

**Post-pandemic Urban Environments and the Shifting Geography of Tech Work**

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Until the COVID-19 pandemic, the widespread adoption of distributed work arrangements such as hybrid or remote work remained an unrealized pipedream despite obvious benefits to individuals (savings in time and travel expenses, better work-life integration) and society (reduced travel congestion, instant remote communication). As a result, even remote and hybrid-work-friendly occupations in the tech sector were concentrated in large metros in the coastal and southwestern US. The pandemic-induced intensification of remote and hybrid work, however, has altered the geography of tech work in the US. Although traditional tech hubs continue to dominate the U.S. tech landscape, the migration of remote-working tech workers to regions with a lower cost of living during the pandemic, followed by tech businesses looking to capitalize on new tech labor pools, has increased tech activity in other mid-sized and smaller markets (Muro and You 2022). Thus, distributed work arrangements are gaining widespread relevance throughout the U.S.

Remote and hybrid working arrangements are less reliant on office spaces and conducted in a variety of nontraditional work settings (e.g., homes, coffee shops, and other third places). Hence, tech-intensive and rising tech metros feature post-functional urban environments where work-life boundaries have blurred, different functions co-exist in the same space, and where unprecedented functions are subjectively and contingently ascribed to settings (Di Marino and Lapintie 2017). This blurring of boundaries between work and other activities challenges the segregation of land uses implicit in contemporary urban environments and represents a paradigm shift in how we use, allocate, regulate, and experience space and place.

We invite theoretical and methodologically diverse empirical research papers that span various issues associated with the post-pandemic intensification of distributed work arrangements in the U.S. and comparable global contexts. Potential topics include (but are not limited to):

1. Theoretical explorations - New urban economic models predicated on fluidly ascribed and intermingled activities to replace traditional urban economic theory as well as land-use and transportation models that assume spatial and temporal fixity of activities, exemplified by a fixed time and place for work, regular journey-to-work patterns, and the segregation of activities or land uses.
2. Mobility- and agility-informed conceptions of space and place - Distributed work practices emerged in a period of economic volatility following the dot-com bust of the early 2000s and the financial crisis of 2008. Lean or just-in-time management practices, which favored contingent tech labor, drove workspace optimization in the form of hotdesking, hoteling, and activity-

based working where workers had no access to assigned workspaces in an office and the burden of creating a workspace shifted to the individual worker. We welcome research that considers the full spectrum of space and place experiences ranging from mobility as choice and privilege to mobility as precarity (Di Masso et al. 2019; Devine-Wright et al. 2020).

3. Gender issues - The tech workplace remains a male bastion, and women encounter multiple barriers to entering, remaining, and progressing in the tech workplace (World Economic Forum, 2021). The flexible working hours and locations of hybrid and remote work are considered women-friendly for facilitating domestic caregiving, which is disproportionately shouldered by women. Further, access to coworking locations near homes is proffered to save commute time and offer a professional and distraction-free work setting for mothers and other caregivers. We welcome socio-spatial research that tackles gendered assumptions about caregiving and tech careers and their impact on provisioning urban amenities that support women's participation in the tech workplace.
4. Displacement and related social equity issues – Policy and planning research for mitigating gentrification-related displacement of low-income people due to the influx of middle to high-income tech workers in rising tech hubs (Qian and Tan, 2021) are welcome. This includes empirical research on the challenges and opportunities associated with transitioning from uni-functional (majority residential or commercial) to mixed-use and mixed-income suburban and downtown communities.

If you are interested in joining the "Post-pandemic Urban Environments and the Shifting Geography of Tech Work" session, please email your abstract code, paper title, contact information, and preferred/planned mode of presentation (i.e., in-person or virtual) to Manju Adikesavan (madikesavan@gradcenter.cuny.edu) by **November 10, 2022**.

## **References**

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- Muro, Mark, and Yang You. 2022. "Superstars, Rising Stars, and the Rest: Pandemic Trends and Shifts in the Geography of Tech." *Brookings* (blog). March 8, 2022. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/superstars-rising-stars-and-the-rest-pandemic-trends-and-shifts-in-the-geography-of-tech/>.
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- World Economic Forum. 2021. "Global Gender Gap Report 2021." Insight Report. Switzerland. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2021.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf).