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**BREAKOUT! Transforms New York’s Open Spaces —
Breaking Out of the Office with Mobile Work
— An Experiment in “Coworking” in Public Spaces**

Will “coworking” be the wave of the future? Beginning on September 17, a team of experts including global workplace design consultancy DEGW takes the office to the sidewalks, streets and public spaces of New York City – and around the world – as part of the cutting-edge exhibition BREAKOUT! on how people work today, and in the future.

NEW YORK CITY, September 17, 2009 – Each weekday for four weeks starting in mid-September, the public spaces of New York City will be transformed into open-air offices where professionals of various stripes will collaborate on work projects under the watchful eye of a team of experts.

This unusual take on today’s evolving and expanding workplace is part of BREAKOUT!, a month-long festival and experiment on how creative, collaborative work is happening more than ever in our city streets, plazas and cafés. Using “coworking” as a model – and providing portable versions of essential office tools in urban public spaces – BREAKOUT! will explore new and productive ways for people to work together outside of traditional office buildings.



Wave of the future? “Coworkers” hunker down at a Barnes & Noble. (DEGW)

Social science experiment

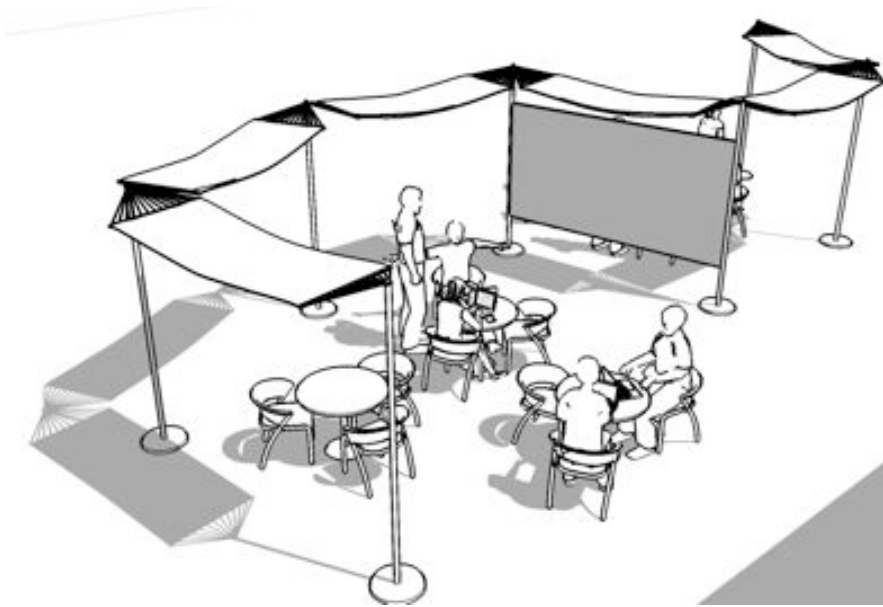
The BREAKOUT! team – made up of technologists, futurists, social scientists and strategic design consultants – will run this unique social-science experiment under a

grant from the Architectural League of New York. Open to businesses, freelancers and workers in general, each BREAKOUT! demonstration will accommodate anywhere from eight to 30 people engaging in a variety of work activities, from design projects to “speed networking” sessions. BREAKOUT! will introduce the concept of *coworking* – a new but pervasive global movement that encourages collaboration in informal work settings – to the public at large. The sessions themselves are part of both a community design process and academic research project where participants will be invited to plan future work meetings, test technology and tools, and contribute to the creation of products and shelters to support work in public spaces. The BREAKOUT! team will document and monitor the results of all these collaborative events.

BREAKOUT! is part of the exhibition and program called *Situated Technologies: Toward the Sentient City*, organized by the Architectural League of New York and curated by the artist/architect and researcher, Mark Shepard. The large-scale, cutting-

edge exhibition and symposium series explores the evolving relationship between technology, urban architecture and changing societal behavior.

As part of the program, the BREAKOUT! Festival comprises a series of events intended to demonstrate the



Conceptual rendering of an outdoor mobile office structure, created as part of the BREAKOUT! Festival. (DEGW)

mobility and flexibility that is now a part of daily work life for growing numbers of people. According to Georgia Borden, Associate Director of DEGW and a key member of the BREAKOUT! project team, “Today’s progressive corporations recognize the larger network of places where people work, and are being proactive about shifting their

corporate cultures accordingly. Smart companies are capitalizing on this social and economic phenomenon and using it to their advantage.”

Word about the events is spreading rapidly via social networks such as Twitter, blogs and other formats that reach an ever-expanding global coworking constituency.

Thinking outside the office box

There are many reasons that coworking is becoming more prevalent, says Borden. Utilization studies show that traditional office spaces sit empty and idle between 60% and 70% of the working day. Borden further explains that as the 21st century moves closer to a knowledge-based economy, conventional office space becomes obsolete.

“The whole idea of the workplace is rapidly being transformed by ongoing technological development,” explains Borden. “We have to shift our own understanding **DEGW** of work styles and practices to accommodate the changing society we live in.” To Borden and the BREAKOUT! creators, this means an “anywhere, anytime office” through the utilization of technology support in public spaces.

While predictions for a future “smart” city have been speculated upon for years, present access to affordable hardware and powerful software has made its existence feasible and imminent. New York City is joining progressive urban centers throughout the world by playing a pivotal role in defining and implementing the infrastructure for a sentient city. In a bold effort, The New York City Economic Development Corporation has teamed up with the Downtown Alliance to formally establish a public coworking site at 55 Broad Street. The opening of the facility is expected to follow BREAKOUT!, sometime in late 2009, proving that in New York City, the workplace of the future is virtually here, there and – in the next few years – everywhere. ###

BREAKOUT! is presented as part of the exhibition Toward the Sentient City and is made possible with support from the Architectural League of New York.

For more BREAKOUT! Festival information and schedules, see the following pages.

The BREAKOUT! Festival: Information and Schedule of Events

What it is: A live demonstration, experiment, and happening about new work trends. BREAKOUT! is part of the *Situated Technologies* exhibition for the New York Architectural League, and it includes an exhibition, a gallery talk, live demonstrations, virtual networking and public space experiments. BREAKOUT! also has an online presence – see www.breakoutfestival.org.

When it happens: Four weeks of live demos from September 17 through October 2009. Sessions take place in public spaces all around New York City. See www.breakoutfestival.org for detailed schedules and updates.

Exhibition Opening: The exhibition opens September 17th in The Urban Center at The Architectural League, 457 Madison Avenue (near 50th St.) in New York City, 6-9pm.

Gallery Talk: On September 25th, the BREAKOUT! Festival will be the subject of a panel discussion featuring leaders from DEGW, The Institute for the Future, and the Yale Information Society Project. The Urban Center at the Architectural League, 457 Madison Avenue (near 50th St.) in New York City, 6-9pm

Other special events:

Urballoon (Tompkins Square Park) – September 18th, 4-7pm

One Web Day, Bloggers/Tweeters Press Tent (Washington Square Park) – September 22nd, 12-2pm

The Future of Mobile Work (60 Wall Street Atrium) – September 24th, 12-2pm

Flash Mob Ethnography (location TBD) – September 28th, 10am – 2pm

Who's involved: BREAKOUT! is presented as part of the exhibition *Toward the Sentient City* and is made possible with support from the Architectural League of New York. Team members include:

Anthony Townsend

Anthony is Research Director in the Technology Horizons Program of the Institute for the Future, an independent research group based in Silicon Valley. He has authored over 20 journal articles and book chapters on the role of telecommunications in urban development and design.

Tony Bacigalupo

Tony is founder and "mayor" of New Work City, a community coworking space in Manhattan. He is co-author of "I'm Outta Here: How coworking is making the office obsolete," and co-organizer of BarCampNYC and TEDxNWC.

Who's
involved
(continued):

Georgia Borden

Georgia is a Director in the San Francisco office of DEGW, a strategic design consultancy. With a background in urban planning, she is very helpful to DEGW's clients use space more intensively. Her recent work centers on helping technology clients develop workplace solutions that reflect changes in work practices brought on by their products.

Laura Forlano

Laura received her Ph.D. in Communications from Columbia University, where she explored the intersection of organizations and technology and the role of place in communication, collaboration and innovation. She is Adjunct Faculty member in Design and Management at Parsons and in International Affairs and Media Studies at The New School.

Amanda Kross

Amanda is a consultant at DEGW, where she incorporates a background in interior design and spatial analysis to provide corporations with design solutions that improve productivity, reduce real estate, and enhance the work environment. She is interested in how the design of the built environment affects the people, organizations, and communities.

Elysse Preposi

Elysse is a senior at Sarah Lawrence College. Last semester, she studied abroad at NYU in London. She has studied anthropology, psychology and computer science, and previously worked at NYCIP, a non-profit that supports indie and small presses in the publishing community.

Sean Savage

Sean has ten years of experience in user research and experience design with a focus on digital design for physical spaces. He helped found PariSoMa, a coworking space in San Francisco, and invented PlaceSite, a location-based digital service that enhances offline social interaction in cafés and other workspaces.

Antonina Simeti

Antonina is a consultant at DEGW, where she applies urban economic and planning principles to corporate workplaces as well as learning environments. With a special interest in knowledge industries and the spaces in which innovation happens, Simeti brings experience in urban planning, public policy research, and environmental review to the work.

Dana Spiegel

Dana is a Software and Product Development Consultant and the President of sociableDESIGN, a company that helps start-ups create and refine their online software and services. He is also Executive Director of NYCwireless, a non-profit that creates free, public Wi-Fi hotspots in New York City.

The BREAKOUT! Festival: Detailed Background

THE BACK STORY: Cities are defined by the work we do in them. Historically, much of this work was done in public spaces and on the street. But in the late nineteenth century, industrialization drove a separation of places for living and places for working. Office towers, originally designed to support clerical work and data processing, dominate the skyline of the cities we know today.

But offices are becoming obsolete as we move towards a knowledge-based economy. Work is being transformed by new technologies and practices of mobility. Utilization studies show that traditional office spaces are idle between 60% and 70% of the working day. Yet while the office is on its way to becoming a kind of vestigial organ, new forms for organizing knowledge work are evolving. We may no longer need to co-locate in order to access shared tools and resources, but we still need to socialize, interact, and collaborate.

Coworking, where individuals come together to fund shared workspaces for collaboration, is growing rapidly in response to the isolation of heavily virtualized forms of work. But coworking is still embedded in the old way of thinking: that space needs to be fixed, dedicated, and permanent to support creative and collaborative work.

ABOUT THE BREAKOUT! FESTIVAL: The new festival, called *BREAKOUT!*, seeks to create a new architecture for the creative city by appropriating public spaces and providing the tools for the collaborative knowledge work that drives the city.

While collaborative knowledge work is the most productive activity of our society, it has not been truly reconceived from an architectural *tabula rasa*. After a century of separation, we seek to re-integrate public life and work life by challenging the centralization and isolation of office work that have imprisoned creative people.

The project consists of a new software platform to organize and track festival activities, and a mobile office kit with tools to support collaboration in public locations around New York City. For four weeks, these public sessions will accommodate many kinds of activities, inspiring alternative scenarios for work and becoming landmarks to attract future, similar collaborations.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY: Much of the technology for BREAKOUT! will be provided by participants themselves. The festival organizers anticipate providing “critical infrastructure” that will connect individuals and locations together, and provide basic amenities to support the kinds of collaborative, creative work that the festival hopes to encourage.

- **Social network.** BREAKOUT! will host a social network website on the NYCwireless web server that will structure interactions for coworkers involved with the festival. This social network will serve several functions, including locating and registering the users’ geographic locations, and providing tools to allow people to rendezvous in a highly dynamic fashion (e.g., Dodgeball.com).
- **Mobile office kit.** Each of the events for BREAKOUT! will use a mobile “kit of parts” including functional and symbolic objects (from whiteboards to mobile Internet bridges).

About DEGW

DEGW is a world-leading strategic design consultancy with offices in Europe, the Americas, and Asia Pacific. DEGW’s international, award-winning practice is based on unrivalled user research, extensive experience in strategic design consulting and systematic evaluation of performance. DEGW focuses on the changing nature of working and learning at the scale of the workplace to the city. They apply the latest research about how organisations and technologies are changing to enable their clients to manage the resources of space and time with unprecedented effectiveness, enhance organisational performance and develop solutions that are flexible over time. In July 2009, DEGW merged with global construction consultancy Davis Langdon.