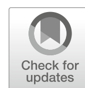
Transformative Changes and Developments of the Coworking Model: A Narrative Review



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Abstract Modern times have seen an emergence of new type of office spaces. Coworking spaces are commonly viewed as hybridised workspaces that are not solely perceived as optimal places to work, but as a source of social support for independent professionals and as physical entities that sprung the creation of collaborative communities. These spaces facilitate interactional effects with the use of mediation mechanisms and through serendipitous encounters with individuals from outside of one's own social circle. By co-constructing a sense of community, these environments have reshuffled the flexible work practice and are significantly impacting the lives of flexible workers across the globe. The chapter presents a narrative review of available resources framing historical development of the flexible workspaces and their evolvement into the contemporary coworking environments. The chapter also highlights the role of collaborative workspaces in the modern economy and it proposes challenges for future research.

Keywords Coworking · Workspace transformation · Collaborative office · Flexible workspaces · Sustainability · Work individualisation

1 Introduction

In the first days of May 2019, CNN published an article describing how WeWork, a multi-billion American company that provides shared workspaces, had morphed into the world's largest physical network of flexible office space users. Due to its fast growth and rapid expansion, the company is not just known for the development of flexible office spaces but also, its leadership in how individuals adapt modern working lifestyles (O'Brien, 2019). Trademarking motivational phrases such as

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"Thank God it's Monday" and constructing co-living condos and developing educational facilities, WeWork pivoted from the community-oriented office provider to the global trendsetter of societal changes. It is an indicator of the growing demand for all-inclusive ecosystems that not only affected how people work, but how they live their lives.

Indeed, societal changes and technological advancements now individualise the world of work (McGuigan, 2010; Taylor & Luckman, 2018) and digitalise the modern society (Grantham & Tsekouras, 2004; Valenduc & Vendramin, 2017; van Meel & Vos, 2001). Highly specialised workers tend to be location-independent and work on a flexible basis, frequently changing the location of their work (Baitenizov, Dubina, Campbell, Carayannis, & Azatbek, 2019; Bögenhold & Klinglmair, 2016; Burke, 2015; Kitching & Smallbone, 2012; Spinuzzi, 2012). While flexible work arrangements such as increased feeling of personal control over schedule and work environment are associated with a handful of positive aspects (Kelly & Moen, 2007; Richman, Civian, Shannon, Jeffrey Hill, & Brennan, 2008; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), there are also negative ones that may place significant impact on worker's life. Alienation (Camps & Luna-Arocas, 2009; Sarros, Tanewski, Winter, Santora, & Densten, 2002; Vickers & Parris, 2007), blurring the work-life balance (Desrochers, Hilton, & Larwood, 2005; Fleetwood, 2007; Moen, 2011; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001) and deterioration of social life (Deranty, 2008; Pedersen & Lewis, 2012) are commonly identified as some of the more notable downsides of work individualisation.

With the increase of ranks in the amount of flexible and independent workers, a new type of office spaces started to emerge (Babb, Curtis, & McLeod, 2018). Addressed nowadays as coworking spaces, these modern hybrid workspaces (Marchegiani & Arcese, 2018) are not solely perceived as optimal places to work, but as a source of social support for independent professionals (Gerdenitsch, Scheel, Andorfer, & Korunka, 2016) and as physical entities that sprung the creation of collaborative communities (Rus & Orel, 2015). Coworking spaces facilitate interactional effects (Brown, 2017) through serendipitous encounters with people from outside of one's own organisation, team, and social circle (Spreitzer, Garrett, & Bacevice, 2015). Within these environments, the interaction between groups of individuals is carried out according to predetermined and foreseeable patterns (Orel & Kubátová, 2019). Living spaces within these coworking places promote community processes through loosely structured and predominantly informal interactions (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte & Isaac, 2016). By co-constructing a sense of community at work (Garrett, Spreitzer, & Bacevice, 2017), these environments have reshuffled the flexible work practice (De Peuter, Cohen, & Saraco, 2017) and are significantly impacting the lives of flexible workers across the globe (Bouncken, Laudien, Fredrich, & Görmar, 2018; Butcher, 2018; Kubátová, 2014).

Entis (2019) recently addressed these societal changes and the role of flexible work environments in tackling the collective social void of feeling adrift in which a lack of a sense of community between modern knowledge workers has emerged as *"the big business of loneliness"*. There are more and more flexible workspaces and hybrid ecosystems that are selling human connections and shaping modern workers' lives (Gandini, 2016; Matsushita, 2016). It would be, however, false to conclude that

flexible office spaces environments have only recently become the ecosystems that are integrating and interlacing various spheres of an individual's life. Evidently, the evolution of flexible office environments can be earmarked to the nineteenth century due to work automation, but only at the turn of the twentieth century did the working population begin to significantly migrate from industrial environments to the administratively-centred office spaces which in turn affected their social lives (David, 2015; Giuliano, 1982; Manyika et al., 2017). The interpersonal interaction and collaborative involvement in working processes gained significance throughout the last century. A review looking into the transition to an open office environment, and its interaction mechanisms are important to create a better understanding of modern working spaces in the twenty-first century (Klein, DeRouin, & Salas, 2006).

By 2019, an increasing amount of academic research had been conducted on the various aspects of coworking and similar types of flexible office spaces (Bianchi, Casnici, & Squazzoni, 2018; Brown, 2017; De Peuter et al., 2017; Garrett et al., 2017; Gerdenitsch et al., 2016; Han, 2013; Lumley, 2014; Ross & Ressia, 2015; Rus & Orel, 2015; Spinuzzi, 2012; Surman, 2013; Waters-Lynch & Potts, 2017; Winkler, Saltzman, & Yang, 2018). However, by this date, the historical development of coworking model is still unresearched, and has yet to be discussed namely from the perspective of its influence on societal and transformative changes in modern societies.

Therefore, there is a demanding, and critical approach that should be taken toward the creation of a comprehensive overview of the development of coworking spaces. A mere descriptive overview of the development of coworking spaces would be insufficient, as several forms of collaborative workspaces appeared in history—especially towards the end of the twentieth and in the first decade of the twenty-first century—requiring appropriate classification and consequently a distinction with a modern understanding of the model.

This narrative review of the literature analyses the available sources that frame historical development of the flexible workspaces and their evolvement into the contemporary coworking environments. The chapter aims to provide structured overview of the topic for both, research community, stakeholders and professionals interested in coworking, and collaborative workspaces. The chapter also offers several directions for future research.

2 Towards Collaborative Use of Workspace

2.1 Human Need for Community

Formica (2016) argued that communities similar to the coworking spaces of today existed in Renaissance era Florence in the form of early homogenous communities that had specific patterns of work processes and interpersonal relations. There, painters, sculptors, and other artists worked together in transdisciplinary workshops called *Bottegas* (Ceccarelli, 2008). Within these spaces, individuals under the mentorship of older and more experienced artists co-created an organisational culture

based on the shared values of cooperation and knowledge exchange. The Systematisation of these exchanges formed the hub of innovations and organisational networks in a real physical environment (Canale, Durante, Paci, & Scarpa, 2018). The key result of the development and operation of these spaces was the design of the Renaissance approach towards understanding and solving the various problems that individuals faced. These environments became a safe place for an elaborated development process for creative communities (Munigala, Oinonen, & Ekman, 2018).

Five centuries later, in the nineteenth century, similar collaborative work environments developed in Paris, France. Within the framework of the *La Ruche* building, French and foreign artists resided in common spaces (Timm-Bottos & Reilly, 2015). At the same time, similar work environments were found in local cafés such as *Le Café de Flore* and *Les Deux Magots* in the Paris Saint-Germain-des-Prés district and the *Cabaret Voltaire Zurich* in Switzerland (Moriset, 2014). The latter primarily functioned as a café or social junction for meetings but also offered a meeting point to writers and other creators. These spaces connected these creatives and helped them to develop new styles and expressions of art. On a related note, *The Writers Room* existing in 1970s New York was a similar environment, which, unlike the aforementioned café-styled environment, explicitly defined as a space intended for writers and their co-operation (Jones, Sundsted, & Bacigalupo, 2009). In the case of these cafés, their primary domain was the articulation of homogeneous communities created within the framework of established organisational cultures based on the principles of cooperation and equality between individuals. While their primary function was to offer physical spaces, a preponderance of evidence pointing toward the existence of mechanisms accelerating the interaction between workspace users was not found. At that point in time, neither the moderated nor spontaneous mechanisms typically used to promote the development of interpersonal relations existed.

Given the advancement of the computer as a working tool and the web as a medium of transmission and direct access to content and information in the last two decades of the twentieth century, individual cafés began to respectively upgrade their infrastructure. In doing so, they became more appealing for individuals who were working off-site and needed a computer with a steady internet connection (Salvador, Sherry, & Urrutia, 2005). To this effect, the Seoul, Korea-based *Electronic Café* which opened in 1988 was the first modern cyber-café fulfilling these requirements. Conversely, its first western counterpart was found in *The SFnet Coffeehouse Network* in San Francisco, California which opened its doors in 1991 (Liff & Lægran, 2003).

These early internet cafés featured stationary computers with access to the world wide web even before the popularisation of portable computers. In the context of descriptive analysis, these places can be understood as temporary working environments with pay-as-you-go access to the computer and the web, and simultaneously also as unconnected junctions of individuals who could work remotely (Broughton, Higgins, Hicks, & Cox, 2010; Salvador et al., 2005). The breakthrough technological advances of the late 1990s and the early twenty-first century that enabled the development of portable computers made internet cafes obsolete (Kellerman, 2009).

Today, internet cafés are still strongly present in less developed countries even though they are almost non-existent in the west (Li, Zhang, Lu, Zhang, & Wang, 2014). Throughout their existence, internet or cyber cafés have been often seen as meeting points for community and neighbourhood (Stewart, 2000), and as social and intellectual spaces (Dewey, 2008).

The portability of electronic devices kickstarted the development of the new office space model. In 1989, the first hot-desk location by the name of *Regus* was established in Belgium and allowed mobile individuals to share work and conference facilities. Soon after, they also provided accommodation capacity which conceptually grouped into their business centres (Virginia & Colin, 2001). The spaces under the *Regus* brand name have focused on servicing individuals by providing them a flexible office space for a limited duration of time without the facilitation of networking possibilities which could be borne of relationships and connections between users. Collaborative actions were limited, but there were no implications that this office model established under *Regus* has interfered with individuals' lives and their well-being. Instead, the establishment of serviced office environments has accelerated the development of office intensification strategies with hot-desking and non-territorial workspace seeing a quick popularization amongst teleworkers (Dent & White, 1998; Lizieri, 2003; Sullivan, 2017).

In parallel with the social movements and relevant technological development, the need for specialised spaces with the established organisational culture arose (Fox, Ulgado, & Rosner, 2015; Smith, Fressoli, Abrol, Arond, & Ely, 2016). Moving into the last part of the twentieth century, an emergence of new collaborative spaces and their consequent geographic concentration primarily led to the development of creative centres as hubs of social innovation (Toivonen, 2016). The first space which could be considered the precursor to the modern coworking space, opened in Berlin, Germany in 1995 as the *C-Base* (Lindtner, Hertz, & Dourish, 2014). Hosting predominantly a homogeneous community of individuals working within the field of digital or analogue technologies, the *C-Base* space—still in operation today—can be classified as a hackerspace. It serves as a model of a space where the community puts the collective achievement of the defined goals which can either be a profitable one, or a non-profitable one, in the foreground (Niaros, Kostakis, & Drechsler, 2017). Even though the *C-Base* appears in the literature as the world's first modern hackerspace, some authors, as its predecessor, mention a smaller community in Michigan, USA which began experimenting with new technologies at the *Grand Valley State University* in 1994 (Dousay, 2017).

However, it appears that hacker spaces are generally orientated towards a niche community that is based on a user-led innovation (Capdevila, 2014) and associated with new technologies (Allen & Potts, 2016). As a supportive environment it could be loosely linked to before mentioned *Bottegas*, but cannot be confused with contemporary workspaces that host heterogeneous group of workers and other individuals. One of the first shared work environments that has been perceived as a focal point model of coordination by individuals with various and diverse backgrounds (Waters-Lynch & Potts, 2017) has been Vienna based *Schraubenfabrik* that opened its doors in 2002 (Brübach-Schlickum, 2016). *Schraubenfabrik* did not

self-identify as a collaborative workspace but as a community centre for entrepreneurs or, as the centre for the development of an entrepreneurial community (Hartmann, 2016). It has taken the further development of societal changes to spring the creation and establishment of the first coworking spaces.

Until 2005, collaborative office environments have been commonly linked to on-demand infrastructure that enables office hoteling, a flexible and virtual use of selected workspace (Becker, 1999; Davenport & Pearlson, 1998; Leigh, 1996). Interestingly, even before the period of rapid popularization, these workspaces have been sometimes envisioned as places that are accommodating the new economy (Harrison, 2002). But as several authors pointed out towards hospitality and openness of these spaces, collaborative use has been somewhat pushed aside until the term of "coworking" has been coined. Not only increased demand towards these shared workspaces, but new societal changes have sprung the development of new type of office spaces that have pushed knowledge exchange (Parrino, 2015) and social learning (Bilandzic & Foth, 2013) to the new extent. By co-constructing a sense of community at work (Garrett et al., 2017; Rus & Orel, 2015) and curating the "third place" (Brown, 2017), new workspaces with integrated social spaces have co-created a phenomenon of the sharing economy (Bouncken & Reuschl, 2018).

3 The Development of the Coworking Model

3.1 From Co-workplace and Co-working to Coworking

While the phenomenon of coworking is becoming increasingly explored, the terminology around remains largely unexplored. In 1999, the American computer software developer Bernard De Koven first proposed the term "coworking". To this regard, De Koven gave a terminological description as the method of participation by individuals who interact with one another without strictly defined or hierarchically-arranged relationships and on the principles of collaboration (Brown, 2017). As part of his development of computer games and programs in collaboration with other developers who either worked independently or joined the team, De Koven saw the link between face-to-face communication and working with online tools. As the development of deeper mutual relationships is essential, individuals require a real, physical environment and tended to work together as equals (Curaoğlu & Demirbaş, 2017). In the following years, the word "coworking" had been used several times but in different contexts. Until referencing the discussed model directly, the term coworking was used to illustrate the sharing of resources between individuals who are connected into the same organisational network. The usage of a dedicated working environment by individual workers has sometimes been referred as "co-workplace", while the lack of a temporary shared working environment can be termed as "office lessness" (Alizadeh, 2012; Goelman, 2004; Han & Kim, 2014; Johnson, 2003; Sellen & Harper, 2003).

At this point in discussion, the commonly incorrect use of the word “coworking” both in popular texts and in academic debates should be noted. In the initial years of development and elaboration of the coworking model, incorrect terminological use was quite a common occurance. The word “coworking” had been commonly replaced with the word “co-working” which represents a misconception and a departure from the understanding of the model. Instead, the term “co-working” actually denotes the cooperation between individuals who are interconnected with relations within a given organisation and where the individuals are placed in the role of co-workers. The term “coworking” refers to the cooperation and the sharing of the workspace between individuals working independently given mutual relationships formed on the basis of either spontaneous or moderated processes within a temporary-set or a permanent collaborative workspace. In May 2018, the *Associated Press Stylebook* removed the hyphenated version of the term, clearing the often confusing and excessive use of both academic and industry terminology in this field (Meunier, 2018).

In this regard, the first environment characterised as a modern coworking space and manifesting itself as such was inaugurated in August 2005 by Brad Neuberg in San Francisco taking the geographic name *The Spiral Muse* (Andrade, de Rezende Pinto, de Almeida, & Mesquita, 2017; Cabral & Winden, 2016; Spinuzzi, 2015). In the same year, *The Hub* in London, United Kingdom expanded into the global network of *The Impact Hub*, a franchised group of coworking spaces (Waters-Lynch & Potts, 2017). In some accounts of academic research, some state that the first modern coworking space as *The Hat Factory* which opened its doors in 2006 in San Francisco (Shepard, 2018). While Neuberg was also actively involved in the establishment of the latter, *The Hat Factory* opened as a second coworking space directly replacing *The Spiral Muse* but due to financial difficulties, had closed its doors after one year of operation (Merkel, 2015).

Neuberg was recognized as the first individual to link the word “coworking” with the flexible working space and its collaborative use (Capdevila, 2015; Garrett et al., 2017; Johri & Teo, 2018; Josef & Back, 2018; Rus & Orel, 2015; Spinuzzi, 2012). However, there is an unexplored correlation of the term coined previously by De Koven in 1999 and of the term that Neuberg coined in (2005). Neuberg claims that there was no connection between them and that the term he co-authored independently as the most appropriate word describing the conceptual starting point of *The Spiral Muse*. Furthermore, he adds that De Koven’s wording has no connection with the then-emerging trend of opening co-operative spaces, but that it merely describes the method of participation of individuals who interact with one another (Neuberg, 2015).

3.2 The Rise of Temporary Workspace Design

While the first coworking spaces picked up the pace to reach active momentum and broader recognition, it was the movement of individuals who popularised coworking

as a model of flexible workspace use (Putra & Agirachman, 2016). In the beginning of 2006, two self-employed Americans and roommates from New York City organised the first one-off gathering of independent workers and named it as a *Jelly* event. The purpose of *Jelly* was to open the doors of their apartment to both acquaintances and strangers who, due to the independent nature of their work from home, were subject to isolation and alienation. The same year *Solos Working Alone Together (SWAT)* began to organise similar events in Chicago with the aim of connecting individuals once or twice a week in one of the pre-selected cafés (Jones et al., 2009). The attraction of both *SWAT* and *Jelly* events was that they were based on the principle of sharing economies based on the sharing of human and material resources amongst individuals (Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014; John, 2013; Taeihagh, 2017).

Due to the unpretentious organisation and promotion through online tools, these collaborative meet-ups gained access to individual stakeholders, and quickly expanded from the US cities first to Europe and then later to other continents (De Guzman & Tang, 2011). The following waypoints have been recognized as necessary to organize a Jelly-style event and widely adopted amongst individuals or organization who hosted open-office gatherings: (a) free access to the world wide web; (b) a central, easily accessible and free location for the meeting; (c) a space with one or more smaller tables serving as a working area; (d) a sufficient number of electric outlets; (e) access to foods in the form of hot and cold drinks, or the possibility for the users to bring the desired food and drinks with them (Heminsley, 2011). The popularisation of these events can be positively linked with the demand for establishing temporary workspaces and collaborative premises. This can be indicated with the organisation of first *European Jelly Week* in 2011, where 48 hosts throughout 14 European countries opened their physical premises for collaborative use (Roolf, 2011). In 2012, the first *Worldwide Jelly Week* was organised, hosted by 223 hosts in 35 countries around the world (Drew, 2013).

The Jelly-style events can be perceived as an indicator of several societal changes that pointed towards reshaping the knowledge work and the rise of work flexibility. First, the organisation of temporary coworking spaces at various locations and the frequency of attendance and visits showed by independent workers the need to create new permanent premises in different European cities. Second, an interest to empower independently-operating individuals and smaller teams were identified. Last but not least, the developments of a form of digital and creative tourism which would enable independent workers to facilitate the transition (and work) between different existing collaborative spaces were evident (Bouncken, 2018; Jakonen, Kivinen, Salovaara, & Hirkman, 2017; Jones et al., 2009; Orel, 2015; Putra & Agirachman, 2016).

The organisation of either an individual Jelly-style event or that of several interconnected events carried out in series was essential for the further development, and above all, an articulation of the coworking model. These events can be hosted by a person, an existing community or organisation with minimum requirements, making the event feasible and, thanks to its non-profit orientation, easily accessible for a broader range of users. Moreover, the number of visits to the temporarily

established collaborative space indicated the need for the establishment of a permanent collaborative workspace (Salovaara, 2015). This represents a predisposition and a starting point for the further development of a shared workspace via a bottom-up approach (Rus & Orel, 2015). Moreover, Jelly-style events represented a real-time promotional platform for individuals or groups, as they could use temporary workspace to establish, and in particular, to strengthen their anticipated relationships with other participants, and incidentally solidifying the level of trust previously already established by digital social networks and similar online tools (Cashman, 2012). Finally, these Jelly-style events were the equivalent of existing peer-to-peer facilities allowing the transfer of knowledge about co-operation as a method of work, which in itself significantly contributed to the spaces' popularization and further development (Heminsley, 2013).

In the first years of its popularisation, Jelly-style events could be understood as a movement toward the creation of heterogeneous communities based on the principles of cooperation and sharing of premises. These collaborative environments were defined as individual accommodation units or dwellings whose tenants can be seen as a smaller community of interconnected individuals which occasionally, and, in exchange for a small fee or some other form of compensation, share the workspace (Putra & Agirachman, 2016; Salovaara, 2015). In the parallel of these events and temporary workspaces, the early coworking model grew primarily based on the common interests of individuals who strove toward the creation of collaboration-based workspaces. The first permanent coworking spaces and their temporary counterparts in the form of *Jelly* events indicated solidarity before the monetisation of related and similar services. In 2008, the US-based workspace *Office Space* established the so-called *Coworking Visa* with its partners to allow the non-payable access of one of the several coworking spaces included in the exchange program. The establishment of this visa helped moderate the process of a user's work flexibility of a particular collaborative space, allowing them to pass between spaces embedded in the program freely and thus interlacing supportive networks (Pohler, 2012; Schuermann, 2014).

3.3 Understanding Increased Popularization

In actuality, the early coworking model was shaped by the communities and by the participation of independently-operating individuals based on the principles of the sharing economy (Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2016). In particular, the genesis of the collaborative space in this context deviated from other spatially similar ways of organising. Due to its informal and reciprocal organisational culture orientation and the emphasis of cooperation practices similar to those of cooperatives, these spaces are also fundamentally different from (Cabral & Winden, 2016; Iulia Constantinescu & Devisch, 2018). Based on this, we can identify the development of coworking model between 2005 and 2010 as period of genesis for coworking spaces. It was

followed by periods of popularisation between 2010 and 2014 and the further hybridisation of the model began in 2014 as an ongoing process.

The first phase of the coworking model development was characterised by a high level of user solidarity from within the co-operative communities, mainly reflected in the mutual assistance and reciprocity demonstrated between users, and the advance (micro) financing of coworking spaces. As noted in the introduction of our discussion, the first collaborative work environments were established in response to the needs of independently working individuals. The solidarity of which was reflected both by providers and users of these places. An example of solidarity is the development of temporary coworking spaces or Jelly-style events, where the organisers of the latter opened the doors of their homes to individuals for one day, thereby blurring the boundary between the work and the home environment. Another well-known example of solidarity is the prepayment of user charges and the creation of space by the method of bootstrapping (*Indy Hall*, Philadelphia) or the accrual of financial support through the leveraging of crowdfunding (*New Work City*, New York).

The leap between the periods of development of the coworking model was marked by two milestones. The first milestone was the reopening of a New York-based coworking space, *New Work City* launched in 2010 with financial resources collected by its users through a crowdfunding campaign. *New Work City* users rebooted a prepayment scheme in the form of a prepaid monthly usage fee and by this they showed their strong identification with space and its agenda (De Guzman & Tang, 2011). The second milestone indicating a leap between two periods and the beginning of the coworking model's broader popularisation was the organisation of the first *Coworking Day* in 2010. This served as the commemoration of the first open modern coworking space *The Spiral Muse*. This *Coworking Day* can be seen as an informally structured international event focused primarily on the promotion of sharing space and the connecting of individuals to the established coworking community within either permanent or temporary coworking spaces globally. Coworking spaces involved in *Coworking day* opened their doors to potential future users as well to the general public for a period of one day each year, and organized events that were in one way or another related to the promotion of sharing (Amador, 2017).

The period of popularisation of the coworking model between 2010 and 2014 was marked by the rapid growth in the number of newly created coworking spaces and the consequent increase in user base. The second half of 2010 brought the estimated number of existing coworking spaces in the world to 600. In 2012, this number grew by 350% to 2072, and then by 215% to 4500 coworking spaces in 2014. By 2015, the number of open coworking spaces was estimated at 7800, which means a further 175% growth (Foertsch, 2016). By the end of 2019, there will presumably be about 21,000 coworking spaces worldwide (Huang, 2019). Given the growth trend and the consideration of other key factors such as (a) fast technological development and the resulting digitization of work; (b) changes in organizations' employment structures; (c) the fluidity of work and the fluctuation of mainly smaller teams; (d) future growth projections of both coworking premises and (e) users are necessary for the needs of further analysis of the model.

The exponential increase in the number of coworking spaces has led to new trends in the model's development. To start, the coworking model became interesting for corporate use (Arora, 2017; Sargent, Cooper, Mellwig, & McDonald, 2018; Spreitzer et al., 2015). This was first indicated by the opening of the *TechHub*, a coworking space opened in 2011 within the *Google Campus* in London, United Kingdom that later branched out to other spaces within five European cities. A similar example can be seen in the already mentioned *WeWork*, the world's fastest growing network of coworking and flexible office spaces with the anticipated growth of opening three to five new locations monthly. The amount of investment capital in this field accelerated and enabled the comprehensive expansion of coworking premises connected into one of the networks. In the case of the *TechHub* franchise, its members can freely move between its franchised spaces. Similarly, *WeWork* persuades members to travel between their coworking spaces (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte & Isaac, 2016). In both cases, the concept of digital tourism is promoted to attract digital nomads or travelling knowledge workers who accelerate the flow of knowledge during their movement between places. The mantra of digital nomadism also encourages individuals to get involved in smaller networks by moving between coworking spaces, thus accelerating the flow of knowledge, increasing the level of mutual participation and affecting faster capital flow (Müller, 2016).

3.4 Evolving Trends of the Coworking Model

While fresh capital from investment funds has allowed rapid and exponential growth, and consequently, the acceleration of new coworking spaces being opened, certain positive and negative aspects of swift growth still need to be highlighted. First, the early coworking spaces, both temporary and permanent, were autonomously and commonly bottom-up formed entities, most often co-created and co-financed by their (future) users, resulting in the creation of an organizational culture within a particular space and norms and values mostly based on sharing, co-creation, and collaboration (Spinuzzi, 2015). The pre-financing and integration of potential hegemonic structures instils specific agenda and the particular interests of more substantial stakeholders to directly influence not only the establishment of physical space, thereby circumventing the process of co-creation, but also the establishment of a set of defined acceptance norms (that is, who can use a single space or the preference of the target groups), values (monetization of services before the concept of sharing), and the culture itself.

The briskly growing network of coworking spaces, such as the *WeWork* franchise, can, because of its financial background, open a large number of its branches in a relatively small area or city, and consequently, due to the gap between supply and demand, affect the local coworking space market. The fast growth and concentration of coworking spaces in a particular area and the popularisation of their use indirectly affects the real estate market and socioeconomic changes in that environment while increasing the speed at which gentrification happens (Merkel, 2015). The

example of opening new coworking spaces within the *WeWork* franchise in downtrodden and underdeveloped areas of New York suggest a resulting gradual increase in the rental price of both the surrounding business premises and housing units (Babb et al., 2018; Brown, 2017). Consequently, we notice that from 2014 onwards capital investment has increasingly turned to the coworking model as a model for establishing or filling up real-estate capacities (Wright, 2018). From this point of view, in the future, a discussion regarding the influence of coworking environments opened in downtrodden neighbourhoods and its consequent gentrification effect will undoubtedly take place.

The lively popularisation of coworking model in recent years has led away from the heterogeneity of the user community. Consequently, this has resulted in an increasingly dedicated specialisation of premises to address potential customers or users who require a specific and defined working environment (Marchegiani & Arcese, 2018). Nowadays, coworking spaces often strive to optimise the conditions for the formation and the operation of homogeneous coworking communities and adapt to the diversification of the coworking industry. There are specialised coworking spaces for individuals working in the field of culinary arts (Raphael, 2017), for musicians (Di Risio, 2018) and working parents (van Blokland, 2018). Moreover, general coworking spaces are expanding their scope of services in order to increase their competitiveness and positioning on local markets. In addition to office spaces with fixed and flexible work spots, they commonly offer café infrastructure, child care, recreational areas and accommodation units (Halvitigala, Antoniades, & Eves, 2018; Merkel, 2015; Racek, 2015).

This points towards the intensified hybridisation of the model as coworking spaces strive toward recreating habitat that can be referred to as a fourth living place in addition to being a collaborative workspace (Morisson, 2018). We may assume that hybridised coworking spaces will increasingly focus on the localisation of all desired and operational services in one place in order to cover the living, working and social segments of the individual in a comprehensive manner.

4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has comprehensively analysed existing literature and showed that flexible office spaces are rapidly developing and hybridising. Fast growth and development of these places have been commonly connected with socioeconomic changes of the particular period. With the twenty-first century economy being increasingly knowledge and innovation based, and increasingly thriving in dense urban centres the flexible workplaces are seeing past paced transformative changes. From early *Bottegas*, flexible workplaces have morphed first into niche community centres and later on evolved into coworking spaces that are keen to become a part of collaborative work culture.

It appears that there have been significant changes in how knowledge workers interact and collaborate. As explored throughout the chapter, coworking spaces

promote more significant innovation and efficiency, allowing the best people for a particular project to come together quickly and affordably with lowering the number of obstructions that would limit the diversity of perspectives and backgrounds of a collaborative community. Shift towards collaborative action orientated workspaces can thus be seen as places that are collectively tackling social void brought upon by new technologies and societal changes. Promoting collective processes through loosely structured and predominantly informal interactions leads towards the co-construction community of work that collectively tackled the challenges and pitfalls of flexible work practice. Moreover, collaborative communities are significantly impacting the lives of flexible workers and enabling them to progress not only with their careers but also raise the quality of their lives.

As coworking spaces are shared by individuals who generally do not work for the same organisation, they tend to break social barriers and interlace individuals in supportive networks. This does not results solely in increased innovation, work efficiency and collaboration, but also causes that involved individuals benefit from received emotional support (Gerdenitsch et al., 2016), reduced alienation and isolation (De Peuter et al., 2017), improved work-life balance (Gandini, 2016), and increased productivity leading to new product and project opportunities (Cabral & Winden, 2016). The vast arrange of positive benefits seem to affect the growing number of coworking spaces around the world, and it does not appear that this trend will slow down within the next couple of years.

Although the phenomenon of the coworking model is receiving increased attention both within the workspace industry, academia and the general public, there are still many fields that will require more attention. The revision of available resources showed that the coworking model is continuing its hybridisation with new types of both independent and franchise spaces emerging and opening their doors. Authors thus propose more focused studies on community development trends within these workplaces and their role in the modern economies.

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