The Spirit of Place: Home, Work and the Space Between

Kenneth Conzelmann (lead author)
Christian Camacho; Le Luo; Thea Khabelashvili (contributing author)

City Tech / CUNY

ABSTRACT:

Today we are facing a reimagining of the workplace as we know it. In fact, the office is an invention of the 18th century, as prior to this, besides farms, shipyards, factories and the like, there was no "office". But today many of us are working from home via virtual methods in a place meant for the domestic side of life. This home place comes with its own “spirit of place” or "place psyche" which should allow for an informal relaxed environment. For many people, this private domicile has now become the ersatz platform and setting for public activities and engagement typically conducted via in-person interactions like school, business, and health care.

There is also the phenomenon of the 'third place'. For many, this entails the commute from home to work: the subway, the bus, the commuter train, the car, the bike ride, the walk to work, or the airplane flight for weekly meetings in DC. For those travel methods which result in carbon release contributing to global warming, yes, this is a good thing for them to be shut or diminished. But our daily experience of the interstitial space - the time and space in between - that big-mix realm between our homes and our workplaces and
beyond, can be a vital source of cultural, social and community connection, engagement, and inspiration – the modern-day agora if you will.

Our paper will look at this current COVID-caused reconfigured world and its impacts on our built environments and its effects on our physical, emotional, mental, psychological, physiological, and sociological wellbeing. We will be reporting on the NYC scene, with contributions from former City Tech students of their own cultural experiences and observations from places around the world including Bolivia and Ecuador, the Republic of Georgia, and China.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Kenneth Conzelmann
Born and raised in the NYC area to German immigrant parents, Ken has lived in the West Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan since 1987. An architect, he serves on the faculty of City Tech and maintains a small collaborative architectural practice with urban and rural projects. He holds a BArch from NJIT (New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ) and a GradDipl (MArch) from The AA (The Architectural Association, London, England). Ken spends time and energy tinkering at his forest cabin in Greene County upstate NY where ideas can be fleshed out and tested, in fresh air.

Christian Camacho
Born and raised in Elizabeth, New Jersey to Bolivian and Ecuadorian parents. His youth as a graffiti artist in the streets of Elizabeth and Newark in the mid-2000’s enabled him to view Architecture from a peculiar lens. He holds an AAS degree from City Tech, BArch from The City College, and MArch II from The Columbia University. Chris is a Project Architect at System Architects in NYC and simultaneously teaches various courses at City Tech as an adjunct lecturer. He enjoys helping students with their designs as well as drawing and cycling.

Le Luo
Born in China, Le attended City Tech for his first two years of architectural education. He transferred to Cornell University for a BA in architectural history followed by an MArch from Princeton University. Le has had work internships with Peter Eisenman in NYC and Pritzker prize recipient architect Wang Shu in Hangzhou, China. He is currently teaching at Tsinghua University in Beijing and co-founding a private practice.

Thea Khabelashvili
Born and raised in Tbilisi, Georgia, Thea received her AAS in Architectural Technology from City Tech in 2020. Before moving to NYC she lived and worked in Essen, Germany working with engineers on major power infrastructure projects. Thea also holds a BS in Psychology from I.J. Tbilisi State University in Tbilisi. She enjoys spending time in the mountains, climbing, and practicing archery.