# camac® space

Workplace Ecology

Read our guidelines and
learn more.

A few insights

→ Offices are unique ecosystems where people interact with each other and with the environment.

→ The immediate level refers to the individual, his desk, the people working in his immediate vicinity, and the distance from the common areas.

→ When designing and building an office, planning for the user is crucial.

→ Employees represent the largest investment for the company, so it is necessary to invest in them and provide them with the best possible working conditions.
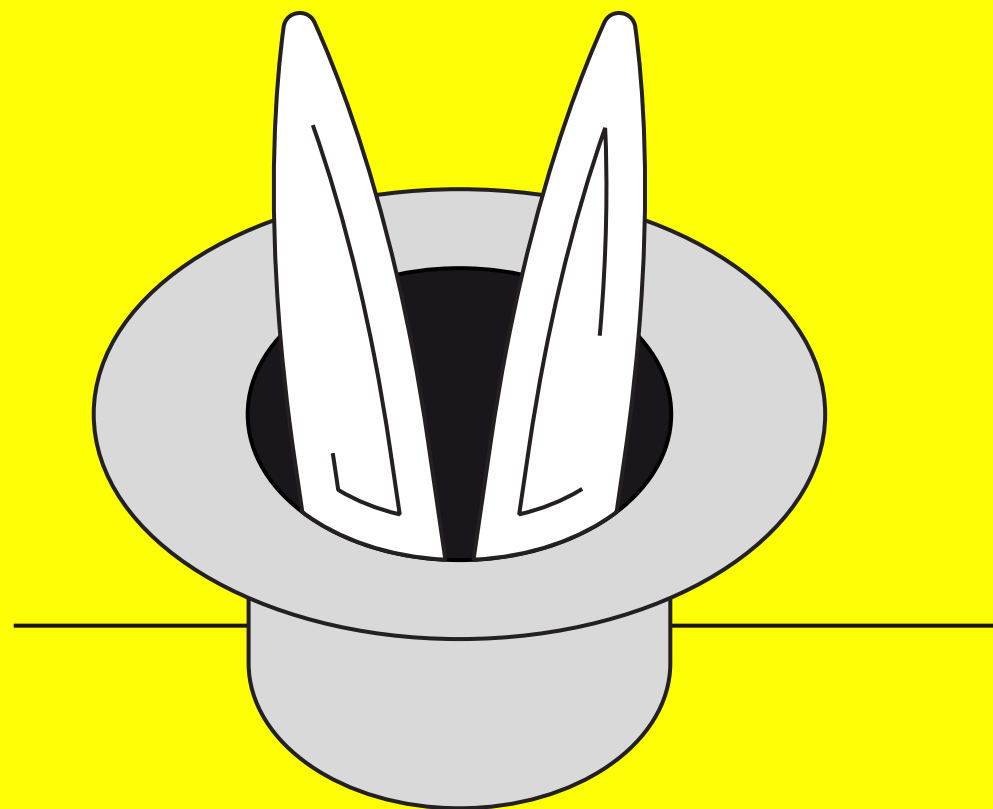
What is Workplace Ecology?

Ecology is a science that deals with the relationships between living things and their inanimate environment. It studies different ecosystems and the relationships within them[1]. Offices are also unique ecosystems that have their own peculiarities.

With the introduction of hybrid work and the ability to work from anywhere, offices seem to be becoming less and less needed. However, the important role of the office should not be overlooked. It can serve as an incubator that enables the development of culture, encourages innovation, and enables learning among co-workers.

In order to realize the full potential of the office, it is important that they evoke a sense of belonging, are comfortable for users and support innovation.

Modern offices are thus becoming more than just a place to work. They provide a space where a company can show its values and mission. Through a range of formal and informal spaces, a well-designed office can provide a suitable space for collaboration, comfort, gathering and independent work.
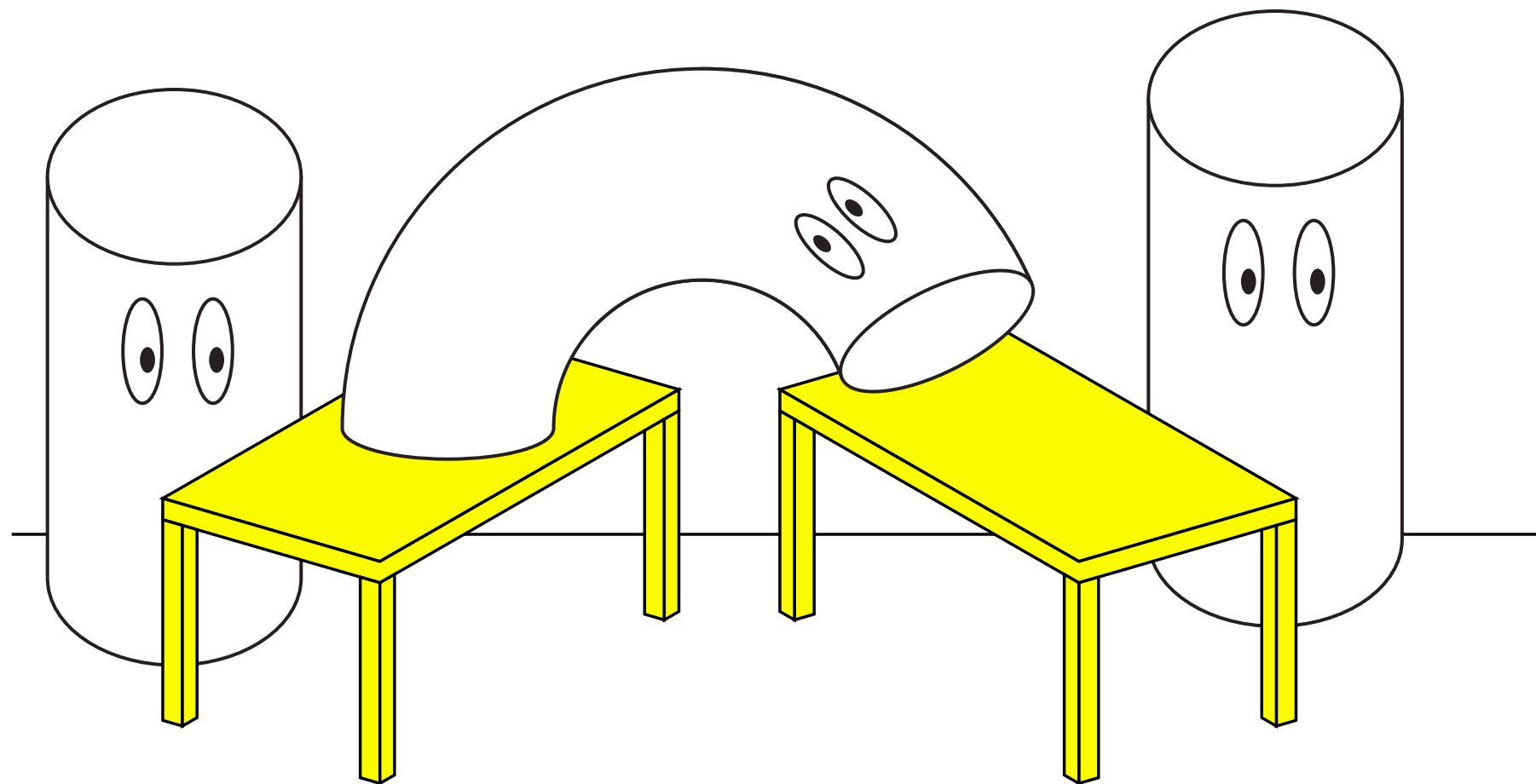
1.   Stanford encyclopedia of philosopfy (2005). Ecology.
      https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ecology/

Three Levels
of Operation
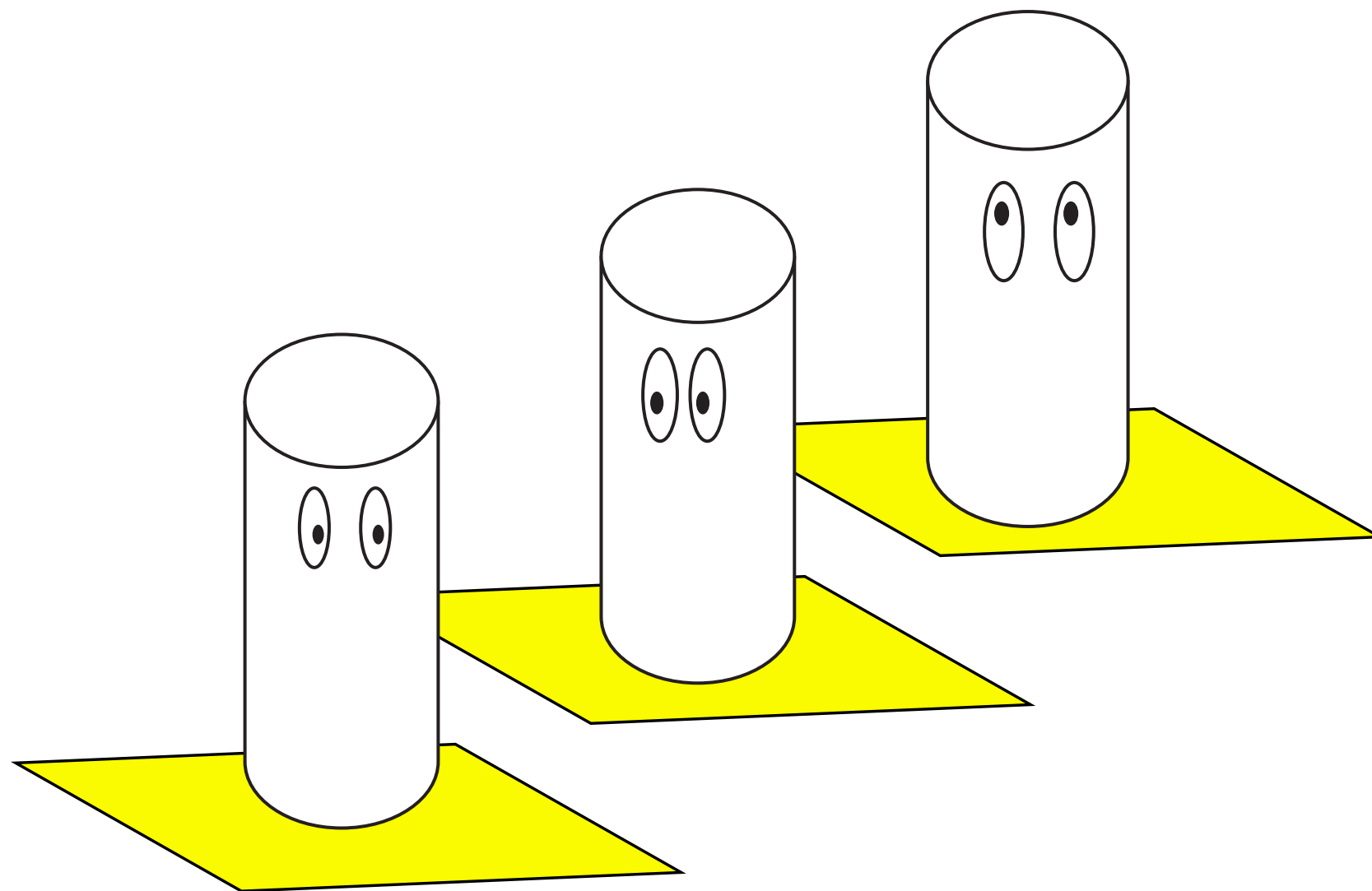
It is important that employees feel engaged. In doing so, offices have one of the key roles, as they can enable interaction between the individual and the environment on three different levels.

Three levels of operation[2]

1   **Immediate Level**

2   **Neighbourhood**

3   **City**

2.   DesignGroup. Office Ecologies - A Different Perspective on Workplace Design. https://designgroup.us.com/expertise/office-ecologies-different-perspective-workplace-design

Three Levels of Operation
Immediate Level

The immediate level refers to the individual, his desk, the people working in his immediate vicinity and the distance to the common areas. It is important that the individual feels comfortable in this environment.

A single solution for a company will not be enough, as employees have different work styles and different needs. Open offices are a good solution if we want to increase the sense of egalitarianism and connection within the office, but in most cases, it is full of disturbing factors such as noise and conversations of colleagues. A much better solution is a space that is partially partitioned and has good acoustic planning.

That way, we create an environment that supports the collaboration of work groups without disturbing others in the office. It is also important to provide space for retreat and work without any disruption, such as phonebooths[2].

When an individual can be given the opportunity to control the immediate environment (e.g., adjusting temperature or lighting), this has a positive impact on cohesion within the team and the overall satisfaction of the individual[3]. When employees do not have the ability to adjust the look of things, lighting, or temperature, productivity drops.
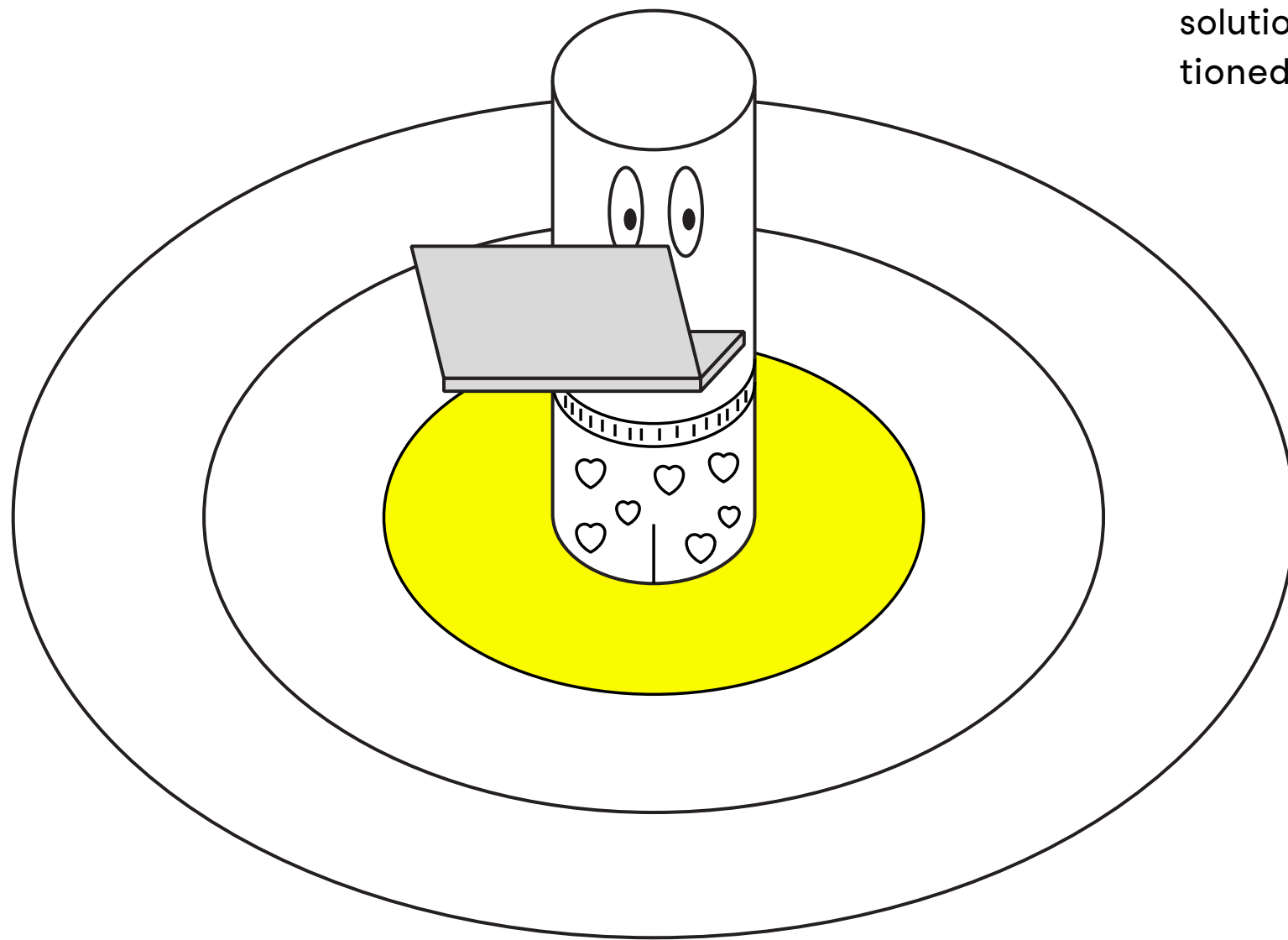
2. DesignGroup. Office Ecologies - A Different Perspective on Workplace Design. https://designgroup.us.com/expertise/office-ecologies-different-perspective-workplace-design

3. Lee, S. Y. in Brand, J. L. (2005). Effects of control over office workspace on perceptions of the work environment and work outcomes. Journal of Environmental psychology, 25(3), str. 323-333. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272494405000538

Three Levels of Operation
Neighbourhood

We can look at the neighbourhood on two levels. The first is the neighbourhood inside the building, i.e., which companies occupy the same building or which are parts of the office that an individual does not deal with every day. The second level is the adjacent buildings and the surrounding area.

It is important to consider whether individual parts of a building are intended for different departments of the same company or whether several different companies are present within one building. Every company must ensure that offices are suitable for uninterrupted communication within the company and at the same time ensure that information does not pass between companies because of business secrets. Thus, it is necessary to have a clear boundary between companies in order to ensure the safety of employees. However, it is important to use other premises available to all companies. Lobbies and atriums can thus be used as informal gathering places for socializing among companies[2].

There are also more and more co-working offices where there is a shared work environment for several companies. Such offices provide a physical space that supports the interaction between different companies[2].
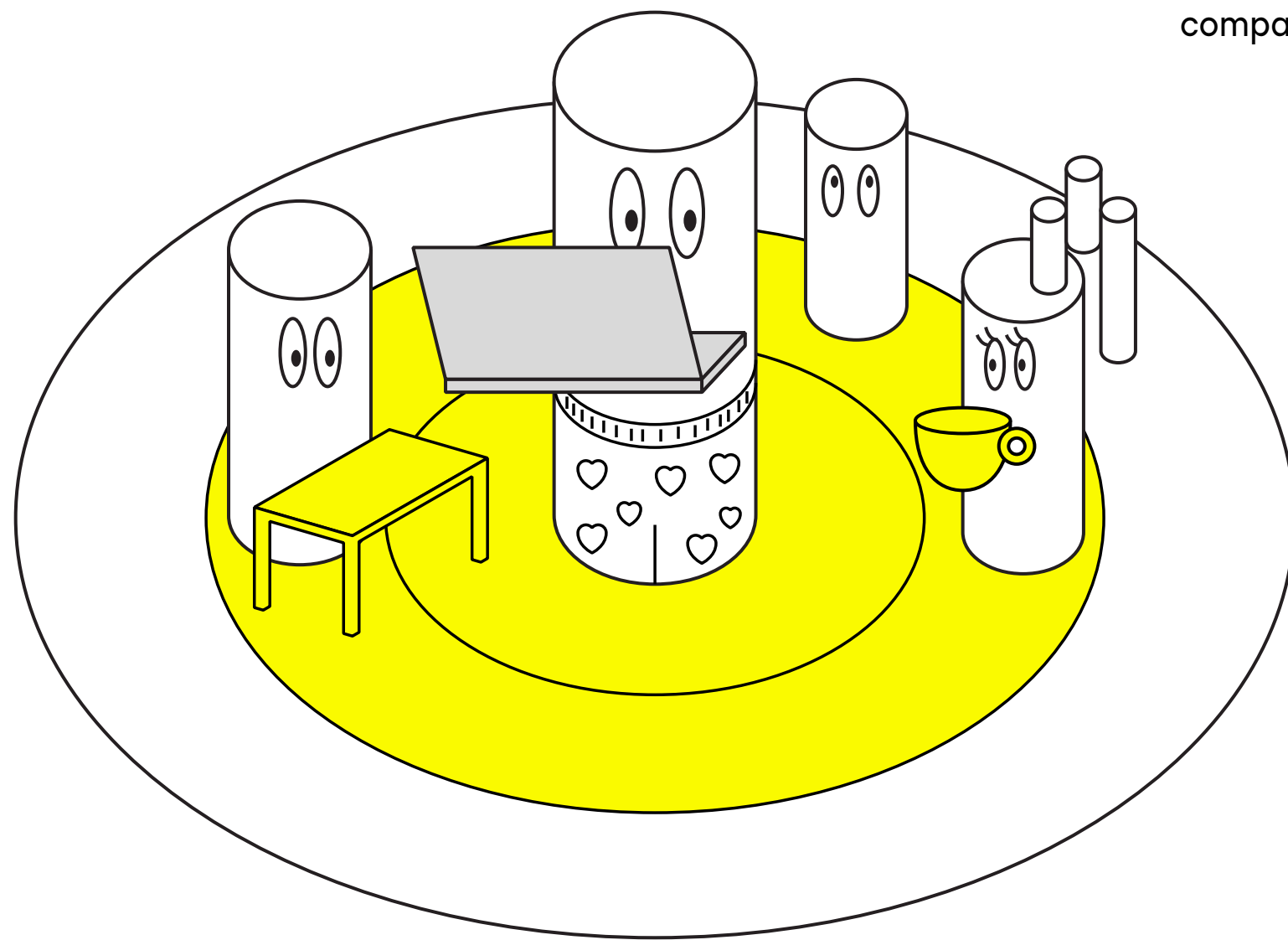
2. DesignGroup. Office Ecologies - A Different Perspective on Workplace Design. https://designgroup.us.com/expertise/office-ecologies-different-perspective-workplace-design

# Three Levels of Operation
City
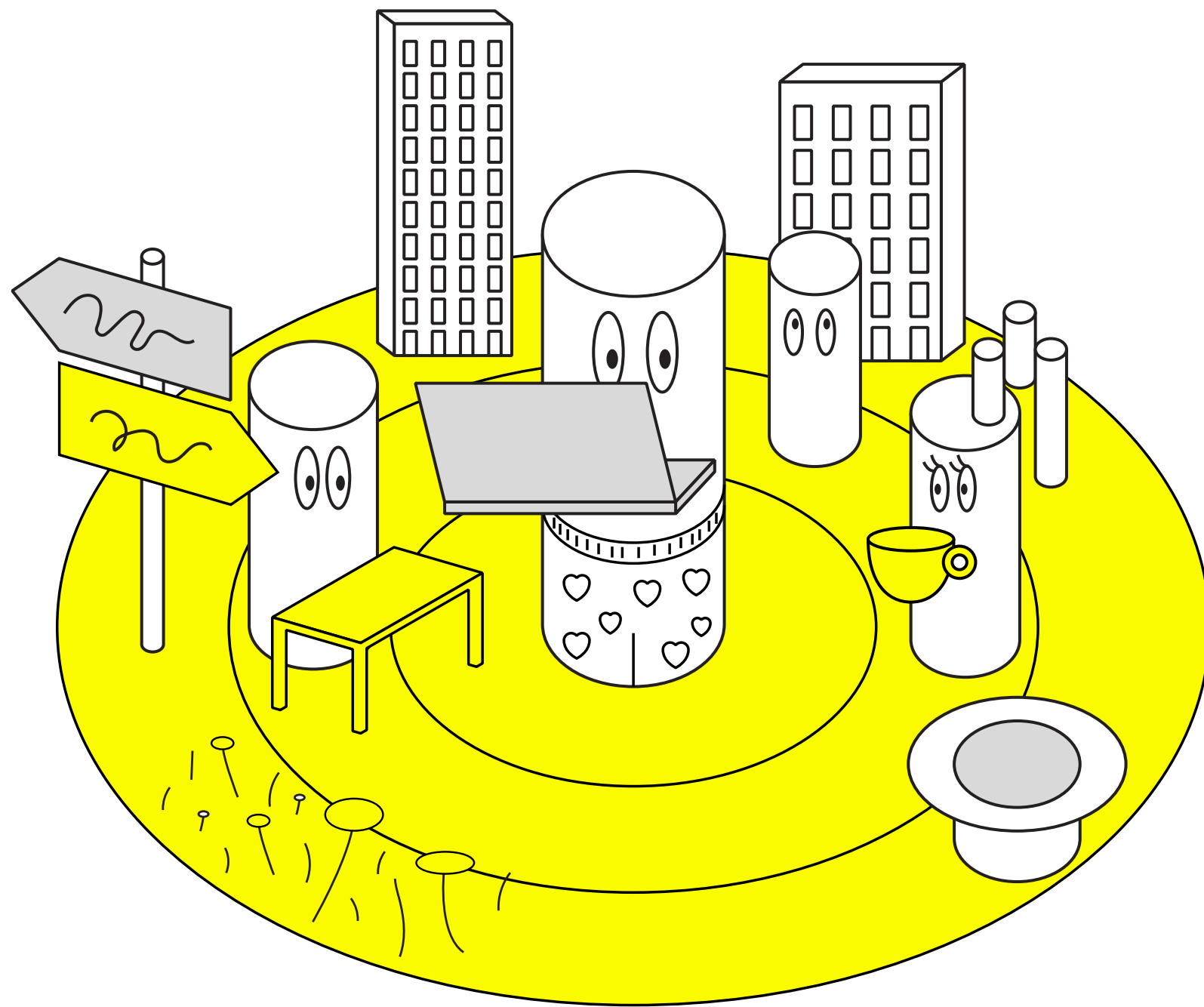
Every city has its own energy that affects the company, and at the same time companies can influence the energy. There are two ways a company can influence a city, through charities and through the design of the building itself.

It is increasingly important for employees to work for companies that are committed to social or environmental change. Thus, it is important that companies participate in charity campaigns, raise funds for various purposes, organize community activities and more. It is important that the company is actively involved in its immediate environment. The buildings themselves can have arranged places outside for gathering, which enables additional communication with the surroundings[2].

2.   DesignGroup. Office Ecologies - A Different Perspective on Workplace Design. https://designgroup.us.com/expertise/office-ecologies-different-perspective-workplace-design

Performance
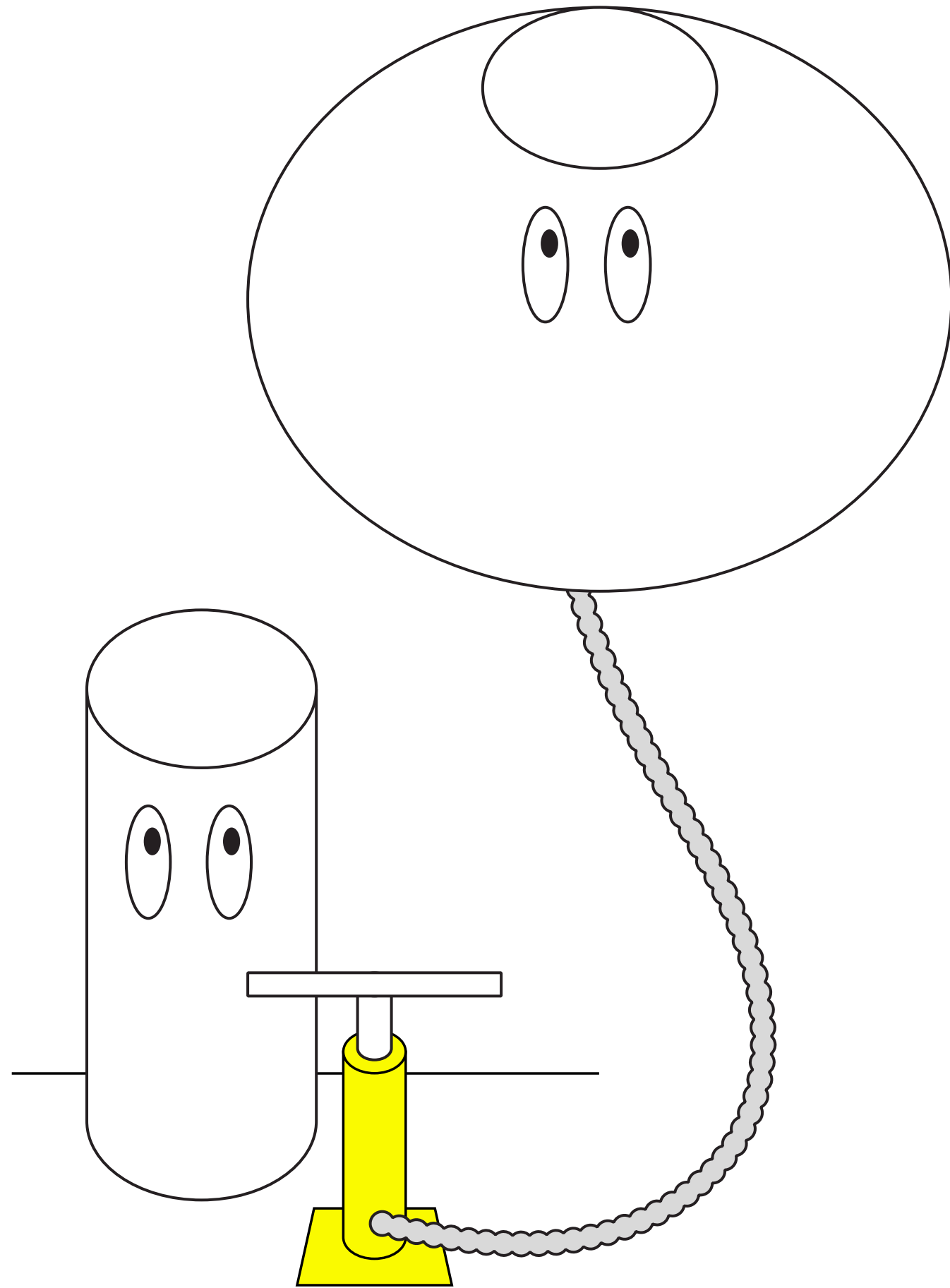
In terms of performance, the important question is: how to promote employee engagement? Transparency, encouraging, and diversity are important.

The work environment is moving from the period of information to the period of co-operation. Thus, there is a change in the handling of information, from storing, transferring, and accessing towards greater sharing and integration of information[4]. For example, employees can be more involved in the decision-making and changes that take place in the company. The hierarchy of companies is becoming increasingly flat, with fewer intermediate links and more direct involvement in decision-making at all levels of organizations.

It is important to promote cohesion and build culture. For example, a city is a much better location for a business than a suburb, as it encourages greater diversity and networking of different individuals. The city enables the connection of the place of residence, work, and free time, instead of the isolation of individual places.

Diversity within the office is also important. Employees must be provided with a variety of workspaces that can be adapted to their needs[4]. It requires a lot of space for collaboration and less assigned places for individual work. The size of the offices themselves is not changing much, but there are major changes in the appearance of the space.

4. Ervin, M. (2014). Workplace ecology under the microscope. https://www.reminetwork.com/articles/workplace-ecology-under-the-microscope/

User Focus
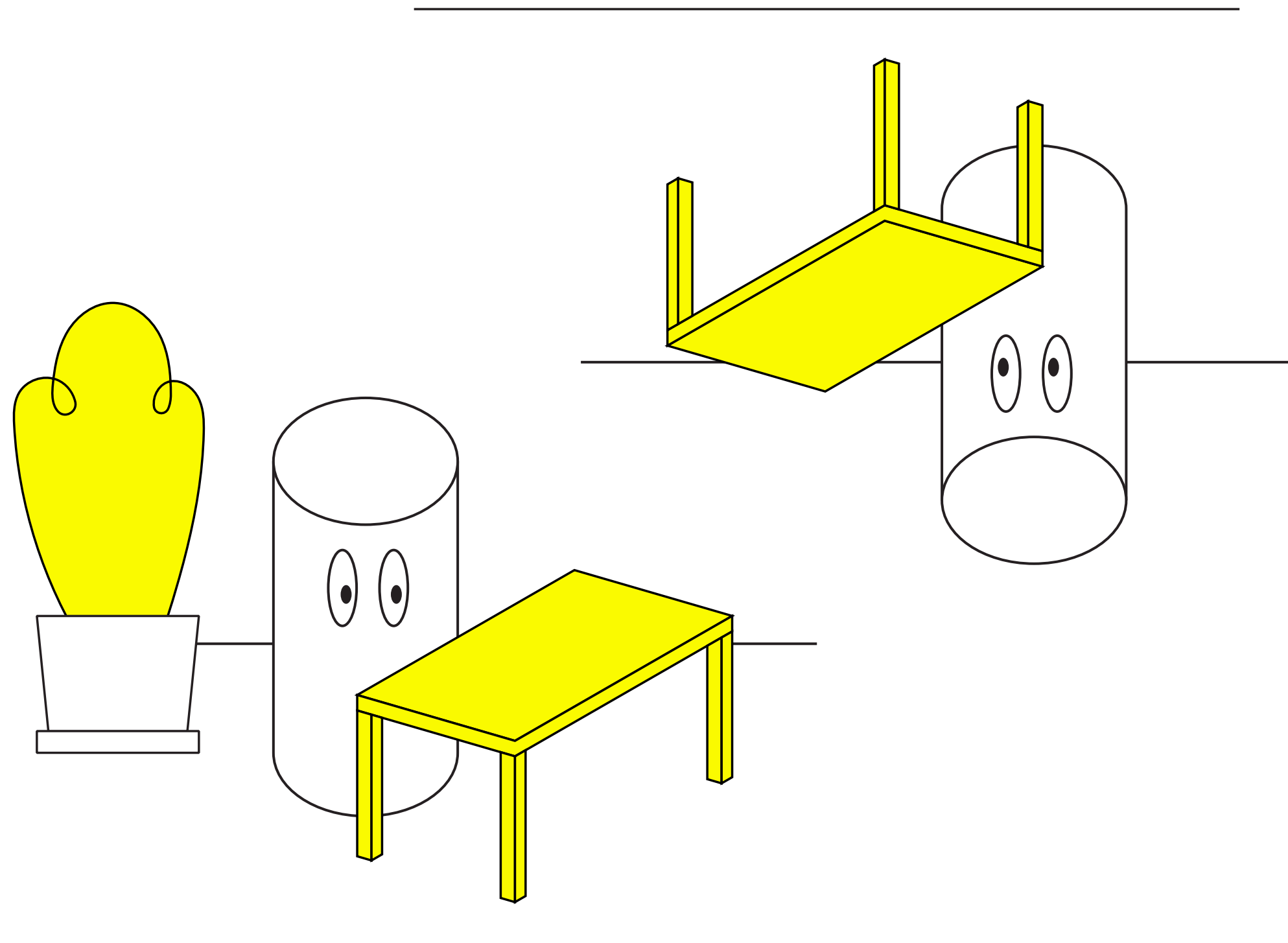
When designing and building offices, planning for the user is crucial. If employees are dissatisfied with offices, this will affect the culture and productivity.

It is important to give employees a choice, namely about the level of privacy, about space and about cooperation. Ensuring the protection of business secrets is important when enabling privacy[4]. For example, an employee who works with confidential information cannot work in the middle of an open office because he cannot ensure confidentiality.

It is also important to provide different spaces according to the style of work. Extroverts and introverts need different amounts of stimulation to work successfully, so it is important to design an office that can support both types of people[5].

Collaboration can be supported in a physical office and in a virtual environment. Depending on the model, according to which the company works, it is necessary to adapt and promote integration within the company.
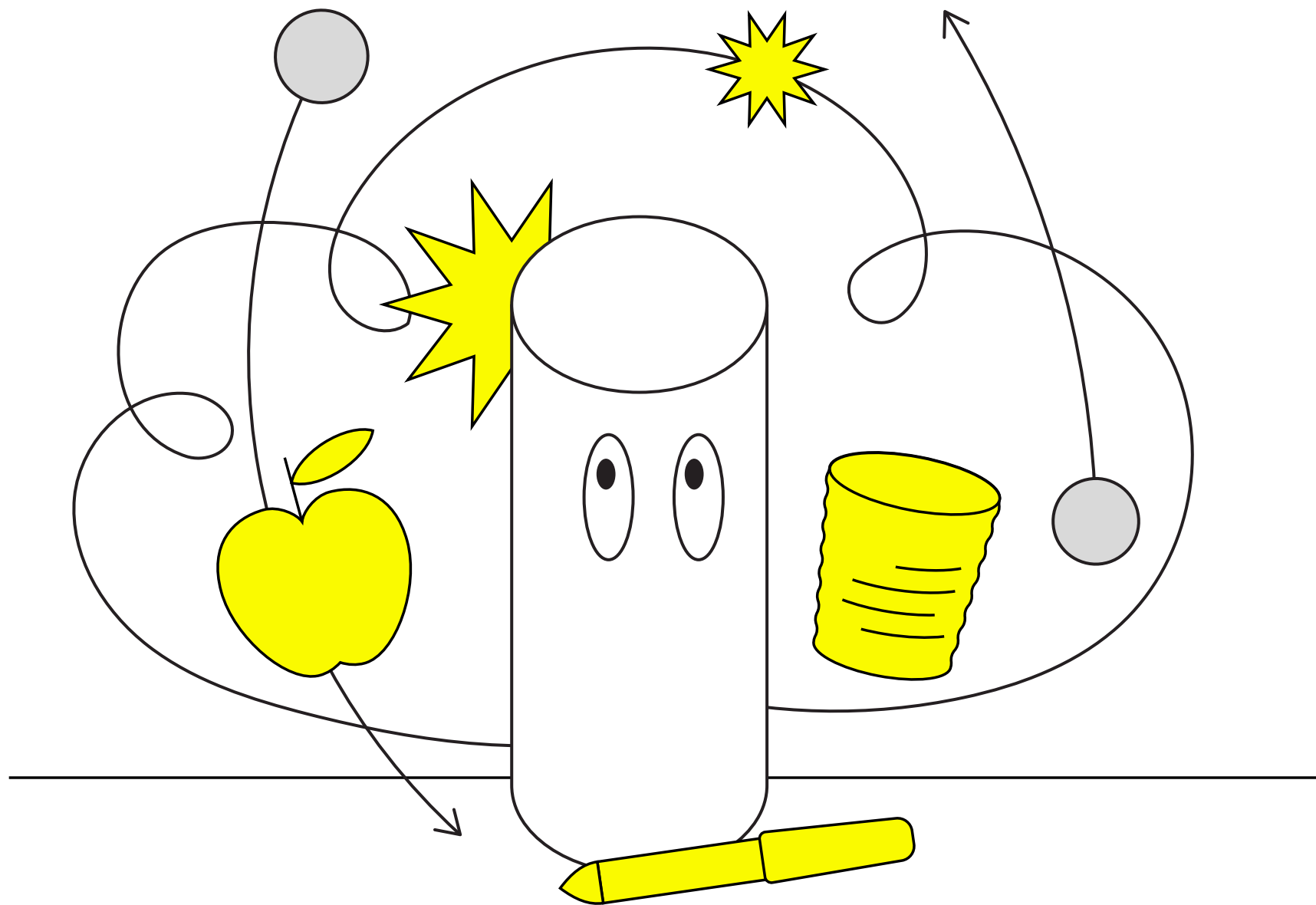
4.   Ervin, M. (2014). Workplace ecology under the microscope. https://www.reminetwork.com/articles/workplace-ecology-under-the-microscope/

5.   Oseland, N. (2021). Beyond the workplace ZOO: Humanising the office.

Satisfaction and Bottom Line

Employees represent the largest invest-ment for the company. Therefore, it seems sensible to take care of them as much as possible, as satisfied employees are more productive, absenteeism is reduced, and the atmosphere in the company is better.
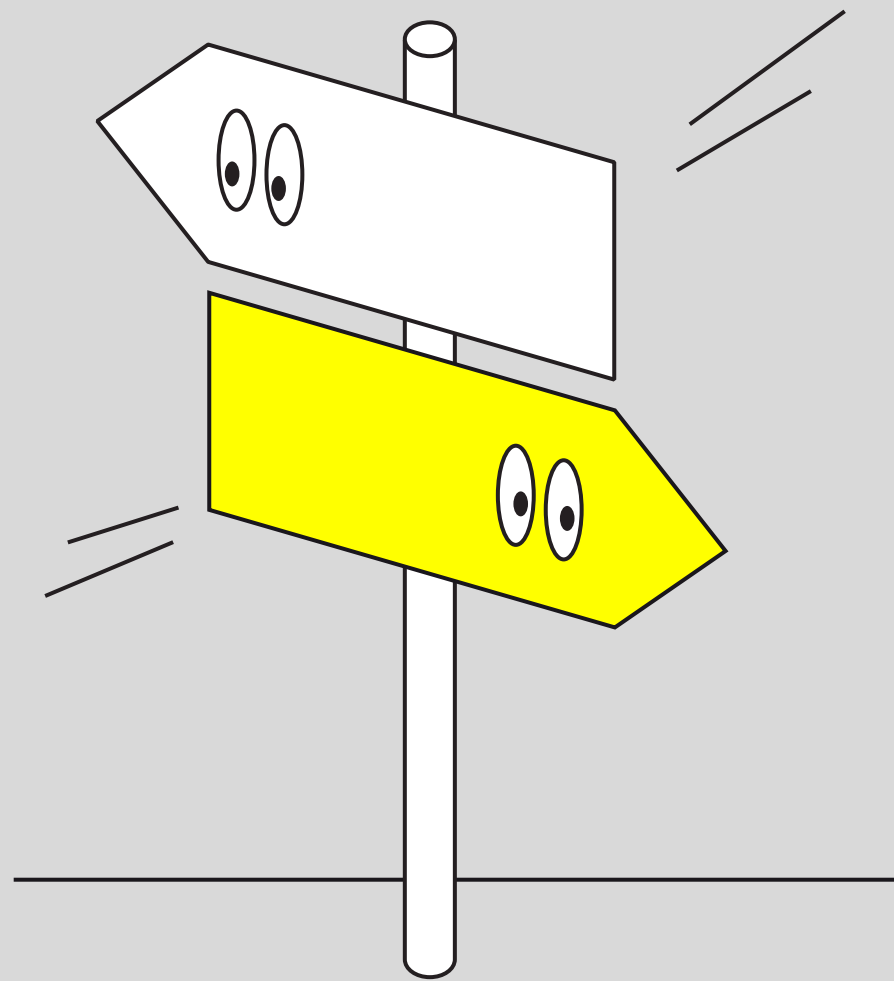
The company's premises should thus promote satisfaction and structure[4]. It is important to provide flexibility, different spaces, technology that supports the work of employees and promote culture through informal gatherings for employees.

4.   Ervin, M. (2014). Workplace ecology under the microscope.
      https://www.reminetwork.com/articles/workplace-ecology-under-the-micro-scope/

Want to learn more?

For any additional questions you may have, don't hesitate to contact our experts at CAMAC Space. We will be happy to discuss further and help you find the best solution for your needs.

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