

Welcome to a special “Special Issue” of the *Journal of Corporate Real Estate* with papers from the 23rd European Real Estate Society (ERES) conference 2016 in Regensburg, Germany. It is a *special* “Special Issue” because the “Normal” and the “Special Issue” are combined, with only two papers that were presented at the ERES conference and additionally two regular papers. You may ask: How come? Were there not enough corporate real estate (management) [CRE(M)] papers presented? Is interest in corporate real estate (CRE) diminishing? A clear “no” to the latter questions: We had identified 15 presented papers for the special issue. They covered an interesting variety of topics from Europe, Africa, Asia and North America. And this year’s ERES in Delft showed a great development of the field and the exact opposite from lowered interest: 11 sessions with papers covering CRE (4) and the workplace (seven sessions) were a record number!

So, why are the papers in this special issue so few and why are they from the “usual suspects”, authors from The Netherlands and Germany? Having been in contact with those 15 candidates as the guest editor of this issue, I do not have definite answers, but a few observations I would like to share.

First, a confirmation of previously made statements: It is great that international real estate society (IRES) conferences have a lower hurdle to participate, because facilitated access encourages younger academics as well as practitioners to actively contribute, even if they do not have a paper ready for submission six months before the event as required elsewhere. The advantage of this policy is a much richer spectrum of ideas and nationalities, age and experience and a “freshness” of research that is inspiring for all who are attending the conference. Yet, this comes at a price, and we see it in the number of papers finalized within a year after the conference: only 2 out of 15 became ready for publication in JCRE!

Three people had other plans for their papers. Another five candidates initially wanted to submit to the special issue but got lost on the way, partly for time reasons, partly for quality issues. This is somehow sad, as the editors really did a great job in allowing for more time and giving content-related advice to those with little experience and/or coming from environments without sufficient academic guidance. I am conveying this to encourage everybody – including the last five (three who directly stated not to be ready and two without response) – to give it a try. Now, that the next special issue is looming at the horizon, is the time to do so.

The two papers that made it to this special issue continue a development from recent ERES special issues: They deal with the alignment of CRE with organizational strategies and the contribution to organizational performance, trying to make the value of CRE activities measurable. At the same time, they examine aspects of new work environments and are more user-oriented than before. We thus see two streams of research topics growing together that have been tackled separately in the past, even in the editorial of the special issue 2015.

Additional commonalities of the papers are their focus on stakeholder involvement in the planning and decision-making processes, the multiple dimensions being addressed and a mixed method approach, utilizing qualitative as well as quantitative methods.

The paper “Performance-oriented office environments – framework for effective workspace design and the accompanying change process” tackles the nowadays omnipresent activities of administrative and knowledge work organization to (re)design offices in a way that optimizes organizational performance. The introduced framework



intends to serve as a comprehensive guideline for workspace design and the accompanying change processes. It addresses relevant design parameters, stakeholders to be included, performance parameters and the change management of such workspace projects, with their interaction to be considered as well. The new approach of the paper is that the organizational environment and its needs – such as the way of working, organization models, performance priorities and change capabilities – are driving the office design, not the other way round.

The paper “Improving decision-making in CRE alignment, by using a preference-based accommodation strategy (PAS) design procedure” focuses on a part of CRE alignment processes that remains a “black box” in most models: the decision-making process. In a pilot study regarding a university’s food facilities, it was shown that the PAS design approach can be performed independently of any other decision-making technique. The consideration of individual and overall preference ratings makes it possible to take into account financial, quantitative and qualitative requirements of the diverse stakeholders who were involved in the participative, iterative process, including collective workshops. The approach enables CRE managers to actually calculate the added value of alternative real estate strategy and thus leads to significantly better decisions that are being accepted by the stakeholders to a much higher degree.

The two regular papers in this section are both qualitative studies of relocation processes and also very much user-oriented. The paper “Social impacts of a short-distance relocation process and new ways of working” represents the fear among many employees that their organization will decide to implement an activity-based office environment. Luckily, this study did show that in such a case adaptation was considered easier by most employees than originally expected. With regard to improved inter-team collaboration after the move, opinions were divergent. The paper “A Spatial Approach to Transformational Change: Strategic Alignment of the Spatial and Cultural Environment” goes deeper into this latter issue of trying to increase collaboration with activity based office environments. The author argues that a physical change is not enough to reach this goal, as it is important to use behavioral artifacts and other cultural constructs as well.

I wish you an interesting and informative time with this special “Special Issue” of the JCRE.

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