Co-working: gentrification method, “third place” and/or new form of educational environment organization

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Abstract. The article is dedicated to the research of the co-working phenomenon presenting a new type of the object, new type of the form of the city and society qualitative life. Having quite a broad geography, functional variety, variety of city-planning situations, a wide range of space-planning and descriptive solutions, co-working is interpreted as a specific “third place”, educational space, a new type of an efficient production facility as well as a new integral environment corresponding to the lifestyle of modern digital nomads. An active development of educational functions makes co-working an integral part of educational institutions. The paper proposes a concept for forming the cluster “IRNITU Co-working” serving as a means for gentrification of the Campus territory, new form of the “third place” of a modern university, image space and educational hub; discusses the results of the use of IRNITU co-working.

1. Introduction

Co-working is the “third place” of the third century [1], a new form of public space and communication system, a territory gentrification method, new type of production environment organization, educational hub, new
social-economic model, etc. – on the one hand, a variety of windows and ranges of opportunities for practical use, and on the other hand, underdevelopment of the research object and subject, as well as general underdevelopment of theoretical provisions define the relevance of the co-working problem discussion.

Breaking up a habitual system of an organization/living space, transforming the nature and structure of everyday activity (leisure and production one), co-working spaces set up new realities of human existence. Transforming into a significant part of a modern urban environment and being a specific form of the environment quality enhancement, co-workings start playing more and more important part in the city life and enter various spheres, expand topic-specific and specific differentiation.

2. Materials and methods. Co-working - new form of a high-quality life of modern city

Co-working: method of gentrification territory and factor of the development of new city life forms.

As a special form of the “third place”, the response towards global gentrification and digitalization and increasing mobility, co-working responds to modern civilization challenges - occurrence of “new types of occupation - freelance, small business forms, elimination of borders between operation and leisure, demands for intellectual leisure and tough competition at the market of free time and entertainment” [2]. The development of start-up systems being a modern method of “entering” a “big life” also has its importance.

Co-working “has grown up” from a community of hackers, creative communities and production workshops. The co-working prototypes are traditionally considered to be hacker spaces arising in the 90-s in the USA and Germany and presenting communication spaces for the people with common interests as well as entrepreneurs’ centers having a necessary infrastructure. The first real co-working corresponding to the new model of the work space organization is founded by the programmer Brad Neuberg (2005) offering not only working places and Wi-Fi but also cooperative meditations, lunches and leisure. The term “co-working” in the literal meaning “cooperative work of equal people” was introduced by the game designer and the first owner of the domain name B. Koven. Being a concept of professional self-organization, a new type of “efficient” office environment, today co-workings are considered
as a unique social&economic model preferred by a number of national researchers of the co-working phenomenon as well [5-10].

The cycle of trans-disciplinary research in terms of number and location of co-workings all over the world demonstrates various spatial distribution of these places in the cities [5;11] in connection with the absence of any limitations for its location which makes city-planning aspects of the problem study very important. The city-planning discourse also sets a co-working interpretation as one of the methods and means of the territory gentrification [12], as a results the territory functional destination changes, new points of social& cultural and business attraction occurrence increasing the place investment attraction. Occupying buildings and erections losing their former intended use (production spaces, former schools, administrative organizations, etc.) co-workings become a profitable option in all aspects: they revitalize and improve the degrading environments and urban quarters, reconstruct separate architectural objects. In addition, in the context of urban planning, one should pay attention to the concept of underground co-workings which are convenient and relevant for being located in city centers. For example, the programme “Moscow: Co-working 2.0” considers the options of locating a net of state co-workings under Pushkin square[10; 13].

A net logic providing the basis for the activity of co-working communities is developed in the system of organization of the most “popular” co-working spaces. Transforming into a net as a specific rhizoma co-workings penetrate into the city structure and have impact on the city tissue, the city environment amenities and conveniences. The example can be provided by a net of co-workings “Rabochaya stantsiya” (“Working Station”) covering all the city space or one of the most creative clusters “Klyuch” (“Key”) the business space of which is located in the former plant premises and/or old mansions in various city districts.

The representation of co-working as a modification of the “third place” expands the potential of city social spaces serving for creative interaction and communication. The geographical location and nature of the city context are often the key factor of forming the specifics and determining successful development of “co-working” spaces and start-up companies. Thus, the evolution of “Neiron” (“Neuron”) is mostly predetermined by its location inside a creative cluster “Khokhlovka” located in the center of Moscow [14].

The specific nature of the development “Dream Industries Telegraph” as a space created for open and efficient dialog capable of changing the “intellectual capital geography” is also in many respects defined by the co-working location at the “key street “ of Moscow in the building of the Central telegraph [15]. Co-working in Khimki (Co-working 14) gathers ambitious people from various businesses under one roof forming a unique multi-
functional center outside Moscow Ring Road [16]. In the situation of increasing mobility the co-working CEO Rooms Comcity organized in the business park “Rumyantsevo” (airport “Vnukovo” area) perfectly suits the requests of modern nomads: for the guests and residents the center provides comfortable sleep boxes for continuous comfortable operation.

Co-working: image-design, environment images and functional typology (specifics, means and methods)

According to individual researchers, as of today the TOP of the most popular and demanded co-working centers includes Centers for production and office activity; Creative co-working centers; Hand-crafted co-working centers and Children co-working centers.

Alongside with this, one should note the developing IT co-workings and educational hubs virtually becoming separate groups:

- IT- centers/co-workings — “real” space (hacker space) for the meetings of residents with similar interests, mostly technological ones (in the area of digital or electronic art). A particular kind of “ancestors” of modern co-workings, hacker spaces obtain a further development in co-workings specially developed for IT specialists as under the conditions of dynamically developing digital culture an important role is given to the developers and programmers, network engineers, product (food) scientists, IT specialists, developers of mobile applications and Internet projects, game designers, etc.

- Educational co-workings having a high potential of forming new pedagogical concepts and transforming the activity by means of incorporating relevant norms into the practice of education, serve for the development of innovative technologies and transfer of knowledge to professional agents. At the same time co-workings allow solving the problems students face at their independent work. Such co-workings can form as separate spaces or implement an educational function in the territory of other co-workings and hubs.

Images, reputations, stylistic peculiarities of the space organization design and structure, as a rule, have some general trends and specific features differentiating them from each other which is very important in the situation of tough competition and increasing the requirements to the environment quality [17].

Traditionally, co-workings offer the residents either permanent places or work at free space providing the lease of free spaces, meeting rooms and office infrastructure. Most co-workings also have specially equipped places, offices for the work of small teams, mini-parks, event-spaces, etc., the interior planning and design of which take into account basic needs of residents - the possibility of a calm and efficient operation, recreation and communication.
General tendencies and possible trends of the Russian co-working development, the image and stylistics of the environment design, methods and means of organization can be traced on the basis of the review of Moscow co-working spaces. The most relevant image of the first co-workings relates to the concept of loft both in the Russian and foreign traditions. The co-working “Start Hub”, being a part of the design plant “Flakon” (“Flask”) strictly differentiates the office space by floors. At this, a part of premises is a loft space with quite large furniture which creates the image of solidity. #tech is specialized in the technological area. A key image (loft) is highlighted by modern equipment with bright designer chairs which looks dynamically and intensively. As an “offset” relaxation we have virtually all sterile light zones. “DI Telegraph” with brick partitions, unfinished concrete columns, the ceiling with shuttering marks and authentic window frames refer us to the building history. The ascetic interior in the process of settlement is planned to be complemented with active tree and shrub planting. Deworkacy has several offices in various city districts each of which is characterized by its own advantages, for example, the view over the Moskva river and a coffee house at the factory “Krasny Oktyabr”; the interior looking like an old editorial board in the building of the newspaper “Izvestiya”, etc. Cabinet Lounge is located in the mansion of Fyodor Schechtel which defines the interior’s concept forming the club atmosphere with high-tech elements, various aggressive industrial structures and lamps. Lilac&violet colour of walls, large leather sofas and armchairs&textile having the natural colour of lounge zones complementing the image and finishing it with paintings from art galleries. The group of “posh” facilities can include Co-working 14 which can be positioned as a futuristic/space object. The colour, neon, wood and metal, ergonomic infrastructure, open space with a panoramic glazing, open terrace, sports gym, capsule hotel, etc. create a slightly art-crafty and still comfortable atmosphere.

The trends of modern development of the most prestigious foreign co-workings are rather oriented towards forming comfortable and well-equipped spaces with elaborated design leaning towards specialized club interiors with well-developed lounge areas.

Educational hub: co-working as a part of a modern university.

A modern university being an educational hub is a multi-functional center the relevant tasks of which consist in the development of means and methods for organizing an efficient innovative activity [8]. Co-working as a new educational technology is oriented at “transition of the working space into an educational space and learning the doing method” being a catalyst of development processes and providing for the “co-organization of activity
cooperation of various educational subjects and a design&net coordination of innovative teachers” [18].

A series of educational co-workings, being the response to the request of the Russian “youth policy - organizing competitive and creative design communities” [19], is formed in the countries of HEIs and educational centers. For example, the co-working Soft Cultures, being a space for architects, graphical designers, developers, editors, etc., conducts professional training of architects and graphical designers. In Moscow State University of Printing Arts of Ivan Fedorov the appearance of media-co-working for generating various media-products initiated by students becomes an efficient form of self-organization of scientific and creative activity of students, a real prospective start-up. In National Research University Higher School of Economics, Saint-Petersburg, at the Center of Innovative Entrepreneurship there is a co-working for the work of the University students which is organized in sessions in duly registered design teams. One more type of an education co-working is opened in Kemerov State University is a co-working for learners and children and parents working in higher educational institutions.

In general, various options of educational co-working organization, risks and potential possibilities of their implementation more and more frequently become the object of research.

3. Results. Cluster “IRNITU co-working” as a form of territory gentrification, new type of the “third place” of a modern university and educational hub

Transforming the Irkutsk campus into a territory of a modern university requires the territory gentrification and shall include the space for development and self-development, active creative actions, new start-ups, etc. A net of co-workings can be one of the forms of such space as the net co-working concept with a wide location coverage allows operating without being fixed at a specific address, cooperate various functions and resources. The first co-working IRNITU made in the loft style and put into operation in 2018 works as a polyfunctional environment - the “third place” for leisure and scientific activity, educational hub and creative space. This co-working alongside with the planned co-working in the basement of the block “G” can serve as an initial, reference point of the network.
Taking into account the existing situation and development prospects of IRNITU within a modern university, as a concept one can offer forming the IT/technological co-working on the basis of the Technical park IRNITU and organizing a creative co-working on the basis of a former fine arts institute. The prospect of using this platform and its potential is an upgrade of gym, creating a multi-level space within the gym area and related subsidiary rooms with a separate entrance on the sportblock side. The occurrence of entresol levels significantly increases the co-working space and allows creating various spaces for artistic&design workshops, creative studios, 3D design-modeling workshops, prototyping and replication, etc. In addition, these spaces can be used for an independent student work, implementation of additional education programmes and as an educational platform for children development. Another prospective activity on the same basis seems to be the development of creative “social workshops” for the city which are so relevant today, including as the way of implementing the digital detox programme by means of practicing various types of creative art&design activity. At the same time, in compliance with the curriculum and schedule one can use the spaces of school halls, sculpture workshops, ceramic, production and sewing, etc. laboratories/workshops. For large-scale outstanding events lots of possibilities arise at the use of inside courts and the block surrounding areas.

The second stage of forming this subdivision of the net university co-working can be its expansion to the second floor towards the library and inclusion of this space in co-working.

The next stage is proposed as the upgrade of attic premises above the library to locate individual guest boxes allowing for a much wider use of the co-working space for the reception of guest from other cities/countries as well as providing additional possibilities for student relaxation. Besides, the closure of the inside court and the space between two block seems to be rather prospective as it expand possible intended uses of the place.

Such concept makes it possible to organize a real center of contemporary design, arts, traditional arts and artistic handicrafts, make a university a place of creative development, professional and amateur creation, creative city space.

In the long view, in the situation of further development of the trends of co-working “penetrating” into the modern social life positioning IRNITU as a national highly technological scientific&research, educational, cultural and creative center will probable make it reasonable to consider the building of new co-working for arranging image events with guest blocks to accommodate guests/residents from other cities and countries.
This will finish the formation of the Campus as a key educational cluster in the city and region, improve the quality of the environment and its investment attraction as the “third place”.

4. Discussion. Integrating the first IRNITU co-working to the university and city life

The operation of the first co-working in the IRNITU system shows its efficient use for the conduct of author’s master-classes, forums, organizational activity games, learning sessions, etc. Its residents and event participants include students, post-graduates, teachers of IRNITU and numerous specialists from other organizations. According to the opinion of IRNITY rector M.V. Kornyakov, the co-working platform today “represents the activity of student design bureaus ad scientific organizations, we have 29 of them. There is an open access to scientific labs, interactive platforms and activity zones are operating” [20]. Here there are well-equipped workplaces, conference halls, high-speed Internet which facilitates the development of a design way of thinking, generates conditions for creation, creative start-ups, etc.

Therefore, today the existing co-working IRNITU operating as an educational hub and a creative space as a reference point of the development of the cluster “IRNITU co-working” is a successful experiment of IRNITU development as a modern university, and the Campus as a modern campus. In the context of the Campus interpretation as a space for scientific & technical creation development, educational hub and prospective image territory, opening of the first co-working as a stage of the university net establishment, can be considered a step towards the territory gentrification and IRNITU movement towards gaining the status of a modern university.

5. Conclusion

Today co-working as a new type of public space start playing a significant part in the social life. Having quite a broad geography, functional variety, variety of city-planning situations, a wide range of space-planning and descriptive solutions, co-working is interpreted as a specific “third place”, educational space, a new type of an efficient production facility as well as a new integral polyfunctional environment corresponding to the lifestyle of
modern digital nomads. Actively developing educational functions of co-working makes the latter an integral part of educational hubs, higher and secondary educational institutions and schools.

Introducing co-working centers in the structure of IRNITU expands the possibilities of its development as a contemporary university increasing its potential and significance in the city and regional life becoming a kind of a place gentrification. This makes IRNITU/ Campus a center attracting young, ambitious and creative people as well as serves for the development and creativity of adult and young people.

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