



## Vital Architectural Studio Project Abstract

### Network Space

**Subtitle:** from nodes to links, applications of network science to workspace

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The goal of our research is to use network science to gain a greater understanding of the role physical space plays in the work of today's firms and consequently to draft a framework to improve the firm-level decision making for their investment in their own workspaces. Even before the disruption stemming from the ongoing global pandemic, we had begun to feel that workspaces and the buildings that contain them were creating an unproductive friction with the very work that they were intended to support. Our hypothesis was that companies were increasingly operating as distributed networks of people, places and things, and these networks were adapting at a rate previously unseen. Our workspaces on the other hand were still best suited for the hierarchical structures of past generations. Now as we approach the one-year-anniversary of our collective forced experiment in distributed work, we are more convinced than ever that network science offers some clues about the pressures shaping workspace today and in the future.

Network science is a field of study that has been applied to other disciplines, notably biology, economics, organizational theory, and communications. Our research included three avenues of exploration. First, we conducted a literature review of books on network thinking (Why Information Grows, The Chessboard and The Web, Team of Teams) intended for a general readership as well as a review of selected scholarly texts and articles on network science. Having given ourselves a foundation in the basics of network science language, we then proceeded to interview subject matter experts in workspace and network analysis. Concurrently with these interviews, we also embarked on a deep-dive case study of the production of Wikipedia - a digital product produced globally through a distributed network of hundreds of thousands of mission-aligned volunteers and a few hundred staff and computer servers. We focused on the potential network effects of the Wikimedia Foundation's rituals and shared social norms through globally distributed workspace, shared communication technology and Wikipedia community events.

In the simplest terms, what we found is that shared workspace is changing from a node to a link. This is particularly true for firms that produce digital products, while shared workspace as a node remains a core function for firms that have physical components to their product offering. Ultimately, following a mindset of flows, network science allowed us to see a heightened importance of shared workspace as a link for modern work: Teams will need the bonds created in shared space to tackle increasingly complex problems, face-to-face interactions will be needed to build new connections that bring in innovative ideas and new perspectives, and the selection of and investment in physical space will continue to communicate a firm's priorities and purpose to the outside world. Centralized or distributed, permanent or temporary - network science helped us to see the pressures on modern workspace and modern work by looking closely at the true cost of a link.

### About the ONEder Grant Program

One Workplace, the largest workplace solutions company on the West Coast, launched the ONEder grant program in 2019 to support and celebrate thought leadership in the architecture and design community. As forward-thinking thought leaders in their own right, One Workplace strives to elevate the roles of architects & designers in the constantly-changing landscape of the modern workplace.

A new round of grants is currently open for applications. In 2021, One Workplace will award grants of \$20,000 each to firms in the Bay Area and Sacramento. For more information, please visit: <https://go.oneworkplace.com/oneder-grant-application>.