



**PARALLEL PAPERS VI**  
**SUNDAY 9<sup>th</sup> JULY 1100-1215**  
**ROOM II - 7.0.08**

**James Walker & Katherine McPherson**  
*Design as Mirror of the Ages: The Room, the Culture and Psycho-Social Development*

Aspects of organizational dynamics are discussed in this paper as a function of designed space. From medieval times to the present, design of domestic and organizational living space, psycho-social dynamics and organisational arrangements have been associated. This paper applies abductive methods to explore associations and their symbolic implications from the communal living of the public bedrooms and 'great halls' of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, through to our current century's open plans for home and workplace.

We consider the design of the family home with the permissible behaviors and privacy it does and does not offer, the influences the development of phantasies, sense of self, desire and behavior. The extent to which the communal interactions of the 'all in together' 17<sup>th</sup> century living and working space have equivalence in today's ubiquitous open

plan, flexible and 'digital alone together' environments, are explored in terms of the changing signifiers of space including culture, power, and role.

For centuries financial constraints have unapologetically influenced living and working space. For such changes to be principally made in the service of new culture, we would expect to find changes in the 'way we do things around here' including performance, team behaviors, business functions, processes and roles. A case study is presented as illustrative of the effects of changes in space design on psycho-social dynamics.

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**Katherine McPherson** is an Architect working in Australia with a systems psychoanalytic and socioanalytic perspective. After more than 25 years designing and delivering workplace design projects, she now provides independent consultancies for project sponsors and stakeholder groups to facilitate brief development, integrating functional requirements and aspirations for space use. She conducts briefings and critical reviews associated with developing strategies for design-based change in the workplace. Katherine works predominately in the private sector and with local government agencies.