

An Office for Introverts

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The Atlantic:

Open offices were supposed to liberate us from cubicle-land. In the 1960s, the German design group Quickborner decided that grouping desks together would increase efficiency and de-emphasize status. They dubbed it *Bürolandschaft*, or “office landscape.” Open plans are also meant to enhance collaboration: Perhaps overhearing your colleague’s every mutter will lead to some serendipitous insights. (“Eureka! Steve, too, can’t get Twitter to load.”)

But we’ve long since entered the backlash phase. “A cost-effective panopticon,” sneered one commenter on the tech site Y Combinator. When the organizational psychologist Matthew Davis reviewed various types of office plans in 2011, as Maria Konnikova wrote for the *New Yorker*, “He found that, though open offices often fostered a symbolic sense of organizational mission ... they were damaging to the workers’ attention spans, productivity, creative thinking, and satisfaction.” A 2008 meta-analysis in the *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health Management* found that open plans are associated with conflict, high blood pressure,

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