

would typically arrange their desks against the wall so that any incoming student would automatically be on the same side of the desk as them. Through this they expressed their wish to remain on the student's side, as it were – a sentiment that many students no doubt appreciate, at least until the first set of examination results demonstrates the uncrossable divide that ultimately separates them whatever they may wish! At the other end of the scale, the more senior professors and heads of department tended to make barriers of their desks. Of course they more often bear the responsibility of conducting discussions that include some element of reprimand, whether it be to the poorly attending student, the outright plagiaristic student or even the member of staff not performing as well as might be expected! Readers may well be wondering how the author organizes his office, and so it is only fair to tell. In fact I am lucky enough to have the space for two desks and a table. One desk is against the wall and has my computer on it, and this is where I might work with a research student. Another desk is a barrier, and here I might perform less pleasant, perhaps even disciplinary, duties occasionally. Finally, the table is circular and here I can sit to discuss with one or more colleagues. Our building does however have standard rooms for more junior lecturers, which although quite large enough for the occupant alone are just too narrow to allow a desk to be placed so that the visitor can come into a collaborating or confronting position. This inevitably irritates many members of staff, and quite rightly, although many of them find this hard to articulate. As a basic tool of trade to set the scene for professional interactions, these offices are very poorly designed indeed. Furniture in the form of fixed or semi-fixed and freely movable items offers essential features of the language of space. What we have seen here then is that the arrangement of such items in space is not a matter of formal composition for most people; rather it structures the behavioural settings they wish to engineer so that they can play out the roles chosen for them in relation to others. We have also seen that sometimes both the amount and shape of space can either enable or restrict the occupant's ability to create the behavioural settings needed for the job.

'Front of house', 'back of house'

Joiner's work provides an example of an important architectural embellishment of normal interpersonal distance. All the government officers and most of the commercial managers in his sample used their desks to defend what we might refer to here as a 'back of house' zone. The area in front of their desks into which a visitor might be invited we might think of as the 'front of house' zone. In many occupations people find themselves sharing part of their accommodation with visitors. These visitors may often be complete strangers (as is probably the case with tax inspectors), they may be remotely known (as when a