CHAPTER 4
DAT-THIRD SPACE WORKING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of the Third-space or Third-place is becoming widely used in the current world and information technology is no exception to use the advantages that the Third-places offer. On the other hand the distributed scrum teams have their own set of hurdles in terms of communication with peers who are not co-located along with many other the issues faced in the distribute team setup. The concept of bringing the distributed team together frequently to a Third-place and continue their work in Third-place would help team bonding, increased interaction, communication and trust between team members thus positively impacting and benefiting the IT projects and their successful delivery on the whole.

Third-place is a social surrounding that is separate from the two usual social environments viz Home and Workplace. Ray Oldenberg (1991) in his book titles 'The great good place' emphasizes the importance of the Third-place and their role in civil society, democracy, civic engagement and in establishing feeling of a sense of the place in the occupants. One's First-place is the home and the Second-place is the workplace. Third-places are the anchors of community life and they felicitate and foster broader, creative interactions amongst the occupants.

As discussed in previous chapters, in a Distributed Agile team environment, the team members do not work in close proximity or though they are in same location they might be not collocated. When working as a team, it would be difficult to effectively communicate and build trust among the team members without a face-to-face interaction.

This Chapter is to study the positive impact of having the distributed agile teams coming together at Third-places while getting accustomed to and reaping the benefits of Third-place working.
4.2 WORKING PATTERNS

The flexible working concept gives the employees, free lancers and entrepreneurs an opportunity to perform their work at their convenience. The industry has so far witnessed collocated working, remote working, open plan offices, working from home office, flexible work routines and part time working. However, we see a new working model which is already popular in some developed nations such as US and the Europe- Third space or Third place working. Almost all the European nations are adapting themselves to flexible working patterns. Some of the examples as below

**Out-of-hours emails**

In France the officials have come up with deal between employers federations and unions signed which insists that the employees switch of their official phones out of office hours. The employers can no longer pressurise the employees to check emails before 9am and after 6pm. This would help the employees overcome the fatigue and stress, as a result of the inability to switch off and be disconnected from office routines.

**Shorter working days, weeks**

Anna Coote (2010) explains that the shorter working hours create a more committed and stable workforce. This study is introduced in the City of Gothenburg in Sweden with public sector workers working fewer hours than the regular work hours but being kept on the same pay in an effort to create a healthier and happier workforce. Employees are asked to work six hour days with a hope that the staff members would take fewer sick days and feel better mentally and physically after working shorter days. Also the Swedish law allows
flexible working culture like shortened work week which would mean working for 3 or 4 days while being able to utilise the longer weekends as needed. Also, there are mandatory laws that the employee should spend their time with family by taking the needed leaves and the employer would be at fault if they do not see to it the employee is taking the needed leaves. As a co-worker with Swedish and Icelandic professionals, I have saw people planning vacations and taking mandatory leaves that they are ought to be taken.

Flexible working patterns

Flexible working patterns suits well the personal needs of the employees in need and has been prevail ant across the nations. For instance an employee on prolonged maternity leave can opt for working for fewer hours a day, based on the time she finds it most suitable for her.

The game fever

For every instance of a well-thought out case against restrictive working conditions, you can usually find an example of someone taking the idea of employee freedom too far. And so to Germany, where union boss Robert Feiger has decided: "It would a noble move by employers if they showed a bit of flexibility during the World Cup. For Germany games after 10pm, work should start a little bit later if possible," suggested the IGBAU construction union chief. "Employers and work councils should talk about rearranging shifts so that their staff can watch World Cup games."
4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THIRD-PLACE

The characteristics of the Third-place are as below

1) Third-places should be placed on Neutral ground

Occupants should not be tied down by any financial, political, legal or any other factors from accessing the Third-places. All the occupants can come and go to the Third-place without any hassles. If one does not visit the Third-place for a few days or weeks, their return should be greeted with interest and enthusiasm. This is in quite contrast to the behaviours at the first and second places –Home and Work place. The eventual return to First-place or Second-place after days of absence would be not taken on a positive note all the time and there are high chances that they are asked justifications and explanations.

2) Leveler

The Third-place should not put any importance on an individual's social status. Social and economic status differences that matter so much in the society are not relevant in Third-places. No particular individual plays a role of host at a Third-places. Leveler means anything which reduces people or co-habitants to an equality. A place that is a leveler is by nature an inclusive place. It should be accessible to public and does not have any formal criteria to provide membership and exclusion. Further, the place that is leveler also permits the inmates to know about the other workmates in a different and fuller aspect than that is possible in the second-place. Wordly status along with the personal mood, personal problems must be set aside and should not intrude in the Third-place association. The purpose it to enjoy the company of one’s fellow human beings and to delight in the novelty of their character.

3) Happy Conversations

Playful and happy conversations should be prevailing in Third-places, although it is not required to be the only activity. The Third-place should provide a suitable environment.
4) Third-places should be accessible and accommodative
They should be readily accessible to those who occupy them and be able to provide the wants of their inhabitants.

5) The Regulars
Third-places would be visited by a number of regulars. They would help give the space its tone, and help set the mood and characteristics of the area over the time. Regulars also attract newcomers and help them to get accustomed to the place soon.

6) A low profile
Third-places are characteristically wholesome. The inside of a Third-place should be without any extravagance or grandiosity, and has a homely feel. Third-places should be accepting all types of individuals, from several different walks of life.

7) The Mood is Playful
The mood within in Third-places should have a tone of playful nature

8) Home away from home
Third-place should provide such an environment that Occupants should have the same feelings of warmth, possession, and belongingness as they would in their own homes. An increasing percentage of American workers now telecommute, not from home, but from a Third-places. Workers cite isolation when telecommuting from home and find working in public spaces a happy medium between the home office and the corporate office. Availability of public Wi-Fi has been a major enable enabler of this trend, and an increasing number of retail chains are catering to it.
In 2011, ZZA Responsive User Environments undertook a global study on ‘Third place’ working - focusing on those important new work venues that are...
neither the office nor home. The people working in libraries, coffee shops and business center settings, in New York, New Jersey, London, Paris, Mumbai and Hong Kong were interviewed. Also the business leaders were with set of questionnaire and received 17,800 responses from over 60 countries. The two datasets highlight the important role of Third places in business today. The large scale business survey demonstrates the prevalence: half the respondents report working in Third places for any or all of the time. The observations of this survey are depicted as below.

- 50% responded that they work from Third place sometime or the other. Of these
- 52% responded that they work in business centers / lounges;
- 48% % responded that they work in informal settings like coffee shops

Further, respondents’ use of Third spaces to work is consistent across the size of their organizations, whether the size of company is large, medium, small or micro. Further, 72% of interviewees report the Third place interview setting as their most frequent work location, with 50% reporting that they work there 4 or 5 days per week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third place</th>
<th>% of visits</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Business Centres/Lounges</td>
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<td>48%</td>
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Table 4.3.1 Third place visits.
Third place working proved the doubters wrong about their concern that working away from the office means reduced work commitment. The data demonstrates the people working in Third places supports productive working. The second point is the importance of working 'close to home' to unlock the other benefits. The business cannot afford to own and operate office space close to the places where employees live in big metro cities. Third places have their own operators. This is an advantage to business, enabling responsive workplace resourcing for their people - in the right localities, with a flexibility as the requirements demand, without any fixed costs -avoiding routine commuting. This not only cuts the cost on routine and wasteful commuting but also saves on the expensive business travels.

Companies can support their employees in using the type of Third space that’s optimal for their needs, whether the informal coffee shop will suffice for the purpose, or the more professional, client-facing, confidential setting of a business center or business lounge is more appropriate. Third-place working is an available resource to conduct contemporary business activity - productively and sustainably. The market is also witnessing products such as reservation systems to manage and book space online in the third place. One such
reservation system is seats2meet.com. In 2013 the Seats2meet.com reservation system handled:

- 20,000 co-workers
- booked over 85,000 Workspace seats
- 235,000 meeting participants
- booked 235,000 Meeting space seats

4.4 BLENDING THE THIRD-PLACE WORKING WITH DAT

Coffee shops were among the first public places to serve wireless and environment for a popular Third-place to work. The most prominent was Starbucks, a chain of coffee houses that started in Seattle and is now everywhere. Starbucks offer not only sofas but also desks with convenient electricity sockets. These days Starbucks makes bigger news when it switches Wi-Fi providers—it dropped T-Mobile for AT&T in February—than when it sells a new type of coffee bean. Bookshops such as Barnes & Noble are also offering such places for their customers to work while they shop. Third-places should create a de-stressing destination and should provide a sense of ease and warmth for the occupants.

Third-places are the non-traditional workplaces which are now gaining popularity among the organization as they are recognized to be contributors to the overall business effectiveness and efficiency. Some companies also have in-house Third spaces i.e. a casual coffee shop atmosphere for work within a corporate office.

The Third-place help interaction and unification of neighbourhoods. The scenario of people often living in the same vicinity for years without ever getting to know one another can be overcome with the residents visiting the Third-places s. Third-places also serve as start-up guide for visitors and newcomers to the neighbourhood to get directions, other basic information getting acquainted quickly, learning quick facts and how the neighbourhood works. The
high rate of residential mobility in our society would need a provision for new residents to get acquainted quickly and easily to the neighbourhood and Third-place is one of the best ways.

One of the reasons for Third-places gaining popularity is the negative stigma attached to the concept of working from home. The contributing factors for their popularity in different countries are the living styles like the space availability, infrastructure availability like audio/video conference facilities, Joint family systems, power back up availability, network connectivity. The Third-place brings people, technology and space together in newer ways. Steelcase work cafe is one of the examples of an in house workspace. The Third-places should have facilities for work, dining, infra capabilities, abundant video/audio conference capabilities.

Provided these facilities in Third-places, we anticipated that they work very well if it is blended with the working style of the distributed agile teams. The hurdles in effective communication and building trust in distributed agile teams and ways were suggested to overcome the hurdles have already been discussed across various forums and in our previous chapters and Third space working by the distributed agile team is one other way to overcome those hurdles.

Inspired by the way the Third-places work, we have chosen four team members who are part of the distributed scrum team located in Bangalore. These team members commute over 90 minutes one way to reach their work place and though they work in same project, they are not collocated. A Third-place is identified which is closer to all the four team members and our experiment is to get the team working in the Third-place for four consecutive Fridays and provide the team a set of questionnaire to assess the effectiveness of working at Third-place and positive and negative factors that the team encountered with such an arrangement.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The overall results of such arrangement of distributed scrum team working in Third place proved that the team is happier in terms of
1) Lessened commutation hurdles

The team experienced the Third-place working reduced the commutation of 90 minutes one way to a mere 15 minutes one way. This is a net time saving of 2 hours approximately a day. This saving of time would cater to lot of energy, effort saving, less consumption of fuel on travel, more time for personal work, less stressful days and resulting in more work life balance. An increasing percentage of IT workers now telecommute (remote work), not from home, but from a Third place. The professionals cite isolation when telecommuting from home and find working in public spaces a happy medium between the home office and the corporate office.

There are plenty of statistics that show how the number of telecommuters and fully distributed teams will continue to rise. Corporations such as Intuit, IBM and Cisco have already experienced positive productivity gains and savings. Liz Presson (2014) in the article ‘Remote Work, Distributed Teams & Independent Worker Statistics’ gives the below statistics

- Telecommuting: Forrester Research’s US Telecommuting Forecast says 34 million Americans workers work from home. This number is expected to reach 63 million or 43% of the U.S. workforce by 2016.
- The Wall Street Journal says 13.4 million people, or 9.4% of U.S. workers, labored at least one day at home per week in 2010, compared with 9.2 million people, or 7% of U.S. workers in 1997. This trend is upwards during the recent years. Businesses that allowed employees to work remotely at least three times a month were more likely to log revenue growth of at least 10% within the last 12 months, compared with firms without such policies.
  - IBM teleworkers are 50% more productive than their office-bound counterparts.
  - Cisco has generated an estimated annual savings of $277 million in productivity by allowing employees to telecommute and telework.
With such a huge number of telecommuter base, the Third-place culture would gain much more popularity in the future.

2) More effectiveness at work

The effectiveness at work is on the positive side as the team seats at a collocated Third-place and in a more cheerful environment.

3) Less stressful days

The lesser travel leads to less stressful days of work for the professionals especially in densely populated cities with traffic hurdles like Bangalore, India.

4) Work Life balance

The time saved on avoiding the travel between office and home can be used by the team to spend with their family members and for their personal work, thus striking a balance between work life and personal life.

5) Socializing with project team and Third-place workers

The team started socializing with other inmates of the Third-place and within short time they were in a position to engage in a conversation and socialize with many of the inmates.

6) Increases trust between team members

The team members answered that they know the team better now and their capabilities and interests. This definitely led to increase in trust within the team on other team members.

7) Increase in the communication between team members

The communication is quite often than before and the team now does not hesitate to call and seek clarification from other team members. They started using phones frequently for things that can be managed over calls and choose to use mails only when it is required for a group to be notified about messages.
This decreased the wait time to get clarifications and thus positively impacting the delivery and its timelines.

8) More comfort with the team work.

The team is more comfortable with the others than before and the same has been expressed by all team members post this arrangement of working in Third-place for four consecutive Fridays.

9) Work routines being more manageable than regular work days

The positive impact of the team meeting is seen on the remaining four working days of the week. The team were relaxed and they know that they meet the other team members on the last day of week and they reserved any informal queries which can be simpler and needs attention for Friday and sought information when they meet.

10) Preference to visit Third-places often

The team also liked the concept and expressed their willingness and interest to visit Third-places often as they seem to be positively impacting the team’s productivity.

11) Environment and ambience at the Third-places

Almost all the team members expressed their satisfaction with the arrangements in Third-place with some exceptions

12) Increase in Productivity

The Third place inmates continues their work activity while being galvanized by other people working around, being free from distractions at home, and being able to focus fully as the work requires. The Third-places exist on a neutral ground and serve to level their inmates to a condition of social equality and they provides a psychological comfort that a good home does and they act as stress busters by providing the inmates the much needed joyful, playful environment
where in they can have fun while they work. This caters to the increase in overall productivity of the individual working often from Third-places when compared to their peers working continuously from first or second places.

On the flip side team has observed the following negative aspects 1) The infrastructure facilities like having printers. 2) Availability of conference rooms should have been better. 3) Environment should have been more sound proof and menu on the food items should have been more elaborate in Third-place that we have chosen to experiment on.

On the whole the team is positive to carry out their regular work schedule in Third-places frequently and find it much effective, time saving, happier environment, lessened apprehensions, increased trust and communication between team and having a work life balance. Further, there is a lot of lively environment at the Third-place and we thought to propose a ‘silent zone’ in the Third-place to cater to the needs of the situations where inmates need to work with extra care and needs privacy of their own. We often feel that working in an environment with no external disturbances would solve critical issues more quickly. So this proposal of the ‘Silent zone’. The implementation of this is yet to be taken in the Third-places and this can be a topic of future research.

As a general observation, the team were impressed with this culture and agreed that the visits to the Third-places twice a month would help the team to socialize and break the hurdles of working remotely and would boost up the morale of the teams. Also the UI programming in distributed scrum teams which would be required in crucial phases of the project can be handled very well in the Third-places rather than the team member seating in isolated locations.