationship as opposed to North American emphasis on individualism wouldn't be a surprise in intercultural studies. In the pursuit of material success, Chinese are very committed to maintaining good social relationships (Sendut et al., 1990). According to Yum (1988):

"If one has to select the main difference between East Asian and North American perspectives on communication, it would be the East Asian emphasis on social relationships as opposed to the North American emphasis on individualism." (p.78).

For a long time, the prominence of relationships was regarded as the trademark of the Chinese communication tradition, which stresses on collective values (Shepherd, 1992). Of particular interest, Chinese's concept of *guanxi* epitomizes this traditionally collective value. *Guanxi* refers to the interrelationship between two parties. Chang and Holt (1991) identified that *guanxi* can be built through relative relationship, previous association and intermediaries and by creating chances of interaction. They also found that *guanxi* is not just a relation, it is an instrument; people in Chinese society always employ *guanxi* as a social resource to help solve conflict, get more clients, help one's career and make life easier.

To Chinese, maintaining inter-relations is treated as a way to avoid unnecessary conflicts and to produce functions of persuasion and harmony in Chinese society (Chang & Holt, 1991; Chung, 1991, Leung, 1988). The distinction between in-group and out-group members serves as the fundamental rationale for *guanxi* and thus, Chinese develop a clear distinction between strangers and friends in their social network (Chen, 2001). Meanwhile, knowing how to build a good *guanxi* is needed to have supportive interaction and harmonious relationship in Chinese communication.

There are several ways to maintain a good relation with Chinese, such as keeping frequent contacts, developing mutual understanding, giving gifts or favours, and establishing personal trust and mutual interests with one's counterparts (Shenkar & Ronen, 1987).

Based on the characteristic of selective communication and social relationship in Chinese communication approach, we see the main function of communication under Chinese value is to initiate, develop, maintain, and promote relationships between two or more people. That is why it is important to initiate a small talk before making a business deal which contributes in relationship-building. Since each communicator is constantly engaging in an ongoing process to sustain the flowing of relationships state, communication is perceived as an infinite interpretive process (Chen, 1987), which cannot be compartmentalized into sender, message, channel, and receiver. This is highly dissimilar with Westerners perceived communication where for North American, the main function of communication is for task accomplishment which associated with the value such as fulfilling social obligation (Zheng & Cui, 2008; Shi & Wang, 2011). In general, Westerners will develop a formal relationship for a period of time to achieve the purpose of communication. Tangible outcomes and objectives are more favourable for them, such as defeated the counterpart, gained a business deal and outplayed in a competition. From the Westerner point of view, the outcome of the communication outranks the process of communication. Hence, Chinese is said to be process-orientated while Western is outcome-orientated particularly in communication context (Yum, 1988).

Besides Chinese interpersonal communication, Yan and Hafsi (2007) used the most widely read and influential Chinese historical novel, *Three Kingdoms*, to decode Chinese core values and behavioural norms to understand Chinese business behaviour. First, they identified a list of principal characters. Secondly, the identified and evaluated qualities and weaknesses as revealed by their behaviour and personality traits as suggested by the author. Findings indicated that there are four most appreciated core values from the Chinese historical perspective: loyalty, honesty and trust, ambition and harmony-seeking. From the *Three Kingdoms*, the researchers found that leaders were always ready to compromise to maintain harmony and power balance as well as a mean to “subdue the enemy without fighting” (pg.10). Thus, within the Chinese clan, harmony is extremely momentous. Another study on Chinese managerial values done by Selvarajah and Meyer (2008) found a strong reflection of harmony values in Chinese managers’ perception of “leadership excellence” too. They surveyed 671 Chinese managers in North China, and the findings indicated that managers who emphasize respect, inclusiveness, and long-term orientation are considered as excellent leaders.

With the renaissance of Chinese thinking in academic literature in recent years, harmony is being regarded as the foundation and an ideal status in Chinese Confucian philosophy (Xi, Cao & Xiangli, 2010) and is gaining more attention from scholars in the field of management around the world. Scholars are aiming to offer a new perspective of Chinese holistic philosophy to fit into today modern management science. Harmony is undoubtedly the quintessential idea of Confucianism, and it has been constantly examined and analyzed in management studies such as conflict

management, negotiation, business behavior, interpersonal and organizational communication. However, most of the existing research had misunderstood the value of harmony as “a final status for the sake of winning *Mianzi* and avoiding conflict” (Li, 2009, p.40). Such uniformity of conception had oversimplified the lofty virtue of harmony and downplayed its possible contribution and implication on management science.

To rectify the misinterpretation of harmony, scholars had refined the conception of harmony in various ways. Xi (1989, 2009) introduced a theoretical framework of *He-Xie* Management Theory (HXMT), which fully combines the harmonious thought of Chinese traditional culture together with the latest development of management studies. HXMT provides a new understanding on the organization management with Chinese attributes which aims to resolve uncertainty and complexity in ambiguous management issues. It offers systematic mechanism and methodology for management integration in coping with problem in management practice (Cao, Zhang & Xi, 2011). In HXMT, it denies the conception of ‘harmony’ as merely the ideal final status but it should embrace the co-existence of diversity and change in order to achieve strategic alignment between organizational strategy and individual behavior by integrating traditional Chinese philosophical value and contemporary management knowledge and practice. The final target of management is to reach the achievement of order for the organization as a whole, rather than an independent entity.

Furthermore, Erchun (2010) discussed the building and communication of China's national image based on the refinement value of harmony which known as harmonious and integrated (*He-He*) culture. Both words, harmonious and integrated, valued relationship and recognize the interdependency and co-exist between heaven and human, the other and oneself. The combination of *He-He* emphasizes the importance of integration and unity of different things into a new composition where each part is mutually dependent to one another. Hence, instead of denying or precluding contradiction, *He-He* acknowledge the differences because its underlying assumption is that if something has differences and diversity, it can produce another something and develop further (Erchun, 2010). With this, harmony in *He-He* works as the treatments of conflict in social and interpersonal relations while integration in *He-He* plays its role as conformity and accordance.

Last but not least, harmony is probably the most cherished ideal in Chinese culture and is a universal objective for management. It is the core value that nourishes and flourishes human society (Legge, 1955). It served as a guideline to initiate the examination of underlying non-Western philosophy or value in communication pattern among the participants.

2.5 Space, Place and Time

In his book, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Yi-Fu Tuan intensively discussed two components of the environment - space and place - based on a single perspective called experience. Space and place are two basic components of human beings and in the lived world. While we live in space, there is no place like

home. Place offers stability and security and is centers of felts value where our biological needs are satisfied. While space provides freedom and openness, it is also marked off and defended against intruders; we usually attached to one and long for another. Space is also a common symbol of freedom particularly in Western world; it means open, it suggests future and it invites action. However, it has a negative connotation because to be open and free is to be exposed and vulnerable. It lacks of fixed pattern of human meaning to which the meaning may be imposed in an open space. Compared to space, place is an enclosed and humanized space serves as a calm center for established human meaning and values. Hence, space is more abstract than place where place is a type of object which defining space and giving space a geometric personality; both space and place are required in defining each other. When architects talk about spatial qualities of place, locational (place) qualities is essential when they speak of space. Therefore, the conception of 'building' is usually known as a representation of place.

Although building is another connotation to space and place, building itself is not a representation; buildings are some sort of material objects which is enclosed and organized. However, it is very common we associate buildings to certain representations such as efficient landscape office, attractive cellular office or even a dead office. Buildings become representative on the basis of texts - the textual representations outlined by architects and designers as descriptions for prior reality (Markus & Cameron, 2002). Since our experience and understanding of buildings are inevitably mediated by language and/or text; architects usually use linguistic choice (texts) to construct reality while at the same time; their choices of decision for

the building are conditioned by the texts. The construction of reality in texts very often materializes in the way a building organizes its space and affects the building users' experience and spatial use.

Markus and Cameron (2002) in their book, *The Words between the Spaces: Buildings and Language*, described three themes to which textual of the buildings would suggest and represent. First, one of the functions of language and text is to enable labelling, dividing and organizing to differentiate and classify various types of building. Classification helps to categorize and subcategorize aspects of space and reality while examining the labels of the buildings alerts us on its spatial division, spatial characteristics, spatial potential or any spatial, cultural or historical development to comprehend the built environment better. However, building is also a social construct that attaches with social relations and values which representations would vary according to different cultural habits, power relations, social relations and perceptions of the perceiver and user. While the social practice in the building, too, spelling out the roles and relationships of who does what, to whom, when, where and how. Meanwhile, planners for the building, such as owner, designer and architect, not only they have power to choose the textual representation; they are also required to maintain and enforce concordance between the texts and use of space. But still, conflicts between the intentions of the texts and actual human spatial usage always happen because of the individual preferences and cultural differences.

Second theme is power. Power is ubiquitous and enters into the design of the buildings in various ways; it is common to use architectural form to symbolize

power and status (Markus, 1994). Quite often, architect or designer will get instruction implicitly from texts such as proposal or briefs, which justifies the desired power relation which is necessity, natural and inevitable. The last and third theme refers to value. As a user or inhabitant for a particular environment; our evaluation and response to the buildings and built environment are important in making judgment for its performance. Value of the building can be evaluated from its aesthetic value, social value, functionality and moral judgment. Aesthetic characteristics of the buildings and whether the building serves its intended purposes well or badly would be at the heart of the evaluative discussion. Most of the time, aestheticism and consumerism remain dominant.

Moving on to space and time, Tuan (1977) correlated time and place in three approaches and they are: (1) time as motion or flow and place as a pause in the temporal current, (2) attachment to place as a function of time which means it takes time to know a place, and (3) place as time made visible or place as memorial to times past. Tuan (1977) explained that place is an organized world of meaning while the world is constantly changing within a process and thus place is essentially a static concept where any sense of place is relatively hard to be developed. There is movement involved in the space making the world continuously lively and accomplishing a complete process. Movement found in the space implying repetition in one direction or circular, it is never fixed. Illustration of movement in space merges well with time's common symbols of arrow, circular orbit or the swinging pendulum where the arrow represents directional time and the movement from side-to-side or top-down/bottom-up indicates the movement in space to a goal

or destination. The goal or destination is therefore a point in time and a point in space. Meanwhile, nothing is fixed and static; everything is constantly moving and progressing in a process. It also indicates that earthly places were all temporary but on its way to attain the ultimate goal. This is particular true and authentic in Eastern belief of impermanence.

Impermanence is one of the essential doctrines and marks of existence in Buddhism which asserts that all things and beings, whether material or mental, are of conditioned existence and compounded in a continuous change of state, subject to being and dissolve (Sunil, 2013). Hence, people are taught to accept their fundamentally oneness with nature rather than manipulate it. Human also advised not to hang on to what we have but live in the present as if it were a wayside station leading us to the ultimate destination. It therefore demonstrates the first approach of time and space - time as motion or flow and place as a pause in the temporal current.

Second approach proposed that it takes time to know a place. Knowing a place, be it subconsciously type of knowing or consciously immerse with it, it takes time. The core concern is “how long does it take to know a place?” Modern man is so mobile and has less time or even no time to establish any relationship and connection to a place. Their understanding, experience and appreciation of place could be superficial. The ordinary way to get to know the abstract and exterior about a place takes shorter time than the attempt to “feel” the place. The visual quality of a place is visible and easily observable while the “feel” of a place requires one’s experience with the place over a period of time; “...it is a unique blend of sights, sounds, and

smells, a unique harmony of natural and artificial rhythms such as time of sunrise and sunset, of work and play. The feel of a place is registered in one's muscles and bones." (Tuan, 1977, p.184). Spending time is necessary in knowing a place but attachment to a person or to a locality seldom acquired in passing. It may take ten years for a man to feel the place; it may also take him only a second to fall in love at first sight with a place as with a woman. In the sense, it is the quality and intensity of the experience matter the most, rather than the duration.

The third approach is the continual of the second approach where it suggested that years spent in a place may leave few memory traces that we can, we would and we wish to recall but it may not leave a significant impact in changing or altering our lives as an intense experience of place does, even of a short duration. Apparently, being rooted in a place gives a different kind of experience from having and cultivating a so called "sense of place". Growing up with a place is like moving along with the flow of time; being put in place is static and the time does not flow. This gives explanation for the very different aspect of place focused by the visitor who perceives place using his eyes to compose picture compared to native who has his immersion in the totality of the place. This is also why a native or local knows his country in a way that cannot be duplicated by a naturalized citizen who has grown up elsewhere. As such, studying space, place and time in the East requires Orientalism perspective for its significance and essentiality in understanding the East by the East, from the East and through the movement of space and flowing of time with the East.

Unfortunately, many overlooked human diversity and subjectivity in making sense of space and place in examining the ways people attach meaning to and organize space and place (Tuan, 1990). Culture indeed plays a role here as it is uniquely developed in human beings and possesses strong influences over human behaviour and their interpretation of environment (Tuan, 1977). Human behaviour needs to be understood in depth through the study of their perception, attitude, value and worldview, not merely based on what is mapped. Although space and time are interrelated, they should be studied in a fundamental way in the East and West since they are culturally diverse from one another. For the East, they valued oneness, mutuality, being and harmony in the cosmic and hence, they emphasizes a circular cosmic. In contrast, the West treasured dualism, independent, doing and manipulation which highlights a linear view of the world (Tuan, 1990).

Theoretically, the East perspectives show a desire to bring nature, man and man's world into a coherent system which stands a sharp contrast to the West dualistic rationalism, binary opposition of things and segmentation of God, human being and natural being. Yi-Fu Tuan (1990) in his book, *Topophilia: A study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, elaborated Chinese substances and cosmological schemata. He claimed that in different parts of the world people have recognized a few basic substances that underlie the multiplicity of phenomena and each of them is identified with a distinctive quality. For Chinese, five substances are known as the basic substances, they are: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Each of these substances would be associated to different kinds of seasonal cycle, direction, colour spectrum, animal, nature and personality traits respectively. For instance, wood

allied to spring, east, green and anger while earth related to center, balance, yellow and harmony; and water analogous to winter, north, black and fear. The association appears to be natural, appropriate and relevant to Chinese worldview; it reflects at least two beliefs commonly presented in the East perspective. First, the Chinese cosmological schemata extends its association coverage to all entities in the universe, not only it allies to living things, it also links to non-living things as an acceptance of achieving oneness among God, human being and natural being in a cyclical process. Second, the schemata stresses on elements such as balance, harmony, center to the “center” and cardinal point among the five basic substances - advocates characteristics of unity, balance and harmony uphold in the Chinese belief.

The above Chinese view of space is closely parallel to the differences of time orientation between East and West. Eastern portrays its time orientation as a placid, silent pool within which ripples come and go; it means time appears to be in a continual movement but is not really going anywhere within the universe (Kim, 2003). Although people may encounter rise and fall in their lives, such changes are in fact happened in a cyclical way and it is just a process of movement. The water ripples effect may be expanded but it would be back to still but would eventually being oneness with the water. This corresponds to Hall (1983) characterization of Asian culture of polychronic in time orientation. People in polychronic system seldom treat time as a tangible and discrete resource, not also a linear entity but highlight the completion of present transactions under the synchronization of human behaviour with the rhythms of nature in a circular movement.

On the other hand, symbol of arrow is typically used by the West to illustrate and represent movement of time from one distant place and past moving to another distant place and future. Thus, the past and history are envisaged as a mean of directing goals to be progressed gradually in a certain direction to achieve a self-claimed ideal state. The West time orientation is also known as part of monochronic system which inclines to scheduling, segmentation and standardization of time use driven by the synchronization of human behaviour with the rhythms of the clock or machine in a linear direction.

In consideration, there are unique underlying values and assumptions in the East and West time orientation. The ideas of mutuality, interdependence circularity and being oneness with all things in the universe have shaped a flexible and relative view of time among the East which provides meaningful revelation to the West accentuation of absoluteness and future focus time orientation (Li, 2008).

2.6 Theorizing Organization Space

Space and organization are inseparable; there is always a place as physical entity and a communicative lived space. Organization and communication are indivisible; there is always a socialization practice among the acting entity in a workplace. In short, space is an ever present element in the fundamental interaction and interdependence among humans (Field, 2000). Thus, a historical trip of organization literature would be able to elucidate the relation between space, communication and organization. The burgeoning research literature on organizational communication provides

potentially illuminating views of the function and influence of space on organization behaviour.

In the early part of the 20th century, there was a famous machine metaphor of organizing introduced by the classical organizational theorists (Miller, 2006). Classical theorists conceptualized organization as highly standardized and specialized; spatial resources were pre-existing 'natural' resources that provide a setting for human action (Cairns, McInnes & Roberts, 2003). There were at least three doctrines of the classical organizational theory that affected how space is perceived as a mere background physical setting. First, environment was mattered most for task instrumentality than for employees' work life quality. Second, individuals were seen as the "cogs" of the machine, where those cogs are standardized. Third, the complexity of person-environment relationship was simplified into highly rationalistic and mechanistic ways. Based on the three principles of the classical theories, space is then understood as a setting barely for task accomplishment.

Later, a complex interpretation of space is identified in the Hawthorne studies conducted by a team led by Elton Mayo (1924-1933). The Hawthorne studies were initially interested to examine the influence of spatial and material changes such as workplace lighting level, incentive plans, rest breaks and refreshments, on workers' productivity. After a series of investigations (experimental design, interviews, and observations), the findings of the study primarily revolved around the social and emotional needs of the workers.

The Hawthorne effect has contributed much on turning away the mechanistic views of classical organization theories to a human-relations approach. It highlights the importance of human needs and social interaction in organizational functioning where it demonstrated the role of physical environment as one of the major influential aspects that affect workers' working behaviour and attitudes (Maslow, 1943). In post-Hawthorne studies, there was a growing concern about the complexity of human needs, motivation and satisfaction in workplace. Therefore, physical working environment is then known not as an inert stage for human actions; it is alive with meaning and influence, as it carries different social values to different individuals (Carnevale, 1992). From there, researchers began to study physical environment using interpretative approach to explore how it is experienced by different users rather than investigate it as an environment per se (Hummel, 1983).

As there is a steady stream of empirical studies on the description of physical environment in organizational life, the Hawthorne studies have served as a springboard that moved physical environment as a setting for merely work purposes, to the possibility that it satisfies human needs and social interaction for organizational functioning. Meanwhile, the interpretation of space in organization has been shifted from a passive backdrop for work to an active tool for getting work done (Newsham, 1997). It focuses on physical-mentality, hardware-software and architectural-social aspects for organization community (Chan, Beckman & Lawrence, 2007). As argued by Clegg and Kornberger (2006), viewing workspace as physical and architectural dimension had ignored the capacity of space in delivering

social meaning and unable to account the social possesses experienced by the actors (Halford, 2004). Thus, there is a need to include the mentality and social factors into organization space studies to heighten awareness of how actors experience the spaces through cultural and sensory artefacts. Space, then, becomes re-described not as a dead thing, but alive in a process of creation and being in the social interaction (Watkins, 2005).

In the past 25 years, research on space had been widely studied in organization and environmental psychology studies. Recently, there has been a renewed interest of spatial dimension in social life and organization setting where scholars take space and place as a central analytical idea in their research (Cairns, 2002; Halford, 2004; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Elsbach & Pratt, 2008; Peltonen, 2011). Despite the fact that space has long been a concern in organizational studies, development of space-organization relationship remains vaguely and difficult to aggregate (Taylor & Spicer, 2007).

One of the major reasons contributes to the evasiveness of space in organizational literature is that space is defined in a number of different ways (Taylor & Spicer, 2007), thus weakening the concept. For instance, place, environment, territory, workspace and physical setting. All these variables may echo a same conception but it could be very diverse in its theoretical formation. With regards to the perplexities of the spatial conception, Nenonen et al. (2009) defined the variety vocabulary of space, place, environment and physical space or place to understand the requirements of knowledge work in physical, virtual and social work setting. They

defined space as the structure of the world in which objects and events occur; place is a space for functions and a stage for human activities, it can be observed and experienced; while environment can be identified as geographical, cultural and historical space for interaction between human, nature and society; and physical space or a physical place is a built environment made for desired purposes.

Furthermore, to clarify the controversy over the concepts of space and place, Olsson and Tuan, in a dialogue with Sheppard and Thrift (Merriman et al., 2012), elucidated space as one of the concepts that can hardly translated seamlessly across languages. Yi-Fu Tuan, a prominent geographer who went back to China after an absence of 64 years, asseverated the translation of English words of 'space' and 'place' to Chinese to be stilted and include meanings that are not closely accord with its denotation in Chinese. Scholars should thereof avoid the uniformity of scripting and understanding the concept of space in different language and cultural context.

Debate over the concept of space is calling for redefining 'space' for future conceptual development. To fill the need, Taylor and Spicer (2007) employed an 'umbrella construct', which refer a broad concepts used to encompass and account for a diverse set of phenomena (Hirsch & Levin, 1999) – to develop the term 'organization space' – which organizations can be understood and analyzed as spatially embedded at various levels. Here, the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre's (1991) triad model of conceived-perceived-lived space is the linchpin of the construction of organization space. Lefebvre viewed space as a product of social relations; it is a number of relations between objects, artefacts and living entities

(Dobers & Strannegård, 2004). Space is also known as relational, concerns the physical, social, cognitive and cultural aspects; it is produced through the interaction between human or between human and objects, while its production is bounded by sensory characteristics (Tuan, 1977).

Within the literature of organization space, Taylor and Spicer (2007) categorized the studies of space into three groupings: space as distance between two points; space as materialization of power relations; and space as experience. To illustrate an integrated framework for space in organization, the research discusses three forms of organization space as follows: space as physical dimension (conceive space), space as materialization of social possesses (perceived space), and space as lived experience (lived space).

Firstly, to view space as physical dimension is similar to Lefebvre's view of conceived space, it is the space constructed by "...scientists, planners, urbanists... and social engineers" (Lefebvre, 1991, p.38). This space comprises various signs and objectified representations used by actors (Crang, 2000). It is also the space that can be seen and communicated and is therefore easily accessed by researchers in describing spaces in organization and hence, becoming the dominant space in our society (Wapshott & Mallett, 2011). In organization setting, the foundation to the study of space as physical dimension is the recognition of distance. This suggests that space is the distance between two or more points that physically exists, and that existence can be readily measured (Abdul, Sulaiman, Arfan, Evawaynie & Norazuwa, 2010). In this conception, space can be examined as measurable distance

and proximity between physical objects (furniture, tool, machines), between architectural objects (doors, windows, partitions, walls), and between people. The data might be presented in drawing diagram or map, for instance, workplace design layout and workplace floor plan.

A key research theme for studies of space as physical dimension particularly examines the relationship between the physical structure, layout of buildings and interaction among the building users. Stryker (2006) conducted a field study to investigate the effect of the workplace physical design on face-to-face communication in two Research and Development (R&D) sites which have very different and contradict designs. One is an open workstation with an open stairway situated in the middle of a sky-lit atrium and connects each floor by open bridges. Another one is a closed office with rows of laboratories and offices in the centre which are surrounded by a loop corridor and its meeting rooms, break areas and toilets are scattered around the 2nd, 3rd, 7th and 8th floors. In his study, Stryker (2006) proposed four physical structure variables, namely type of workstation (open versus closed), workstation visibility (high versus low), layout efficiency (average distance between the target individual and his or her team members), and headcount density. The findings suggest that the relationship between physical structure and face-to-face communication is complex where different physical structure promote different dimension of collaboration opportunity to support different type of face-to-face communication (team or non-team). There were significant results indicating that open workstations and high headcount density were found to promote team communication; workstation visibility is a key variable for promoting both team and

non-team communication. However, face-to-face team communication will take place even as the distance between team members increases, primarily driven by high level of responsibility and high sociability.

To ascertain whether the physical proximity of collaborators remained as a strong predictor of the impact of their collaborated research, Lee, Brownstein, Mills and Kohane (2010) examined the life sciences research articles published by Harvard Investigators from 1993 to 2003, with at least two authors in collaboration. Lee and his colleagues carefully analyzed the relationship between physical distance between any two co-authors and its corresponding citations from 35,000 articles which involved 200,000 authors. The results of the study suggest that the role of physical proximity is critical in predicting the impact of scientific research even with the presence of advanced communications technologies. Although the causality between proximity and the impact of collaboration cannot be inferred from observational data, the researchers have provided two possible explanations for this phenomenon; first, physical proximity may lead a greater collaboration and hence, better quality research; second, researchers who are physically within a close circle of research association may have an internal strategic preference in maintaining high impact research.

To better understand the relationship between workplace spatial settings and occupant-perceived support for collaboration, Hua (2010) conducted a two year multiple-site field study in 27 office space from 11 organizations. On examination of the workstation density and openness of floor plan, the data demonstrated that

increased density negatively affects the occupant-perceived support for collaboration while a simple openness (open floor plan with high visibility and high density) does not positively associated with perceived-collaboration. Besides this, the research findings particularly explored the value of shared spaces in the workplace which has yet to be addressed widely in previous workplace behavioural research. Three shared spaces, namely meeting space, shared copier areas, and kitchens were examined. Findings suggest that the meeting space should be located close to workstation for higher perceived level of support for collaboration. A shorter workstation-to-meeting space distance creates more opportunities for occupants to have casual conversation for collaborative work. While the service hubs (shared copier and office equipment area) that provide opportunities for unscheduled encounters between co-workers are preferred to be placed at certain distance from the open workstation areas to lower the levels of perceived distraction. With these findings, distance is apparently a powerful tool to facilitate desired interaction and collaboration.

Workstation density, size, enclosure and inter-workstation distance are known as the mostly studied workplace physical characteristics. Of these, barriers and enclosures appear to be a prominent topic due to its salience and easy comparison among workers. Discussions have frequently concerned the impact of open office as compared to enclosed office settings. Findings on the benefits and effect of open plan office, however, have not been consistent. The mixed and inconsistent findings is plagued by a condition which Elsbach and Pratt (2008) have referred to as tensions – an opposition between or within the instrumental, symbolic and aesthetic functions of physical objects and arrangements. For instance, the perceived instrumental and

symbolic functions may be opposed when a high degree of enclosure lowers the degree of noise for work efficiency (instrumental) and helps to improve perceived status of superior (symbolic), but at the same time be perceived as barriers to differentiate identity as superior and subordinate (symbolic). This may reduce satisfaction for clerical workers (Zalesny & Farace, 1987). While tension within instrumentality can be seen when an open plan office fulfils the performance needs on promoting better information flow (Hundert & Greenfield, 1969), it failed to attain employees' desired privacy for confidential conversation with other employees (Carlopio & Gardner, 1992).

Although all of these tensions may be unavoidable, Elsbach and Pratt (2008) suggest that the situation can be improved by vigilantly analyzing the interaction between the multi-dimensional of physical environment which is inexorably entwined with other environments such as social, natural, and cultural environments. In addition, the actor-observer dynamics in the physical environment should be taken into consideration for it may strengthen or weaken the functional tensions. It is generally considered that different people would perceive and interpret objects and arrangements in a fundamental different ways (Elsbach, 2004). This is similar to what Gieryn (2000) indicated, as places are bounded with meaning and value where the interpretation of meaning or values can be easily altered across different people and different culture.

Edward Hall (1966), an anthropologist, also partially agreed with the universal way of space use; he noted that a person from different cultural background will

accommodate their spatial practice to an extent where they consider that is appropriate. His view not only refers to the personal space use but also larger unit space use - the building we inhabit. Back to Lefebvre's triad spatial model, the meanings that we attribute to space are inextricably bound up with our understanding of the world in which we live; it involves qualitative cultural values (Halford & Leonard, 2006; Tyler & Cohen, 2010; Wapshott & Mallett, 2011; Gottdiener, 1993). Lefebvre (1991) had questioned what make the interpretation of perceived-conceived-lived difficult to understand - "A culture, perhaps? Certainly – but the word has less content than it seems to have." (p.43). In Zhang's (2007) study on 'The Leisurely Office', he also expounded the vital role of Chinese culture in the forming of the double-natured bureaucratic power through his research on social production of space in a Chinese bureaucratic organization. Thus, cultural differences have had a tremendous effect in understanding the intersection of cognitive, social, and cultural aspects in the physical environment and production of space.

Second, to study space as materialization of social possesses corresponds to Lefebvre's perceived space; it is perceivable through people's perception and experience to their everyday world and spatial use. In the early stages of the Taylor's influence in office management, the workspace consisted of only job-related materials, and there existed a highly standardize managerial practice and workspace design. Organizing workspace is thus expected to maintain control and surveillance of production and behaviour in order to ensure employees work and perform in an appropriately disciplined way. The latter studies of workplace control are mainly inspired by Foucault's (1984) understanding of space which emphasis on

materialization of power relations, visual surveillance and control. It suggested space is potentially providing fixed positions and permitting circulation, and through these, organization seeks to control actors within its context (Cairns, McInnes & Roberts, 2003). For instance, an organization which yearns to facilitate strict supervision could limit workers' movement and interaction by placing them within a controlled seating plan and seating layout.

There are a few prominent social possesses that always materialize through organizational space namely power, status, sense of control and identity. Using qualitative methods, Elsbach (2004) conducted a study in a technology firm examining how individuals in corporate office environments interpret office décor as indicators of their displayers' workplace identities. Besides describing how the unique attributes of physical markers contribute to the cognitive interpretation processes, data revealed that there are a variety of physical markers recognized as cues of displayers' workplace identities. Salient physical markers include photos, toys, artwork, certificate and professional artefacts. Further analysis categorized the identity interpretation in both distinctiveness and status representation. For instance, a displayed family photo says the displayer a family oriented, balanced, not work focused person (distinctiveness categorizations) and not a 'player' (status categorizations). On the other hand, exhibiting personal awards or diplomas as office décor may develop a complex representation of workplace identity which demonstrates the displayer as a show-off, pretentious person (distinctiveness categorizations) yet successful, hardworking and accomplished (status categorizations). The complexity is again, caused by the tension between or within

the functions of physical objects and arrangements as suggested by Elsbach and Pratt (2008).

Other than signaling the status of the displayer(s), spatial characteristics of work environment are also generally believed to signal social position (Konar et al, 1982). The possession of status demarcation is one in which a person's position in the organizational hierarchy is symbolically indicated by the nature of his or her work facilities (Steele, 1973). For instance, higher-ranked people are always associated with enclosure by walls or partitions, spacious floor space, and greater capacity for personalization (Donald, 1994; Veitch & Gifford, 1996). A low degree of noise, distraction, and crowding will lead to higher perceived architectural privacy which provides a sense of control over environment and hence, help to affirm employees' identity in the workplace (Becker et al., 1983; Sundstrom et al., 1994). The hierarchical ordering of space within an organization, such as who has how much space and who can move where, communicates about bureaucratic status, social identity, and inequality (Halford, 2004). That is why private offices usually carry a symbolic meaning of higher ranking and help enhance an individual's self-identity by creating personal boundaries (Sundstrom et al., 1980).

Also, Tyler and Cohen (2010) also studied how the informants invest meaning in their workspaces and used them to convey their desired messages to others in a university setting. For instance, displaying their kids' drawings and photographs to reflect the aspect of their personal life; displaying academic and professional qualifications, as representational spaces, were performed in accordance with their

preferences to be perceived as someone competent and professional. Employed personalization that associated with artefacts is a conscious strategy of the informants in order to reveal and convey the way that they wanted to be regarded and recognized as, however, they would be doing accordingly to the organization's appropriateness. In other words, people make use of the space and artefacts to project the ways in which they wished to be perceived onto it. As a result, we do not just occupy space, but we become ourselves in and through the organization space.

Under this approach, scholars see office buildings as an agent that enables the flow of materials through its layout and spatial configuration (Baldry, 1999). Meanwhile, a working environment is not only permit work activities, it also communicates the symbolic social possesses through displayed artefacts, employee movement and interpersonal interaction (Becker, 1981; Rapoport, 1982; Steele, 1973). Hence, space and spatiality become a 'vehicle of meaning' which carried specific meaning and multiple identities of the workers.

Space as Lefebvre's lived experience views space as experiences produced and manifested by those people who inhabit it (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). It suggests that people are not only 'use' the space but 'understand', 'interpret', and 'experience' the space through the associated symbols and images which are, sometimes coded and sometimes not. This aspect of space is highly complex and difficult to understand and communicate because the embodied symbolic and imaginary elements have their originality of meaning in history and culture (Lefebvre, 1991; Simonsen, 2005). To define and interpret lived space requires users' symbolic understanding and

imagination; the meaning can be very personal but they are socially negotiated (Wapshott & Mallett, 2011). Therefore, space is a relational aspect of spatiality where lived space is occupied and animated with human actor's subjectivity perception and experiences, rather than follow the ways the space is designed; it is rather felt than thought (Crang, 2000).

In Zhang's (2007) twelve-month ethnographic study on understanding the power relations in a Chinese bureaucratic organization, three types of spaces were identified - a straight-forward spatial design, an ambiguous spatial practice, and an interpretive spatial experience in the Chinese organization. The workspace in a Chinese organization is highly related to hierarchical power and the design of the building and arrangement of the office displayed an obvious hierarchical differentiation. For instance, directors' rooms are located at 23rd to 25th floor while the administrative departments are placed at lower floors. Besides this, an ambiguous spatial practice has been found where people had opposing sets of behaviours towards the power distance in the organization. For instance, upon arrival at the workplace, personal belongings which are supposed to be strictly prohibited were then found in almost every corner in the office; slippers, toothbrushes and cosmetics were displayed nicely on the employees' desks. It was opposed from the desired high power distance architecture.

The last feature of space is an interpretive space of the employees' spatial experiences. Throughout the ethnographic fieldwork, Zhang identified a twofold interpretation of power in the organization. A hierarchical power is feared when

people interpreted it as hierarchical-authority (power-as-hierarchical); which refers to the formal authority in making important decision. On the other hand, people joked and rumoured about the hierarchical power when they interpreted it as personal benefit (power-as-personal); which refers to the informal and extra ‘personal benefit’ given to the authorities. Thus, the researcher discussed how did the strict hierarchical differentiation materialized (or sometime not materialized) in the office building and spatial practice which in turn, further embodied in the organization lived space and employees’ lived experience: how did the employee perceive, feel, imagine, and experience the workspace hierarchical power. Spatial experience is thus the spatiality that provides a lens to observe the lived phenomenon within an organization. Furthermore, Zhang admitted that the Chinese culture within which the organization is situated plays a vital part in the forming of the unique lived space. By having said that, cultural differences would have different implication for the forming of principles and conception of organization space.

The complexity of lived space is mainly discussed in two central dimensions – symbolic and aesthetic analysis (Taylor & Hansen, 2005). Davis (1984) proposed a framework for both researcher and practitioners to view the workspace internal environment as being composed of three main elements: (1) physical structure; (2) physical stimuli; and (3) symbolic artefacts. Physical structure refers to the architectural design, physical location, seating arrangement, and physical placement of furnishing in a building that influence or regulate social interaction. Physical stimuli refer to those aspects of a physical setting that raise users’ awareness and thus have an impact on their behaviour. The last element, symbolic artefacts, are

aspects of the physical setting that convey messages or as cues for professional image, status, task effectiveness and aesthetics which have consequences for human behaviours. In Davis's (1984) framework of organization space, he suggests that it will be more appropriate to view cognitions, behaviours and environment as being reciprocally determined rather than taking an environmental determinist view of behaviour. This support the view of space as lived space where space is not only a designed space but an experienced and interpreted space through a complex combination of objects, stimuli and symbols.

To investigate the complexity and hidden function of office design for work efficiency and effectiveness, Elsbach and Bechky (2007) discussed the multiple roles of office design from three perspectives: (1) instrumental functions; (2) symbolic functions; and (3) aesthetic functions. The first two functions are similar to what Davis (1984) has discussed (physical structure and symbolic artefacts). While aesthetic functions defined as the sensory experience of an artefact (Vilnai-Yavetz & Rafaeli, 2006). The concept of aesthetics is seen as the experience and expression of environment through the human senses which provide a framework for expression, interpretation and representation of roles, purposes, behaviours and actions at an individual level (Cairs, 2002). Sensory experiences of workers on physical setting consist of both cognitive and emotional responses which potentially to promote place attachment and thus improve satisfaction (Elsbach & Bechky, 2007). It should be noted that these three dimensions are complementing each other rather than independently. Considering only one of the dimensions in examining space is an

incomplete understanding of how space may be interpreted and experienced (Vilnai-Yavetz & Rafaeli, 2004).

In Malaysia, Norhafezah (2010) conducted a space-sociality study to investigate the impact of Cyberjaya (essentially a Malaysian-modernist city planning concept and model) on the life worlds of its inhabitants. She employed a six-month ethnographic fieldwork (observation, interviews, documentation) to explore the living, social life and lived experiences of Cyberjaya citizen (Cyberians). As a study of a city, three main spaces have been explored: space of mobility, spaces within organizations, and public spaces.

Focuses on the life inside the organizations, two spaces have been observed and discussed: office spaces and non-office spaces. Observation data shows that absence of sociality in the office lobby stands a contrast to its common characteristic as a formal social place. Office spaces are under highly technology-driven surveillance with the support of human surveillance for the purpose of protecting organization intelligent properties. As a result, sociality mostly occurs in the organization inner socialization space such as the gymnasiums, play rooms, kitchens, and rest areas. Other than places for interactions, her findings indicate the usage of staff identity card and the placement of black sofa in the lobby are closely associated with organization culture and identity. For instance, in Cyberjaya, the presence of a staff card is more than just an identity card; it symbolizes control, power and identity. A staff card symbolizes the power and control the holder has to access to the privileged spaces and also to identify him or her as a Cyberian or a professional working staff

in Cyberjaya. Besides this, as black usually signifies authority and prestige, the black sofas in the lobby reflect a symbol of formality. When come to the sofas arrangements, those being separated far apart (three to four feet) are indirectly restricted in their chances for private talk. Apparently, office space carries, constructs and conveys social identity, social meaning and social life within a lived space. To summarize space as lived experiences, a space shall be treated not as a passive receptor but is produced. As what Cairns (2002) suggested:

The physical environment is not purely physical – it is contained within, influences the development of and is influenced by the nature of the social environment. The physical and social environments contain one another, frame one another and influence the development of one another – but they are not as one. (p.818)

However, due to globalization and advancement of communication technology, virtual teams have increased rapidly worldwide and changed the traditional view of office and building (Kirkman *et al.*, 2002). The construction of virtual team mushroomed in most organizations with a rare exception where all organizational teams can be regarded as virtual to some extent (Johnson *et al.*, 2001).

Virtual team is defined as a team who has fostered extensive use of a variety forms of computer-mediated communication technology that enables geographically dispersed members to coordinate their individual efforts and inputs (Peters & Manz, 2007). More specifically in the context of organization, Powell *et al.* (2004) defined virtual team as a group of individuals geographically and organizationally dispersed, and often temporally distributed brought together by information technologies to

accomplish one or more organization tasks driven by common organizational purposes and aims.

Pawar and Sharifi (1997) classified virtual teams from conventional physical teams in six categories. First, the nature of interaction will be changed from having unscheduled encounter opportunities to exchange both work and non-work related information in physical place to an extent where informal exchange of information will be getting minimal in virtual space. Second, while there is an increased opportunity for resources sharing among members from physical teams; most of the collaborators in virtual teams would only have access to a similar technical and non-technical infrastructure. Third, controlling and accountability over and within the teams remain unchanged in traditional physical teams, as it always has; but it will be getting limited for virtual teams. Fourth, the presence of interpersonal communication will remain strong in physical teams while getting less in virtual teams. Fifth, since members from physical teams are collocated, they are more likely to have similar and complementary cultural background unlike the dispersed virtual team members who are more likely varied in culture, language and time orientation. Sixth, physical team would face relatively minimal of incompatibility of technological use compared to members in virtual team.

The characteristics of virtual teams possess a threat to the conventional view of organization space. Although the form and function of communication technologies have taken the priority over the traditional values of space, researchers are confident that virtual teams will not totally replace the needs of having conventional teams

(Ebrahim, Ahmed & Taha, 2009). Virtual teams will surely continue to be a necessary type of work arrangement while human will also continue benefited from the advancement of technology; however, virtual teams may not appropriate for all types of work under different circumstances. In virtual team, sense of place seems unachievable; sense of belonging is unlikely to be nurtured and social space for face-to-face communication can barely be conducted. Past research found that the nature of impersonal, task-oriented, more businesslike, less human-friendly and mediated communication-based virtual teams may have a positive influence on knowledge base team's performance but in a long run, it may lead to human diseconomies and decreased in worker satisfaction (Schmidt *et al.*, 2001; Akgün *et al.*, 2008). In short, physical place and virtual space are two sides of a same coin, both are equally-weighted in creating value for people. While mechanistic way of management helps to enhance organization productivity; a humanistic way of managing people would also improve organization morale and interpersonal relationship.

2.7 Henri Lefebvre's Triad Concerns

Lefebvre's triple concerns grasp the complex production and reproduction of space and social relations at all levels. Social relations are spatial relations too; these two sets of relation are inextricably bound up with one another. The bio-physiological relations between people in a specific organization (social relation) occur in space; where space contains both social relation and spatial relation in it. We cannot talk about social relations without mentioning spatial relation; they are in an interdependent relationship. Space provides a place for social relations; social relations can only become a social reality by virtue of a spatial practice; the

production of space is experiential, and it needs to be seen as being constituted by relationship between the physical and social sphere (Dobers & Strannegård, 2004).

To simplify Lefebvre's (1991) production of space, we can start the imaginary from an abstract space with workplace layout and design. Next, there is a flow of material which helps to get work done – flows of labour, money and information (Harvey, 1990). Both physical space and material object allow people to work, to move and to interact. Thus every physical movement and interaction of employees considers as a spatial practice within a given space and consists not least than a social relation. However, in between what is provided and what people do, there is the representational space – a space of subjectivity of local knowledge, human experiences, sense-making, imagination and feelings (Zhang, 2007). To sum up, space can be physical and geographical; but space is also filled with people's action, intention and understanding – things seen as well as things thought (Cairns, McInnes & Roberts, 2003); it makes action possible and is itself the field of action (Löw, 2008). Therefore, perceived, conceived, and lived space shall refer as a whole space which is interrelated:

It could thus be suggested that the existing way of understanding Lefebvre's model can be supplemented with the notion of 'shifting perspectives'. We might compare conceived space, perceived space and lived space as three cameras projecting simultaneously onto any organisational event. Coming back to the previous example, through the first camera we read mathematical data, the height of the man, the length of a corridor, and so on; through the second we see the body movement of the man, his walking about, his gestures; and through the third, we reach into his inner subjectivity, his feeling about the stupid doorknob which wouldn't turn, for instance. Each camera generates different data – that much in agreement with existing literatures – yet each, at the same time, refers to, as a whole, the organisational space that they come

to represent. In other words, conceived, perceived and lived spaces overlap, not juxtapose, one another (Zhang, 2006, p.222).

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991) emphasized the perceived-conceived-lived triad should be interconnected, so that the “subject” or the individual in a given group may move from one to another without confusion – so much in a logical necessity (p.40). Meanwhile, these spaces combine together in the social production of space as a whole but not necessarily constitute a coherent whole (Tyler & Cohen, 2010). According to Lefebvre’s theory of socially produced space, the bases of social practice and spatial practice derived from a mixture of perspective, understanding and ideology. Hence, there is no absolute right or wrong in defining the spatial meaning; spatial practice is always relative, in the process of change and subject to revision (Lefebvre, 1991). Thus, space does not comply with rules of consistency or cohesiveness; it is symbolic and imaginary and it has its originality source in history and cultural code.

However, a number of scholars have detected a tendency towards reifying the triad spatial in the current organization space literature (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011; Watkins, 2005; Zhang & Beyes, 2011; Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Most of the formation of organization space is baffling as they had divided the spaces into three parts rather than investigate the interplay of the three parts as a totality. Therefore, Zhang (2007) proposed the interplays between spatial planning, spatial practice and spatial experience which derived from Lefebvre’s triad model could be integrated in a recycling circle with no definite starts and ends points. It may be illustrated in the following *Figure 2.2*.

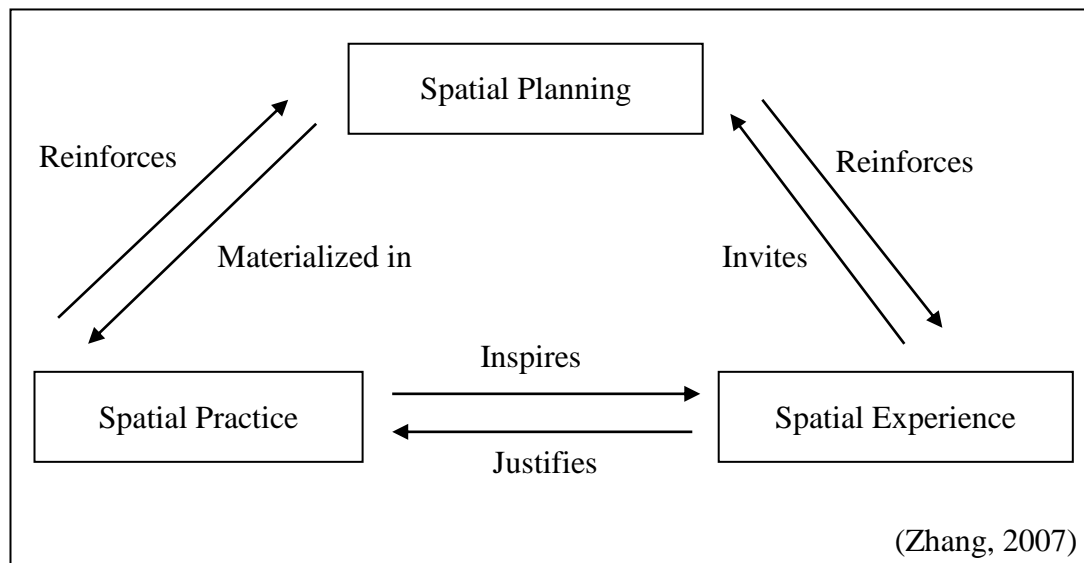


Figure 2.2. Interplays between spatial planning, spatial practice and spatial experience

Within the recycling circle, he discussed how spatial design invites employees to have spatial experience materialized in spatial practice; and how spatial practice and spatial experience both reinforce the functionality of spatial design; last but not least, he examined how spatial practice inspires unique spatial experience which can be justified through spatial behaviour. Social production of space is thus, as the outcome of a dynamic process and relationship between each of the three intertwined elements.

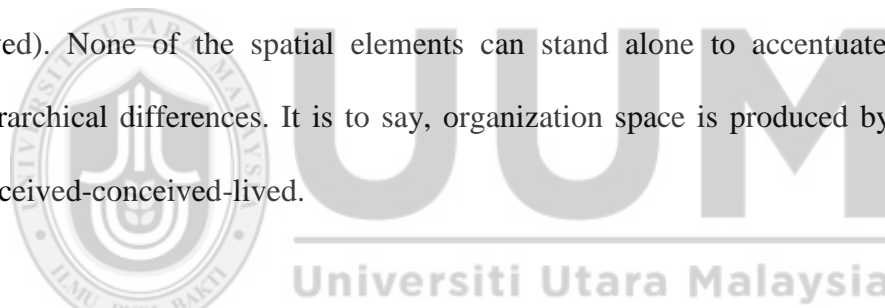
Lefebvre (1991) says, the triad as “the three moments of social space” (p.20). In seeking to understand “the three moments”, we shall first relate this to Lefebvre’s habitual use of ‘moment’ as “the attempt to achieve the total realization of a possibility” (Zhang, 2006, p.222). This is to say, Lefebvre views the three elements

of perceived-conceived-lived as a whole; they overlap each other, their spatial is not fragmented and not juxtaposed to one another (Zhang, 2006). Therefore, the analysis of the triad must be treated holistically and consider their consistency and dynamic inter-relations where three of them come together into a single moment of social space (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). To avoid reductionism, Lefebvre ties together the physical, the cognitive, and the social into a unitary theory of space, in which he suggests the spatial triad as simultaneously affected and affecting each other (Gottdiener, 1993; Dobers & Strannegård, 2004; Haan & Leander, 2011).

As Zhang and Beyes (2011) discerned, the ‘petrified’ interpretation of Lefebvre’s spatial thinking, they engaged with Lefebvre’s trajectory of spatial thought and drawing from an empirical case study of spatial production to propose dialectical materialism as an approach to conceptualize the production of space. With regard to material-dialectical reasoning, a dialectical or ‘trialectical’ in Lefebvre’s spatial triad see each ‘moment’ of the spatial triad as a constellation of mutually affected and affecting each other, we cannot talk one without recourse to the other two. The production of space is a dynamic process through the coming-together of the perceived-conceived-lived; all three terms constantly mingle in the making of space. None of the three is a solution and independent in itself, they are each a push towards the openness of possibility.

The distinction between the three is devoid of meaning, they are interrelated and come together to produce organization space even if they could be in a contradictory grouping. For instance, drawing from Zhang and Beyes (2011)’s case study,

comparing the greyish, dark and rather austere corridors of the administrative stratum to the corridors of the executive stratum which flooring is covered by red carpets, its walls are mounted in wooden veneered with a cheerful brown and decorated with painting in expensive-looking frames; the hierarchical differentiations in the organization were obvious, but its meaning is not only laden with either one of the triad spatial - it is embodied in the triad. The effort to establish high power relation is materialized in the office design (conceived); routinely practiced by the 'populace' from the administrative floors and the 'noble leaders' in the executive floor (perceived); becomes alive when we see two realms of opposing daily life in the corridors - a loud, casual and mundane versus a silence, sumptuous and luxurious (lived). None of the spatial elements can stand alone to accentuate the desired hierarchical differences. It is to say, organization space is produced by the triad of perceived-conceived-lived.



Back to the current reified notion of spatial understanding, Zhang and Beyes (2011) concurred with certain elements which have empirical dominance have gained the front-stage of empirical scenarios and hence, researchers reified them into independent empirical existences. However, it is worthwhile to note that each part of the spatial triad does not own an independent empirical existence; it is the dimension of conceived, perceived, and lived that come together to produce organization space.

2.8 Space and Collaboration

Collaboration is considered imperative in knowledge intensive processes and for organization to successfully engage with a dynamic environment. It is much known

that effective collaboration leads to desirable outcomes such as innovation, knowledge sharing, or joint projects (Heringa et al., 2011). It is also perceived as a key driver to organizational effectiveness in present fast-moving and competitive work environment (Hawryszkiewicz, 2005). Knowledge work is collaborative by nature; it is impossible for a single employee possess all the knowledge and skills needed in solving today's complex business issues. Collective intelligence of a diverse group of people through mutual interaction and collaboration always outperforms than a lone thinker; it is the necessity to the quality of the work. Essentially, collaboration is defined as "working together" where it can be a solution, a tool, culture, and process that provide a purposive sharing of information towards common goals (White, Lyons & Swindler, 2007).

In the "IBM Global CEO Study 2006" survey, 75 percent of informants ranked collaboration as a "very important" part of innovation and of business success in general (IBM Global Services, 2006). By sharing information across disciplines and nature of business, employees managed to exchange inspiration and ideas which contributes to business innovation. From the same study, it found that extensive collaborators performed better in revenue growth and operating margins. As a matter of fact, IBM's findings are not unusual. Another research on the collaboration behaviour of companies conducted by Frost and Sullivan (2006), together with Verizon Business and Microsoft shows that organizations that collaborate more perform better. The results of the research indicated the significance of collaboration in driving business performance is twice of the importance of strategic orientation across the globe, across regions and across six industries namely financial services,

government, healthcare, high technology, manufacturing and professional services. According to the research findings, the profound impact of collaboration on innovation, productivity, customer satisfaction and profitability is highly driven by its definite structure and direction in leading business performance.

More recently, CEB, a world's leading member-based advisory company in the United States, surveyed 23,000-plus employees across different industries and locations to study the role of collaboration in driving today's workforce. In the survey, more than two-thirds of employees reported that their jobs require more collaboration today than they did three years ago. Also, about sixty percent of respondents claimed their daily task requires regular coordination with more people from diverse functional groups at different supervisory levels (Cattie & Riper, 2012). Furthermore, the survey findings came with three insights about the impact of collaboration on the work environment. First, collaboration increases the levels of knowledge sharing which have outsized impact on team performance. Second, collaborative work environments foster innovation by having more co-workers sharing sections, which allows the employees to feel more encouraged to come up with new ideas. Third, collaborative work environments have higher employee retention. Collaboration is therefore the key to building a connected, engaged and sustainable organization to solve problems, seize opportunities, and ignite innovation (Morgan, 2012).

As a provider of indoor physical settings, workplace environment plays as the 'enabler' for communication and collaboration among the inhabitants. When we talk

about collaboration, what many overlooked in collaborative work is the need for concentration. Collaboration is not solely about team work, group effort and group functioning. Indeed, it comes with both individual focused (concentration) and group oriented (collaboration) tasks (Heerwagen et al., 2004). While there is a vast body of evidence suggests that interpersonal relationship and group interaction can be enhanced through close proximity (Kiesler & Cummings, 2002); there is scant published research study on the connection between spatiality and collaborative work (Hua, 2007). Most of the literatures are one-sided in examining the impact of the office environment on either individual work or group task.

To facilitate collaboration effectiveness through workspace, we must first understand the coordination required for collaborative action. Bridging the research variables and findings in previous studies, four aspects have emerged as conditions known to contribute to collaboration. The four conditions are types of collaborative workplace; types of collaborative work; social dimensions of collaboration and spatial variables for collaboration.

The Center for Building Performance at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) has identified seven types of collaborative places which may be instrumental to the next generation of collaborative work (Hartkopf et al., 2009). They are amenities, circulation places, shared equipment places, meeting places, project places, individual office and electronic collaborative places. Each of these collaborative space types may support different range of collaborative tasks. For instance, amenities places such as cafeterias and recreation places afford for social networking

activities which involve multidisciplinary and multiagency collaboration and tend to have longer retention rates. While circulation places such as lobbies and hallways are the most prevalent areas for social networking with some level of information sharing. Shared equipment places usually offer services to the occupants such as photocopy room and pantry. It functions like circulation paths or crossroad where people can stop to socialize and to exchange information. On the other hand, digital collaborative places are rooms equipped with computing and multimedia systems which involve large scale of coordinated tasks and constantly relates seamlessly with multi-disciplinary team work across the global connection. Whereas dedicated meeting and project places play a major role in providing ideation and creative development which relies on pooling together diverse disciplinary expertise and energy to generate the most intensive intellectual input from team members. Last but not least, the individual place with acoustic and visual privacy is dedicated to members who are working on project that requires high concentration and attention.

In general, researchers categorize the types of collaborative work as individual focused tasks and interactive group work (Heerwagen et al., 2004); as planned and impromptu (White, Lyons, & Swindler, 2005). Different types of collaborative work are associated with different cognitive processes, social processes and spatial features. For instance, individual focused work is highly cognitive but with least sociality while group oriented task requires greater collaboration and is both highly cognitive and highly sociality. Therefore, it is crucial to provide a range of spatial setting to meet the cognitive and social needs for a variety of collaborative activities. Also, collaborative work could be planned or impromptu. Formal collaboration is

usually planned for knowledge transfer, decision making or problem solving which entails technical communication; it takes place at dedicated meeting places such as conference room and project room. Whereas informal collaboration is usually unplanned for socializing, it is driven by the opportunistic encounters that spark impromptu conversation around circulation paths and shared places. Besides broadening the web of social relations at work, spontaneous collaboration offers excellent potential for ideation and creative development too.

The famous Google office is an example of one of the principles in their office design guidelines; ideas are not just generated in meeting room but also in the social spaces in between (Felix, 2010). Fostering casual face-to-face interaction within untraditional settings of workplace is a goal now actively pursued throughout the Google offices in worldwide. Strong evidence shows that the information richness of face-to-face interaction leads to the development of interpersonal social ties (Lee et al., 2011) and trust (Hill, Bartol, Tesluk, & Langa, 2009). Possession of task interdependency and mutually relationship is essential for a successful collaboration, thus face-to-face interaction is known as a critical factor in collaboration which requires meeting in real space and time for uncertainty reduction (Brown, 2008; Storper & Venables, 2004). The central idea here is that by stimulating face-to-face contact at the workplace, collaboration can be promoted.

According to Heerwagen et al. (2004), the social dimensions of collaboration include three components: awareness, brief interaction, and collaboration. These dimensions differ in purpose and time frame as well as spatial requirement. Firstly, by its very

nature, awareness allows workers to remain in touch and alert with what is going on around them without using focused attention. Social awareness is maintained through conversational cues such as back-channel feedback and through non-verbal cues during face-to-face contact such as eye contact, facial expression, and body language (Gutwin, Greenberg, & Roseman, 1996). Such situational awareness is also known as presence awareness (Espinosa et al., 2007) in which an individual is aware of the physical availability and accessibility of others. It allows workers to enhance coordination and increase observational learning by seeing what others are doing (Malhotra & Majchrzak, 2014). This will then cultivate task knowledge awareness where individuals in the team are knowledgeable about the work that other individuals are performing, including their current work progress (Espinosa et al., 2007).

Amenities, circulation places and shared equipment places are considered as high-awareness workplaces which offer greater opportunity for face-to-face encounter. Building social networking through situational awareness and movement within workspace may not appreciate by the management because in many cases, networking is considered as not benefiting work and not a part of the formal organization flow (Klimecki & Lassleben, 1998; Hua, 2007). However, a moderate social networking at work is important for social relationship, trust building, coordination and collaboration (Nardi & Whittaker, 2002; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998; Tschannen-Moran, 2001).

To promote awareness in workspace, management or facilities management needs to consider the key environmental drivers - visual and aural accessibility. Both good visual and aural permitted occupants access into surrounding and alert with the signals of presence or absence of someone or something. A 'social facilitation' effect occurs when people are in others' presence (Forsyth, 2013). That is, the presence of other (presence awareness) increase one's concern and hence their performance, alertness, and motivation changes (Zajonc, 1968), along with their ability to observe and learn to cooperate with others (Macy, 1991). It also provides unquestioned help, because such visibility gives information on what the other person is doing and thus increased knowledge sharing (Appel-Meulenbroek, 2010). With the appearance of artefacts in work, it may enhance the coordination, memory and understanding of work among the occupants (McGee, 2002). The displayed artefacts and physical layout that are readily seen would have an impact on increasing attention, enhancing social impact and accessing information and coordination which in turn, help to create a greater degree of awareness. In short, observation of others' work allows task knowledge awareness coordination to facilitate performance of the team's task (Malhotra & Majchrzak, 2012).

Second dimension - brief interactions, is usually unplanned, quick and spontaneous. It occurs as part of the natural behaviour among knowledge workers to develop further collaborative relationship. Scholars do agree that collaboration often begin and stem from informal conversation and unscheduled interaction between co-workers (Bozenab & Corley, 2004). Frequent casual contacts and spontaneous communication opportunities within work teams are necessities for information

sharing and relationships tie. People usually receive the most social support from the people who are close with them in physical proximity or in most frequent contact (Wellman, 1992). Brief interactions can occur at individual workstation and/or shared-places intentionally (seeing someone on scheduled meeting) or unintentionally (meeting someone by chance in the lobby). Increased chances for brief interaction can potentially improve information flow (Bagnara & Marti, 2001), a sense of camaraderie, and greater likelihood in developing friendship at work (Carletta, Anderson, & McEwan, 2000; Gutpa, Govindarajan, & Malhotra, 1999). Since visual access is important in motivating human action, therefore a closer proximity between workers is essential to encourage more brief and informal interaction in an organization. Previous study has identified that there is very little spontaneous interaction likely to be happened beyond 30 metres (Allen, 1997). To better support brief and informal interaction at work, visually open workstations and central stairways might help to deliver higher ratings in creating friendship and information exchange opportunities.

The third dimension – collaboration. There is a growing central conflict of collaboration at work: how to design effectively to meet both needs to interact socially and to work effectively. There is no “one size fits all” solution for any crisis and conflict. As the nature of work varies across organizations, the communities may embrace and adopt different value to fit into one faction. As a result, the requirement and implementation of a successful collaborative environment will be varied from the nature of work, management structure and cultural norms to leadership style. Among the key considerations are on-going communication needs (Allen, 1997),

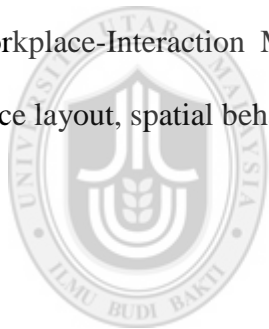
complexity of the group task and task structure (Chachere, Kunz, & Levitt, 2003). Communication needs are concerned with types of technical communication. Allen (1997) addressed three forms of technical communication which focuses on work coordination, knowledge sharing and creativity inspiration respectively. While in a highly structured dependence organization, extreme collaboration is commonly employed for parallel and highly interdependent serial of tasks.

Driven by the significance of collaboration at work, the value of the workplace itself in stimulating successful collaboration is gaining attention too. Although majority of the existing empirical studies proposed a linear causality relationship between space and collaboration; several architectural factors have been identified as physical determinant for the occurrence of collaboration. Three spatial variables for collaboration have been identified as visibility, accessibility and proximity.

Visibility refers to the opportunity for an individual to observe and being observed by others (Hatch, 1985). Human are visually-oriented thus human interaction encounters depend very much on seeing and being seen. The more someone sees and is seen, the greater are the possibilities for interaction (Sailer & Penn, 2009). As visual contact has long been believed to affect interpersonal behaviour, individuals are supposed to be significantly interacted with people they could easily see. Previous empirical research findings suggested that workstation visibility, in both types of workstation – open workstation and closed office, is a key variable in promoting team communication and reducing the impediments to communicate in

the working environment (Rashid, Kampschroer, Wineman & Zimring, 2006; Sailer & Penn, 2007).

Using space-syntax theories and techniques, Rashid et al. (2006) have developed a model explains how spatial layout creates spatial behaviour to affect face-to-face interaction in the office. Data collected from four federal offices in the United States and generated by space-syntax and observations. Findings indicated that spatial layouts have consistent effects on movement, but inconsistent effects on visible co-presence and face-to-face interaction. While spatial behaviour such as visible co-presence is an important predictor of face-to-face interaction. A framework of Workplace-Interaction Model is constructed to describe the relationship between space layout, spatial behaviour and organizational outcomes, as shown in *Figure 2.3*.



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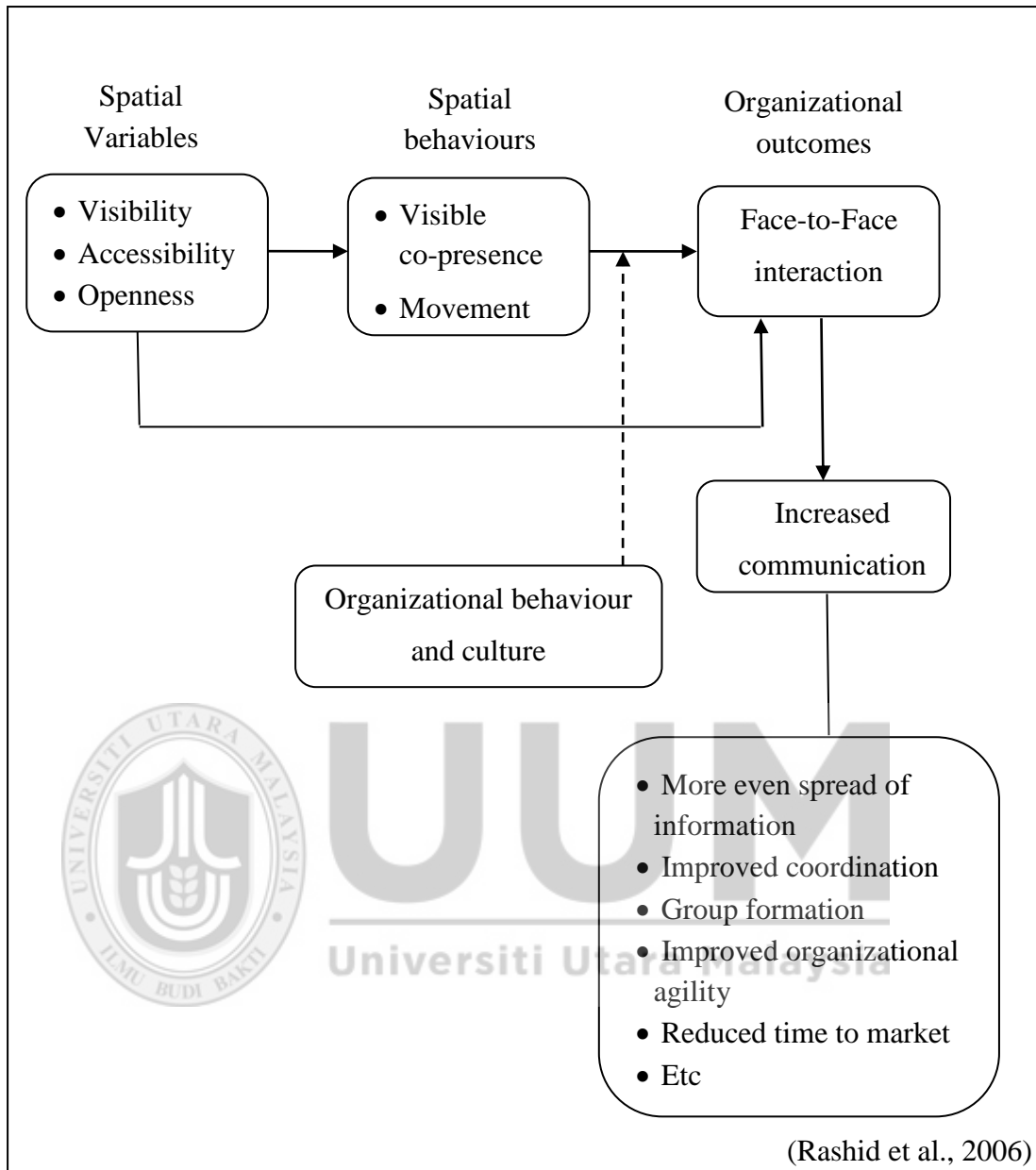


Figure 2.3. The Workplace-interaction model

Furthermore, observational studies also showed that interactions result largely from movement patterns and spatial visibility that make workers available for recruitment into conversations (Backhouse & Drew, 1992). Most of the time, personal workstations and high-trafficked corridors garnered most interactions in an

organization. It is because these places offered higher visibility of people, information, and artefacts which arouse awareness and understanding (Lahlou, 1999). In sum, the results of these studies proposed that visibility is positively related to interaction frequency by increasing co-presence awareness and allowing face-to-face communication opportunities.

Accessibility is defined as the ease with which a given workspace can be approached or entered. Architectural accessibility can be measured through the number of walls and partitions that surrounded each employee's individual workspace. Closed doors were counted as a barrier too. The strongest empirical evidence to support this variable in the physical workplace has been provided by Oldham and Rotchford (1983). They found that the fewer boundaries surrounding a workspace, the more architectural accessibility occurs based on the significant correlations between accessibility and discretionary time. Other research has indicated that accessibility makes organizational function possible by allowing people to meet face-to-face, or to reach sources of information resources (Peponis et al., 2007).

However, most of the previous studies have referred to accessibility as simple as the ease with which a given individual workspace can be accessed (Hatch, 1985; Hua, 2007; Oldham & Rotchford, 1983; Penn et al., 1999; Peponis & Wineman, 2002, Peponis et al., 2007). To have a holistic approach, accessibility can be described in three dimensions. First, for movement, that is fundamental for people passing each other and creating the potential for face-to-face encounters. Second is sight, which enhances the amount of interaction awareness; and third is hearing, which is a carrier

of information and/or a disturbance. Office design with the right balance between visual and auditory accessibility is of great interest in the present workforce (Steen & Markhede, 2010).

Based on spatial analysis, network analysis, self-assessment questionnaires, field discussions and accounting documents, Peponis et al. (2007) studied how workplace design and spatial layout support knowledge work which resulted a higher productivity. A study conducted before and after the employees moved into new premises; its findings showed that the new building with more integrated and more intelligible layout resulted denser interaction networks. The researchers suggest that spatial integration, accessibility and visibility support not only the knowledge work as well as the organizational culture. Organizational culture will then serve as cognitive functions to cultivate and promote better communicative experiences.

Proximity is another key determinant to make collaboration easier. Close proximity between people who work together always lead to easy, quick, frequent and informal interaction within the teams. Workers who are collocated are always associated with the privileges of having direct observation and regular face-to-face conversation which is believed to strengthen social bonding and social contacts (Kiesler & Cummings, 2002). In general, proximate people have a tendency to collaborate.

A study on 164 scientists and engineers in identifying how proximity makes collaboration easier, concentrating on the way it facilitated interpersonal interaction and awareness found that pairs of researcher who shared same research interest or

were in the same organizational chart, were unlikely to complete a technical report together unless their offices were physically near to each other (Kraut, Egido & Galegher, 1990). This finding is similar to Allen's (1977) pioneer study between building and communication among product development engineers which raised an important insight where proximity would always produce increased communication. From his observations, people who work nearby come to know each other better and are much more likely to know and understand what each other is doing. Consequently, they are able to coordinate their work better. Though people in the same department are more likely to communicate than with people in different department, through observation, Allen (1977) found that people do not choose communication partners solely from propinquity. Such phenomenon can be explained through comparison of spatial practice across industries and cultures. There are distinct differences in communication behaviour across disciplines such as common interest, occupation and cultural norms. Allen (2007) suggested the difference between cultural value, between the North American and Asian countries served a different perspective on space management too. The canon is that there are profound cultural differences in the ways in which individual and organization utilize physical space for interaction (Hall, 1966).

Hereby, the present research first identifies the social requirement and spatial features for a broad spectrum of collaborative work in an organization. Both conditions will lead the research to further investigate the affordance of space for collaboration at work. Through Gibson's theory of affordance, this research aims to

study space by integrating cognitive and social needs for collaboration as well as the cultural diversity in spatial practice.

2.9 Theory of Affordance

The Theory of Affordances was originally introduced by an ecological psychologist, James Gibson, in 1977. Ecological psychology and its idea of affordance have been studied in multidisciplinary fields and interdisciplinary studies, and its conceptions are still evolving (Sadler & Given, 2007). More recently, Bell et al. (2008) advocated the use of affordance theory to examine place preference, especially in understanding the reciprocal relationships between individual and environment. The theory helps to explain what activities are possible or take place in specified environments (Geyer, 2013). Furthermore, Ghavampour (2014) also suggests theory of affordance for investigation of place to describe the linkage between environment, human behaviour and values and needs fulfilment.

In earlier work, Gibson (1979) referred to 'affordance' as the relationship between the physical properties of an object and the characteristics of an agent that enable particular interactions between the object and the agent. An affordance is therefore the possibilities that the objects or environments offer the subjects for action. For example, a knife may have the affordance for people in the kitchen to cut fruits or to slice meats; it enables for other purposes too - to stab people or to carve wooden statues. A tree may have the affordance, for a bird, of being a shelter and making a nest; or for an insect, of concealment from a hunter. Hence, affordances may differ for the vast variety of species and various types of context (Hutchby, 2001; Jenkins,

2008). For example, as emphasized in Gibson's original writing of *The theory of affordances*, he stated that if an object rests on the ground and has a sufficiently rigid and flat surface and is approximately at the height of the knee of the human biped, then it affords sitting-on. However, Gibson went on to say, '*knee-high for a child is not the same as knee-high for an adult*' (1977, p.68). Despite of the properties are usually objective phenomena, they do serve as affordance in particular combinations and relative to particular perceiving and acting entity (Keane, 2014).

However, earlier Gibson's way of defining affordance was not so much in human practice but visual perception as he excludes the ability of the perceiver (or agent or subject or individual or actor) to perceive the range of action possibilities that allows or inhibits them to perform (McGrenere & Ho, 2000). Gibson is reported to have stated that affordance is the properties of the environment which offers certain possibilities for behaviour and does not change with the changing needs of the perceiver and is independent of the perceiver (Clark & Uzzell, 2002; Geyer, 2013). Meanwhile, affordance of physical environments exists, whether it is perceived or not. It is then the central topic of debate for Gibson's theory of affordance. To avoid the contested statements, scholars have proposed several arguments to expand the concept of affordance. One of the incipient reasoning was presented by Norman (1988), described affordances as below:

...the term affordance refers to the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used. A chair affords ('is for') support and, therefore, affords sitting. A chair can also be carried. (p.9).

For Norman (1988), both actual and perceived properties, even if the perceived property may or may not be an actual property, it is an affordance. Our culture, past knowledge and experience are applied to our perception of the things (object or environment) and affordance is resulted from such mental interpretation of things. Hence, it is important to recognize both an object's intended uses (real affordances) and the affordances perceived by the user (perceived affordances). Good designers will integrate the possible uses and affordance of the objects such as door handles and light switches into its physical design, which can be readily perceivable by its proposed users as intended affordance (Norman, 1999). However, such designed affordance constitutes only a portion of the affordances a human being might perceive. Therefore, genuinely affordances of an object are what we perceive from its immediate visual features together with some others explicit cues which derived from one's perceiving abilities. Perceiving one's affordance merely from its direct visual characteristics may disregard unrecognized or unremembered function.

Later, Chemero (2003) argued that affordance is not properties of the environment or perceiver but of whole systems and dependent on context; it could be the collective or individual's culture, experience, knowledge, needs, goals and system of meanings. Due to the dynamic context, potential affordance and actualized affordance would appear to be under different socio-cultural meaning (Heft, 2003). Heft (2003) illustrated this by considering the affordance of a chair in one's own living room; it may afford sitting on, but a similar chair in a museum with a cordon around it would not due to the socio-cultural meaning of the context conditioning the realization that

the perceiver is not supposed to sit. Hence, affordance is then understood to be relational and dependent on both the environment and perceiver (Jones, 2003).

Theory of affordance is usually applied to social situations in which people are face to face (Ghavampour, 2014). As such, affordances emerge only when the individual and socio-cultural factors such as individual intention, social needs, ability, are matched with the features of the environment (Kytta, 2003). This complexity of matching is then possesses an indefinite number of combinations of properties, which Kytta (2003) extended to the types of affordance to potential, perceived, utilized and shaped. Potential affordance is an opportunity for behaviour offered by an object or environment, may be perceived or not. Perceived affordance is an opportunity for behaviour offered by an object or environment that has been perceived by the perceiver (or user) but not acted out. Utilized affordance is an opportunity for behaviour offered by an object or environment that has been perceived by the perceiver (or user) and acted out. Shaped affordance exists when the perceiver (or user) alters the environment in a way to create an opportunity for desired behaviour.

To extend the theory of affordance in ethnography, it is important to attribute the existence of three possible perspectives to view affordance from; the object or environment itself, the perceiver or user and a third party observer (Keane, 2014; Sahin et al., 2007). By taking other individual characteristics and social elements into consideration, it helps to examine the affordance of space more than a linear way of causality and avoids reductionism in understanding and interpreting the

findings. In the Geyer (2013) study on ‘Greenspace’, he proposed that affordance can be conceptualized in three different levels: design, normative and personal. Design refers to the intended affordance which is an exercise of “fit for needs” to permit certain behaviours to take place. For instance, provision of a large rectangular area with basketball backboard and basket is expected to afford playing of basketball. Normative, refers to the collective shared understanding of an affordance. It is an interaction between perception and object or environment which shaped by cultural norms. For instance, a picnic bench in a park offers the affordance of sitting at and having a picnic. Personal, refers to the affordance perceived and experienced solely on personal circumstances and may be non-normative. For instance, a flat pathway offers the possibility to walk, jog or cycle on it but only if the individual wishes to do so and has the ability and skills to do either behaviour. Apparently, there is indeed a complex set of concepts and conventional rules governing the affordance encountered and interpreted by individuals. The interpretation and perception of affordance is closely tied up with the agent’s values, culture, and past knowledge, which explains why the affordance is not afforded evenly to every single person (Hutchby, 2001).

Later, researchers proposed the existence of affordance for individual action, social behaviours and social interaction in organization setting. Based on a case study on the relocation of ThoughtForm, a communication design firm, Peponis et al. (2007) identified very strong positive shifts with regards to the affordance of the post-relocation through the self-assessment questionnaires and observations. The three positive perceptions of affordance are the access to team work spaces, access to

informal relaxation spaces, and access to quiet work spaces. The informants felt that the relocation affords more abundantly spaces for various work settings and work styles which meet the needs to support and afford teamwork and personal work. With this, the researchers believe that affordances provide a relevant lens of analysis, and a medium that allows researchers to analyze the ways the physical properties and social processes are intertwined in organization. Affordances in organization can be best understood in the way of how the workplace supports or inhibits individuals' engagement in work activities by accessing to both direct and indirect guidance (Peponis et al., 2007). These affordances are usually constituted in work practices and experienced by workers in their daily routines.

Furthermore, it is suggested that the spatial affordance modulate patterns of movement and associated modes of seeing and understanding in space and place, for example, museum. In museums, educational message is structured through movement in space. The pattern of visitors' movement (whether a defined path or self-directed path) will convey informal education in museums and structure the overall impression of the exhibition. To extend the theoretical understanding of spatial affordance, Wineman and Peponis (2010) examined the spatial affordance in museum design for visitors' exploratory movement and active engagement with the exhibit elements. Their findings have indicated that the way which exhibits are arranged in space creates the possibility of spatially guided movement, a movement pattern that brings visitors into contact and engagement. Such particular spatial affordance argue that the form of space within a particular spatial structure affect our perception and shape our understanding to explore, to move, to make contact, to

engage and perhaps, to interact with the surroundings. Research findings by Achiam, May and Marandino (2014) in museum study have also indicated the affordance of physical, geometry and symbolic setting of discovery room for different level of visitor's cognitive actions and meaning making. While Lu and Peponis (2014) found out the affordance of spatial arrangement of museum exhibitions, 'covisibility', has a great cognitive impact on visitors. Covisibility refers to the setting and placement of objects in the field. Thus, it is particularly significant to this research in justifying the role of spatial affordance in influencing people's spatial practice for communication and as a medium associated with cognitive functions to afford perception and action for interaction and collaboration.

Besides this, Fayard and Weeks (2007) also examined the affordance of photocopier rooms for informal interaction in an organization setting. Their research illustrated how does the concept of affordance use to explain the relationship between a specific type of environment and the behaviour of actors within it and to analyze the physical and social elements of the environment that are relevant to the behaviour. From their study, they introduced the notion of social affordances and identified the social and physical characteristics that produce privacy, propinquity, and social designation which are necessary for an environment to afford informal interactions.

The prerequisite of privacy suggests that people feel most comfortable to interact informally when they can control the boundaries of their conversation. The need for privacy in a workplace is constructed by a multi-layer factor. The privilege to access to certain workspaces and be able to communicate informally with others is known

as psychological privacy which refers to any sense of control over access to oneself or one's group. While the needs to be away from distraction and interruption can be fulfilled by having architectural privacy which refers to the visual and acoustic isolation by walls, doors or partitions. Besides, desk position and placement, workstation type and the density of workspace provide potential affordance for architectural privacy as well.

The precondition of propinquity suggests that informal interactions usually occur in spaces that bring people physically closer to each other. The well-known research on proximity and likelihood of communication conducted by Allen (1997) indicated that there is a significantly negative link between physical distance separating people at work and the frequency and likelihood people communicate with each other. Meanwhile, one is less likely to interact if another party is difficult to encounter. Therefore, a well-trafficked place usually affords a greater chance and opportunity for people seeing each other and socially obligated to have face-to-face interaction. For example, the centrality of lobby makes people easy to enter, exit and walk through and thus affords more propinquity and opportunistic interaction.

Ignoring social designation and using purely physical proxies for privacy and propinquity is an oversimplification on the workplace interaction phenomenon (Fayard & Weeks, 2007). Social designation creates a sense of responsibility on workers to socialize and it can be related to social norms and spatial practice exercise in an organization. The social designation of activities provides a set of shared expectations and understandings about the do's and don'ts in the place. Similar to

spatial practice, the practice of door-closing in an organization may implicitly convey a message in which impromptu interaction is not welcome and privacy is the priority. In another words, such spatial practice does not afford impromptu interaction.

An explanation of the affordance for a particular social behaviour in a given setting would answer two questions. The first question is: what are the environmental requirements of the behaviour? In searching for the affordance for informal interaction, prior theory has identified two environmental requirements. People must come into unplanned contact with others (propinquity), and people must be able to control the boundaries of their conversation (privacy). However, in Fayard and Weeks' study, the theory of affordances helped identify a third environmental requirement for informal interaction: people must feel that it is socially acceptable to stop and talk to each other in this setting (social designation). Thus, the precondition to afford informal interactions in workplace is to have appropriate propinquity, considerable privacy, and justifiable social designation.

The second question is: what are the physical and social characteristics of the setting that may fill those environmental requirements and signal the affordance to perceiving actors? Through a series of observations in the same study, Fayard and Weeks (2007) found the key characteristics for informal interaction fall into three dimensions: architecture, geography, and function. Architectural elements refer to windows, doors and partitions; geographical elements concern with the architectural layout and arrangements; and functional elements look at the technical and social

function of an object found in the surroundings. Moreover, Fayard and Weeks emphasized that cultural differences must be taken into consideration since different people may perceive the affordance in fundamental different ways. Therefore, this research employed Chinese value of harmony into the affordance identification to examine the affordance for collaboration. To further investigate the affordance for collaboration, preconditions to afford collaboration in workplace will be identified from the Chinese perspective.

Since perception of affordance varies with individual factors and is highly culturally-derived (Gomes, 2012), this research employed the dynamic concept of Gibson's theory affordance to cast and capture the reciprocal relationship between organization space and human behaviour within a specific Chinese sociocultural context. The theory is used to examine the ability of organization space to support needs and preconditions for collaboration. It will also help to explain the properties of the organization space offer to its perceiver or users – as in what it provides, furnishes and affords for interaction and collaboration. Different types of affordance will be identified without unilaterally determining the perceived affordance.

2.10 Summary

This chapter has described the idea of intellectual imperialism and its manifestations in Eurocentric academic landscape. The prominent differences between East and West from the aspects of knowledge construction, absolutism versus relativism view of space and time, human communication approach and philosophical-religious traditions challenged the nature of universality of Western-centric paradigm

especially in intercultural and communication context. Such philosophical foundations and value systems are known to be highly influential in shaping one's communicative pattern.

While the chronological view of organizational communication development has justified a renewed way to study organization space as physical dimension; as materialization of social possesses and as lived experienced. Zhang's (2007) study in *Leisurely Office*, offered new ways of studying the triad spatial production and his findings have strengthen the importance of culture in organization space too. However, the increased demand in technology and virtual office has reshuffled the functions of organization space which possess a threat against traditional view and value of space for collaboration.

Chapter 3 will explain the rationale for using qualitative approach and ethnographic design. The chapter will provide further details concerning the research site setting, role(s) of researcher, data collection process, data analysis, and the process used to establish trustworthiness of the findings.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology adopted in the study. Interpretive/descriptive paradigm and ethnographic design were employed. As the qualitative approach is particularly interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings, it therefore provides the most appropriate way to understand how do the participants understand, interpret, and experience organization space through everyday situations. Some leading policies of ethnomethodology will also be discussed.

The initial part of this chapter considers some important tenets underpinning qualitative and ethnographic enquiry to illustrate the appropriateness of the approach. The latter part of this chapter provides detailed accounts of my roles, how I conducted the fieldwork, and the analytical process employed. With these detailed descriptions of how the research was conducted, the reader would be able to understand and evaluate the trustworthiness of the findings explored in subsequent chapters.

3.2 Why Ethnographic Approach?

Ethnographic research, rooted in the discipline of anthropology, is a holistic approach to investigating real-life experiences, interpretations and practices as

situated in local context. Traditionally, this meant descriptive accounts of a community or culture, usually for one located outside the West (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). It focused on people in their lived environment and aimed to explore a variety of non-Western cultures and ways of living. To conduct such work, fieldwork is required, including living with a group of people for extended periods, in order to document and interpret their distinctive way of life and the beliefs and values integral to it. Ethnography fieldwork thus refers to an integration of both first-hand empirical investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Slowly, ethnography has evolved and been adopted more readily into a diverse range of disciplines from anthropology to sociology, psychology, education, medicine, nursing, organization and management and human geography (Knoblauch, 2005; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Oliffe, 2005; Roper & Shapira, 2000; Watson, 2012; Yanow, 2012).

As the core aim of this research is to understand a non-Western view of organization space through the informants' day-to-day communicative pattern and behaviour, this research is positioned in an interpretive and descriptive model centring on the way in which people make sense of and attach meaning to their subjective realities. The interpretative paradigm also emphasizes that there are fundamental differences between the physical and human world. Humans are not "objects"; they are condemned to "meaning" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Hence, by situating the research in interpretive and descriptive paradigm, the East would be centred and no longer studied as an object, as which we have been studied for decades.

Recognizing that reality is socially constructed under constant negotiation, the interpretive/descriptive paradigm advocates that people perceive and react to various situations differently and hence, social interaction is essentially an interpretative process in which meanings evolve and change in the course of interaction. Therefore, to identify the underlying non-Western principle or value in communication behaviour, it is important to engage with people in their life context to describe the observed human experience and interpret the socially constructed meaning and lived experience. Such an interpretivist view can be linked to Max Weber's *Verstehen*, which references an interpretative process in which one must understand something in its context; an outsider observer of a culture must attempt to relate themselves to the experience and understand it and others (Creswell, 2009).

Ethnography has even been deemed necessary in organization communication studies as it plays a key role in organizational research due to classical organizational theories such as the Hawthorne effect and later, human relations and human resource theories (Yanow, 2012). At the beginning, Taylorism, a component of Scientific Management, used detail-oriented management and observation-based descriptions. Later, a deeper and more detailed observation was employed in Hawthorne studies in wiring room experiment and plant-wide mass interviewing programmes for determining worker attitudes. This reflected the need for the observational presence of researchers and the utility of interviewing. Although the human relations and human resources approaches differ from classical views of management for their opposing views considering the needs of individuals, their emphasis on individuals

for their presence as part of the teams who contribute significantly in making a difference and making sense for reality means that individual actions and accounts should be given attention too. Hence, ethnography is an appropriate fit for this research as it values people's actions and accounts in an everyday context, and pays attention to wider structures in examining social life by understanding thoughts and feelings of people through observation and interviews. It is also used to explore contextual aspects of organizational setting by collecting the "irreducibility human experience" via "direct and sustained social contact with agents" (Willis & Trondman, 2002, p.394).

In order to achieve the core aim of the research, which is to examine space for collaboration from non-Western perspectives by investigating communication pattern and behaviour in an organization, the ethnographic approach is employed. This is for two main reasons: the nature of subjectivism and interpretivism.

Based on the Eastern paradigmatic assumptions, it is clear that the understanding of life and worldview is highly subjective. Subjectivism in social science concentrates more on the way the social world is perceived by individuals and social life as the outcome of the interaction of structure and agency through the practice of everyday life (O'Reilly, 2012). Giddens (1984) insisted that social life is neither determined by social structure (institutions, rules or resources), nor it is the outcome of individual actions, determined by how individuals feel, what they intend or plan to achieve. Both structure and agents or individuals demonstrate duality; they always interpenetrated, interrelated, and interdependent. Additionally, 'structures are

constituted through action [...] action is constituted structurally' (Giddens, 1976, p.161). Hence, we cannot consider structures (objects) and agents or individuals (subjects) to be two distinct entities. Although structure may limit what people can do and cannot do, the interplay (practice) between the two entities may bring unexpected possibilities into everyday life.

To reach a comprehensive understanding of non-Western communication pattern and production of space, it is essential to see humans as actors in the social world rather than a passive reacting object in the natural world. It is also important to understand people in the context of their particular society or culture and their meanings about what they are doing; what are the possible outcomes produced from the interplay between human and space. Such interpretivism view generates knowledge and makes sense of the world through interpreting the world in a particular context as well as capturing human subjectivity via practice. The work of Etienne Wenger (1998) on communities of practice is a useful way to think about what we can observe and learn from in various contexts within which agents and structures are enacted.

Communities of practice are the coming together as agents or individuals engage in practice and doing negotiation of meanings, in their respective communities. The practice refers to 'doing' in a social and historical context gives structure and meaning to what we do. Since humans are diverse in background, identity, status, power and goal, there is more negotiation of meaning and adaption one's self goals and expectations in line with the experiences, norms and practices of others.

Meanwhile, communities of practice are interrelations which arise out of engagements in practice rather than entities an ethnographer might try objectively to describe (O'Reilly, 2012). Practice is dynamic and pluralistic. It is a continuous effort of how individuals actually engage in social life, making sense of the social context through social engagement. Engaging in community practices reveals everyday struggles and negotiation of meaning of the agents to the ethnographer, the better to understand the actual engagement.

There are two strands of interest truly at the heart of qualitative research: (1) a concern with meaning and the way people understand things; and (2) a concern with patterns of behaviour which derive from activities of a social group (Denscombe, 2003). Hence, qualitative methods that associate with interpretive views which aim to understand a particular social situation, event, group or interaction (Holloway, 2010) is appropriate in examining non-Western view of organization space. To further investigate the constitution of non-Western values or philosophies in the participants' communicative behaviour, qualitative methods allow researcher to explore the way people make sense of their social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the objects of study (Cresswell, 1994).

This research also relates itself to some of the core concepts in ethnomethodology. Recognizing everyday life as an achievement, collective sense making, and the central importance of talk as a social process are the essence of ethnomethodology (Linstead, 2006). This reveals how individuals in an ordinary society work hard in

everyday situations in which they find themselves and the way in which they use commonsense knowledge, procedures, and considerations to accomplish their everyday needs such as social needs, while maintaining consistency, order, normality and meaning in their lives (Garfinkel, 2002). With this, Harold Garfinkel opened a new path in sociology for his recognition of the properties of practical reasoning in common sense, in everyday situations. He repositioned the interpretation of the actors for not only describing the context; actors too, construct the context. Although scientific rationality may result in successful activity, in many situations of our daily lives, it may allow less successful activity than practical reasoning. That is because our everyday actual practices involved in the setting are able to provide a subjective reality of interaction. This is pertinent to this research as it allows the researcher to witness everyday social practice in the organization, engages in communication process and spatial relations in the everyday situation.

Besides conducting observation, ethnomethodological research also requires researcher to listen to conversations, ask for actors' interpretation and analyse them. Since there are indexical expressions (meaning those they have a different meaning in every context), listening skills are important in order to capture life in the world in which the conversation takes place. This is especially vital in examining human communication, as it involves in an endless process of interaction, sense making and meaning exchange. According to Psathas (1995), some of the core values in ethnomethodology which are significant in understanding social context may be characterised as follows: (1) the organization of practical actions and practical reasoning, which provide relevancy to this research as it imposes sense of social

reality from the participants rather than descriptions of persons being studied; (2) the organization of talk-in-interaction, which refers to the approach of conversation analysis in social interaction that embraces both verbal and non-verbal conduct in everyday life situations; (3) talk-in-interaction within institutional or organizational settings, it emphasizes the importance of an identifying interactional structure specific to a particular context and social setting; and (4) the study of social activity, in which the setting is performed. Thus, ethnographic research and ethnomethodology are practical in answering research questions which require in-depth understanding and analysis of the underlying assumptions in the process of human communication. Spatial construction from non-Western perspectives also requires more than what an eye can see and what an ear can hear. The engagement into the practice in everyday situations through the effort of seeking practical reasoning through commonsense knowledge, listening to conversation, and asking questions for interpretation, would be extremely useful and significant in answering the research questions.

As suggested by Hymes (1974), in order to understand communication in a culture, the impact of cultural values and beliefs on communicative patterns should first be examined. To explore the Asian approach to communication, Dissanayake (2003) suggested four areas to effectively investigate Asian communication patterns. First is to analyze classical texts that contain valuable yet implicit concepts of communication. Second is to explore classical traditional concepts in current cultural practice. Third is to examine cultural rituals and performances which provide a valuable cultural space from which to identify traditional concepts of communication

practices. Last but not least is to pay closer attention to day-to-day communication behaviours and see how they can be related to traditional cultural values. To shun superficial behaviours, a focus on everyday behaviours, practices and understandings - the ethnography of communication – is the way to understand non-West communication. It enables the researcher move beyond the abstract sphere of thought to more down-to-earth experiences (Dissanayake, 2003).

The ethnographic approach adopted in this research is primarily shaped by the epistemology assumptions in the Eastern communication pattern. The East is said to be different from West in respective upholding value and philosophy in epistemology. Philosophical belief leads the way on how people seek for knowledge and hence, as Fung says, philosophy mirrored “the method of conducting study” (as cited in Wang, 2011). Compared to Western philosophy which puts greater stress on logical and rational creation of knowledge, Eastern philosophy has no great conviction that knowledge must be scientifically proven via logics and systems but rather on internal factors, self-cultivation and ethics (Liu, 2004). The study of Eastern epistemology requires not only a proper methodology, but also a deeper knowledge of the socio-cultural environment and ethical approach. Eastern thoughts that incline to “practical knowledge” in understanding each other are less technically controlled than technical knowledge derived from a systematic and rationalistic methodology as advocated by Western philosophy (Wang, 2011; Habermas, 1987).

Together with an Eastern ontological view of what is real, this research recognizes that individuals invest different meaning to their environments in a fundamentally

different way and individuals' cultural systems of meaning are assumed to frame the perception and construct the subjective social reality. Based on the multiplicity of meaning-making process in social reality, ethnographic approach is used to seek non-West reality and knowledge through meaning searching, meaning creating and meaning interpreting from multiple ways with no absolute fixed procedure. Ethnography is also a 'description and interpretation of a culture or social group study which aims to understand social reality by focusing on ordinary and everyday behaviour of the culture' (Holloway, Shipway & Brown, 2010, p.76).

Considering that space carries different meanings under different circumstances and perspectives, it is imperative to examine how and why certain group of people manipulate space to meet specific social needs and desires which leads to promote or hinder collaborative behaviour. Therefore, the researcher shall enter into and become fully immersed in the natural setting and naturally observe actual behaviours in people who share the same culture (Olson, 2008). This suggestion was once made by Lawrence and Low (1990):

The specific nature and degree of fit between social organization and built form in particular societies have been explored in recent ethnographic field studies conducted by archaeologists. David (1971) argues that the definition of fit is specific to each culture and must be discovered by the ethnographer. This includes identifying both the basic spatial elements associated with domestic functions (e.g. sleeping and cooking) and the social units to which they are linked (p.463).

For instance, Norhafezah (2010) conducted an ethnographic study in Cyberjaya to explore the inhabitants' social being and living in the city. She hung out in the city and got involved in social activities conducted by the policy makers of the city. Her

findings implied that the city of Cyberjaya was socially dead and did not meet the desirable urban experiences due to the absence of people and sociality. However, the city possesses its own unique Malaysian flavour. By immersing ourselves in the natural settings and being in the place, we would be able to identify both the manifest and latent functions of the place.

As the main objective is to examine the non-Western perspective of space for organizational collaborative efforts, this research first conceives space as the manifestation of lived human experience and in relation with the experiences of being in the place. Ethnography is therefore conducted to understand and capture the underlying meanings of people's lived experience through the ethnographer's first-hand experience in people everyday situations. It highlights how space is actively created through organizing processes rather than being a mere architecturally designed space (Halford, 2008). In ethnography fieldwork, researchers will interact with the participants in a regular and usual manner with minimal interference (Brewer, 2000). By 'hanging out' in everyday organizational life, the researcher can closely monitor how space is produced and how that production affords interaction and collaboration from a non-Western perspective.

3.3 Selection of Research Site

The research was conducted in an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) company. The new government ICT landscape will not only be citizen-driven and employee-centric, it will also have a dynamic dimension that calls for a better blend of organization planning and management (MAMPU, 2011). To push the

nation forward with higher effectiveness, research and development (R&D) need to have an integrated process. There are three channels most often used to gain integration - hiring skilled employees, purchasing hardware and software, and using consultants. It is interesting to note that two out of three channels involve people (Mowry, 2007). Therefore, humans plays a key role in organization development and human communication is also a necessity for R&D task coordinating.

Not only have the advancements and development of high-technology information and communication tools been a major driving force behind globalization, it also leads a growing interest and popularity for virtual team or virtual organization across boundaries of time and space in modern organizations. Communicative and collaborative efforts in organizations by their very nature demands visibility, proximity and face-to-face interaction and are now facing difficulties in meeting the requirements for virtual team and organization. Working in a virtual team may grant an individual certain extent of freedom; it also limits to a certain extent human communication and opportunistic encounters for social exchange.

Not only does it, a virtual team fails to provide pre-conditioning for interaction. It also creates barriers to achieve effective communication such as geographically dispersed, delayed communication, and temporally distributed. It thus challenges the traditional communication pattern and preference for collaboration (Ebrahim, Ahmed & Taha, 2009) and has also threatened conventional workplace practices and communication patterns. More importantly, it has altered the traditional view and

value of space. Hence, an ICT company is selected to examine the renewed concept of production space and contemporary view and value of space.

3.4 Data Collection

Initially, I made request for my fieldwork by sending my research proposal to 15 ICT companies located in Kuala Lumpur. These 15 companies were selected based on the following characteristics: companies whose primary business activities are involved in using information and communication technology (ICT); nature of work with emphasis on R&D; and a majority of local non-Western employees, preferably Malaysian Chinese. The rationale is to find a research site with the presence of struggles between relying mediated communication through communication technology and demanding face-to-face opportunities encounters for communicative and collaborative action. A majority of Malaysian Chinese employees were needed for examination and investigation of the non-Western underlying assumptions in their everyday communication pattern and behaviour.

In the submitted proposal, I described my research objective, data collection procedures, and the significance of ethnography fieldwork. However, most of my applications were declined, as many companies were not willing to be observed and researched. The lukewarm response was anticipated, because it is quite common to experience problems in gaining access to organizations for ethnographic research. Waal (2009) indicated that one of the reasons is that organizations tend to be vulnerable regarding their reputation and are well aware of the damage that can be

done by the publication of ‘misinterpretations’ by researchers, despite legislation promoting transparency and a commitment to free flows of information.

Nevertheless, one company responded to me and scheduled an interview with me. It is a research-based Information Technology (IT) company, CCE, and thus the qualitative approach is not strange to them. Prior to the interview, I had been asked to do a seventy-five minute standard research analyst online-test. It was an aptitude test. Two days after the test, I was invited to attend an interview with two senior analysts. At the end of the interview, we reached a consensus in which I would formally work as an intern in CCE while informally work as an observer during my fieldwork (or as they called it, internship). Also, I was allowed to reveal both of my formal and informal identities to the other colleagues. However, the name of the organization shall not be revealed and any photographs for research purposes were strictly not allowed. The fieldwork took place over a six-month period between October 2011 and March 2012.

3.4.1 Role of Researcher

Descriptions of ethnography as a qualitative research method include the role of the researcher as an instrument or tool (Morse & Field, 1995; Roper & Shapira, 2000). The nature of ethnographic research requires the researcher to be present as a participant or/and observer, hence the understanding that the research is involved as an instrument or/and tool. Both the insider and outsider roles must be balanced for effective data collection and analysis. The researcher must be aware of the consequences of their presence for what may be found out. While much has been written about the observer-participant relationship in ethnographic research, the level of engagement this relationship takes matters the most. Moreover, being an active

and engaged insider researcher is a practice of reflexivity as well (Greene, 2014). Establishing and maintaining an appropriate degree in both social relations and emotional responses with participants are important to the reflexive process (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

Throughout the data collection period, I employed five types of participant observation: non-participatory, passive participation, moderate participation, active participation and complete participation, according to my different levels of involvement (Spradley, 1980; DeWalt, DeWalt & Wayland, 1998; Schwartz & Schwartz, 1955) throughout the six-month fieldwork. My roles did not progress step-by-step linearly from passive to active participation. Instead, my roles mostly moved between moderate and active participation. I only experienced non-participatory activities for the very first day of reporting and some days in December when most of my colleagues were on leave. Being a participant-only with complete participation was also a rare experience, but I did have it for a few times when I was too immersed and occupied with my intern workload.

On my first day of reporting to the research site, I reached office at 8:25 am, about half an hour earlier than the expected reporting time. Below are my very first fieldnotes:

Reached here at 8:25am but the office glass door was locked and I have no access card to enter the office. May be it was still early, the receptionist wasn't there too. I stood outside the office but I did keep an eye to see if someone can help. I saw someone in the office walking pass the glass door so I quickly waved and smiled at him and said "Can you open the door for me?" with gesture. I didn't

know if he can hear me or not and whether he knows what I was talking but the guy just opened the door for me without asking anything or saying anything to me.

I then walked in and sat on the chair near to the reception counter. I didn't know what to do or what to expect but I dare not to walk around so I just sat down and looked around. After a while, the Human Resource Executive who I met during my interview walked towards me and greeted me "Good morning, Chally. You are too early. It's ok, let me show you your place.

When I was standing outside the office and sitting alone near the reception counter, those were the moments I experienced as an observer-only researcher (Roper & Shapira, 2000) because I was a total stranger to the place and I did not see myself as part of the organization too. I was indeed an outsider. The observer-only role vanished immediately when I was told that I would be given a place where the HR executive was leading me to. I saw no one in the office when we were walking to "my place". As we reached "my place", the HR executive told me that it was my temporary work desk (it was then my permanent desk throughout the six-month fieldwork). She asked me to have a seat and she would come back to me later. She then left and I was alone at "my place". This time, I did not feel myself as an observer-only researcher because I was given a place and territory. I was no longer a fully detached observer or outsider as soon as I started looking around, observing the context from "my place".

Another time when I was an observer-only was some days in December when my colleagues from my team (9 of them) were all on leave. Literally, there was no one within my direct visual range except for one IT staffer, but we did not talk to each

other because we were not sitting near to each other and my back was facing his front, so there was no direct vision between us and I felt so lost and strange sitting in the office for doing nothing significant, as written in the fieldnotes:

Another boring day it was. All ANZ girls are still on leave so I was the only one in my team who stays for...work? Not really, no one assigns any work to me. I was so free and relax in the office. Basically there were only one or two analysts working on standby mode in each team. The office was so quiet and I guess there was less than 10 of us working (more accurately, physically staying) in the office today. Apart from doing some readings for my research, I browsed the Internet all day long. Shyen (the IT staff) was here but as usual, we didn't talk to each other much. I was thinking if I should ask him out for lunch? I was also thinking if he would ask me out for lunch?

On the other hand, the role of participant-only with complete participation and engagement was rare, because I always kept in mind that I must stay alert to my surroundings. While I wished to “go native” in the research site, I also did not want to put myself at a risk of losing levels of objectivity. I had two pieces of paper placed at the top right corner of my desk; one to jot down observation details and key words for feelings, ideas or events, and another to record the usage frequency of quiet rooms located next to my desk, at my right.

However, there were a few times where I almost burned out due to a high intern workload and rushing for tight deadlines especially during the report submission week. I was so immersed into my work, not research work but the work assigned by my on-site supervisor. For those days, I had no time to do observation or to jot down anything happened in the office. I was totally not in the mode of being a researcher. I noticed the movement and overheard the conversation but as I was too occupied with

the assigned report, I was not able to record anything or write any fieldnotes for those particular days. That was the time I made a weekly half-day off request from my on-site supervisor as I had was losing the minimum levels of engagement that I should have, as an ethnography researcher.

Other than those rare moments, I stayed and alternated between moderate participation and active participation for most of the time. I cannot determine exactly the transition of roles between a moderate participant and active participant. When working on the job given by my on-site supervisor, I made every effort to relate what I see and what I heard to my research. I also jotted down any casual idea, single word, conversation, and feelings in my fieldnotes. By the end of the day, before leaving the office at 5.30pm, I would review my notes for fieldnote writing. In another time when I was free from having intern workload, I usually spend my time away from my desk. I moved around and sometime just sat down and watched what others were doing. When sitting with people I was not familiar with, although I was supposed to be observer-only, I didn't make it through for most of the time. The reason was the presence of the "researcher effect". Other colleagues gave me a strange look when I was walking around in the office and taking notes. Some of them didn't know why I was moving around; sometime they asked, but for most of the time, they didn't. For those who know about my background and role, they acted tactfully and spoke less when I was around them as an observer-only researcher. Hence, to reduce my "researcher effect" or "observer effect"; I acted like I was doing some work (by switching on the desktop, having paper and files with me) rather than sitting still and looking at others' behavior. I pretended I was doing work on the

paper and on the screen because some colleagues gave me a very suspicious look when they saw me writing on my notes (internal jokes / gossips) after they uttered or mentioned something.

When doing readings for data analysis, sometime I put myself into the situation to think like how an insider would think. But sometimes, I interpreted the data as an outsider too. When attending for general meeting and regional conference call with the Australia and New Zealand team, I interchanged my roles from less participation to more active participation according to my on-site role as an intern trainee.

I played my role as observer-only with low level of involvement when I was engaged in general meeting together with other staff in the office. I spent most of my time not listening to the content of the meeting (usually on work updates) but rather taking notes on the participants' non-verbal cues such as their facial expressions, standing or seating positions, who they mingled with, and whether they were with their direct team mates or colleagues from other teams. I did so because I had limited interaction with these analysts from other teams during the working days. However, participating in conference call with my team's regional offices disallowed me to have low levels of involvement because I was required to present certain report progression and attend to the conversation details among my direct team members and analysts from Australia and New Zealand office. Since there were only 10 of us in the meeting room and sometime we would be assigned tasks through the virtual conversation, I had to pay attention to the content of the meeting rather than observing people. This was fine because these people were my direct team members

whose work desks were just next to mine. For the general and regional meetings, I collected more detailed observation from general meeting because I was not obligated to report updates or present or even to say a thing. Some fieldnotes written during general meeting are as follows:

This morning (11am), I attended my first ever general meeting with everyone in the office. When I first walked into the meeting room, most of the staff was already there; I saw some new faces I never see before. I also noticed there was a small table placed next to the entrance with some snacks like Mamee, Twistes and candies; phone and speaker already placed on the big table; the displaying slide was showing "Evolving in FY12". While the IT staff was trying to connect Skype with other colleagues from other countries, I looked around to observe and make sense of the setting.

In the room, there were only 11 people sitting around the big table while it can fit up to 15 people, I think. Another 28 people were sitting around the room and 11 of them were standing for there was not enough chair. As I observed around, people were mingling around with members from other teams too but mostly still staying close with people who are from the same working team. After a while, the meeting started with greetings from the CEO who was in Australia that time. He greeted "Good morning, good afternoon and good night wherever you are in!" That was because there were teams all around the globe having this general meeting together via Skype, for instance, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Japan and Philippines. Out of the 50 of us, I noticed there were only three people were taking notes while the others were staring at their phone, typing on their phone, typing on their laptop and a few of them fell asleep.

Throughout the six-month fieldwork, my roles interchanged under different social contexts and circumstances. Basically, when I was required to have high levels of involvement for my on-site role as an intern, I would then have low levels of

involvement for my role as an observer-researcher. When I was not required to commit high levels of involvement for my on-site role as an intern, I then have more freedom and autonomy to increase my levels of involvement as a moderate and/or active participant-researcher. Engaging in different roles at different levels of involvement helped me generate more diverse and different understanding towards the informants' practice of organization communication and spatial relation.

3.4.2 Research Method

Multi-method data collection, namely participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, documentary sources and material artefacts analysis were employed to explore the way people make sense of their social life through their everyday natural settings. Participant observations were carried out over a six-month time span. In my first week of fieldwork, my immediate on-site supervisor brought me around and introduced me as an intern who was there for research on the workplace. As soon as I commenced my observation, I reminded myself to take 'everything' as what I am going to observe. Getting immersed in the organization is not just to tell what is obviously known, but 'everything'. Nothing should be assumed to be uninteresting and insignificant. Choosing not to observe something may narrow the potent observational data and affect the credibility of the study (Neyland, 2008). During the initial observation, I paid attention to observing people's social interactions and the spatial utility. As the fieldwork progressed, my focus became refined and more targeted to the collaboration efforts and actions among research analysts.

Conducting observation to investigate how participants define organization space allowed the researcher to watch and analyse how people utilize their organizational space for both practical (work) and social needs. Engaging in the fieldwork experience and observing the symbolic meaning constructed by the inhabitants enhanced my understanding on the ongoing social practice and spatial practice in the organization. In addition to this, any conversations, activities, unstructured interviews data, ideas, feelings and responses that emerged during the observations were written as fieldnotes on a regular basis. Fieldnotes are an outcome of observation and are cumulative. To be able to portray an accurate and equitable assessment of the social and spatial experiences of the informants, I took every opportunity to move around in the office after I gained my confidence to do so, as my movement was low in the first month of the fieldwork.

The process of conducting observations will lead to a familiarity with the setting, activities, sociality and people within the research site. Such familiarities were important for exchanges and conversation between the participants and me and often resulting in providing insights to later be addressed in semi-structured interviews. In situ, I, as the participant observer, was not only present physically in the settings and shared the informants' life experiences; I also managed to enter into their social space and symbolic world through learning their social conventions and habits.

To gain greater depth and breadth of knowledge about the interaction pattern and spatial practice in CCE, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect personal narratives or stories about how they utilize the work space and how they

perceive their communication pattern for collaboration. It also used to probe issues raised by the observations and fill in any holes in the collective stories created by the various data collection techniques. This helped expand the research horizon and a render more holistic and meaningful ethnography study.

Since the questions in semi-structured interviews were partly predetermined, the responses were somehow fixed at certain criteria. It is sufficient to generate overall ideas for the research questions, but fails to provide more individual thought, feeling and experiences in the organization. Therefore, I also engaged in unstructured interviews which allowed more free-flowing of ideas. Sometime I would have a guide, plan, topic or purpose before initiating the unstructured interview with someone. Sometimes it was just a spontaneous unstructured interviewing, more like a casual chatting or conversation. Informants were then given the opportunity to respond in a leisurely way, to disagree, to change the topic and sometime, add new insights into the research too. Engaging in unstructured interviews allowed me to seek for more clarification and explanation for unclear and contradictory statements or responses I received from the previous semi-structured interviews.

Along with fieldwork, trust and rapport in the researcher-respondent relationship are vital in encouraging people to be involved in the study and gradually reveal more in-depth information about their event experiences to the researcher (O'Reilly, 2009). Respondent rapport provides not only an open discussion (Goudy & Potter, 1975), it may also lead to a degree of acceptance or cooperation of the respondent to a research project too (Blohm, 2007). To build a better relationship with the potential

informants, I engaged actively in both formal and informal occasions. For formal occasions, I made efforts to attend every general meeting and monthly regional meeting and worked as a committee member for the CCE annual dinner. For informal occasions, I frequently had lunch and dinner with colleagues from different teams and casually engaged in weekend outings officially organized by the company as well as those personally planned by the other colleagues. For the first four months, I progressively initiated casual conversations with the informants and carefully observed how interaction occurred and examined the use of space among the occupants before working hours, during working hours and after working hours. I did not conduct any semi-structured interview with the potential informants in the first two months of my fieldwork, as I was not close to them and we did not talk much.

Besides having communication and interaction with the informants, I also paid particular attention to both documentary sources and material artefacts. These key features of the social world are always easily overlooked and forgotten yet they are significant (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In many social settings, people constantly engage in the production and circulation of various types of written materials, including employee handbook, company rules and policy, timetables, organizational chart, warning letters and more, both in printed or electronic form. This could be referred to as a 'documentary constructions of reality' (Coffey & Atkinson, 2004) which suggests that documents sources may construct 'facts', 'records', 'decisions' and 'rules' that are significantly involved in social activities. Besides, documentary sources and material artefacts may also construct

contradictory reality against how it supposed to be. For instance, some managerial level informants attempted to relate organization objectives to organizational structure and spatial practices as follows:

“There are three teams here and for ASEAN, we are made to work in silo and work on our own domain. Apparently, we go by product at the end of the day, not by geography. Also, the whole ASEAN strategy came as no great collaboration is needed. We tend to collaborate within small circle but not as in larger scale. I think this justified why we ‘look’ quiet and not talking to each other. So, no matter how you place us, that’s how we work.”

“IT is a big industry; we definitely need a good working space, open concept may be a good choice to help in knowledge sharing. It gives a great opportunity for you to get to know people, explore the opportunity for your own career development. That’s why I will put things like sharing info in my subordinates’ KPI. I always want them to interact with others, for work and social.”

“In fact right, placing us in cubicles in the office is a very rigid practice which doesn’t really fit our motto and culture because I supposed IT should be a very dynamic industry. It doesn’t make sense to me but it is fine if this is where and how they (the top management) want us to sit.”

From the above explanations, it is clear that organizational objectives, culture, practices, and spatial relationships are interrelated and interpenetrated.

As for material artefacts, rather than treating them as a separate domain or as a background of the social practice; it should be and is needed to be analyzed as a signifier and physical resources that offer physical settings for social activity (Brannan, Rowe & Worthington, 2012). Social phenomena and relationship will not

happen without the use of material artefacts or objects. The very basic necessity of having a chair and table, a pen and paper signify the essential embodiment of social activity in physical things. Collective social activities in an organization are constantly involved in the creation, use, production and circulation of written documentary sources and material artefacts - which must be given attention during ethnographic fieldwork.

Informants for interviews were selected on criterion-based and non-probabilistic methods for maximizing the representativeness of the research findings. As such, I aimed at Malaysian Chinese informants who worked in R&D team. In fact, all Chinese analysts were from Malaysia except for one from Indonesia. Finally, I managed to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interview with 42 Malaysian Chinese research analysts ranging from junior analyst to senior analyst. A list of questions for semi-structured interview is as attached in Appendix A.

Some questions may sound abstract and consist of jargons or concepts that could not be easily understood by the informants. However, some of it is designed to be abstract. For example, in “*Tell me what do you think about organization space?*”, the researcher did not want to restrict the definition of “*organization space*” and so, informants were given freedom to have open interpretation. I also modified the way I ask after I received the first response of “*I do not know and have no idea at all*”. (*Personal communication, November 2, 2011*). Later, I rephrased the questions to casual conversation-like. For instance, instead of “...*would you practice a selective communication?*”, I rephrased it differently depends on the conversation and

language used with the informants but I ensured the rephrased question carried a same meaning to the original question. Examples, I rephrased it to “...*would you speak differently to different people?*”, “...*would you practice a same communication style to whoever you talk to?*”, “...*would you adjust or modify the way you communicate or talk to different types of people?*”. I also rephrased “*spatial usage and practice*” to “*how do you use the space here?*”, “*how do you utilize the office space?*”; however, this was dependent on how the informants’ definition of “organization space” at the beginning. For “*spatial requirement for collaboration*”, I led their responses to physical and architectural dimensions while I rephrased to casual and informal question like “*what do you think is the pre-condition in term of physical and architectural dimensions that we need for collaboration or working together?*” (if this was how the informant defined collaboration). The adjustment and modification of questions largely depend on the previous responses given by the informants as well as the language used.

Personal and professional details of each informant are attached in Appendix B. Each of the interviews was conducted at different locations and days at the informants’ convenient, ranging from 40 to 60 minutes each. All interviews were recorded for accurate transcription. Pseudonyms were used for all informants to maintain informants’ confidentiality. However, casual conversation and informal interview were conducted among the 52 people in the office, including three informants from Human Resource department; four informants from the Sales and Marketing department; and three informants from the Finance department.

3.5 Data Analysis

Ethnographic data is never analysed subsequently to its collection; the analysis of data is not separated into strictly distinct phases (Gobo, 2008). Instead, they are closely intertwined processes which are repeated to reassemble data to search for patterns and to provide interpretations or explanation of a question or particular problem (Boeije, 2010). This research followed Angrosino's (2007) and Boeije's (2010) process of data analysis for ethnographic and observational research.

There are three "steps" in the process of data analysis which need not happen in a strictly sequential order but may be simultaneous or repeated in the course of the research (Angrosino, 2007). First, it is essential to keep clearly organized observational fieldnotes and interview transcripts. During the fieldwork, any ideas, feeling, experiences and responses that emerged during fieldwork observation and unstructured interview or conversation were written as fieldnotes. Semi-structured interviews were then transcribed as accurately as possible from the tape recordings. Throughout the six-month fieldwork, a large amount of data was produced from observation, as well as semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

Second, as soon as the fieldnotes and interview transcript were collected, overview reading was conducted before proceeding with more formal analysis. This step is intended to detail, review and make sense of the collected text data content. Also, it helps to look for both consistencies and inconsistencies interpretations given by the informants. In this research, some 'negative evidence' and interpretations which against literatures were found (examples will be discussed later). In general,

overview reading is able to provide an overall picture of the ethnographic data. A thorough reading is helpful to form data into a story and make the confusion becomes a meaning. This process of reading through the data and interpreting it continued throughout the fieldwork.

The third step is to sort data into categories. There are two phrases of data analysis - descriptive analysis and theoretical analysis (Angrosino, 2007). Descriptive analysis is the process of taking the stream of data and breaking it down into its component parts. In the beginning of the research, a few thematic categories are drawn from the literature. Some scholars have made the point that preconceived framework or thematic category is not necessary for ethnographers (Flick, 2002). However, Angrosino (2007) stated that having framework and thematic category are encouraged but it needs not to be formally tested. It serves as an outline for an acceptable framework for analysis. I began with no more than five themes and more themes emerged through the reading of the data, which will be discussed below. After collecting the data and conducted descriptive analysis, I proceed to second phrase of data analysis - theoretical analysis. This is the process of figuring out how those component parts fit together and explain the existence of patterns in the data compared to the interpretation of others in literature (Angrosino, 2007). Some of the patterns are parallel with existing studies while some have added new perspectives.

During the overview reading and analytic interpretation, I used coding to categorize segments of the data and constantly compared them and assigned them into groups that address the same theme. Coding was developed as a technique for grounded

theory approach. However, it has been increasingly redefined and is appropriate to use for ethnographic study (Boeije, 2010; Gobo, 2008). Meanwhile, not all coding sessions have to lead to a grounded theory. Lewins and Silver (2007) offered a more pragmatic definition of coding:

Qualitative coding is the process by which segments of data are identified as relating to, or being an example of, a more general idea, instance, theme or category. Segments of data from across the whole dataset are placed together in order to be retrieved together at a later stage. (p.81).

Next, I will discuss in detail both descriptive and theoretical analysis. At first, the collected data appeared to be a bulky and diverse collection of accounts. Hence, I started with four thematic themes based on literature which fit my analytical needs and the research objectives. They are: (1) *Organization space: definition; types of organization space and functionality of organization space*; (2) *Underlying assumptions in communication: presence of non-Western value, worldview or philosophical perspective in communication pattern and behaviour and conflict management*; (3) *Collaboration: definition and types of collaborative work*; (4) *Preconditions for collaboration: social requirement for collaboration and spatial requirement for collaboration*.

Then, from the descriptive analysis, I began ‘open-coding’ my ethnographic data (observation, fieldnotes and interviews) to generate themes or codes that I have not pre-identified. That was when I found two new themes: (5) *Cultural space: it derived from the practice of feng shui and the characteristics found in the material artefacts (objects at the lobby and main entrance of the building, painting, elevator button)*

and members' interaction manner which the participants named it as 'the Chinese space'; (6) Lived space: generated from three phenomena found in the organization and they were: the 'Dead Place', the 'Happy Corner' and the 'Cina Cluster', each of the lived space filled with its unique ambience and distinctive atmosphere respectively. More references to these will be presented in Chapter 4.

The process of descriptive analysis continued until the conceptual themes were "saturated" - that is, until a few new codes emerge and the definitions of these codes are stabilized (Guest, et al., 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The saturation of this research occurred far later, after more than half of the ethnographic interviews were done. The preliminary and open-code lists were then merged into a comprehensive list of nearly 750 codes across all six thematic themes, which I then organized it into different categories and subcategories under each of the main thematic theme through theoretical analysis.

For first thematic theme, *(1) Organization space, it remained three categories while each of the categories has its own sub-categories: (a) Definition: (sub categories) (i) office layout, design and seating plan, (ii) workstation or cubicles, and (iii) location; (b) Types of organization space, five dimensions of organizational space were found and they are: (i) the constructed space (office building, personal workstation); (ii) the collaborative space (meeting room, quiet room, pantry, and photocopy/printer room); (iii) the symbolic space (director's room and director's restroom versus public restroom); (iv) the cultural space (practice of feng shui and the 'Chinese space'); (v) the socially lived space (the 'Dead Place', the 'Happy Corner' and the*

'Cina Cluster'); (c) Functionality of organization space, divided into two groupings: (i) for work purposes and (ii) for relationship purposes (to interact, to build relationship and to cultivate sense of belonging).

For second thematic theme, (2) *Underlying assumptions in communication*, it also remained in two categories: (a) seven sub-categories were found in *Presence of non-West value, worldview or philosophical perspective in communication pattern*: (i) *mutuality and interdependence (group-oriented, emotional interdependency)*; (ii) *paying respect to the elderly (seniority in age, work experience, knowledge, experience)*; (iii) *relationship centred* and (iv) *particularistic relationship (particularistic culture and selective communication)*. For the second category, there was only one sub-category for (b) *Presence of non-West value, worldview or philosophical perspective in conflict management*: (i) *embracing diversity (acceptance of conflict, accommodates changes and embraces complexity)*.

There were five categories for the third thematic themes of (3) *Collaboration*. The identified categories are as follows: (a) *Definition: collaboration refers to* (i) *mutuality*; (ii) *common goal*; (iii) *a tool*; (iv) *a relationship* and (v) *a culture*. There were two categories for (b) *Types of collaborative work*, (i) *planned versus ad-hoc* and (ii) *face-to-face versus mediated*. The data analysis also identified three (c) *Pre-stage to achieve collaboration*, which are (i) *low intensity face-to-face interaction*; (ii) *two-way communication for greater information sharing* and (iii) *true collaboration at deeper levels of interaction*. Then, the analysis further interpreted the data to identify a total of six preconditions for collaboration. This refers to (d)

Social requirement for collaboration: (i) trust; (ii) respect and (iii) relationship; (e)

Spatial requirement for collaboration: (i) congregated spatial design; (ii) spatial potential and (iii) visibility.

Finally, the research identified four types of (4) *Affordance of space for collaboration and they are: (i) potential affordance; (ii) perceived affordance; (iii) utilized affordance and (iv) shaped affordance.*

Significant statements given by the interviewees were marked and written in Chapter 4 to provide readers a clearer and better understanding of the informants' experiences. Subsequently, I tried to identify the relationships between all thematic coding. Data were analysed through intensive reading and re-readings to enable the classification of categories and identification of themes which aim to develop the data into meaningful themes. The procedure of interpreting data continued until conceptual categories or themes were saturated and stabilized (Flick, 1998; Guest, et al. 2006).

3.6 Trustworthiness of Findings

One of the common criticisms of qualitative research is the presumed lack of reliability and validity of its findings failed to meet certain standards of trustworthiness (Levy, 2006). However, trustworthiness within qualitative research can be established by applying specific techniques. I employed techniques introduced by Carson et al. (2001), used to ensure that a qualitative study fulfils the requirements of dependability and credibility.

First, the research was conducted in a natural setting of the phenomena. Concerning the common setback - discrepancies between what people say they do and what they actually do - in qualitative research, six months of ethnographic fieldwork was conducted to enhance and further validates researcher's pragmatic interpretation in a given lived space by engaging in the actual natural setting. Fetterman (1998) argued that "working with people day in and day out for long periods of time is what gives ethnographic research its validity and vitality" (p.36). During the fieldwork, I managed to generate description of lived experiences by capturing and testing knowledge produces in action, identifying gatekeepers who allowed access to potential informants, building trust and rapport with the informants so that they would be comfortable to disclose information. This contributed to gaining a credible account by building a close relationship with the informants.

Second, the research employed a triangulation of data to develop codes and themes. Multiple forms of data were collected and analyzed to minimize the opportunities for bias. In ethnographic studies, the triangulation is "within method" (observation and interviews) rather than between methods with different ideologies (qualitative and quantitative) (Gobo, 2008). Thus, I systematically compared and examined the quality of data collected from interviews and observations that had significant impact on emerging themes. Trustworthiness of the research was then increased through 'cross-checking' information that gathered from different ways but is going parallel towards a same conclusion (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Third, member-checking has been conducted to gain feedback from the informants. While some demonstrate their research validity through peer review, I managed to call for three discussions with the actual informants for verification after data and conclusion have been interpreted and constructed. The first and second discussions were carried out in January and February 2012. There were respectively 10 and 12 research analysts that attended the discussions. Some attended twice while some did not. The discussions were intended to see to what extent the informants agree with the researcher's initial interpretation. The third discussion was a presentation by me to the board of managing directors in CCE. About one month after my fieldwork, I was given a chance to present my preliminary findings to the Managing Director of CCE Asia/Pacific, Managing Director of CCE Malaysia, Research Director of CCE ASEAN (two of them), and Research Manager of CCE ASEAN (three of them). During the presentation, I addressed the key issues of collaboration needs and spatial practice in CCE Kuala Lumpur office and ended my presentation with recommendation and suggestions based on the three dimensions of proximity – social, cognitive and organization. Although there was no official and specific decision made, it was indeed a fruitful discussion in which invited informants commented and provided feedback in relation to my initial findings.

With few exceptions, the fieldwork proceeded according to plan, with no major interruptions or problems hampering my efforts. There were two forces contributed to such smoothness: the ardent support from the CCE top management and the need and readiness to change among the staff in CCE. CCE Kuala Lumpur office has been located at the same place for more than 10 years. Four years ago, the top

management realized an unhealthy working environment in the office, mainly caused by the segregated office layout. According to a senior manager, in the past, the management had tried to do a lot of movement and modification of the seating plan and getting new furniture to cultivate a collaborative culture. Hence, my presence is highly valued and welcomed by the management. Besides the top-down efforts in restructuring the office layout, there was a demand for change from the bottom-up too. Most of the staff in CCE were not satisfied with the office settings and were ready for changes. As my presence was recognized and trusted, most of the informants showed a great willingness to give cooperation in sharing their ideas and opinions to me, because they were seeking for a change and thought that my research could help to escalate the change.

3.7 Summary

The design for this research followed an interpretative/descriptive paradigm and ethnographical approach which concerns with the meaning of human action and interaction in everyday situations. Ethnographic design is appropriate for it permits the researcher to witness and experience the actual settings with the informants (Creswell, 2009). A six-month of participant observation fieldwork was conducted and 42 Malaysian Chinese analysts were interviewed face-to-face to identify the social requirements and spatial conditions for collaboration from their non-Western perspective. By clustering the data collected from observation, interviewing, documentary sources and material artefacts, thematic coding was used to analyze and develop meaningful themes. Furthermore, fieldwork, criterion-based sampling, triangulation, and member checking were employed to present a fair, honest and

equal account of social life of the informants in the research site. These techniques are meant to ensure the pragmatic validity and trustworthiness of the derived data. Throughout the chapters that follow, I will present the materials and data obtained during the fieldwork with descriptive accounts. I will augment these with descriptions from the non-Western values of harmony that share relevance with my research questions.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This section presents findings collected from the fieldwork to investigate the affordance of space for collaboration from a non-Western perspective. The chapter first presents a background about the fieldwork settings and the researcher's experiences with entry into the field.

To answer the research questions, fieldwork spatial settings were examined to identify the principles and conceptions of organization space. Five dimensions of space have been identified through descriptive and theoretical analysis, namely the constructed space, collaborative space, symbolic space, "Chinese space", and socially lived space. Next, materialization of non-Western philosophical values in communicative assumptions practiced by the informants in the settings will be discussed to understand a non-Western approach of communication in interpersonal relation and they are: mutuality and interdependence, relationship-centeredness, particularistic relationships, paying respect to the elderly, and embracing diversity.

The subsequent part of the findings focused on the characteristics of collaboration and types of collaborative work followed by the investigation on the social requirements and spatial conditions required for collaboration. As a result, the social preconditions to afford collaboration are: trust, respect and relationship; while the spatial conditions are: congregated spatial design, spatial potential and visibility.

These necessities for collaboration guided the researcher to identify various types of affordance of space in the organization that filled those environmental (social and spatial) requirements and signalled affordance to perceiving actors.

4.2 Setting

CCE is an ICT global market research and consulting firm. Its single-floor office is situated in a Chinese-owned tower, Tower C, which is located within the Golden Triangle commercial district of Kuala Lumpur. Out of the 43 research analysts in Malaysia, 42 of them are permanently based in Kuala Lumpur offices and provide global, regional, and local IT expertise for ASEAN (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam), Asia/Pacific (Hong Kong and Singapore) and ANZ (Australia and New Zealand) regions. The office works closely with other global offices as an integrated system through constant face-to-face and mediated interaction among regional colleagues.

Overall, research analysts in CCE Malaysia can be categorized as having two disciplines, which are technology focus and industry focus. Technology focus emphasizes on the technology solution for business, such as emerging technology, green IT, peripherals, hardware system and software application. Industry focus encompasses the studied industries such as finance, retail, manufacturing, health, energy and government. There have been a variety of research studies in each industry. Each research discipline contributes directly to its immediate market research and indirectly to the overall IT landscape construction.

During the six months fieldwork (October 2011 - March 2012), I gained full-time employment at CCE as an intern in ANZ (Australia and New Zealand) research team with a monthly stipend of RM600.00. Whilst employed as an intern, I engaged in all duties required as a junior research analyst. I worked for 8 hours a day, from 8:30 in the morning until 5:30 in the evening. In the first two months, I worked for 5 days a week and performed a great deal of data entry work. As soon as I found out I had no sufficient 'personal' time to conduct and record observational details, I spoke to my on-site supervisor to request for a half day off on every Friday. Thus, in the latter four months, I worked 4.5 days a week and utilized the day off for my research data collection.

4.3 Entry into the field

CCE office space spread into a U-shaped layout consisted of right wing, central and left wing. As such, the employees were divided into three zonings. Finance, Human Resource and analysts for Asia/Pacific (AP) were placed at the right wing; Information and Technology (IT) staff and analysts for Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) were at the left wing and for the central long hallway, there were analysts for ASEAN together with staff from Admin, Sales and Marketing. There was a receptionist sitting right at the front office. (Please refer to Appendix C: U-Shaped Three Zonings in CCE)

In my first day of reporting, I was given a personal desk near to my team (ANZ). As suggested by Jordan (2003), spatial exploration is often a good strategy for getting into the fieldwork. Before I made the initiative of moving around, the Human

Resource (HR) officer had brought me around and explained the use of space in CCE to me. In general, the HR officer introduced five types of organization space to me, namely amenities, circulation places, shared equipment places, meeting places, and individual room. For amenities, there was a wet pantry and two dry pantries in the office. There were also three prevalent hallways connecting the U-shaped office layout (the right wing, the central and the left wing). Two photocopy/printer rooms were located at the central and the right wing respectively, as shared places. Four meeting rooms varied from different sizes and another four “quiet rooms” with a maximum capacity of two persons were also available in the office for concentrative work. (Please refer to Appendix D: CCE Office Layout)

Considering the U-shaped office layout in CCE (the right wing, the central and the left wing), my presence in CCE was not equivalent across the three separated sections. I spent most of my time primarily at my desk which was at the left wing followed by the central hallway, which was the must-pass-through hallway from the main entrance to my desk. I had rather limited opportunities and valid reasons to make an appearance at the right wing. To avoid a bias and selective observation, I made a request to my on-site supervisor, asking for a temporary work desk at the right wing for me to conduct my observation. With the approval from my on-site supervisor and the HR, I was allowed to spend my Friday half-day off at one of the vacant desks available at the right wing. Besides Friday, I was also allowed to use the same desk whenever I engaged in any collaborative projects with the teams at the right wing. (Please refer to Appendix E: The Researcher’s Route & Workstation)

Spending time to survey the layout of research site and its physical context were indeed edifying. It helped me to understand important aspects of relationship and work processes that made local sense and provided insights for data collection and analysis. Below are the fieldnotes written during the first two weeks of my fieldwork:

Ever since the HR executive led me walk around in the office during my first day of reporting; now I feel like I have no reason to walk around especially access to the right wing. I know no one over there (at the right wing), all my team members are just next to me, pantry is just few steps away from me, I can get my photocopy and printing done at the central hallway... I wonder is there any reasons for me to make some movements to the right wing. It was like a secret and secluded place for me because I only been there twice. Those unfamiliar faces passing by my place to the pantry must be from the right wing.

...Today my supervisor asked how's thing going on. I think he wanted to know if I am coping well and I also think he is interested in my research because he asked a lot of questions about my study. Our conversation went like this:

Supervisor: Hey, how's everything? Let me know if you need help.

Me: I'm good and everything is fine but...you know what, I never paid any visit to the AP (Asia/Pacific) team (at the right wing) after my first day of reporting. Are they friendly? Do you think I can just make some movements over there without any reasons? I don't want to make my presence awkward.

Supervisor: Ah! See, if you look closely at our office space right, it is like a big U-shaped layout. We are here, they are there and admin and ASEAN team are in the middle (central). So, ya, I don't think you are required to go over there (the right wing) unless you want to resign then you will have to see HR over there. (laugh) What about I introduce some of them to you?

Come, let's go over there.

...I had my second tour in the office today, this time led by my on-site supervisor. He introduced my roles (both intern and

researcher) to almost everyone in the office. As we reached at the right wing, he clapped his hands to get attention from everyone and said, “hi all, this is my new intern, Chally. She will be here to conduct a research for her postgraduate study, it is about space. Interesting right? She just told me that she has no chance to come over here, so now I brought her along and introduce her to you all. I think she will have to do some interview with us so please extend your assistance to her, I know you all are very friendly. (laugh)

...This was my first time walking from left wing to right wing through the central hallway and returning back to my desk at the left wing. This time was very different from my first time office tour because there was no one in the office during my first tour. Today, I managed to see many faces especially those in the secluded right wing. (Additional notes added latter: when people from the left wing sees the right wing as a secluded area, so do people from the right wing sees us, from the left wing secluded from them.)

As I'm writing this, I realized there is only one U-shaped connected route from left wing to right wing and vice versa. It was really awkward to walk around because the pathway was narrow, one must give way if another one is coming from another direction. The one and only pathway to access to the right wing was ridiculously narrow which fits not more than one person. There isn't even space to give way; one must walk through the pathway first then only another one can walk from a different direction.

....My thought of the day is: walking all the way from my place (the left wing) to the right wing was like having a catwalk fashion show, there was no T-stage but the narrow pathway and people sitting along the side-ways left me an impression just like that.

My desk was previously occupied by my on-site supervisor. He once said to me “this was my old work desk, a good place”. My desk was located next to a pathway heading to the pantry so not only that could everyone see me; everyone had to pass through my desk before they could go to the pantry. Hence, it was a matter of whether I want to make an eye contact with the people who passed by my desk. At

first, I only smiled at the passer-by but later, I greeted them “good morning” just to build rapport between researcher and informants.

On the second months of my fieldwork, the management decided to move the dry pantry from the central to the end of left wing. Right after the relocation of dry pantry, the words I heard the most from the passer-by were “*why so far away?*” The movement was a good move for ANZ team because the pantry was then a few steps away from us. But it was a bad movement for staff who sitting at the right wing and central for they had to walk further for the same pantry that was once a few steps away from them. Sometime when they walked by my place, some of them would say “*Chally, come, interview me, I will tell you how bad is our pantry location, it is space right?*”, “*Chally, can I suggest changes for our space?*” Most of the informants slowly accepted and got familiar with my researcher role in CCE and were becoming more open to share their thought with me too.

4.4 Five Dimension of Organization Space

Drawing from the materials collected from observation, interviews, documentary sources and material artefacts, organization space in CCE can be classified into five dimensions: constructed space, collaborative space, symbolic space, “Chinese space”, and socially lived space.

4.4.1 The Constructed Space

Constructed space refers to the fixed physical office settings, prominent office designs and planned seating arrangements which can readily be seen in the work environment. These spaces are ubiquitous and provide places for people to get together to interact and perform routine activities. As explained by Johnny, the Director,

“...when you work for a company, you need to have a place or location for everyone to meet or to work together and to collaborate because each individual has each function. However, in today modern world, you can be decentralized and work at anywhere with more modern technologies. Organization that has an office reflects that they want to centralize their resource under one roof.” (Personal Communication, January 26, 2012).

The constructed space of an organization can be observed through its exterior appearances and interior designs. If someone steps out from the elevator at level 13 in Tower C, CCE office will be at the right side with its corporate logo on the glass door entrance. The door is always locked and can only be accessed using a staff identity card. Behind the glass door, there was a high front-panel reception counter that hinders any direct eye-contact with the receptionist. For visitor, guest or staff who has no access card, they can always ring the doorbell to notify the receptionist on their presence. After entering the office, one will see a floor-to-ceiling wall behind the reception desk, a very narrow passage that can fit no more than one person at the left and two single seated sofas, with a CCTV (closed-circuit television) video multiplexer placed at the right. Meanwhile, outsiders would have no visualization of the workplace environment at all. It somehow created a high

sense of security and formal surveillance via the access only by access card, zero interior visualization, and the presence of multiple CCTVs.

To optimize spatial utility of CCE's U-shaped configuration, the management divided the staff into three market-based sections for greater team communication. Research analysts were placed according to their coverage market into three zonings - right wing for Asia/Pacific (AP); central for ASEAN; and left wing for Australia and New Zealand (ANZ).

The central idea behind the segmented seating arrangement was to encourage proximity and frequent contact among people who work closely together. From the observation, team members sitting within the same area showed more likelihood to engage in conversation or interaction. When I asked Judy, the Human Resource executive, about the arrangement of placing new staff, she replied "...before the reporting day of the newcomer, I would check on his/her coverage market, usually we place newcomer next to a seasoned analyst who works for the same coverage market". (Personal Communication, December 21, 2011).

In term of socialize, the settings and layouts were only sufficient for direct team mates sitting near one other. The impact of proximity on the level of relationship is explained by Tan, a senior analyst:

"I think space is about distance. The further the distance, the formal the relationship is. Meanwhile, the closer we sit next to each other, the more relax and comfortable we can be and the relationship would be more intimate and informal too. For me, the distance determines the communication style and interpersonal

relationship we have. In Malaysia office, I do not have any direct team mate here and I do not really work with anyone in the office, but whenever I feel like talking, I will talk to people who sit near to me because we are close to each other. After sometime, I have a better relationship with them (people who sit nearby).”(Personal Communication, February 7, 2012).

Kathy, the Director, also made a comparison on attitudes towards work between 80's babies and 60's and 70's babies as follows:

“Office gives space for us to work; interaction is part of the work. For me, I prefer to have a combination of face-to-face communication and distant communication. No matter how virtual an organization is, you need to meet at least once a year, that's the minimum. Especially for a junior analyst, you need to talk to them more often or even on a daily basis. Face-to-face communication is good to build up the relationship while communication technology is there to speed up whatever distant communication, make life easier and make work more effective.

But based on my very personal observation, I think there's a different understand of life for 80's babies. 80's babies in Malaysia have a confusing thinking. They tend to think what they think is the best but when you ask them to do something, they gone blank. 60's and 70's babies are a bit different because they need to grab whatever attention they can get since their parents were always busy working. Just like me, I can hardly see my parents during day time (the informant referred to her childhood time, when she was young) so I'm quite an independent person and know what I want. While 80's babies' parents are a little bit more comfortable so the kids can do whatever they want to do and the kids never really think of grabbing any attention from their parents too. So, I have no surprise when these young people say they are more comfortable dealing with technology than people. But, I doubt they are capable to use it for a professional reason, in a professional way.

It was very hard to guide them through Skype, teleconference or through whatever communication technology. This young generation stills very much demand for interpersonal

communication despite them denied so. I knew it because at once, I was asked to oversee about 20 junior analysts both from local office and regional office in Singapore and Thailand. I can see the difference.” (Personal Communication, January 16, 2012).

The most prominent office characteristic in CCE office was its segregation layout and design. It segregated not only the seating plans, as well as the concepts of workstation, furniture and lighting. According to a senior manager who has been working in the company for 8 years, the middle or central part of CCE office was the first CCE workplace. Then, the office extended to the left wing and lastly was expanded to the right wing for Asia/Pacific market research. This explained why the three sections had different cubicles and office design. The central, also the oldest section, was occupied with cubicles with eye-level height opaque partitions while the left wing's cubicles were attached with eye-level height glass partitions. The right wing, also the newest section, was an open plan office with workstations without partition, newer furniture and modern office design. Not only did the types of workstation differ, the lighting in the office areas got dimmer from the newest section to the oldest section too. The seating positions were varied from one's front facing another's back at the central, to a square form of seating plan in which everyone was facing the same direction at the right wing. Judy, the Human Resource senior executive, claimed that:

“The shape of the office is quite funny. The lighting and office setting and furniture are not standardized and you will feel not comfortable to show it to the visitors when there is a tour. Everything is different, the cubicles, the height of the partitions, the colour of the chair, the colour of the wall. It is like a maze rather than an office.” (Personal Communication, December 21, 2011).

Jay, a senior analyst expressed his dissatisfaction as below too:

“...I dislike the layout the most. First of all, it made you feel very boring in the sense that its layouts like Lego-brick. So every team is actually separated and they work very silo. We are compartmentalized into three; such structure makes us hard to be bonded.” (Personal Communication, November 16, 2011).

While Jo, a junior analyst also explained that consequences of having U-shaped office design as discouraging inter-team communication and collaboration:

“...Yes. I do think I should interact with other people but I’m lazy to walk. Our current U-shaped arrangement is not the best fit for me, I think if you want to be a very sociable person in CCE, you got to walk a lot then you can maintain your friendship with each and every one here. I don’t see why I should walk so far to just saying a ‘hi’?”

I personally think we need to put all analysts together. Our work may not directly relate but still, we can talk socially. My boss is trying to make us collaborate with other technology analysts. In Australia and New Zealand (NZ) office, we are all open and sit together. For NZ team (less than 15 people), they do have every Monday discussion like a short meeting. For Australia office, regardless which region or market you’re covering; they put all the analyst together to discuss something. They will just stand up and say “hey, what do you think about?” then there they will start a discussion and it is like talking war. We Malaysians, will feel like they are noisy. Malaysians have the culture as in why I need to talk to you? But Australia is like, we have to try to be open and talk to everyone. My boss is trying to make us more sociable, so she put in my KPI that I need to talk more to other analysts. I’m trying now but again, I’m just lazy to walk around. Why is our office layout so weird and funny?!” (Personal Communication, December 28, 2011).

Although the U-shaped layout has been commonly known as “weird, funny, not strategic”, some informants did think that staff can be benefited from it. According to Chloe,

“For me, seating plan is one of the key factors that can boost our work productivity. Seating arrangement by region, by domain, by technology can really help analysts to have more collaboration and gaining more insights on the industry development. Everyone is different, we all have our culture. But I think if we want to unite people, the most important part is to step out the first step, then everything will be fine. This first step can be started by grouping people into smaller teams. I think our current U-shaped design can help to do it.” (Personal Communication, November 20, 2011).

Throughout the six-month fieldwork, it was learned that the spatial arrangement in CCE is segmented and constructed by function. It divided the staff into pertinent zones through a planned seating arrangement. This cluster of constructed spaces is then known as a physical entity comprises of physical settings with strategic planning aimed at generating communication among the inhabitants through proximity.

4.4.2 The Collaborative Space

CCE recognizes ICT as a high-demand industry where a highly collaborative working environment and atmosphere are in need. Thus, spaces for both individual focused (concentration) and group oriented (collaboration) tasks were available in the single-floor office for a higher perceived level of support for collaboration. Different types of collaborative spaces, ranging from large to small, open to enclosed, were found in CCE, with technology support for information sharing and displaying.

There were four meeting rooms with different capacities intended to serve for different purposes located at different wings. Each meeting room was equipped with soundproofing, Wi-Fi Internet access, ample power sockets, whiteboards, flexible seating plans and fixed desk(s). The biggest boardroom is located at the left wing, named “Spring room” with a capacity of 40-60 persons, also known as the conference room. The room was equipped with a large projection screen, video bridging and conferencing facility and a fixed U-shaped boardroom table. It usually used for monthly videoconferencing meetings with other regional offices or any general meetings which required everyone in the office to attend. Another three meeting rooms were situated in the right wing, named “Summer room”, “Autumn room”, and “Winter room”. These rooms allowed small group discussion with lesser capacity for 4-6 persons. They were equipped with a fixed square meeting desk and mobile seating. To avoid any unnecessary conflict and disappointment, users were required to make an online reservation for meeting room booking. Some analysts had encountered bad experiences when not making pre-booking for the meeting room, as explained below:

“...speaking about room space, I wonder why some of the directors want to compete with us in using the meeting room. Last time, it was me, Cassmine and Jessica discussing something about New Zealand market in the meeting room. It was very spontaneous where three of us thought of something and want to continue the conversation after lunch so we just walked in and sat down in one of the empty meeting room to continue the discussion. Suddenly, ‘director X’ came in and she showed her ‘not-so-happy’ face then walked away. Later, the Admin lady came and told us that ‘director X’ already booked the room so we have to leave. For me right, I wonder why she needs to have her meeting in the Spring room (meeting room) while her room is so freaking big; her room

is actually the biggest among all directors, it is 4 times of the space of others' room. Anyway, the lesson learnt is that we must make room booking first before entering.” (Personal Communication, January 15, 2012).

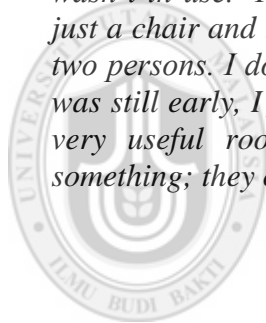
Besides collaborative space for group, there were also four “quiet rooms” - enclosed work spaces with a maximum capacity of two persons available for short-term activities demanding concentration or confidentiality. It offered the highest level of privacy for CCE analysts to make calls and for focused task. Everyone is allowed to use the “quiet room” for work-related activities. A protocol of a booking system is used to avoid queuing and each booking section should not exceed two hours. All informants found the quiet room extremely useful for concentrative work and private talk. Thus, utilization of quiet rooms was high. Research analyst at all level shared a fair amount of visit to quiet room mainly for quarterly report updates with their regional research partner, since such updates usually took a longer time and involved intensive discussions. There were two quiet rooms located at each wings; the left and the right. Although majority of the analysts found it to be extremely useful, some of them disagreed so. As written in fieldnotes:

During lunch today, Tina was complaining about the unavailability of quiet room for her to conduct tracker (part of the analyst's report update). She claimed that she didn't like to make calls in front of everyone at her own desk, for her, it may disturb others and also, she can't concentrate well when talking in open space. Cherry then said it is okay to make call from our own desk, as long as we don't shout, it is not disturbing at all. Cherry also explained her concern over Tina where she understands why Tina not feeling comfortable to talk in front of others because when Cherry first joined in, she felt the same too but now she got used to it and will just make call from her own desk and let the new analysts use the quiet room because she knows new analyst need it. Jonathan agreed so, he said quiet room is particular useful for people who have problem in doing public speaking so for him, he used the

room once then he realized he doesn't need it since he has no problem to talk in front of others.

Later, Susan continued during the interview "I think space got to do with it. Culture is more on a bigger issue. Malaysian culture is more reserved. If you can see the difference, for example in a conference or event, Malaysian likes to ask question through a piece of paper. In Australia, they ask question verbally, they will immediately raise their hand and just ask question. Malaysian participants will rather write it. It means that there's this fear of public speaking. In Malaysia, it is a very common thing, we not very vocally-open people. We have the fear of people saying "what is she asking this stupid question?" or "Her English is so broken." Hence, we tend not to speak and make calls in front of other. I feel Tina." (Personal Communication, December 4, 2011).

I went into the quiet room next to my desk this morning when it wasn't in use. I just sat down without doing anything. There was just a chair and table in the room and can fit maybe a maximum of two persons. I don't know if there is any soundproof partition or it was still early, I felt so quiet sitting in the room. I think it can be a very useful room if someone wants to concentrate in doing something; they can lock the room too.



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Besides the dedicated collaborative space, circulation and shared places were found to create opportunities for casual conversations and unscheduled encounters among staff. Most of my first "hellos" and quick introductions of my research background were initiated in the pantry. It was indeed a place to draw people together, initiate conversation, and enjoy a relaxing and playful atmosphere. For instance, as part of CCE annual dinner committee, I engaged in several small group meetings in the pantry during off-peak hours. Those discussions were conducted in an informal way, as there were people holding their cups, sipping the fresh-brewed coffee, heating up their muffins and unpacking take-out foods for a late lunch. Despite the unusual

meeting setting, we still ended up with fruitful, enjoyable, and entertaining discussions.

Besides the fundamental amenities and shared places, a Wii videogame console and a dartboard were also available in the ‘Spring Room’. To use the videogame console, one is required to get the key from the general clerk by filling up a record book. However, I never saw any game days throughout the six-month fieldwork. I heard people suggest of having a game competition but no one took the initiative to get the access key for the videogame console. Joey, a junior analyst, explained this:

“Ideal office shall come with games to play as well. We have Wii and board game here. It is locked up. If you want to play, you need to tell the clerk, eventually the boss will know then you are also scare to play. The clerk might tell the boss, you wouldn’t know but you might have the fear. Personally, I won’t do that during office hours unless there is guest here. Last time, there is a guest from Singapore, he turned it on then we all can play. It was fun and I hope we will have it again.”(Personal Communication, December 28, 2011).

The feeling of fear may then become the reason preventing the staff from using the game set. Moreover, the existence of the game set was not known by all staff especially the newly joined. As for me, I did not know there was a game set kept in the room till someone told me so. Ronnie, a manager, made a relevant remark:

“For this new group, the Wii is not accessible; no one knows there is Wii inside. Even me as the introvert person but I played Wii. Six month ago, playing Wii was fancy by everyone. There are certain people who make the efforts to make sure we play Wii but those people already gone. The rest of us are not those individual, we didn’t make the effort. May be we do not want to get into trouble, may be. The problem now is first, no one really knows the Wii is there. Second, someone needs to take the initiative and start calling people to play.” (Personal Communication, November 28, 2011).

Despite the existence of shared places, collaborative spaces and assigned spaces designed for individual and group work, some analysts preferred to go for alternative work setting out from the office - the 'third place'. The two most common 'third places' were the clients' offices and the nearby coffee house. Employees in CCE were given flexibility, choice and control moving around to find the best place to work. The frequency of analysts to work at client's office varied according to their coverage market. Analysts responsible for local market travelled to client's office at least once a week, while analysts responsible for international market travelled abroad to client's office once for every quarter, each visit lasting for 3-5 working days. On the other hand, there was a small number of employees that chose to work at a coffee house as a 'third place'. Movement to the coffee house was usually initiated by the manager to his or her subordinates when a personal talk was deemed necessary for job performance, employee appraisal review or employment confirmation. Although it was unusual to have formal dialogue at informal setting, those managers explained that it was because of the unavailability of small meeting rooms. According to Henry, a team lead in CCE:

"There is time when you think you really need a room because you need to talk to your staff in private. However, we found no empty rooms for us to use most of the time. It was always occupied. I usually do the employment confirmation with the new staff at coffee house. Although having such discussion in enclosed room would help to imply the level of seriousness of the matter, have it in informal setting could make the conversation more relax and lively too especially when you have no choice (means when you have no dedicated meeting room to use)." (Personal Communication, February 3, 2012).

Besides the flexi-movement to 'third place', CCE is also one of the growing number of modern organizations recognizing non-traditional workplace strategies. CCE offered a variety of work arrangements, such as flexible working hours and unlimited Work-At-Home (WAH) policy to their staff at all levels. Every staff member was given flexibility to clock in to office at any time at their convenience, preferably between 9:00 am to 6:00 pm, as these are the working hours expected by clients and colleagues. Each of the staff also entitled to WAH policy upon approval from their superiors. A variety of responses was given by the analysts and other informants about the WAH policy as follows:

"Our WAH programme is doing quite well; people are started utilizing it since it is unlimited now (previously was 12 days a year). I rarely WAH because of my role as a HR support so I do need to present myself in the office rather than working remotely."

"I don't WAH because for finance department, we can only access to our system using office desktop. So for me, the unlimited WAH policy has nothing to do with me, even I'm entitled for it."

"I don't do it very often unless it is really really necessary. I find myself probably more productive if I work in the office. WAH can give you a lot of distraction and I'm a person who gets distracted easily."

"It depends. I come to the office because I want to spend more time interact and meet my peers and I think I work more efficient in the office. There are lots of distractions at home."

"I worked from home before (completely WAH basis), which proven to be very tough to me. It was so stress to have to work for fast-pace work 24/7 in your bedroom. After a while, it made me don't feel like staying in my bedroom anymore. So I think WAH maybe a good option for let say, a mother or people who has something to take care of at their house."

“I rarely WAH because the culture in my own team not allow me to simply WAH.”

“I want to WAH but last time when I WAH, my boss sort of like scolded me. I just feel like my bosses are little stricter. It means right, we are given the freedom and we are also entitled for something we cannot utilize; it is so bad.”

“Look at our traffic conditions, WAH policy is much needed and I enjoy such freedom given.”

“I think it is good to have a balance. If our office location is close to my home, I actually prefer to work in the office because you can access to people and ask question then things can be done more quickly. But because of the 2 hours traffic jam (a waste of time) in KL city, I usually WAH on Monday and Friday. It eased my stress a lot”

The responses indicate that different employees have different definitions, needs and views to the practice of WAH. Throughout the fieldwork, I noticed that the daily occupancy in CCE office was very high, as many insisted to come to the office instead of participating in WAH. Also, since they were allowed to work on flexi-time, most of them clocked in by a quarter to ten instead of before nine o'clock. The reason given was to avoid peak traffic hours and with such flexibility provided, they didn't mind to come to office every day. During interviews, informants stated several reasons for coming to work rather than staying at home. The common reasons were highly related to the need for interpersonal interaction. According to them, their presence in the office was mainly for having lunch partners and interaction with the co-workers for info-sharing and emotional needs. Faye, a senior analyst, explained her irregular WAH practice as below:

“People here WAH only when we really need to focus and stay out of everyone. I rarely WAH because it makes you feel lonely

especially when you're stress then you have no one to share with; unlike in the office, you can just turn around and talk to your colleagues. The feeling is much better when you have someone to share with.” (Personal Communication, November 10, 2011).

Henry, as a team lead, expressed his struggles as follows:

“As a team lead, sometime I have problem in approving WAH request from my subordinates. In fact, I have no problem just giving a green light for them to WAH but some of them WAH too frequent to an extent it was like a MIA (missing in action) than WAH. I know I can ask for justification or reason for them to WAH but on the other hand, since it is something they entitled to, why should I ask? As for now, as long as they (his subordinates) performed and delivered their job on time, I'm fine with their WAH request.” (Personal Communication, February 3, 2012).

From the informants' feedback, it appeared that while people have claimed that we are heading to virtual team and office-less, we have yet to reach that status. Even as technology-savvy people, most of the informants still preferred face-to-face communication rather than mediated communication. Despite all the benefits of the current ICT technologies able to provide, there was a lack of human interaction and a loss of human moment. As clarified by the informants:

“The definition of office is changing now. Office is not a necessary or compulsory place to do work because I can work at home. My home is an office too in certain extent. I know WAH and working in the office have their pros and cons. Basically, my view is working in the office is good for peak period because of less distraction and we can definitely get our work done, while for off peak, home is better.”

“Everything is digital; one day virtual team may be the ultimate working space for all of us. But as for now, I think there's this thing virtual office can never able to deliver like how an office or workplace can do, which is the motivation and sense of belonging.

I always feel better and get greater motivation by clocking in to office than WAH."

"While dealing with colleagues, I think face-to-face communication is not a necessary as long as we share a same tune and communication channel. As you go through a same process and write for a same report over time, basically you don't have to see the people facial expression and can talk over the phone. But, when dealing with clients, I think face-to-face communication is still the best option because you need to understand their specific requirement. Also, the culture in CCE is to show face to our client to impress our client. It is one of the ways to maintain the cohesiveness with our clients."

"For me, this is my first time working with a virtual team. At first, there is a big problem for me, even for lunch, for me I prefer to sit face to face rather than side by side. I prefer to see the people facial expression, this kind of thing is very important. That is why at first, it is very difficult for me because all I have is the voice of the person on the other line. But it is something I need to use to it. In fact, I am very used to it now. However, I still prefer face to face communication."

"Yes, I constantly engage in virtual team and I use all the tools that is available like Sametime (CCE internal instant messaging), Skype, email, Chatter. All these different tools help us virtually gather as a team. But I always prefer face to face communication because you can get instant interaction instead of waiting for reply via email. Skype is ok but Malaysia connection is kind of slow like the other day when I call Arun (in New Zealand), my side here keeps disconnected so we need to call each other again. We called three or four times for a two hours call, it was quite troublesome and irritated but most importantly, the flow is not there already."

"Mainly, I will use Skype video to contact my teammate in Australia but I still prefer face-to-face because it is clearer to hear. If I could work with someone sits next to me, it would be the best. I don't like working on the phone, you will get your work done slower. I don't prefer Skype video call because I feel very awkward to talk to the camera. In my definition, Skype video call doesn't equal to face-to-face communication."

Based on the responses from the informants, there was a missing human element in mediated communication and working in a virtual team. Of all, to be able to see the other person's facial expression is important, for it is not a mere reflexive but a communicative component and cue for interpersonal development, which can only be found in face-to-face interaction.

Referring to the collaborative spaces in CCE, there was a right mix of spaces encouraged workers to stick around and spending significant time in the office for different work modes. Firstly, CCE created a 'neighborhood' concept with three different sections which aimed to generate spontaneous and back-and-forth exchange of ideas and information among direct working teammates. Secondly, "quiet rooms" were provided particularly for concentrative work and fulfilling the need for privacy. Thirdly, dedicated meeting rooms for group collaboration afforded extensive dialogue with the presence of digital tools that allowed both collocated and virtual team members engaging in information sharing. Fourthly, shared place was found to be extremely significant for informal brainstorming and informal information swaps. Last but not least, workers were given choices and control in deciding when and where to work – in the office, at home, or in a "third place" on a flexi-time basis. According to one of the directors,

"I think this is something we can't not to provide to (referring to the different type of collaborative workspace). Look at the amount of time you spend in the office, because we spend so much time in the office, we must at least make people happy and satisfied with

the facilities provided to them. Happy people perform better in the organization.” (Personal Communication, January 26, 2012).

4.4.3 The Symbolic Space

Given the limited space in CCE, there were only five personal rooms available for four local directors and a Human Resource director not permanently based in Malaysia. Having directors behind a closed door and drawn curtain was not a common practice in CCE. The local directors always kept their door open unless in a private meeting or conversation with someone. Their rooms were equipped with an L-shaped executive desk, a high back executive chair, two chairs which placed in front of their desk and credenzas for storage. The rooms were in various sizes, settings and decorations. The biggest personal room belonged to the director who has been working with CCE for more than 12 years. Her room was filled with spacious office storage cabinets and some houseplants, a golden horse statue figurine and two Chinese porcelain vases. There was no prominent personalization or decoration found in the other director rooms.

Besides the directors, managers and senior analysts were given certain privileges in their workstation too. Managers were given more spaces and bigger desks, as explained by Jo, “...*their desk is bigger and there are two chairs put in front of them like ready for interview to come at any time*”. “...*without realizing it directly, the managers actually have the territorial kind of identification*”. (Personal Communication, December 8, 2011).

Supervisors and senior analysts were given a place nearby window as a privilege of having a good view. Harn, as a team supervisor, claimed that:

“As a supervisor, I have the “honour” to sit near to the window and to enjoy the KLCC view which is desirable by everyone. The reason why I was asked to move to my current place is the power of symbolic (shrugs his shoulder) which I do not really feel it. Now, my place is spacious and I’m sitting by the window like a boss who can enjoy the view during working hours.”(Personal Communication, December 22, 2011).

I also did an analysis based on my observation, as written in fieldnotes:

From my observation, the rooms and the spacious workstation were a direct social resource for the materialization of status and identity because it gave the visitors or any passer-by a positive indication on the owner’s corporate position and power. Larger workstation also signified the owner would have to engage in small group discussion while the room implied the involvement of the owner in private and confidential discussion or conversation. As heavily discussed in the existing literature, privacy was the major point of reference for the symbol of hierarchical differentiation. The enclosed room offered freedom and control to the directors to see or be seen which is not given to the other analysts who were sitting in the open areas. Take my place as an example; I was always ready to be seen because I was just next to the pathway. The room’s door and window curtain also allowed the user to regulate spatial practice according to their communication needs and preference. For instance, sometime the director(s) would close the door and pull the curtain while sometime they would not. I think they did it when they want to have private time (not to be seen) or they want to be seen and to see. By contrast, employees in open areas had their privacy safeguarded by nothing more than cubicle panels. This indicated the materialization of status and identity of someone through his or her given privacy.

Similar to the director rooms, the access to restroom in CCE was heavily loaded with symbolic meanings of hierarchical differentiation too. The office of CCE is situated

in level 13 in a 32-storey office tower. There were four restrooms available at each floor; two public restrooms for ladies and gentlemen and two private restrooms for ladies and gentlemen. Based on the observation details as written in the fieldnotes, almost all staff in CCE used the unlocked public restrooms, while the two female directors and two male directors were given the key to access the private locked restroom. However, none of the informants mentioned the above matter during interview and there was no comments or complaints filed from anyone too. It remained unclear whether such practice not worth mentioning or whether the staff refused to talk about.

Despite there was a class-conscious spatial practice exercised in CCE which highly associated to controlled symbolic identity for status and power, most of the informants treated it as a demonstration for recognition of the length of service and as a deserving reward for senior persons. Drawing from the interviewing data, the informants reckoned that what a manager has is what he or she deserves, especially in terms of how much space they should be given for the purpose of interviewing, private talk and short discussion. For instance, informants referred to the allocation of personal room given to the directors as part of the director's responsibility rather than to symbolize their status and power. That was because their positions involve more private and confidential discussions commonly known to have sensitive and confidential information that can hardly be discussed in open space. The materialization of space for identification of seniority was stronger than the sense of control, status and power found in CCE. Some of the relevant remarks are as follows:

“...I think they (the directors) earn the right to own a room since they work so long. It is a better way to differentiate people who work longer. For example, I work this long and that’s what I get to differentiate people who just started. I feel they earn the room and they have the right to have a room. Also, they already own the room so it is not right to ask them to move out. However, it is up to them to come out and interact with the other analysts.”

“I’m very satisfied with my room and it is too big for me. This room should be a MD (managing director) room. In fact, I have no problem to move out from the room. I’ve been working for 20 years and I never had a room until this. I guess maybe there isn’t any available cubicle so the management put me in this room temporarily, maybe.”

“I think the room comes with seniority both in hierarchy and age. If they work longer and if they are older, we tend to respect elder, right?”

“I think based in Malaysia culture, we still practice seniority, where we need to respect the one who has higher level than us or who is in the industry or company longer than us. One of the ways of paying respect can be giving them a room, I guess. Most of the time, one’s seniority in age helps him or her seniority in hierarchy.”

4.4.4 The Cultural Space - the “Chinese” Space

CCE is located in a Chinese-owned office tower and the building itself carried a strong Chinese-identity. First, there was a huge spouting fountain placed in front of the building main entrance with 18 nozzles. Second, there were eight Chinese brush painting arts displayed at the lobby, with Chinese poems on them. Also, level 14 in the building has been renamed level 13A and there were four tangerine plants placed along the main entrance during the Chinese New Year in 2012. These are associated with common practices and customs in Chinese society. According to Eddy,

*“...can’t you see how “Chinese” this place is? Look at the typical wealth-generate fountain with 18 water pumps in front of our building. Also, the tangerine plants and Chinese painting placed right in front of our main entrance. All these are so “Cina” (Personal Communication, December 8, 2011)
(Cina means Chinese in Bahasa Malaysia)*

The “Chinese” space was not only found in the public space at the lobby, as its presence can be traced in CCE interior office space too. Chinese traditional belief of the arrangement of space, *feng shui*, was not a strange thing to the informants and such practices were found from the fieldnotes and ethnographic interview written as follows:

“Anne was standing at Jacky’s place and searching for something on his table. Vivy asked if Anne wants to move to Jack’s workstation since it’s not occupied now (Jack moved to another regional office last week). Anne said a firm “No” because she personally thinks the feng shui is not good as there is a big transparent window behind the seat. Vivy nodded her head and said, “Jack moved to this new workstation for only two months and then he decided to leave after working in CCE Malaysia for 5 years.” They then doubt if it related to the bad feng shui. They continued the topic during lunch time and discussed with the rest.”

“...last time when we were sitting near to the new pantry, we’ve been told that the feng shui is not good and also our back is facing the window which is bad. When we first moved there, most of us fell sick and few of us admitted to hospital at different times...we do believe it is because of the bad feng shui.”

“...in our office, there are certain cubicles which has higher turnover rate so we always joke that there are having a bad feng shui. Gary sat in my current room before me and once he moved in, he gets promoted and gets married so everyone thinks this room has a good feng shui. Talking about our office building, its structure is quite unique with many sharp angles which are designed to cut the prosperity angle reflex from the KLCC building to take their wealth.”

Although most of the informants mentioned about *feng shui* during the interview, some of them think it was merely a Chinese superstitious which has no scientific basis and thus, the practice of *feng shui* did not sound convincing to them. Some also correlated the practice of *feng shui* to religion when they mentioned “*I have heard of it but I don’t practice any because my family is very strong in our religion.*”; “*Isn’t that what the Buddhists do?*” *I’m a Christian and I don’t believe it.*”

However, whether to follow or not to believe, many of them have the basic *feng shui* knowledge, especially considering that one’s back should not directly face to a window or door - it conveys a hidden meaning where the person would not do well because of the lack of firm support. For informants whose seat was in front of a window, they chose to draw the curtain all the time since it was not possible to remove the window or to change the workstation. According to them, they didn’t really feel any good or bad effect with or without the curtain drawn but they think it was harmless to follow the basic “*Oriental rules*” (*Personal Communication, November 14, 2011*) passed down from previous generations. Besides the seating position, some of them also decorated their desks with good yield *feng shui* ornament which believed to bring good luck and prosperity into their life. For instance, four analysts at the left wing were found placing *angpow* packets (Chinese red packets) on their desk that symbolized a smooth flow of money. Some other analysts also displayed *feng shui* lucky charms and jewelry as each signified different power, wisdom, strength and fertility. Apparently, the construction of space in CCE was not only symbolical and flexible, might as well relational to cultural values uphold by the occupants since some of these spatial practice such as *feng shui* and Chinese

material artefacts signified non-Western view of balanced, harmony, peace, wealth, and wisdom.

Feng shui is one of the oldest and most famous intangible settings to Chinese architecture; it is an art of Chinese space arrangement. Chinese have practiced *feng shui* for thousands of years and are convinced that the environment and its latent forces affect our lives and well-being (Ding, 2008). *Feng shui* is also a Chinese cultural phenomenon study of the relationship between human and environment which stresses a critical need for balance and harmony. It is the art of living in harmony with the land, so that one derives the greatest benefits, peace, and prosperity from being in perfect equilibrium with the nature. That was why the analysts placed *angpow* packets on their desks for good fortune.

While many have taken *feng shui* as a metaphysical science, there are scholars eagerly rediscovering the wonderful promise of the practice of *feng shui* to better understand Chinese ways of thinking and acting. *Feng shui* represents a traditional Chinese worldview emphasizing harmony, particularly the harmonious relationship between people and the environment, and the achievement of harmony through a searching process, rather than through creation (Chen, 2007). The growth of acceptance of *feng shui* can be traced from the publication on the impact of *feng shui* on organization corporate image and reputation (Li & Lii, 2010), organizational communication (Chen & Chung, 1994; Chung, 2008), office space (Chen, 2004) and Chinese social interaction (Chen, 2007). If one carefully examines *feng shui* from human communication discipline, we can find that it emphasizes the value of

harmony and provides us with abundant resources that can be studied from the perspective of nonverbal communication, especially those ideas regarding space and time (Chen, 2007). Even in CCE office and Tower C building, the practice was not only limited to personal level, it involved the organization and corporate levels from its displays and arrangements of fountain with 18 water pumps, tangerine plants, Chinese paintings and poem, rename of 14th floor and personal *feng shui* practices.

4.4.5 The Socially Lived Space

Referring to the CCE segregated office layout, its lived space was once again separated into different practices. Two observable aspects were found: social dynamic and sociality. It was easily noticed that people who sit near to each other were closer because of the given proximity. During general meetings, people usually chose to sit together with their direct teammates seated in the same working areas. Here, one of the salient drawbacks of CCE seating arrangement was the cultivation of in-group and out-group dynamics.

There was a strong in-group versus out-group social dynamics between the three sections (the left wing, the central and the right wing). The language of “we” and “they” was commonly used when someone wants to refer his or her direct team members versus the other colleagues who seated at the other two sections. However, the use of “we” and “they” may be deliberate for work-related tasks only because it was also common to see people from different sections went for lunch, after-work dinner and weekend outings together. Such exceptions cannot be made without personal efforts as told by MJ, an analyst seated at the right wing:

“Some people blame at the zonings for not able to make friends but it is not true for me. Although distance could be a factor made us tend to have lunch with people sit near to us, the practice can be different if we do something extra. Last time, we have a colleague, May, sitting at ANZ team (at the left wing). She actually has quiet a good relationship with few of us from AP (at the right wing) because she will take the initiative to come to our place and ask to go lunch with us. After some time, we actually include her as in our group. Until today, we still keep in touch in MSN. (Personal Communication, November 9, 2011)

Such “us” and “them” culture seemed to be one of the effects from the functional seating plan and has also made a profound impact on the socially lived space in CCE office.

In the single-floor office, I noticed different spatial practice and diverse lived space in each corner within the U-shaped layout. This manifested organization space as a space occupied with inhabitants’ subjectivity perception and experiences. It is not about how the place is designed and desired to be used, but how people assign meaning and experience the space and make it alive. In general, there were four fundamental different lived spaces, known as the noisiest, the “dead place”, the “happy corner” and the fear-to-go photocopy/printer room in the three distinct sections as follows. (Please refer to Appendix F: The Locality of Lived Space)

Analysts at the right wing (AP team) were known as a grouping of “Cina” people because they usually spoke in Mandarin in their daily conversation. This group of people is said to have open communication because they were seated at open plan office and their speaking volume was relatively high. As there was no partition for

view and sound blocking, everyone could easily overhear what the rest were saying and thus, they always shouted at each other from far and spoke loudly overhead. The other analysts often joked that no secret can be kept at the right wing and for that the right wing was then known as the noisiest place. Comments on the communication, atmosphere or spatial practice at the right wing are as follows:

“I don’t even know AP team is noisy because I can’t hear from my place here (the central).”

“They (AP team) are loud and always laugh so hard but I don’t really socialize a lot with them despite I am from AP too, because they speak Mandarin which I don’t really understand. I put on my headphones every day to signal I need some ‘quiet time’ but I don’t think they get the message.”

“Putting all analysts together in open space? Oh, I foresee there will be war as noisy as the AP team now.”

“Do you know who is the most talkative one in CCE? Is AP team!”

“I think they (AP team) interact a lot probably because of their open office concept - no partition and easy to speak to one another without have to walk to them.”

“Although they look like talking non-stop but I don’t think they will say serious thing openly; I think they were just making jokes around.”

The open office designed for dynamic flow of information became a place with low privacy, noise, and more superficial conversation because they were self-conscious about being heard.

Analysts from the central section were labelled as anti-social cluster because it was very rare to see any ongoing verbal communication among them and “...*there is an awkward quietness here*”, claimed by Danny whose desk is at the central area (Personal Communication, January 5, 2012). “*Last time, when the visitors (analysts from Indonesia and Thailand) came, they also tell me that the central area is scarily quiet*”. (Personal Communication, November 20, 2011). The central area was so quiet till “*I was scared walking in ASEAN (central area); it was so quiet and even my footsteps would disturb them*”. (Personal Communication, October 28, 2011).

Although the central section was known to have the highest traffic hallway where everyone from the left wing must pass through in order to go to the only wet pantry in the office, and people from the right wing must also pass through to the nearest printer room to collect copies; the presence of interaction was extremely low. From the observations, I noticed the passers-by usually lowered their head, stared at the floor, and seldom initiated conversation with anyone seated along the central hallway. For people who seated at the central areas, they usually gazed at their laptop screen intensely tried to avoid any eye contact with the passers-by. With these, they were secretly known as less friendly and the place itself was known as the “dead place” as interpreted by the majority informants from other teams based on their personal interaction and spatial experience along the central hallway. I did make a particular fieldnote about the mentioned “dead place”.

...many time I tried to reach office earlier just to avoid from experiencing the weird quietness along the central hallway for which I must pass through from the main entrance to my desk. It is fine if there was no one, it is supposed to be quiet too. But, when the areas are filled with people yet it was so quiet; it would not be

the walkway you wish to pass through especially with a running nose.

From the materials collected during the six-month fieldwork, three reasons were found to explain the awkward quietness. First, it was the culture of not talking much verbally. The team at the central areas was the first team that CCE had since its establishment in Malaysia and “...the culture that being passed down from the beginning is that the managers were strict and people tend to keep quiet and would not break the silence because everyone is quiet”. (Personal communication, December 7, 2011). A few of the informants who have been working in CCE for a long time still vividly remembered how harsh the managers were and how the analysts were made to work in a silo. Some of them claimed so:

“Last time, our bosses (at the central areas) used to stand behind us and watched us how to do Excel and make calls. If there’s anything wrong, they will straight away pointed out and tell you if you do in this way, you’re going to waste another 5 minutes.”

The office layout has changed significantly so I came in 4 years ago is more like a factory. In ASEAN, Everyone is seated in one row and the most senior people were sat behind to observe what we are doing. Perhaps this is the culture.”

“In the beginning of IDC culture, it was quite strict and people try to keep quiet. When I first joined, I was very stressful but I think I need to align myself. Also, being in a quiet environment, it helps you to focus.”

“There is some history where this office is used to be ASEAN office. As you know, AP and ANZ bosses are not here but ours are here. So, we can’t simple make noise because last time when we make noise, the bosses will not happy and will score you so

gradually it becomes a culture where everyone is not allowed to make noise and talk to each other openly.”

“The ASEAN team, being the first team we have in CCE, used to have a very strong “I am your senior and you are my junior” culture here. So, everyone act tactfully including not making noise to disturb those “senior”. ”

“Sometime the flexibility of the organization depends not only on the physical environment but how much flexibility can the organizations provide you. Come to think about it, maybe if we were sitting at ASEAN, we will turn to be quiet too. Because when the organization didn’t grant us flexibility, we can’t be flexi, so we become rigid.”

“If I need to talk to someone from AP at the right wing, I will normally call rather than walk over there; it is very far. And what’s worse is that when you walk pass the ASEAN side, it is so quiet, you can feel everyone is looking and staring at you so I feel a bit awkward so I don’t like walking there.”

Second, the presence of directors and managers developed a fear feeling in others. (Please refer to Appendix G: The Distribution of Directors and Managers). There were four directors and three research managers seated along the central hallway and it made the surrounding people acted carefully and tactfully by not talking too much in front of the superiors. *“With this fear, people tend to talk less and this eventually became a habit or a culture in CCE without realizing it”.* (Personal communication, 27 November, 2011) Third, different people may have different communication preferences. For those who did not talk to each other face-to-face, it did not mean that they were not communicating with each other through other, mediated mediums. During a lunch with three research analysts who were seated in the central sections, I have been told that they were talking non-stop through instant messaging during

working hours. Although analysts from the left and right wings strongly believed that the presence of managers and directors was the main reason causing the analysts from the central areas fear to interact, the analysts seated at the central areas were unanimous in denying the fear to talk in front of the bosses; they insisted their team has different communication preferences. Ms. Kathy, a research director, shared a story on how her subordinates developed anxiety towards her in past few years.

...I encountered before where I stand up (in her room with transparent window), and then everyone sits down. And when I go, everyone started talking again. Also, during evening time, I can hear people say goodbye but I can see no one is waving outside. And when I went out and looking for someone, she/he left without me noticing. I once suspect they just bend down their body when they pass by my room (to avoid being seen through the room's transparent window). At once, I even went out and said "please leave" when there is rumour saying the analysts dare not to leave before the bosses. However, for my side, I have to admit that I was very strict at that time because I have almost 30 analysts report to me directly....Then I realized that the most effective way to make people grow is actually morale and motivation. (Personal Communication, January 16, 2012).

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Since the ASEAN analysts at the central areas were known as relatively less friendly than others, I first started my interviews with analysts from the left and right wing. When I had thought the reasons for this "quiet scene" were saturated, new information given by the analysts from ASEAN team revealed other stories of experience. So, the interviewing data has then showed contradict explanations on the quietness and the impact of the presence of superiors. Furthermore, things got worse when the management reactivated the access of back door at the left wing which had long been locked for security purposes. The highest traffic and density hallway was then transformed from a "scarily quiet" place to the "dead place".

It started off when people from the left wing requested the reactivation of the back door for convenience purposes, because the back door was much nearer to the elevator and restroom compared to the main entrance. With the alternative provided, people from left wing were no longer passing by the central hallway to reach the right wing; they would get out from the back door and re-enter the main entrance to get to the right wing. The same movements applied to the people at the right wing, as they preferred to get out from the main entrance/exit and re-enter the office using the back door to reach the big pantry and only wet pantry, which are located next to the back door. (Please refer to Appendix H for Routes without Access to Back Door & Appendix I for Routes with Access to Back Door). Making a comparison of movement centrality between with and without access to back door, the centrality of internal movement was high, strategic and completely within office interior areas when staff have no access to the back door. On the other hand, an extremely low centrality of internal movement was found after the reactivation of access to the back door.

As an observer, I saw a negative outcome in the reactivation of access to the back door. The “dead place” with awkward quietness was then turned into a dreaded silent hallway with an extremely low traffic and movement. *“Last time when the back door is locked, I have no choice but now I prefer to use the back door. After this door opened, I very very seldom walk through the ASEAN side already”. (Personal Communication, December 4, 2011). “Ever since the back door is accessible, I seldom walk through the ASEAN unless I need to check something with someone. I do not like passing their place. (Personal Communication, November 21, 2011).*

As soon as the directors and managers realized the unconstructive consequences, the access of back door was deactivated again. People were then under a controlled movement to use the only hallway at the central section; however, the awkward silence remained. The lived space at the central areas was indeed ironic for it has the highest density, highest traffic, and high occupancy but failed to increase noise and frequency of face-to-face interaction as intended. This paradoxically phenomenon was not exclusive to the central hallway but other shared places in CCE as well.

Oppose from the ordinary spatial practice, the photocopy/printer room in CCE - a place that naturally draws people together and provides communication opportunities - was not functioning at it should have. The printer room is supposed to be a place where people tend to hang around to have short catch up or casual conversation when collecting their printouts. Unfortunately, this did not happen in CCE because it was located in between two directors' rooms. It is common for people try not to have conversation within visual range of their superiors. The photocopy/printer room was therefore a place where people feared to go and they were unwilling to stay long. One of the fresh junior analysts even once asked me to accompany her to collect her copies in the photocopy room because *she was too fear and shy to walk through the quiet hallway (Fieldnotes, November 15, 2011)*. This has once again demonstrated the perceived spatial experiences do not always run parallel with its desired outcomes. The tension between the idealism and materialism in space generates a range of unpredictable lived experiences and sociality within it.

To further explain this, Foucault's concept of the panopticon may be useful in identifying the problem. A panopticon is an architectural design put forth by Jeremy Bentham for institutions with surveillance needs, primarily for prisons, and later used for insane asylums, schools, hospitals, and factories. The idea of the design is having a circular building with an observation tower in the centre of an open space surrounded by an outer wall and this wall would contain those who needed to be observed or watched (e.g. prisoners). The concept is to place the observer or watchman at the tower in the centre while each of the prisoners is placed in a separated cell occupying the circumference. Furthermore, with the bright lighting emitted from the observation tower, the prisoners would not only be invisible to each other; they would also not be able to tell if and when they are being watched. Despite of the fact that it is physically impossible for one or even more watchman to observe all cells at once, the strategy of making the prisoners uncertain and unknown if they are being watched acts as a control mechanism, effectively controlling prisoners disciplinary behaviour through a constant consciousness where surveillance is internalized.

Examining the unexpected low sociality in the central highest traffic hallway based on the principles of Foucault's panopticism, we must first identify the surrounding of the central areas. At the central part, the Admin, Sales and Marketing staff and analysts for ASEAN were sitting together with a total of four directors' room, presence of two managers and several CCTV security cameras facing at different angles. Apparently, the function of the latter three components (director's room, presence of manager and CCTV camera) is said to be highly relatable to Foucault's

control mechanism in controlling the behaviour of the other staff and analysts. The staff and analysts sitting at the central areas fell within the visualization and observation by the three levels of surveillance - being seen by the directors, being monitored by the managers, and being captured by the CCTV cameras.

As mentioned before, even if we are placed under surveillance, direct or indirect, we would not know if we are being observed or monitored, while being seen is definite. It then induces a psychological state of 'conscious and permanent visibility' into our state of mind convinces us that surveillance is internalized. As a result, we tend to act, behave, and communicate tactfully. It could be one of the reasons which discouraged sociality along the high traffic hallway at the central part of CCE office and it could also contribute in hampering one's willingness to initiate interaction with one another. The same effect is found in the photocopy/printer room which is located in between two directors' room. One's psychological state of being observed and monitored may be even stronger and higher because of the 'close' surveillance from the surroundings. Perhaps, the socially dead space and awkward quietness found in the central hallway and fear-to-go photocopy/printer room are all psychologically made.

On the other hand, the team at the left wing was known as the most energetic and friendly team who resided at the "happy corner" in the office. The label of "happy corner" primarily derived from its strategic location as they were away from the directors' rooms, they had no local manager overseeing their work, and their workstations were just few steps away from both the wet and dry pantry. Many

mentioned the demographic profile of analysts at the left wing had even made them a happier “happy corner”. Compared to the other analysts, there was only one male analyst at this “happy corner” and the average age for the analysts here was also the lowest among all. Here is an observation of Tina, a senior analyst seated in the central area:

“The girls over there (the right wing) are talkative, they are young and if you look into their background, they are single which make them more care-free and have less commitment. Unlike most of the people at the central, most of us are married with kids. If we finish our work earlier, we will rush back for our family. Also, do you notice there is only one male analyst sitting there? Girls of course talk more than male!” (Personal Communication, January 18, 2012).

While one of the directors pointed out that:

“I think it could be the culture. Even if I look at myself and a few other ASEAN analysts, I just focus on the things that I do. I think it goes back to the individual; when you have task to do, you tend to put your head down and get it done. This is also the culture here among ASEAN team. People in ANZ are more friendly and willing to open up and break the barriers to talk to everyone. They are very different as they are more willing to have information sharing not only for work perspective but also having a happy environment to be in. Not to forget, these girls are young too.” (Personal Communication, January 26, 2012).

One analyst seated at the “happy corner” attributed their happiness to the following:

I think we are happy working here for a few reasons. First, most of us almost joined at the same time and we started off at the same time, we had all the question at the same time so we helped each other out. Of course, the chemistry is there and the good thing is we are hidden away at one corner so we can talk a lot and joke a lot without worrying other people hearing and I think AP side (the right wing) is also like that. They are hidden in one side so they are also a bit noisier but I’m not sure if they are as happy as us (laugh). Unlike ASEAN (the central areas), so many managers and

directors are there, I'm sure they cannot be so free and talk so much as we do, quite pity.” (Personal Communication, January 10, 2012).

“...since we are hidden at one corner here, literally we can do whatever we want to do, nobody will know anything about it. Most importantly, none of us has our immediate supervisor or manager sitting here to watch us, we can be real care-free. You know what, I'm glad that we are not seated at ASEAN. I can't imagine for not allowed to speak as frequent as we are now.” (Personal Communication, January 5, 2012).

In sum, there were a wide range of lived spaces and scenarios found within the single-floor office. It was learned that different groups of people with different uphold cultural values would construct a fundamental different spatial relation and production even if they were at the same place with similar spatial characteristics.

4.5 Value of Harmony Materialized in Day-to-Day Action

Prior to investigating non-Western perspectives of organization space, it is important to examine the uphold values of the informants and their underlying communication principles. Particularly, the investigation paid close attention to examine the informants' daily conversation, communication pattern and conflict management, as these are more relevant to the cardinal value of harmony in social context which is also the most appropriate aspect in human interaction, if one has to study the main differences between the East and West perspective in communication.

Drawing from the ethnographic observation and interview, there was an emphasis on collectivistic culture which encouraged “we” mentality with the characteristic of

“group orientation” in CCE. During the interview, informants generally preferred working in a team and getting everyone involved for effectiveness and efficiency. According to them, working together may not have led to a high productivity at all times, but it guaranteed a dynamic flow of information and greater brainstorming session for idea generation. Relevant remarks included the following:

“Working in a team and get everyone involves for the best result. Team work is very important, working alone is not sufficient even though we are skilful.”

“Without a good communication with other members, you can’t get your work done, be it work problem or social problem. No man is an island.”

“R&D (research and development) work can never be a one-man show. Basically, we must work with different work groups using different technologies to generate different ideas. With these, we could have more constructive feedback; get things done faster and more efficient, eventually we become friends too.”

“In a short term goal, our aim is always to get work done but in a long term goal, we want to expand our networking and build relationship with the co-workers. Who doesn’t need friend?”

As the approach of “we” is predominated over the “I” approach, it carried a sense of interdependence and a need of being cooperative in sustaining work life and social life in CCE. The informants in CCE found that the co-presence of two or more people in the organization was not merely for task coordination but also to encourage sociality and hence, helped to solidify interpersonal relationships. They did not think they could accomplish their task alone and working silos were definitely ineffective especially for a research-based organization. For them, it was common that when your colleagues would eventually be your friends and the compatibility between

achieving personal goal and maintaining relationships with the counterpart was desirable for everyone. According to Mandy and Felicia, both senior analysts, during a face-to-face interview:

“It is sad not getting know our colleagues who share a same office with us. Despite our work may not directly relate but I suppose we still can talk to each other, right? Also, you do not really go to someone just because when you need them to work with you; when you have more interaction with someone then you will understand better how you can approach the person. For example, if I notice someone in stress, for work or not for work, I will approach him or her differently or if I know you have difficulties, I will help you as well. The relationship is not just for now but for future too. Who knows what will happen in the future?” (Personal Communication, December 27, 2011).

“We are human, it is impossible to say we don’t need to build relationship. Staying independent is just a nonsense to me. Yes, of course we all need some personal time and we can also do many things alone but if you are thinking to be forever alone without relate yourself to others, it is not possible. (Personal Communication, October 27, 2011).

As for my own experience as written in fieldnote:

As I’m writing this, today marked the second month of my fieldwork. I had a pretty awesome and good engagement here in CCE. However, I just got to know one thing which I always wanted to know. Since my first day of reporting, on average, I had one or twice free lunch bought by my colleagues; mostly from those who are in the same team with me but there were other colleagues from AP and ASEAN asked me out for lunch and paid for me. To be honest, I was feeling a bit flattering because it seemed to me, they treated me really good. But, today, the secret is finally revealed. There is this policy in CCE called “Bring Your New Colleague Out”. Under this policy, whoever initiated effort to bring the new colleague out for lunch is entitled to claim the expenses for the so-called welcome meal from the management. I think the rationale behind is to nurture and promote the interrelationship between staff. And now, I finally know why people keep buying me free

lunch. It turned me down a bit because I feel like the person who bought me free lunch may not as genuine as I first thought. Anyway, it is good to have free lunch and make new friend and perhaps, that's what social harmony called.

It shows that humans are essentially interrelated and the communication climate in CCE was relatively supportive and open for their self-initiated effort in building and solidifying interpersonal relationship with some sweetener in the sense of people may get incentive for doing so. As explained by Cassmine,

"You need a team if you want to have collaboration. If you are thinking to promote collaborative effort through office space, for me, I don't see it is going to work out because the nature of our current space layout is so secluded. At the end of the day, the collaboration effort is by human so why not we focus on the human aspect first? For example, creating some sort of activities that encourage people to be socially involved will be the preliminary stage for us to know each other better.

Initially when I first join, I thought my place is just to do work. But now I truly think it is important to create interpersonal relationship with co-workers. Through that, we can create a good working ambience and environment. It is important to get work done and at the same time keep a good relationship." (Personal Communication, January 18, 2012)

Throughout the fieldwork, I noticed the relationships among the staff in CCE were close as everyone recognized each other names, job functions and availability despite their daily routines not being directly related and their workstations being far from each other. By paying attention to material artefacts, there were two whiteboards in CCE, the bigger one placed at the central area and the smaller one placed at the left wing. For the one at the central area, whoever had any information to share could write on the whiteboard and the Admin staff would also update the name of the

people who was on leave or if there is any upcoming activities or visitation. On the other hand, the smaller whiteboard for ANZ team at the left wing usually filled with self-drawing graphics, illustrations, or some wise words by any of us from ANZ team. Sometime, we also dedicated our birthday wishes on the board for whoever has their birthday coming soon. While I perceived the bonding in ANZ team seemed to be stronger than others, during a casual chat, a manager reminded me not to be biased towards the others. *“You came in as an ANZ team member so automatically you are in ANZ culture. While you may label yourself as part of the ANZ energetic, happy team; you cannot assume other people are not as happy as you are in ANZ. We have our own way to maintain our friendship too; just that we are not the same as you doesn’t mean I’m less talkative or less happy than you”*. (Personal Communication, November 28, 2011). I do not know why he told me so but it served as a good reminder for myself for not being biased and try not to be involved as a complete participant-researcher which may take my objectivity away. However, the available material artefacts are significant to be examined.

Furthermore, from the observation, I also noticed that the segmentation of analysts into three zonings indeed encouraged collectivistic communicative behavior. Unfortunately, it also constructed the collectivism into three rather than one totality. The “we” mentality was found to be strong not as in CCE as a whole but was divided into Asia/Pacific, ASEAN and ANZ, to be exactly. This was particular obvious when analysts referred their own team of analysts as “we” and analysts from other two groups as “them”. Below is a conversation I overheard and jotted down in my

fieldnotes, it was between two analysts, one from AP and another one from ANZ discussed for the annual dinner's Superhero themed party:

"Cherry, can you ask your team see if they want to go to the costume shop in Fahrenheit tomorrow during lunch time? We are going to check out the price."

"You mean all of us from ANZ? Who is going with you?"

"Of course laa, who else is in your team? Almost all of us are going except for Lee; he may not join the annual diner."

"Do you want me to ask Shyen? (Shyen is an IT personnel who sitting next to the ANZ team)"

"Oh, Shyen! Up to you. Between, we are thinking maybe we should go in group for better discount and also the shop is small; don't think it can fit all of us here. So, we are going tomorrow at 1pm. You plan for your team; ASEAN team they all will go after work tomorrow."

In CCE, it was very rare to see any of the research analysts going for lunch alone or being isolated. Although every research analyst was given flexibility to work from home, many insisted on coming to the office for lunch partners and social bonding. They valued emotional interdependence in strengthening their friendships and relationships. For them, the focus of establishing a relationship was important in building long-term alliances for the growth of a team. This can be observed from the way they justified why they seldom used WAH in **4.4.2 The Collaborative Space**. Many of the informants commented that a lack of interaction was their main concern for not using WAH. It signified the importance of interrelationship and interdependence in interpersonal communication.

People in CCE also demonstrated willingness and effort to coordinate and cooperate with each other for relationship maintenance during day-to-day interactions. There were consistent activities which ranged from welcome lunches, birthday celebrations, farewell dinners, annual dinners and parties for festive celebrations among the staff in CCE. Most of them were involved and participated actively in the events and there was a record of full attendance for the annual dinner of the year. Throughout my six-month fieldwork in CCE, I had joined many occasions with other colleagues to build better rapport with them, including volunteering myself to be part of the annual dinner committee members. The theme for the annual dinner was Superhero versus Villain. Everyone was so excited over it and the main topic in the office back then was “*What are you going to be? Superhero or villain? Which superhero or which villain?*” The annual dinner held right after team building activities and the event was a successful one because it was fully planned, organized, and executed by CCE staff without hiring any event planners or helpers. Below is one of my fieldnotes regarding the annual dinner party:

Once again, I think the effects of segregation of analysts into three zonings extended more than the communication pattern and the “we” mentality. Paying close attention to the choice of characters, I noticed that even the preference in dressing up is very much team-based. For ANZ team, three female analysts dressed up as Power Puff Girls; another four female were Supergirl, Wonder Woman, Catwoman and Batgirl together with a male Joker (villain) and there were another two analysts costumed as characters in Street Fighter - Chun-Li and Ryu.

In ASEAN team, most of them were dressed up as Star Wars characters. The characters for male analysts from Asia/Pacific were mostly superheroes such as Superman, Batman, Spiderman and Green Lantern; while female analysts seemed not putting much efforts for the costume theme.

The above “we” mentality developed a sense of interdependency and engaging behavior in interpersonal interaction in CCE. These are close to collectivism cultural dimension in Chinese society which seeks to construct, maintain, keep and sustain harmony social relationships. However, it is indeed difficult to distinguish between harmony and superficial social harmony. Although there was a salient close relationship among the staff, an awkward and odd response was spotted during a board meeting. As written in fieldnotes, *“it was a videoconference with other regional offices to review company performance in 2011. All of a sudden, I saw people burst into laughter in a sarcastic manner when the presentation slide was showing “Relationship between CCE and Us”.* I heard different voices in the room, some whispered *“love-hate relationship?”* while some muttered *“we have no relationship with them”* and many were murmuring something about the statement among themselves. The harmonious relationships the people had shown earlier were then uncertain and doubtful. Nevertheless, it could be the low sense of belonging attached to the organization instead of interpersonal relationships.

Particularistic human relationships may explain the above social harmony too. In CCE, most of the informants consented that they regulated their communication pattern according to their level of intimacy with other people and the others’ seniority. Level of intimacy refers to how close the relationship is. In general, the closer the relationship, the more open, informal and intimate communication can be conducted regardless of the other persons’ job designation and ranking. Informants revealed that they seldom applied a same rule to everyone whom they interact with.

Informants explained the need to employ particular rules and interaction patterns with particular people in a particular context as follows:

“We have to and it is a must! It is important to customize your approach to different people because different people have different preferences. If I were talking to someone I’m not close with, I will normally talk formally and will not make jokes like what I always do with people I close with. As we have clients from Australia and so, I will make sure I speak in a correct language. For other, they may think it is about the slang but for me, it is a way to speak for them to understand us.”

“Yes. Maturity and age take count. I think the level of relationship is important in how we approach people. For people who are not too close with, we tend to use formal channel of communication.”

“The first I look at will be intimacy then will be their position in the organization. Like if you were talking to the Director, you need to be more cautions, for me, especially the words and tone that I use. With friends, I will be more casual.”

During the fieldwork, I witnessed how certain people communicated openly and informally with their immediate manager or the research director while some people were not. I was also surprised at the discussion topics in their conversation; they had great variety, from work-related to very personal and intimate topics. Here, we see the significance of forging an intimate relationship with colleagues for open communication regardless of job designation.

Essentially, the informants placed the traditional value of respect to the ‘elders’ as an important practice in Chinese particularistic culture. Informants referred to ‘elders’ as people who are older than them in age, people who held a higher position in an organization, and also in terms of the length of service they had in a given company

or industry. “Respect the elderly, pay respect to the senior, show respect to people who are older than us, take what the senior says” were mentioned several times throughout the 42 semi-structured interviews. Paying respect to elderly is common either in the East and the West but for the informants in this study, they were more tactful in the selection of word or vocabulary during the interaction with the “elderly” as defined by them. According to the informants, there were certain words or greetings which are inappropriate to be used in front of the older people, for instance, “dude” and “what’s up”. These words may sound relax and friendly to younger generations, but it may sound extremely rude for baby boomers. From the above, the characteristics of particularistic relationships reflect two principles, which are relationship-oriented and hierarchical-based.

On the other hand, many people misunderstood harmonious relationship as a conflict avoidance practice in Chinese society. To clarify this, Wing, a research manager who has been working in CCE for six years, expressed his view as follows:

“Not to avoid conflict for the sake of avoid conflict; never maintain a harmonious relationship just for the sake of maintaining it. Although everyone wants to work happily, if you cannot work it out then you have no choice to break the harmonious and sometime, conflict is a positive thing.” (Personal Communication, January 11, 2012).

Nearly half of the informants believed that conflict is not inherently a negative thing. Being constructive, being honest, and paying respect to others were three important characteristics to ensure a good flow of communication in CCE. Most of the informants did not value establishing harmonious relationships as the end of human

communication, neither to serve for conflict avoidance. On the contrary, they reckoned that conflict is inevitable while harmony is breakable, if needed. It is necessary to say no and confront, even though it may cause conflicts. According to the informants, if there was a disagreement approaching, they would think of react to it rather than avoiding it. They viewed communication as a process of action-reaction; it is a continuous process which inspires and motivates both communicators to reposition themselves regularly to accommodate changes or uncertainty. A regional research director in CCE, Kathy, claimed that:

“Sometime conflict and confrontation make you know more about your colleagues. Conflict is a must which you cannot completely avoid it. However, there is a lot of time where conflicts ends up as quarrel so we must first calm down or not talking for few days or get a neutral party to iron out the problem. People are unique and everyone has their own style but at the end of the day, there never a problem that we cannot solve.” (Personal Communication, January 16, 2012).

In other words, the underlying assumption of the value of harmony practiced in CCE acknowledged the rich diversity of people way of thinking and believed the unity of variety is a way to confront complexity. It opens a door for people to embrace complexity and changes to an acceptance of conflict.

When the informants were asked to comment on the company U-shaped office architectural layout, most agreed that it has segregated people into three sections which decreased the opportunity to have serendipitous communication. However, many of them did not see it as the major obstacle that caused them not to have a good relationship with people from the other teams. They have accepted the fact that

the U-shaped architectural layout is unchangeable. But to overcome such a problem, it depends on the users' reaction whether they are willing to make extra efforts in maintaining relationship or to ignore the beauty of having harmonious rapport with the others. In this case, what someone can do probably is to initiate effort walking over to the other sections despite the long distance rather than isolated themselves from others because of the distance. In the observations, I noticed how some of the informants regulated their spatial practice to fit into the rather awkward spatial design. For instance, a research analyst seated at the right wing told me that instead of making her coffee in the pantry as soon as she reached the office, she preferred to do it a quarter to ten because that was the time when everyone was in the office. By passing through the central hallway and the right wing, she could greet people with whom she rarely interacts with during working hours. Closely related to the value of harmony, people were found to confront uncertainty in a harmonious way.

Based on the findings above, the conception of harmony in CCE is different from the common understanding of harmony as the ultimate goal for communication; it is beyond as an ideal harmonious final status. Instead, the perceived-value of harmony in CCE encouraged five aspects in interpersonal relation and they are: mutuality and interdependence, relationship-centered, particularistic relationship, paying respect to the elderly, and embracing diversity.

4.6 Collaboration

CCE by its nature a research-based company and its work structures are mainly team-based operations. There are three major market research teams (Asia/Pacific,

ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand) responsible for four major technologies (hardware, software, IT solution and consulting) in three major industries (retail, manufacturing and government). It requires collection of people with different sets of skill working together. The exercise of collaborative teamwork in CCE is primarily in relation to today's evolving work environment, in which jobs are becoming increasingly complex and clients are becoming more demanding for meaningful output.

4.6.1 Characteristics of Collaboration

As determined from the interview data, informants defined collaboration as an effective tool to get work done with richer ideas and broader perspectives. It is also a working relationship between two or more people towards a shared goal. As there is a common goal shared by them, meanwhile the members would have certain types of relationship connecting one to another that had bind them together to complete the tasks and do so in a collective way. Some relevant comments on "collaboration" are as follows:

"There's job that requires individual work as well as team work. There's only so much that one individual can produce and having another team mate helps you will make thing better and faster. That's the beauty of collaborate"

"There are certain works you can do it on your own but there are certain work that you need to collaborate where you need input from other."

"Getting together is just the first phrase, next you need to communicate supported by right tool and environment. It has to have a common objective."

In CCE, each group possesses unique structured relations with roles, rules and norms which aim to control group processes towards the common goal. Referring to the organizational chart found in CCE's official website (documentary sources), in general, there is one local research director oversees a specific domain of technology while research analysts are responsible to report to their respective research manager who supervises analysts by region. Besides, each region works on different tasks and routines. For instance, the ANZ team is responsible for Australia and New Zealand market research while the Asia/Pacific team mainly works on ad-hoc projects in Malaysia.

According to the informants, the effectiveness and performance of the collaboration was highly dependent on the members' inclusion in the particular collaborating team. The informants reckoned that it is important to enhance the sense of belonging of the members and satisfy their psychological needs for continuous participation. Thus, communication is said to be the central process communicating the recognition of someone's membership in a collective. Besides, informants also greatly valued interdependency, as it takes two hands to clap. As such, members are expected to be mutually dependent and must actively coordinate and cooperate to accomplish the assigned collaborative task. For them, if people persist on the collaborative effort and working together, they will slowly form a culture in the organization.

Drawing from the interviewing data and observation fieldnotes, the informant revealed the difficulties and tensions involved in making a successful collaboration. First, many organizations have underestimated the need for concentrative and

focused work in collaboration. Although collective knowledge is greater than its sum of the individuals, many think that they could not have collaboration without individual work. Therefore, informants were satisfied with the settings available in CCE, as different types of rooms were available to accommodate individual focused and group collaborative work in both open and closed environment equipped with facilities that foster greater sense of engagement, both virtually and physically. As stated by Yen,

“I like the idea of having quiet room. It is in fact very useful for us to make call without disturbing our “neighbour”. It is good that the management understand it is not all about collaboration. We do have our own work to do which usually required a lot of thinking and analysis. Even before we collaborate with others, we also need to do some self-research first. Many companies have overlooked it; this is my first time working with a company that has “quiet room”.”

Second, most of the informants perceived a very fine line between collaborate for group interest and compete for self-interest. The workforce is becoming challenging and competitive, and there are different reasons for working together. While some are working for team performance, some are working to achieve personal goal. As a result, informants reported thinking that it is necessary to build trust between individuals and include an explicit management structure for collaboration, in order to reach compromises on the division of work and broad goals of collaboration.

Sandra, the director, also expressed her view as follows:

“As someone who has been with the industry for more than 10 years, I noticed the work attitudes of the people nowadays are very much different from me. Today, many analysts work in silo and don’t see the need of studying the whole picture of IT. In the past, we don’t train in this way but we have a lot of collaboration. For

the analyst further down, it is more like competing. If I collaborate with you, what can I get? If I support you, then will I get recognition? They are apparently young and quite junior but yet they think they know everything while they are only responsible for one hardware research.”

Third, there is a tension between intellectual collaboration for knowledge exchange and societal collaboration for information sharing. The informants understand that collaboration is more than talking to the other colleagues and frequent interaction, as this does not promise a deep discussion. For example, the open plan office at the left wing by no doubt created more interaction and conversation. However, some informants doubted fewer meaningful conversations contributed to collaboration. Also, such interaction become known as noise rather than productive knowledge sharing. It brought them confusion about how to define and achieve genuine collaboration. Anne also perplexed by the nature of collaboration and explained as follows:

“Sometime I don’t understand what exactly the management wants. I think the company must tell us clearly about their objective - to create noise or to create collaboration. If we are intending to create collaboration, collaboration is not about talking or going out for lunch. Collaboration is when we are working for a common goal with the support and flexibility given by the management. Sometime we are asked to attend team building activities but for me, a strong team work doesn’t bring us to the next level of career development. While another sometime, we are asked to quickly form a team to work on an ad-hoc collaboration project, which for me, I gained two things from such “collaboration” - how to work under a tight deadline and well, I gained new friends. I think the management must plan well and define and decide which type of collaboration they actually want.”

4.6.2 Types of Collaborative Work

The team structure relations in CCE are said to be direct, as each analyst has their respective research manager to report to and research managers are also required to report to designate research director for different technology domain updates. Apart from the ad-hoc consulting project, each team has routine work tasks which range from weekly, monthly, quarterly to yearly basis. Every analyst has specialized knowledge and skills for their responsible tasks such as providing business strategies, competitive analysis, market sizing and forecast, industry trends and monitoring the development of new programs for emerging markets. The working culture in CCE demonstrated the importance of working together and knowledge sharing as the basic building blocks of successful team performance. Members must represent the relevant parts of an organization to ensure a sense of participation in the decision and support for its implementation. Johnny, the Director has provided a clear review about the need for collaboration:

“In CCE, what we are doing is resell our knowledge. And, each individual doesn’t carry the entire IT knowledge in himself / herself. If you look at how we structure, we are very much structure into domain so there is no one knows everything about IT. If you look at how information are being required and demanded by our clients and vendors, it has changed as well., they don’t just look at specific domain or market, they are very much look at across several domain and if you also look at how the entire landscape had been shaping after so much consolidation and acquisition that go on so in term of the information requirement, we need to be able to provide information and supply information that are relate to our clients. Hence, there is a lot of collaboration in between. For us, without collaboration, I don’t think we can move very far.”

Generally, there were two types of collaboration found in CCE work structure: planned and ad-hoc collaboration. Planned collaboration is usually routine, long-term, interdisciplinary and team-based. Ad-hoc collaboration is generally specific, short-term, transdisciplinary, and cross-team. As mentioned above, each team is required to perform a scheduled assignment in a specific timeline and which is known as a planned collaboration. Occasionally, some teams would be called for ad-hoc consulting projects for a short period of time, working collaboratively with other teams. Ad-hoc projects are usually on a short duration basis; however, some of it can last up to twelve months. The major differences between planned and ad-hoc collaborative projects are on its nature of regularity and involvement within team and between teams. Both types of collaborative work can be conducted through face-to-face interactions and virtual communication through the presence of communication technologies. Different types of mediated communication methods are used to communicate between the local analysts and the home-based analysts such as e-mail, video-conferencing, teleconferencing, CCE internal instant messaging and voice-over-IP service, Skype.

The need of communication has formed the knowledge work a fundamentally social activity while the process of building knowledge is essential to collaboration. However, collaboration is not just any kind of working together or socializing. Drawing from the ethnographic interviewing data, informants claimed that the working partners must undergo at least two engaging process before they can collaborate. First, the working partners must have a low-intensity interaction for coordination of tasks at the beginning. For the early stage of collaboration,

informants preferred to interact face-to-face with the presence of non-verbal communication for better understanding and minimal misapprehension. *“Co-presence is important to start off but not a must when we are getting know more about each other”*. (Personal Communication, November 20, 2011). That is why research analysts travel abroad to meet eye-to-eye with their working partners despite the travelling costs are high. *“Seeing each other face is still important so we meet with our Australia team face-to-face at least once or twice a year”*. (Personal Communication, December 6, 2011).

Second, two-way communication is required for greater knowledge exchange and information sharing. A good flow of information and ideas is critical for collaborative work. For this engaging process, dual presence in virtual and physical space provides alternative and flexibility for people to work at their own convenient. The mixed presence complements each other as a tool for effective and creative collaboration. *“Although face-to-face communication is the most effective channel but as most of us involved in virtual teams, communicating using ICT tools is also a must, with this, even if we are geographically dispersed, we are still a team”*. (Personal Communication, January 18, 2012).

After spending a significant time in the above two phrases, the third stage, true collaboration, comes when people cooperate and work for a common purpose, communicating at deeper levels of interaction in the presence of trust and understanding.

To foster greater collaboration, its social and spatial requirements must be first identified. Prior to this, the informants indicated that designation and obligation to collaborate was the prerequisite for them to commence participation partly because “...it is hard to expect someone who genuine initiated collaborative effort” (Personal Communication, January 6, 2012) and “... it is almost impossible to have people collaborate without being asked to”. (Personal Communication, December 9, 2011). Therefore, the need to collaborate must be present as a valid reason for people to work together. Research by its nature a highly interdependent task, members must coordinate cooperatively and provide assistance to their working partners. In CCE, analysts who are responsible to a same domain of technology were found to be closely interacting with each other to discuss on the domain market trend for respective country. For instance, those who work for hardware in ASEAN were more likely to exchange their point of view than those who are also working for hardware in Asia/Pacific or in Australia and New Zealand. The need to collaborate is essential to instigate collaboration; however, identifying appropriate social and spatial requirement for collaboration is also necessary to further enhance and reinforce the collaborative effort.

Drawing from the collected materials, three social requirements and three spatial conditions have been identified as environmental requirements for collaboration.

4.6.3 Social Requirements for Collaboration

While spending six months in CCE, I witnessed people who performed professionally during a presentation broken down emotionally minutes later because

of personal problems. I also partnered with some colleagues who were socially friendly to me but ended up with several communication breakdowns throughout the project period. Also, when the informants were commenting on or referring to someone, it always consisted of two facets. These experiences led a conclusion that people perform two types of behaviour at work. Generally, there are two basic types of behaviour: task behaviors and social behaviors. Task behaviors focus on the individual's goal and work while social behaviors focus on the individual's social and emotional needs at work. Many may emphasize on task and ignore the social aspects of behaviour. However, it is indeed imperative for both behaviors to be taken into account to form an effective work team. Hence, the obligation to collaborate at work is not enough to cultivate collaboration. On the other hand, as soon as the need is acknowledged, the following three social aspects are essential for collaboration: trust, respect, and relationship.

According to the informants in CCE, trust was the key to good communication especially for those working in a highly mobile and distributed team. The informants elaborated that most of the time, their willingness to cooperate is encouraged by the trust they had on teammates, because it made them believe they were competent to complete the task. In another interpretation, trust was a type of confidence too. When the presence of trust is high, informants will be more willing to commit to the task and to be open with information and sharing with others. In the ANZ team, most of the analysts were not happy with a research manager based in Australia. There was a constant communication breakdown. When they were asked to explain more on the relationship with the research manager, an unswerving answer was given – *“there is*

no trust between us". For many of them, it was hard to have shared mind over a shared goal without trust. Taken from the conversation and interviewing data, *"trust derives from work performance; trust and accountability; trust and respect gained from previous working relationship; trust between superior and subordinate"*, it can be said that past working experience and higher frequency of interaction between the team members able to build a greater trust among the informants.

Besides, trust has a direct relationship with respect as well. Informants mentioned that when a team has a high level of trust, there will be more respect paid among the members. Several types of respect were mentioned by the informants, for instance, *"respect to others' right to say no, respect to others' opinion, respect to others' culture, working style and decision"*. Not to forget the majority say on *"paying respect to the elderly and senior staff"*. Throughout the interview, many informants mentioned on paying respect and having trust on the two most senior persons in CCE (Kathy, a research director who has been working in CCE for more than 12 years and Johnny, a research director with more than 20 years of working experiences in ICT industry). The informants then explained their willingness and appreciation to work together with two of them because they had good working experience with them in the past and it built trust between them.

Other than trust and respect, a team must have *"good internal social relations, positive relationship with the team member, healthy working relationship, good personal and work relationship"* for mutual understanding and group cohesion to strengthen collaborative efforts. Group cohesion referred to the interpersonal bonds

that hold a group together which has positive impact on a group performance. There are many ways to form and sustain interpersonal relations. Socialization process is said to be the fundamental activity to develop social relations. For instance, CCE's policy of "Bring Your New Colleague Out" which encouraged existing staff bringing new colleague out for lunch or dinner helped to foster a social relation. It also facilitated close relationships for group cohesion among the members. Most of the informants were aware of policy and also once brought new comers including me for lunch. Although the feedback was positive and encouraging, a few informants claimed that a simple lunch outing may not help to form a close relationship. Based on my own personal experience being brought out for lunch, I reckoned it was indeed a beneficial ice breaking exercise for people to get to know each other. Such a high perceived value of relationship for collaboration is parallel to the value of interdependence, interpersonal interaction and mutual influence as reflected in the value of harmony.

4.6.4 Spatial Condition for Collaboration

Besides social requirement, most of the informants deemed that spatial condition helped to inspire, support, and enable collaborative effort. Space is now increasingly recognized as an organizational resource to reinforce the existing patterns of communication or to create new patterns of interaction. Drawing from the ethnographic data collected from CCE, there were three spatial conditions perceived as necessary to promote collaboration: congregated spatial design, spatial potential, and visibility.

A congregated spatial configuration stresses the centrality of people, workstations and facilities (*proximity as in nearer to working partner, nearer to pantry, nearer to photocopy/printer room, nearer to co-workers*). Many informants were not satisfied with CCE's segregated office formation and reckoned that the U-shaped office layout has separated the analysts into three islands on which each of the team is isolated from one another. It was one of the barriers to cultivate social relations and teamwork for collaborative effort. Unlike a segregated office, a congregated office configuration is able to offer possibility for connectedness and proximity among people. Connectedness enables accessibility and openness which allowed opportunistic encounters for conversation and interaction. People who are highly connected and near to each other tend to have shared values and closer relationships compared to those who are secluded. This explains why there was a strong in-group and out-group dynamic in each of the corner in CCE. However, some highly connected and congregated spot may also fail to boost interaction encounters unpredictably. The highest traffic hallway in CCE was one of the examples which failed to generate meaningful interaction among the people. Besides Foucault's concept of the panopticon, such phenomenon can also be explained from the spatial potential of the hallway.

Spatial potential refers to the prospect of spatial use of a particular place. For instance, meeting rooms allows for group assemblies and conferences while individual workstation is more likely to afford individual focused work. As collaboration requires both individual focused (concentration) and group oriented (collaboration) tasks, an office setting must be able to support both spatial potential

for individually and collaboratively tasks. Spatial potential in CCE is considered adequate for various types of task. There were individual work desks and quiet rooms available to fulfil the individual concentrative needs, and there were also meeting rooms in various sizes available to be used for different types of team discussion.

Referred to the previous example, although the traffic and movement in central hallway were high and expected to create more encounter chances, its location failed to offer the possibility for people to stop and talk. Analysts seated at the central areas have the narrowest seating plan and thus, it was inappropriate to have conversation as it might disturb the others. Same problem was noticed for photocopy/printer room which located in between two directors' room. It has turned from a shared place to a 'grab-and-go' fear place where nobody wanted to stay any longer to avoid visualization from the superiors. Another spatial potential would be the availability of the place. Quiet rooms and mid-size meeting rooms in CCE were always fully booked and hence, many people had to go for a "third place" for either individual or group task. It is clear to claim that spatial potential should not be evaluated based on its possible functionality but its traffic, location, size and availability too.

The third spatial requirement is visibility (*co-presence, visibility in person, visibility virtually through video call, virtual visibility cues such as 'available', 'away', 'busy'*). Visibility played a very significant role during the initial stage of collaboration. Informants mentioned the importance of meeting up with new teammate in face-to-face setting for social relations and mutual understanding.

Especially for analysts in ANZ team, most of them think that they *“have better working relationship with those foreign working partner whom we met before than to those who never met but only communicate through mediated communication”*. The same is true for local research analysts, who paid *“frequent visits to local clients’ offices as a form of socializing and it lightens the effort for coordination and knowledge exchanges after getting clear instruction and information through face-to-face communication.”*

Internally, the visibility in CCE office was hindered by its secluded spatial layout. The available visibility was only sufficient to observe direct teammates. It was nearly impossible to experience the visible co-presence of others, unless someone walked around in the office. Visibility in CCE was mostly driven by the open plan office at the right wing and transparent partitions at the left wing, as well as by facilitating controlled movement between the central, left, and right wings. This can be seen from the deactivation of back door in order to form controlled movement to ensure visible opportunity and reconnect people from the three different zonings.

Informants valued visibility, as it has positive effects on initiating face-to-face interaction and indicates whether someone is available to talk. For instance, Chris was telling us that:

“...it was easier to see if someone is available to talk at the right wing’s open space office than the central areas with higher partitions which block the visibility between the passer-by and the one sitting at their workstation.”

There was also an interesting phenomenon as written in fieldnotes:

“I read an article a few days ago; it was about a new scene which took place in many modern organizations. They called it - “headphones are the new walls”. To see if this new scene occurred in CCE, I walked a lot these few days because I want to see how many of them are wearing their headphones. Based on my consecutive 5-day observation, it was to say half of the analysts in the central hallway were always wearing headphones. By having the headphones on, I think it signals more on “I am not available to talk” or “do not talk to me” rather than “I like music” or “I enjoy listening to music.” Thus, visibility guides a visible co-presence to tell who is available in the office and it may also offer visible signal to hint if someone is ready and willing to talk. Conversely, the practice of wearing headphones was a hint to reject conversation and signaling interaction may be not favorable; it is the new wall to block unwelcome chat.”

4.7 Four Types of Spatial Affordance for Collaboration

Based on the preconditions to achieve collaboration, it is clearly known that frequent interaction, high chances for opportunistic encounter, propinquity and togetherness are important to fulfil the above social and spatial requirements for collaboration. It particularly increases chances for interaction, helps to foster relationship and trust among colleagues, as well as offer opportunities for co-presence and visibility. To examine environmental conditions that signal such affordance, various types of affordance will be first identified.

4.7.1 Intended Affordance

First, analysts’ proximity based seating arrangements zoned by their coverage research market are a potential affordance designed and intended to offer frequent interaction. However, it only permitted regular conversation among analysts sitting

at the same areas. It provided a rather limited visibility and co-presence for analysts who seated at different zonings. Thus, the seating arrangements were an intended affordance to encourage more socializing within team.

4.7.2 Perceived Affordance

Second, although many informants were aware of the availability of shared place such as games room and photocopy/printer room which aimed to encourage potential social encounters, the leave-me-your-name procedure of getting the video console and the fear-to-go location have caused many of them to stop or not use it because of the psychological state of mind where they reckoned they were placed under surveillance. While the central hallway with the highest traffic was supposed to offer most potential affordance for propinquity, it was a failure due to the presence of directors, managers and CCTV cameras, not to mention the passing down of culture in which talking was prohibited. Therefore, the incompatibility of spatial potential has made it a perceived affordance where the opportunities for social interaction and encounters offered by the environment are perceived but not acted out.

4.7.3 Utilized Affordance

Nevertheless, there were places where opportunity for collaborative work was perceived and acted upon by the informants in CCE. This is the third affordance - utilized affordance. It is indeed important to recognize the need for concentrative and collaborative for genuine collaboration effort. The accessibility and high utilization of quiet room and meeting room were an evidence for utilized affordance. Quiet rooms were occupied most of the time for concentrative work and private talk. While

meeting rooms became an important gathering point to assemble all analysts from different zonings for general meetings or discussions. It fulfilled the need to encourage face-to-face communication, co-presence and visibility. The right mix of workspace is believed to improve social relationship and strengthen trusting relationships.

4.7.4 Shaped Affordance

Fourth, shaped affordance exists when the perceiver (or user) alters the environment to create an opportunity for desired behavior. Referring to the reactivation of access to back door, the management quickly deactivated it as soon as they noticed the negative consequences in worsening the sociality in “dead place”. Here, the controlled movement is known as shaped affordance, as the decision makers amended the environment for desired behaviour. Besides, to solve the problem of having inadequate quiet room and meeting room available for analysts, analysts were given flexibility and autonomy to adjust their working hours and decide their preferred working setting - office, WAH or the alternative ‘third place’ - as shape affordance, and for greater work productivity and efficiency with the trust granted by the management.

In sum, the five dimensions of organization space have presented various types of affordance to offer opportunity for collaboration, whether perceived, not perceived, acted out or not acted out.

4.8 Summary

Each of the above findings was examined and analyzed after careful observation, triangulation of data collection, member-checking, and data analysis using thematic coding. These findings were based on ethnographer's first-hand experiences in the natural settings with minimal interference. It offers insight for discussion on non-Western views of communication pattern and organization space. More analysis for the affordance of space from a non-Western perspective will be presented in the following chapter.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Having reviewed the values of harmony, organization space, spatial and social requirement for collaboration in CCE, this section proceeds to examine the redefined value of harmony compared to previous research. Next, an investigation on the production of space from a non-Western perspective will be presented with the reference of Lefebvre's triad space model. Last but not least, the discussion will further elaborate the affordance of space for multi-faceted collaboration from the perspective of Chinese cardinal value of harmony.

5.2 Redefined Value of Harmony

Based on the findings as presented in Chapter 4, there are five perceived-value of harmony underlying interpersonal relation and they are: mutuality and interdependence, relationship-centred, particularistic relationship, paying respect to the elderly, and embracing diversity. These are profoundly related to the key value of harmony in social context, they are: trust, respect, interdependence and relationship-centred. The perceived value of harmony is at the essentiality for Chinese cultural and social protocols (Buderi & Huang, 2006). While the significance of relationship-centred is also pertinent to social ties which are strongly embedded in Chinese collectivist culture (Gao, Knight & Ballantyne, 2012) and Malaysian Chinese prominent cluster of relationship-oriented found among Malaysian Chinese youth (Soontiens, 2007).

Malaysians are known as being more collectivistic than individualistic. It means we have high concern for others and keep other people in mind, promote a sense of oneness with other people and always consider the group as a basic unit of survival (Hofstede, 1980). It reasons why many informants in CCE considered it is important to have good relationship with their co-workers and would still clock-in to the office though they were given unlimited WAH. Such “we” mentality which encourages a sense of interdependency and engaging behaviour in interpersonal interaction is close to Hofstede’s (1980) collectivism cultural dimension in Chinese society. In Chinese communication studies, particularistic human relationship has to be obligated (Chang, 2001). The need for particularistic relationship reflects the ethics in Confucian, which is relationship-oriented and hierarchical-based. Selective communication is thus important to maintain a harmonious process of interaction between people who have diverse backgrounds and at different stages of intimacy.

Literally, the hierarchical-based ethics in Confucianism appeared to be comparable to Hofstede’s power distance index. However, if one examines and looks closely into the Confucianism principles in hierarchical-based ethics, such relevance is said to be null to Hofstede’s power distance.

According to Hofstede (2001), power distance is connected with the social acceptance of unequal distribution of power which the inequality usually connected to prestige, wealth and power itself. Power distance is then defined as the “extent to which the less powerful members of institutions or organizations within a country

expect and accept that power is not equally distributed” (Hofstede, 1991, p. 28). While the main issue involved in this dimension is to examine how the society deals with the fact that people are unequal (Hofstede, 1993). Malaysia topped the countries in the world with the highest value of power distance index at 104/104. Such extreme value of power distance index implies that the Malaysian society agrees that power should be unequally shared and people who have higher social positions should obtain numerous privileges and it is considered as right and natural. Back to the fundamental argument as discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, before we place ourselves in the West paradigm, we must ask ourselves how accurate we can perceive and understand ourselves through the knowledge about ourselves that has been understood and internalized by the West? The West may be unique but they are certainly not universal. While many claimed that Hofstede’s cultural dimensions have a large influence on organizational practice and communication; Bakar and Mustaffa (2011) pointed out one of the most challenging concern in the field of organizational communication, that is ‘the application of theories and models developed in one part of the world to understand a phenomenon that occurs in another part of the world” (p. 197).

Driven by the rich history and ethnic diversity in Malaysia, a study on leadership in Malaysia revealed unique organizational cultures in Malaysia which hold a distinctive mix of Asian and Western cultural values. Such organizational cultures composed of Malay’s Islamic principles, Chinese and Indian religious and cultural value as well as British colonial management philosophy (Kennedy, 2002). One of the findings on Malaysian culture was giving priority to maintaining harmony by

placing emphasis on collective well-being and demonstrates humane orientation to respect the society hierarchical differences. Most of the key values in Eastern traditional teaching are proven to be able to blend in well with interpersonal relationship and also into modern organization practice in Malaysia.

Zooming into the concept of power distance, Bakar and Mustaffa (2011) extended the efforts to explore the characteristics of power distance concept rooted in Malaysian organizations by conducting focus group in three public organizations in Peninsular Malaysia. The study identified five categories of power distance characteristic and they are: group bond, mutual respect, social status, education and expertise, and rank in an organization. Apparently, the meaning and embodiment of power in Malaysia context are greatly different from Hofstede's dimension. Comparing the overall communicative values found in my research to theirs, three characteristics matched - group bond, mutual respect, education and expertise.

Back to the hierarchical-based ethics in Confucianism, human interrelationships should be regulated by the Five Code of Ethics, *Wu Lun*, which emphasizes five key relationships: ruler/subject, father/son, husband/wife, older brother/younger brother, and between friends. These relationships are assumed to be unequal but complementary (Chen & Chung, 1994). The application of *wu lun* encourages two main elements - mutuality of the relationship and interdependency - which regulate the social relationship with five types of ordering namely particularistic relationships, complementary social reciprocity, in-group/out-group distinction, essential intermediary and formality, and overlap of personal and public

relationships (Yum, 1988). In general, it places emphasis on juniors are required to pay respect to the senior; in particular, while ruler has to show justice / subject must show loyalty; while a father shows love / a son should show filial piety; husband shall show initiation while the wife shows obedience; elder brother should express brotherly love to younger brother who shows reverence in return and lastly, friends should show mutual faith in one another. Again, the values identified from the fieldwork matched with some of the principles in *wu lun*, but most importantly the vital values always advocate mutuality and interdependence.

Confucian hierarchical-based ethics may demonstrate power inequality by placing people at different social ranking, however, the key differentiations in Confucian teaching have less to do with power relation or autonomy but seniority, complementary, obligatory and long term asymmetric reciprocity. Confucian philosophy views relations as a complementary give-and-take rapport; everyone is eventually interdependent and interconnected and so, dependency is acceptable; it is not something to be looked down upon nor heavily relies on (Yum, 1988). On the other hand, the differentiation in social order is not primarily aimed to demonstrate hierarchical power distribution but the 'power' should be exercised for self-restraint and at modesty. The relationship (or the 'power relation') is based on mutual responsiveness rather than simple obedience, which is a condition of a harmonious social order in Confucius' thinking. Meanwhile, a subject respects, follows, obeys the ruler not because of the unequal power given but each of us has our responsibilities and duties within the hierarchical-based social relationship where we need to fulfill. It means that in order for the ruler to gain the subjects' respect, the

ruler must conduct his duty in taking care of the nation. Hence, the ‘power’ differentiation is not what has been defined in Eurocentric study; the East recognizes ‘power’ as part of our assigned responsibilities.

The above humanitarian efforts reflect group-oriented culture which is closely relevant to Confucianism – a humanistic philosophy. Confucianism, as the foundation and backbone of Chinese cardinal value of harmony, focuses more on the relationship between man and man (Cheu, 2000). Its teaching has been abundantly recorded in the Analects which chronicles the words and deeds of Confucius. Although the Chinese in Malaysia may not be well schooled in the Confucian classics, they in general still live under the influence of Confucianism; its principles and moral values have remained a core feature of their collective psyche in the daily life practice (Wong, 2008; Zawawi, 1998).

Values of trust and respect as heavily discussed in the findings are inseparable from Confucian teaching too. To Confucius, *“armed conflicts were unnecessary and death (lack of food) was unavoidable, but trust must be retained for a proper social order”* (Analects, chapter 12:7). If by force of circumstances, a government should first give up arms, then food but never lose trust to the common people. For interpersonal relationship, as stated in Analects (chapter 1:4): *Ceng Zi said: “Each day I examine myself in three ways: in doing things for others, have I been disloyal? In my interactions with friends, have I been untrustworthy? Have not practiced what I have preached?”* Trust is therefore an honorary value in Confucian teaching and it is indeed important to perform two types of trust when interacting with others: being

trusted and being trustworthy. Both types of trust are prerequisites for good communication, open communication and true collaboration as shown in Chapter 4. Having trusted working partners motivates informants in CCE to commit and cooperate while being trustworthy is essential to earn respect from subordinates or superior. Trust and respect are therefore interpenetrating in the process of communication and the interplay between them is essential to produce genuine collaborative effort.

Confucian also stresses five humanistic behaviours that shape a fundamentally good person: courtesy, generosity, honesty, persistence, and kindness (*Analects*, chapter 17:5). Among all, there are two important concepts that dominate Chinese socialization process: *Li*, propriety and *Ren*, benevolence (Chua, 2003). *Li* (propriety) refers to the norms and rules of proper conduct in a social context which emphasize showing respect or reverence to others (Chen & Xiao, 1993). *Ren* (benevolence) embodying a concern for one's own wellbeing means that one should show affection to those with whom one is closely related (Chen, 2009). Both values closely reflect the practice of paying respect to the elderly and Chinese particularistic culture in CCE as discussed above and earlier in the findings. Also, these values had materialized in the informants' belief of unity of diversity to confront complexity. To the informants, conflict cannot be avoided but what one can do is to respect and acknowledge the differences for integration. Ultimately, we want to achieve organization goals as a whole rather than as an independent entity. It behooves the informants to embrace the co-existence of diversity and changes to achieve

harmonious state. As elaborated by Xi, Cao and Xiangli (2010), the idea in Confucianism encouraged diversity instead of homogeneity as below:

...this has been clearly expressed by Confucius (1992), “junzi he er bu tong, xiaoren tong er buhe,” which was translated in Jia’s (2008) work as “Educated persons are in relational harmony while holding different views; uneducated persons are in disharmony even while holding the same views.”(p.201).

Nevertheless, as Mencius, the most revered Confucian philosopher said, *“Opportunities of time vouchsafed by Heaven are not equal to advantages of situation afforded by the Earth, and advantages of situation afforded by the Earth are not equal to the union arising from the accord of Men”* (Mencius, 1895). Mencius cherished the value of *He* (harmony) beyond the universe yet it is also the most basic practice we can do and we should do. He was trying to say a good timing is not as good as being advantageously situated, and being advantageously situated is not as good as having harmonious relationship with other people. Meanwhile, in due course, success is all about fostering good *guan xi* (interpersonal relationship) with others (Buderi & Huang, 2006). The Chinese society has long been well-known as a relation-centred society, emphasizing relational interdependence, interpersonal harmony and even a surficial social harmony (Yang, 2001). This justified the importance of nurturing smooth and harmonious personal relationship is at the central of collaborative efforts. In overall, the redefined value of harmony vindicated the *raison d’être* of trust, respect and relationship for collaboration.

Besides observing the redefined value of harmony in communicative assumptions, the relations between harmony and space are equally-weighted for the investigation of spatial production.

5.3 Production of Space

As we compared the five dimensions of organization space in the findings to Lefebvre's triad of conceived, perceived and lived spaces, an identical formation of space is observed. The constructed and collaborative spaces carried a same focus as conceived space. It is a spatial planning for social regulation. Here, we see conceived space from its physical and architectural dimensions as discussed in the findings where the dimensions of the constructed and collaborative space also refer to office layouts, workplace designs, proximity, shared places to meet all levels of communication needs; ranging from personal concentrative needs to interpersonal, small group, team and organizational communication.

The most salient physical and architectural dimensions in organization space are physical proximity and shared place. Physical proximity is always at the heart in organization spatial practices for its best-known role in initiating casual talk and inviting frequent contact for direct team communication (Stryker, 2006; Lee, Brownstein, Mills & Kohane, 2010) while the peripheral function of shared place is to increase user's perceived level of support for collaboration other than providing essential and adequate space for all ranges of work task (Hua, 2010). As shown in the findings, the impact of proximity was indeed beneficial for team communication and the availability of collaborative shared places (meeting room and quiet room)

have also satisfied both concentrative and collaborative needs. But there were also contradictory results and unexpected outcomes observed during the fieldwork. First, physical proximity functioned more than inviting and maintaining casual interaction or team communication among those sitting in close proximity. The observed unusual communication behaviours during fieldwork have disclosed another layer of proximity in anticipating unwelcomed interaction by avoiding eye contact, putting the “new wall” (headphones), lesser the movement within office to abstain from propinquity and opportunistic encounter, as a way to reject all the possible interaction while staying in close proximity with others at the same time.

Another concealed layer of physical proximity can be seen from the drawback findings on cultivation of extreme in-group and out-group dynamics and the drastic declined in non-team members’ face-to-face interaction. These conflicting observed communication behaviours could be explained by Elsbach and Pratt’s (2008) functionality tension. There was an apparent tension within instrumentality functions - while the segmented working zone fulfilled the proximate needs to encourage team communication, it failed to satisfy informants’ needs and motivation for non-team interaction. It was just sufficient for team interaction but not an all-embracing strategy. It then perceived as barriers to cultivate non-team communication. To an extent the findings conform to the function of physical proximity as a strong predictor to support communication (Allen, 1977; Serrato, 2001) and collaboration (Hua et al., 2010). However, proximity alone is unable to be a strong determinant for effective communication, be it team or non-team. Other factors such as workplace layoust, seating arrangements, controlled movements and locality do

contribute to the effort of promoting communication and collaboration. Most importantly, from an Eastern viewpoint, space is not absolute; it is socially constructed through a dynamic interplay between all beings, constantly on the flow of time making everything relative and is perceivable only in relation to one another. Therefore, the interplay would generate diverse interpretations and realities for organization space and practice; reality is always plural for relativist - the East.

Secondly, Lefebvre's spatial practice is a perceived space focuses on the way we sense, encounter and use the space. It involves occupants using their intimate feel to support their ability to negotiate the use of space in a situational and appropriate fashion (Spicer & Taylor, 2006). The key materialization of social possesses in space found in existing Eurocentric studies are mostly on power relations (Foucault, 1984), social position (Konar et al., 1982) and bureaucratic status (Halford, 2004). Hence, the research findings on the symbolic space that vehicle space as materialization for identification of seniority and responsibility is in a way analogous to Lefebvre's practiced space which carries a symbolic meaning too.

Though the spatial practice in CCE signaled differences in social position, it wasn't much focused on power and control as suggested by Foucault (1984). Instead, it was more on the materialization of symbolic social possesses of seniority and responsibility through a person's given space, movement and access. For instance, the use of director's room, the given spacious space for managers and the privilege to access to private locked restroom are apparent distinctiveness representations. Nevertheless, many of the informants did not take it as status representations but a

recognition of the length of service and seniority. It was a form of respect paid to people who deserve the acknowledgement and appreciation.

One may correlate the embodied aspects that materialize in space; power relation, social identity and seniority to hierarchical differentiation and social stratification in Chinese society (Yan & Hafsi, 2007), be it mild, moderate or strong power relation differences. While social and hierarchical differentiation was not completely wiped out in the Confucian teaching, the East approaches the variations in power to a complementary and reciprocity nature between two persons; the two neither go against nor resist the existence of one another. In a sense, the occupation of space materializes different meanings and multiple social identities across different people and culture (Gieryn, 2000). The interplay of forces may be ambiguous, subtle and indirect but it is as well based on a consensual and agreeable style of interaction (Chen, 2011).

The third space is directly lived through its associated images, symbols and artefacts, and hence, it is the lived experience of those inhabited them (Lefebvre, 1991). The cultural “Chinese” space in CCE signified more than a symbolic space. The 18 nozzles in the fountain remain as a design and the eight Chinese brush painting arts view as China ornaments until someone interpreted it as “Chinese” space. These material artefacts possess a high relevancy to Chinese *feng shui* principles where water is associated with wealth; installing a fountain symbolizes moving and “alive” money flowing which believed to bring great money luck (Lillian, 1999). Also, in Chinese culture, the number of “8” is believed to have auspicious meanings because

it sounds similar to the Chinese pronunciation for wealth and prosperity while number “18” is considered as a very auspicious number for Chinese that associated with a great success and prosper (Lillian, 1999). Moreover, the mystery of replacing level 14 to level 13A would remain as what it is until someone associated it to the common Chinese superstition where number “4” brings a hidden meaning of death as it made the sound of death in both Mandarin and Cantonese. Last but not least, while someone may not understand the function of placing tangerine plants during Chinese New Year at one’s main entrance; one would couple the artefacts to luck, happiness and prosperity. It connotes space is interpretive and as mentioned by Henri Lefebvre in his book, *The Production of Space*, ‘(social) space is a (social) product’; physical space has no ‘reality’ without energy that is deployed within it. It requires occupants to use, understand and experience the space before associated it to symbolic and imaginary elements which have their originality of meaning in the user’s culture (Simonsen, 2005).

The prominent socially lived space – the “Cina”, the “happy corner” and “dead place’, are then associated to Lefebvre’s lived space as it made up of the shared discourses that the inhabitants used to make sense of the spaces they dwelled in. A random visitor may not associate the ANZ workspace as “happy corner” and same goes to a visiting colleague, who will not associate the right wing as a grouping of “Cina” too. Hence, the interpretation is unique, subjective and exclusive to the actual space user(s) only (Crang, 2000). For instance, the highest traffic hallway which is supposed to be the noisiest place was ironically known as the “dead place” for its awkward quietness. It indicates that space is alive with meaning and influence; it is

not only a designed space but a sensory experienced and culturally interpreted space through a complex and rich combination of objects, stimuli and symbols (Zhang, 2007; Elsbach & Bechky, 2007). It is rather felt than thought.

A few reasons of the awkward quietness in the highest traffic hallway have been identified. It is a combination of factors such as the unfitting narrow hallway which offered limited space for interaction, inappropriate seating arrangement (one's face facing one's back), the new wall – headphone, eye-level height of opaque partitions, culture of working silo, different communication preferences, presence of 'permanent surveillance' or 'panoptic gaze' from the directors and managers and the presence of CCTV cameras. It appears that, each of the beings, material or non-material carries different stimuli and symbols which reciprocally determined the social effect as a whole.

In conclusion, as space and time shall not be treated as absolute, Eastern view of relativism valued the fluidity of time and space that makes things constantly becoming and perishing in a non-fixed and spontaneous processual nature of life. Eastern view of holistic and pluralistic is then allowed open interpretation for reality searching. Instead of exerting power of governance to manipulate spatial practice or exercise controlled movement to promote or inhibit desired behaviour; emphasizing values on complementary, reciprocity, obligatory in the interplay between human, space, social interaction and emotional response would bring greater results.

5.3.1 Cyclical View of Space from Non-Western Perspectives

As discussed throughout the findings in the previous chapters, interpersonal and social relationship seem to be the lynchpin of Eastern communication. This is primarily driven by three basic principles which are mutuality, interdependence and diversity as discussed in the body of findings.

By nature, everyone is interrelated and interdependent yet diverse. Harmony is then interpreted as a means to homologize different things in order to make a response to each other and encourage people to “being” in the situation and align themselves to the conditions which best fit with the other people, things and environment (Chang, 2007). To achieve a harmonious state, the Chinese placed greater likelihood on realization of strategic adaptation between people-people and people-environment. Chen and Starosta (2003) also clearly stated:

“Epistemologically, the meaningful understanding of the holistic structure of the universe is embedded in the relational connection of all things. Thus, human communication is a relational process in which interactants constantly adapt and relocated each other in the network of interdependence” (pp. 5-6)

When examining the production of space from the non-Western perspectives, a non-linear view of space is observed. In the West’s linear view of spatial production, the triad spaces would be atomized into three different dimensions rather than as a whole; it tends to view the triad moving through a linear route. Meanwhile, space is viewed as spatial planning; as spatial practice and as a lived space; each as a singular aspect of space. Nonetheless, with the presence of mutuality and interdependence in

the East philosophy, it has led the view of spatial triad model in a cyclical way indicating the triad is not embedded in gradations with a fixed order. It is a rather flexible and relational construct in a continuity cycle. Linear view of Lefebvre's spatial production and a cyclical view of space from non-Western perspective are both illustrated in the following *Figure 2.4* and *Figure 2.5* respectively.

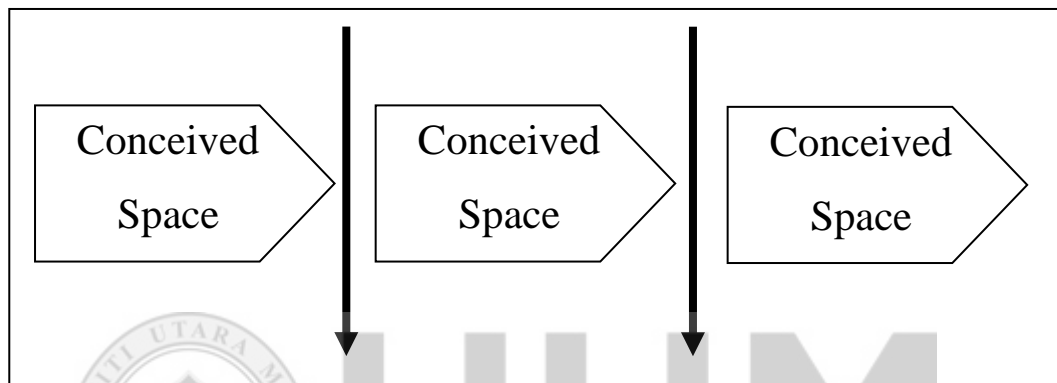


Figure 2.4 Linear view of Lefebvre's spatial production

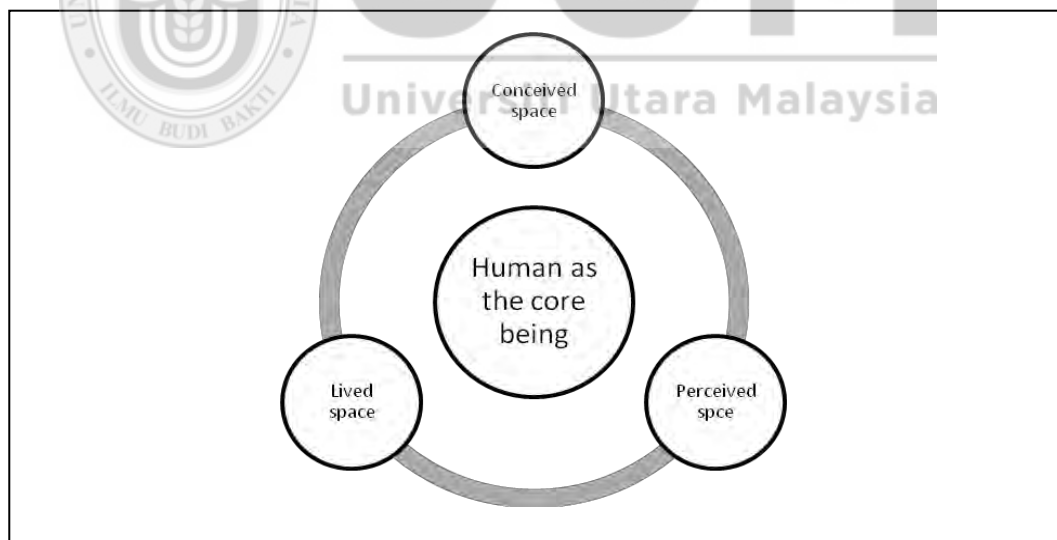


Figure 2.5 A cyclical view of space from non-Western perspective

In a linear view of space, organization space can be seen as a functional place to work and to solidify relationship while social identity and status would be

materialized during the socialization and of all, it is a space occupied with inhabitants' subjectivity perception and experience. Each of the spatial elements is interrelated yet open for single interpretation without the reference of the other two. Compared to the findings from observation and interviewing data, spatial production is an action-reaction process of production. It depends on which dimension of space a person is "being" in; it can be the distance, office layout, symbolic space, lived space or the Chinese space of *feng shui*, each of these spaces provokes reaction which leads to another dimension of space to ensure the circular continuity of communication process; each of the spaces becomes more meaningful when it is in reference to the other two. This is akin to Chinese's view of human communication as a continuous and never ending process which motivates communicators repositioning themselves regularly to accommodate the changes (Chen, 2001).

For instance, the central hallway with the highest controlled movement in CCE is constructed as a must-pass-through hallway from the main entrance to most of the analysts' working desks but its failure in generating face-to-face interaction would not occur without the reference of the other dimensions of space. Having said that, its narrow walkway and inappropriate seating arrangements lowered the users' perceived support for interaction. While the directors' rooms and direct visualization from superiors have further constrained users' willingness to talk in front of their superior(s). Not to mention the culture of wearing headphones as the 'new wall' to avoid interaction and the practice of not talking much that reinforced the culture of silence which eventually made the hallway a 'dead place'. The lived space at the right wing among Asia/Pacific analysts too, the "Chinese space" will not be formed

without the grouping of Mandarin speaking analysts who seated at the open space office which allowed quick and easy interaction without any partitions blocking the noise has eventually made them the noisiest. In addition, the Chinese language used and Chinese practices of *feng shui* also made their territory known as “the Chinese space”. The production of space clearly stays in a cyclical process where each of the dimensions of space is interrelated, intertwined and mutually-influenced in making sense of social reality; the triad also interpenetrated one another to ensure the continuity of interaction through the flow of space and time.

Non-Western view of communicative assumptions recognize human as the core being in the process of alignment between the multitude of people and the universe, each dimension of space will simultaneously affect each other to ensure the continuity spatial production. Space would not have any meaning or reality attached to it without the presence of “energy” that is deployed within it. The (social) product of interpersonal interaction and interplay between all beings would make a great energy to construct (social) meaning in the (social) space. Based on the East view of relativism, there is no fixed procedure in approaching space. For instance, for a director in an organization, his room may help him to portray the sense of identity and seniority at the beginning; later only he studies the spatial planning and immerses in the lived space. If for someone who believes in Chinese *feng shui*, he probably would start to study the imaginary lived space by examining the office spatial planning rather than paying attention to the spatial practice. Nevertheless, the continuity of production of space has a great dependence on the comparisons and

references to the other dimensions of space. The triad will be coming together into a spatial relation for production of organization space.

During the process of spatial production, one is required to have considerate alignment with other people and the environment to warrant the cycle staying in a harmonious state with the presence of changes, diversities, uncertainties and complexities. Each dimension of space helps to reinforce the co-existence of one another and no space can be evaluated independently without reference to the triad. Such non-Western view of organization spatial production in an interrelated cyclical loop with no sequential order for each dimension of space is comparable to what has been proposed by Zhang (2007) in *Figure 2.2*.

5.4 Affordance of Space for Collaboration

The identification of redefined value of harmony and investigation on non-Western cyclical view of organization space are of great importance to analyze the affordance of space for collaboration. Zeroing in on the social and spatial requirements for collaboration, four types of affordance are identified - potential, perceived, utilized and shaped. These affordances are of pragmatic importance that leads the analysis to identify the affordance of space which warrants successful collaboration. Compared to previous studies, affordances are identified from each of the singular aspect of space. For instance, affordance to access to collaborative space (Peponis et al, 2007); affordance of spatially guided movement in spatial planning (Wineman & Peponis, 2010) and affordance for privacy and propinquity in shared places (Fayard & Weeks, 2007). Again, it atomized the observation of triad spaces into three tiers and

considering each dimension of space carries different affordance for different behaviour to serve different communication purposes. The risk, however, is oversimplification. The characteristics of pluralism and interrelations in Chinese value of harmony construct a cyclical view of space which unveils a new way to understand and to study affordance of space as a whole rather than a self-determining entity to afford communicative and collaborative efforts.

The findings from the fieldwork illustrate the notion of spatial affordance that produces sense of community and sociality in organization space managed to afford workplace collaboration. Sense of community and sociality possess high perceived value of social relationship and group cohesion which are parallel to collectivism that emphasis on the ties between people. Relationship-centred culture is certainly imperative for collaborations which stress on interdependent, interpersonal interaction and mutual influences as reflected in the value of harmony while group bonds that hold a collective together are known to have positive impacts on team performance too (Mullen & Copper, 1994). Since space is a stage for overall experience, we cannot simplify nor compartmentalize the affordance produced by each spatial dimension; it is locked within the cyclical production of space. However, there are prominent and salient examples that can be seen in every dimension of the space which affords for the above two affordances for collaboration.

First, organization space affords a sense of community to the occupants by having people get together under a shelter and develop social intimacy through frequent

encounters and interpersonal interactions. It is the early stage for team building and also the ultimate aim to have a collection of people living within a territory that shares common goals. Salient features in organization space that afford such opportunities can be referred to the grouping of people based on the conception of neighbourhood, congregated office configuration, visibility (to be seen and to see) and high occupancy rate. People who are working closely will be placed in a close proximity which encourages a sense of in-group for better flow of team interaction. Having awareness of what colleagues are doing and to have access to each other are essential for early stages of information sharing, learning and socializing too. Also, the given flexibility on deciding the time and place to work elevates the level of trust which is critical for potential collaboration.

Although high occupancy rate in a congregated office design may promise a good number of occupants, it does not guarantee increased interaction. Therefore, the other dimension of space must be able to afford sense of community to promote collaboration. Unfortunately, lived space can hardly be planned or executed as planned. Therefore, certain social practices or regulations can be nurtured and cultivated, maintaining it over some time, it may become a culture or a norm. For instance, management practice of having regular team and non-team outings, annual dinner or the policy as implemented by CCE – ‘Bring Your New Colleague Out’, would help in promoting sense of togetherness and improve interrelationships as a complementary effort.

On the other hand, co-presence of people working shoulder to shoulder without collectively creating content is not a genuine collaboration; it is also the limit of togetherness. Putting people collectively and providing visibility alone are not sufficient to foster participative effort. Participation emerges only when people feel obligated to engage within the given space and having trusted working partners to collaborate with. With the presence of human interactions and human moment, organization space will be able to ensure a dynamic flow of interplay between all beings aimed to foster more active and engaging participations.

Workplace can always achieve this by creating spaces that provide a right mix of cognitive engagement across digital and physical mediums. The possibilities to work and co-creating content together are the key to build knowledge and accelerate learning process. Providing adequate collaborative workspace at strategic locations fulfils the basic modes for knowledge work. Nevertheless, concentrative space for tasks that require thinking, studying and strategizing must not be disregarded for a successful collaboration. In addition, the need of socializing, formally or informally, during initial stage of collaboration leverages the knowledge sustainability and ingrained it in the organization (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; King, 2009). Therefore, quiet rooms and mid-sized meeting rooms in CCE are of the balanced mix of work surfaces that offer flexibility for concentrative work and collaborative project. A variety of workspaces is able to improve social relations and strengthen trusting relationship by giving choice and freedom to the occupants over their preferred working practices, working hours and working settings.

Second, office space is not just a place to store a group of people working together (Lefebvre, 1991; Clegg & Kornberger, 2004); it is now a “destination” where it provides communal working experiences and engaging social network for ideas generation, collective learning and knowledge exchange. It is indeed an inspiring flow of sociality that fuels collaboration, ultimately, productivity and innovation. Non-Western view of organization space emphasizes the importance of human, harmony and interpersonal relationship that create buzz, form community, build relationship and generate a whole lot of collaboration. Sociality is the foundation of growth and hence, the presence of human being in an engaging interaction would afford for making integration happen while maintaining social relations which both play a key role to diffuse collaboration.

The lived space experience opens the way for insiders and outsiders to observe the sociality within an organization. The transition from work space to social space is seamless while many doubt the presence of noise and less meaningful conversation at work; there is still an immense amount of significant interaction contributed to successful collaboration. Although lived space is fundamentally a subjective spatial experience, culture of the organization is crucial in shaping and sustaining collaborative lived space (Street & Coleman, 2012). However, the responsibility relies not only on the culture cultivated by the management but it has greater emphasis on the culture that is co-created by the inhabitants in the organization. In CCE, the socially lived space in the “happy corner” and “dead place” were strongly driven by the culture practiced by the inhabitants rather than the management. While many of the informants claimed that the quietness in the central hallway were caused

by the practice that has been passed down from the beginning where the managers were strict and talking was not allowed as well as the effect of Foucault's panopticon; many have overlooked that the "happy corner" is not an inherently happy place. Being located as the furthest from the main entrance and under a controlled movement to pass through the "dead place" every day; the place itself had not associated with any negative impact but a "happy corner". Compare that to the right wing, supposed to be a dynamic open concept working space, has turned to be a noisy place with labels which are rather biased – the noisiest and the "Cina". Nonetheless, the reasons as discussed earlier, it is the culture practiced by the inhabitants themselves and it is the lived space constructed by the people around.

In a nutshell, the presence of sociality is needed for collaborative efforts especially during the pre-stage and engaging process of collaboration. However, it should not be violated as a form of noise, disturbance, labelling or name-calling. Space users and occupants must embrace diversity and be tolerant to uncertainties to create engaging lived space. At the same time, support from the management shall be provided by investing resources into organization space for better communication flow and organizational growth.

5.5 Summary

The above discussion showed a redefined value of harmony which is still very much compatible to traditional Chinese cardinal value of harmony. The significance of mutuality, interdependence and pluralism in Chinese collective culture has shaped a cyclical view of spatial production where no single dimension of space shall be

examined without the reference of other spaces in the relational constructed triad cycle. While spatial potential presents a range of possibilities for working together, there are two basic affordances of space afford for successful collaboration. Organization space is able to afford a sense of community and sociality which serve as the fundamental conditions to embrace inclusiveness, to build trust and to afford effective communication for focusing, learning and socializing. Culture is said to be one of the salient factors to ensure the effectiveness of working together. Without an encouraging collaborative culture support by the management and practice among the occupants, there will be no true collaboration.



CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

While most of the findings in current research are congruent with previous research findings and Eastern philosophical values, the current research still offer some insights into spatial studies from a non-Western viewpoint. In this chapter, I will discuss the overall findings, research significance and limitations, implications for future research and close it with the relevance of the study by stating consequences and ramifications of the Easternization of the West.

6.2 Overall Findings

Examining the epistemology of space from Occidental and Oriental worldview leads us to two schools of thought. While the West stands at absolutism and treats space at empiricism level; the East perceives space at the level of relativism where all beings are interrelated and interdependent. This has materialized in everyday communicative behaviour and spatial practice found among the informants.

The Eastern values which have been materialized in day-to-day action namely, mutuality and interdependence, relationship-centred, particularistic relationship, paying respect to the elderly and embracing diversity are highly pertinent to Chinese cardinal value of harmony. It is also the most appropriate and common uphold values by the East in social context and human communication which rooted at the value of balance, relativity and harmony.

As for spatial practice, current findings indicated that people need space and place as a “destination” for togetherness and social ties. The absence of human face-to-face interactions and lacking of human moment in mediated communication can hardly replace what a workplace can extend. Furthermore, research findings also demonstrated the affordance of space for two dynamics - a sense of community and sociality - for collaborative efforts which is pertinent to Chinese cardinal value of harmony that promotes interrelationship, interdependent and mutuality. Materialization of a salient hierarchical differentiation, mainly on seniority and responsibility is found from non-Western perspectives but it held little resemblance to the power relation which has been cited in most of the Eurocentric study.

It then explains space is relational construct; the interpretation of space is neither consistent nor uniform because it is culturally bound. In summary, from a non-Western view, the production of space is within a continuity cycle which has a primary aim to establish relationships and nurture social harmony.

6.3 Significance of the Study

First of all, examining spatial production in organization from non-Western perspectives contributes an alternative view of space in current communication literature predominated by Eurocentrism. A cyclical view of spatial production has been constructed in current research based on the constitution of non-Western philosophical values underlying the communication pattern and behaviour in everyday situation. This stands a contrast to the existing atomistic and linear view of spatial production in the Eurocentric study. Such variation in viewing organization

space would affect the role and function of space in organization practice. While most Eurocentric organization studies stressed that the major role of physical environment or organization space is for governance and control (Cairs, McInnes & Roberts, 2003; Elsbach & Pratt, 2008); this research opposes the view by identifying a renewed function of space as a social resource to foster and support collective behaviour through its affordance of sociality and sense of community. In addition, post-colonial study in architecture found that most of the architectural issues in current research are object-centred rather than value-centred. Rasdi's (2012) study on Islamic interpretation on mosque architecture found that the mosque is trapped between the two worlds of academia and practice. There was an absence of true spirit and a lack of commitment and professionalism in the mosque design. This indicates that designing, creating or studying space merely from its physical dimension is not sufficient to have a good grasp of its usefulness and practicality; not to mention the spirituality which is perpetuation in the Eastern philosophical-religious tradition. This research provides a lens to study production of space from a non-Western cyclical view rather than the long (mis)representation of linear way.

Another contradictory result in current research as compared to existing Western-centric studies refers to the salient hierarchical differentiation that materialized in organization space. Instead of materializing power relation as cited in most of the Eurocentric study; current research findings demonstrate a dissimilar hierarchical differentiation - seniority and responsibility, from non-Western perspectives. For this, it does not mean that there is an absence of power inequality in Chinese societies but as discussed earlier, the distribution, definition and exercise of 'power'

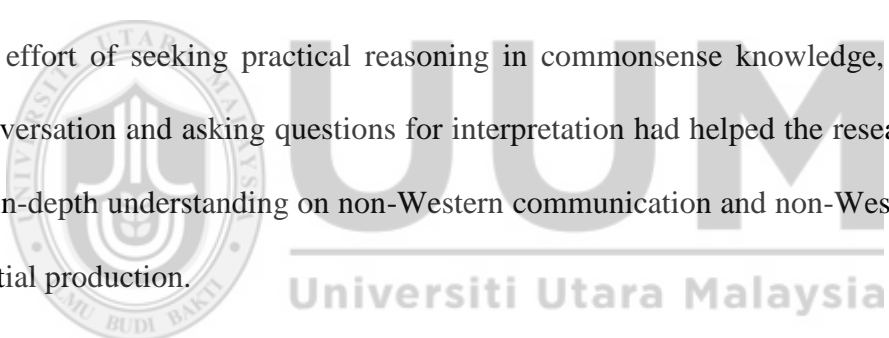
are much different from the ‘power’ as understood by the West. Chinese perceive ‘power’ a complementary and obligatory force to maintain harmonious state in social exchange. Unlike economic exchange, social exchange has no well-defined “value” but it is based on the norm of reciprocity which is inherently long term and asymmetric in nature. This reflects the core value of ‘pursuit of harmony’ from the East and ‘pursuit of individuality’ from the West in perceiving ‘power’.

Compared to existing Western-based empirical studies, this research helps to contribute to organizational communication studies by adding a non-Western perspective and offering a local relevance by placing Chinese participants (or non-Western) to the centre of the study as a knowing subject which has been ignored for long as part of the impact of intellectual imperialism. Through re-visiting the Confucian approach among Malaysian Chinese, this research has significantly broaden the topics of inquiries, making both communication and organizational communication research locally relevant at the same time deepening our understanding about Malaysian Chinese.

Apart from contributing to the East-West communication studies, this research also manages to revisit Lefebvre’s triad space model as a whole totality rather than reifying the triad into atomistic view of linear process. Bringing triad space into a coming-together interplay with different user background (the East) and social interaction (different emotional response) in the organizational context, showed that organization space is rather felt than thought. Decision makers must know that what

has been working perfectly for the West, even for long, may not work well for the East.

Methodologically, employing ethnographic fieldwork and selective ethnomethodology allow this research studies organization space in natural setting which provides the most appropriate way to understand, interpret and experience the spatial production. Multi-method data collection namely participant observation, semi structured and unstructured interviews, documentary sources and material artefacts were employed to explore the ways people make sense of their social life through their everyday situation. Engaging in the practices of everyday life through the effort of seeking practical reasoning in commonsense knowledge, listening to conversation and asking questions for interpretation had helped the researcher to get an in-depth understanding on non-Western communication and non-Western view of spatial production.

The image contains a large, semi-transparent watermark of the Universiti Utara Malaysia logo and name. The logo is a circular seal with a central emblem and the text 'UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA' and 'TAU BUDI BAKTI' around it. Below the seal, the text 'Universiti Utara Malaysia' is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font.

Practically, the research findings strengthen the importance of having office as the ‘destination’ to provide communal and engaging working experience for inspiring flow of communication and sociality. The traditional view and value of space and workplace are yet being threatened. The absence of humane and lacking in human moment in technology and virtual organization are yet to substitute the role of physical workplace for which is still highly valued and appreciated, at least, from a non-Western perspective.

6.4 Limitation of the Study

With no doubt, Confucianism has been dominating way of thinking and social behaviour in Chinese society for centuries (Wong, 2008; Wang, 2011). Its values and teaching are multi-dimensional and hence, a single-interpretation approach by using only the value of harmony is inadequate to capture the essence of Confucian ethics; though it has been recognized as the intrinsic of Asian value in communication. There are considerable Confucius essentials and foundation, such as the *Yin-Yang* theory, Five Code of Ethics (*Wu Lun*) and *Qi* (energy). These Chinese ancient wisdoms possess many ideas that can be explained and studied using contemporary research methodology, including empirical and interpretive investigation to further examine non-Western perspectives in interpersonal interaction as well as organizational communication.

To re-discover the bodies of Asian theories of communication, Dissanayake (2009) proposed two types of theory: (1) Theory A, much significant work has been undertaken in this, which deals with traditional Asian theories, classical concepts and texts to understand Asian human communication; (2) Theory B which engages current and contemporary experiences and structures of relationships with the diverse Western conceptualities. Both types of work are much needed to enrich the field of Asian communication theory.

As such, this research employed fundamental cultural value orientation as a platform to differentiate Eastern from Western paradigmatic assumptions to generate more relevant findings and thorough understanding as suggested in Theory A. It also

relates to current conceptualities and experiences which seek to engage modern Western conceptualities critically. As where this research is located, perhaps it has yet to be recognized as a fully emic research study and it also did not completely fulfil the requirements for Theory A and B. Nevertheless, it is already a huge effort contributing to organizational space literature from a different perspective and paradigm. Through culturally rooted thinking and theorizing, it is possible to advance the multicultural turn in communication theory.

6.5 Implications for Future Research

The adoption of Chinese cardinal value of harmony in studying the production of space has been driven by the cultural differences between the East and the West (Zhang & Spicer, 2013; Chen, 2007). Research findings demonstrated a cyclical view of spatial production from non-Western perspectives and the notion of affordance of sense of community and sociality for collaboration which is highly relevant to the principles in Chinese value of harmony. Therefore, it opens doors to other cultural values and ethnicities to study and investigate production of space from non-Western perspectives. The idea of incorporating non-Western perspective should be drawn on for intellectual necessity as well as to broaden the horizon of existing organization communication studies. For instance, the Chinese art of space arrangement, *feng shui*, does not only contain mysterious knowledge but is has become an integral part of Chinese tradition that mirrors Chinese cultural wisdom, which commands that if we pay attention to our environment, we will find new ways to weave a thick web of meaning and create different realities in our life and work space. Future studies may focus on the investigation of organization space from the

practice of *feng shui* - the Chinese art or practice of creating and governing spatial arrangement in relation to a broad spectrum of Chinese traditional principles such as *yin* and *yang* (two opposite but complementary forces), *wu xing* (five elements on earth), *ba kua* (the eight trigrams), *qi* (energy flow) and other cultural, spiritual and philosophical system for harmonizing purposes.

Although the cyclical view of space from Chinese perspective has been proposed by Zhang (2007), there were very limited empirical studies conducted to further investigating the construction of the cyclical process and the interplay between the dimensions of space. Future studies may facilitate and advance the study of cyclical view of spatial production and the interplay of forces and tension between the triad through empirical research.

Last but not least, Confucianism remains as a strong and influential social philosophy among the Chinese (Wang, 2011), and its teaching shapes a human-oriented workforce which generates different views on organizational communication and effectiveness. While the social implication of Confucianism-influenced organizational communication studied in current research is on collaboration, future organizational communication research and cultural studies may consider other social contexts such as organization culture, leadership, conflict management and decision making.

6.6 Relevance of the Study: Consequences and Ramifications

Since the main theme in this research is about space, I shall commence the relevance of my study from 'space' itself. The idea of 'space' is actually confusing and problematic. While it may seem to be abstractly invisible; it is also an actuality, which can be measured, manipulated, occupied and most importantly studied on the basis of mathematical and scientific logics. Therefore, in the West's eyes, space may be much valuable and worth studying than Orientalism. That probably explains how did intellectual imperialism started from the West occupying the physical space of the East and move on, colonized its epistemological space.

Intellectual imperialism has dominated both East and West knowledge production and later, intellectually refashioned the East. This occurred with the condition of 'gaze' and 'flow'; the West 'gaze' upon the East through the 'flow' of ideas, information, media, technology, practices as well as goods and services (Nair-Venugopal & Lim, 2012). Particularly, the East-West power relation flow is mainly one-way flow where one supplies while the other one receives. Power usually generated through the three vital Cs: Colonialism, Capitalism and Christianity. Capitalism controls are obvious through transnational and multinational corporations while Christianity has slowly become the dominant religion in the world (Lim, 2012).

While the East-West power-relation may flow only one way, Campbell (2007) attested that the flows of East-West cultural relation are overlapping and pulling in different directions as Westernization or Easternization. This is also paired with the

large number of Asian immigrants to the West and the pervasive of “Made in China” labelling. This has appeared to us a dynamic, asymmetric and reciprocal cultural flow from both directions (East to West and West to East). Next, the question is whether Easternization of the West through cultural flow possible?

Referring to some of the East practices like yoga, meditation, *tai chi*, *qi gong* and vegetarianism in the West; we know that Easternization is possible and in fact, acculturation has already existed, since long time ago, in the waves of the New Age movement in the 1970s (Campbell, 2007). The New Age is generally applied to a range of spiritual or religious beliefs and practices that developed in the West since 1970s. Hence, Campbell averred that the West has long been Easternized since the cultural revolution in the waves of New Age and he also made a strong claim that East has culturally refashioned the West.

Take *feng shui* as an example, it is known as a practice that affected the development of traditional cultural landscapes in East Asia. It arises out of Chinese concepts regarding to *yin-yang* theory and *qi* energy. In the nineteenth century, Westerners described the practice as superstitious, irrational, and unprogressive and hence, the general response was negative. In the early part of the twentieth century, the few accounts that dealt with the practice were less critical but still portrayed the practice as irrational. Recently, the concept of *feng shui* is getting popular and it has also been widely applied in the West. However, much of the interest surrounding *feng shui* in the postmodern West is questionable for its role as a true acculturation or merely a capitalism and commercial possibility.

Same conundrum for the learning of Asian languages such as Chinese and Japanese, it is getting common to see Chinese-speaking Westerner and Chinese lesson in school programme but these can be arguably be claimed as true Easternization. This reminds me of one of the general meetings I attended during my fieldwork. It was a general meeting with all global offices through videoconference and as jotted down in my fieldnotes; the first slide of the power point deck was showing (1) *Chinese Proverb I: Dare to dream* and (2) *Chinese Proverb II: To get through the hardest journey we need take only one step at a time, but we must keep on stepping*. However, the slide was only for display purposes before the conference started, nothing was mentioned and it puzzled me the true meaning of showing such Chinese Proverbs.

Therefore, in my very personal view, though I am uncertain if the East-West cultural relation flow can be as influential as East-West power relation flow, one thing for sure and unarguable is that, the West has absorbed the cultural elements, values and practices from the East in some imperceptible ways. Its effects and impacts may not be as strong as in East-West power relation and the ramifications may not be relevant to politic or socio-economy directly. The influence is present; the East and West gaze mutually to each other.

Another explanation is that while the West exercise the power relation flow in refashioning the East intellectually; the East is 'being' in the cultural relation flow, not necessarily to refashion the West culturally, but open up for acculturation in a

reciprocal and asymmetric flow where East and West both absorb and adapt to suit local and individual preferences from a wide range of cultural elements.

Other than the above, another phenomenon which worth to mention is the phenomenon of Korean popular culture, *Hallyu*, which came into vogue in Southeast Asia and mainland China in late 1990s. Till today, *hallyu* can be dissected into four parts for export abroad: *hallyu* 1.0 (K-drama), *hallyu* 2.0 (K-pop music), *hallyu* 3.0 (K-culture) and *hallyu* 4.0 (K-style). This cultural phenomenon has been closely connected with multi-layered transnational movements of people, information and capital flows in East Asia and is believed to be able to make a transition from Western-centred to East-Asian based popular culture. State-Funded Trade Promotion Organization (KOTRA) has recently published an annual 2015 index measuring the reach of the Korean Wave in major countries around the world. The result indicated that apart from gaining a great popularity in Asian countries, Korean wave is growing rapidly in some Western countries such as the United State and Argentina while for countries such as Australia, United Kingdom, France and Canada; it is growing at the medium growth under diffusion stage (KOTRA, 2016). The growth is promising and thus, it is foreseeable that the East is able to refashion the West culturally.

Last but not least, throughout my writing, especially when reading and putting the struggles between the East and West in texts; many times I was wandering in between the paragraphs. I am perplexed by the consequences of intellectual imperialism; I wondered how long it is going to take for us to be able to stand

independently and to claim that the knowledge is ours. I am also bewildered by the fact that why must East Asia be treated as a peripheral just because we are highly rhetorical and polemical in nature? Does it mean that a multi-ethnic country like us, Malaysia, will always be considered a peripheral country?

I then ponder on the originality of the 'Orient' and 'Occident'. The term 'Orient' derives from the Latin word *oriens* which means "east" or "rise" while 'Occident' contrasted with 'Orient'; it means 'sunset' in Latin word of *occidens*. What has come to my mind is that, 'sunrise' and 'sunset' are both natural phenomena and earth rotation that are impossible to be viewed simultaneously. When we have one, we don't have the other. Never, they both meet but we must have both for the rotation. Many times in our life, rising requires more hard work than falling; a variety of resources are needed for growth, for change, for moving upward than to just to set off and disappear. Orient and Occident, could be the same, perhaps.

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