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The Flexible Workplace

Coworking and Other Modern Workplace Transformations

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Preface

> I naïvely thought that I would post on Craigslist and I would have a flood of people at the space. In fact no one came for the first month and I would go and set up the folding card tables on Mondays and Tuesdays at the space patiently waiting for people but no one came. I realized then that I had to do more outreach and I started handing out flyers and cards and going to coffee shops and talking to people about the idea. Slowly a trickle of more and more people came into the space.
>
> – Brad Neuberg (2005) on first coworking space

Three years before the global economic crisis of 2008, San Francisco-based software developer Brad Neuberg had found himself dissatisfied with his professional life and daily work routine. While enjoying his independence, he frequently felt isolated due to the seclusion associated with working from a home office. According to Neuberg, he felt the urge to establish a physical space that would offer like-minded individuals the opportunity to share a workspace, establish a sense of community and exchange resources such as knowledge and expertise. In 2005, Neuberg (n.d.) decided to proceed with the idea of establishing a physical location to serve as a shared workspace, and began renting a spare space for 2 days each week. The first location had been established within the Spiral Muse, a feminist collective in San Francisco, where he set up a handful of foldable tables and kicked off his debut shared work session. The first pop-up coworking space has been born.

During the first few years, the coworking movement progressed and developed at a relatively slow pace. The first wave brought a handful of temporary coworking settings, such as Jelly or SWAT meet-ups, where individuals gathered in a preselected coffee shop, library or apartment and worked alongside each other (Orel and Dvouletý 2020). In the early days of this movement, permanent coworking premises were rare and manifested in the form of collaborative environments such as hackerspaces, maker labs and other flexible arrangements that served as a focal point of local communities with similar values, (work) habits and beliefs. However, the recession which followed the economic crisis of 2008 and 2009 shifted the labour markets and accelerated the development of irregular forms of work (Haškova and Dudova 2017; Alberti et al. 2018; Kalleberg 2019; Petriglieri et al. 2019). Many knowledge workers found themselves self-employed and working on a gig basis

behind the walls of their homes (Friedman 2014). Work-life balances were shattered (Emslie and Hunt 2009; Smith 2010; Orel 2019), with feelings of isolation (Johri and Teo 2018), limited access to networks and disrupted rates of productivity (Tietze and Musson 2010; Kojo and Nenonen 2015) becoming the "new normal".

As a result of these changes, the demand for coworking spaces skyrocketed. In 2009, there were reportedly about 310 such spaces worldwide. Thereafter, the number nearly doubled annually. The latest report shows that there were about 26,300 coworking spaces at the beginning of 2020 (Mazareanu 2020). Coworking environments were initially seen as phenomena of digital transformation (Clifton et al. 2019) and of the sharing economy (Bouncken and Reuschl 2018). This view was understandable, given the role of these workspaces as a source of social support (Gerdenitsch et al. 2016) and as a catalyst for coordination among independent professionals (Waters-Lynch and Potts 2017). Coworking facilities were considered to be places where economic diversity could be articulated (Vidaillet and Bousalham 2020) and where a sense of community at work could be co-constructed (Garrett et al. 2017) by individuals *working alone together* (Spinuzzi 2012), establishing knowledge exchange processes (Bouncken and Aslam 2019) and jointly expanding their collaborative capabilities (Castilho and Quandt 2017).

However, as the number of coworking spaces grew and the global economy healed (Grazian 2019), coworking spaces began to shift their focus away from catering to the needs of independent professionals in favour of providing an optimal working environment for teams and corporate clients. With this change in focus, the coworking model became associated with increasing workers' productivity (Bueno at al. 2018) and for sourcing local talent (Spreitzer et al. 2015; Kubatova 2016). Over time, coworking environments came to be perceived as a suitable business model for accelerating innovation capacities within organizations (Cheah and Ho 2019).

The swift growth of coworking environments around the globe disrupted the corporate real estate market (Sargent et al. 2018). Coworking spaces started being factored into office planning (Arora 2017; Yang et al. 2019) and had become an integral part of contemporary urban economic development (Jamal 2018). Various subtypes of models started to emerge in the form of shared corporate offices, spaces within accelerators and incubators (Murphy 2018), standalone innovation centres (Duh and Kos 2016; Gaidis and Liebman 2020) and even facilities within larger public spaces such as museums and libraries (Schopfel et al., 2015). They even began to appear in various rural settings (Moriset 2011; Kovács and Zoltán 2017). Despite the spread of novel coronavirus, which disrupted the steady growth of coworking environments, research on the likely impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic suggests that the coworking industry will recover and continue to play a significant role in the post-pandemic society (Mariotti and Akhavan 2020).

That being said, the following edited volume offers readership new perspectives on coworking environments and analyses the phenomenon from various perspectives. The book is divided into four parts. The first part analyses coworking environments through the prism of tailored, flexible workspace platforms. Alessandra Migliore, Irene Manzini Ceinar and Chiara Tagliaro have contributed the chapter

"Beyond Coworking: From Flexible to Hybrid Spaces", wherein they analyse the advances of the coworking concept and the resulting hybrid trends, thus expanding the current taxonomy of new working environments. Miryana Stancheva has labelled her contribution "The Coworking Phenomenon: An Organisational Revolution or a Continuous Evolution?" In this piece, she evaluates whether the coworking phenomenon is a result of continuous organizational evolution or if it signifies a novel, even revolutionary, approach to management. Felix Gauger and Andreas Pfnür contributed the chapter "Coworking Spaces in Public Administration", in which they analyse the potential of coworking spaces for public entities, showing how these spaces can enhance the attractiveness of the public sector and foster collaboration among units and citizens. Finally, Pavel Bednar, Ilaria Mariotti, Federica Rossi and Lukas Danko wrap up the first part with the chapter "The Evolution of Coworking Spaces in Milan and Prague: Spatial Patterns, Diffusion and Urban Change", wherein they discuss the micro-location of coworking environments as they relate to the internal urban spatial structure, and offer case studies of the transformation underway in two European cities.

The second part of the book is dedicated to different types of coworking environments. Viktoria Heinzel, Stavros Georgiades and Martin Engstler offer their contribution in the chapter "Corporate Coworking: A Catalyst for Collaboration, Creativity and Innovation", wherein they provide an overview on the topic of corporate coworking, along with their insights into the potentials of the new working model for corporate organizations. Monika Golonka continues the discussion on corporate coworking environments within the chapter entitled "Coworking Versus Corpoworking: A Realistic Perspective", with findings around recent literature that could serve as a foundation for future research on the subject. Michael T. Knapp and Alina Sawy go in another direction with the chapter "Coworking Spaces in Small Cities and Rural Areas: A Qualitative Study from an Operator and User Perspective", in which they examine various factors from both the operator and user perspectives, highlighting the challenges in setting up coworking environments in suburban and rural areas.

The third part of the book seeks to understand collaborative and joint activities that commonly occur in coworking spaces. Julian Waters-Lynch and Cameron Duff contributed the chapter "Coworking's Cooperation Paradox: On the Role of Stigmergic Curation", in which they demonstrate how convergent properties of the physical and digital environments, and the synergistic practices of participants, have enabled coworking space users to share information and learn about each other's interests and work. Gislene Feiten Haubrich goes one step further in her chapter "Mediation Matters: The Role of Staff in Coworking Constitution", detailing her study of staff supportiveness in coworking spaces and its role in nurturing collaborative activity within coworking spaces. Tadashi Uda concludes the third part of this book with the chapter "Experiencing Collaborative Spaces: Evidence from Social Media", wherein he illuminates coworking users' embodied experiences.

The fourth and the final part seeks to analyse the usage of coworking spaces on the go and the popularization of digital nomadism. Simon Hensellek and Natália Puchala contributed the chapter entitled "The Emergence of the Digital Nomad: A

Review and Analysis of the Opportunities and Risks of Digital Nomadism", in which they review the existing literature on the phenomenon of digital nomadism and analyse the opportunities and risks associated with this type of flexible work arrangement. Keita Matsushita contributed the chapter "Workations and their Impact on the Local area in Japan", wherein he connects digital nomadism and the usage of coworking environments in a case study. Finally, Esmir Demaj, Alba Hasimja and Amela Rrahimi wrap up the final part of the book with the chapter "Digital Nomadism as a New Flexible Working Approach: Making Tirana the Next European Hotspot for Digital Nomads", exploring the capital city of Albania, Tirana, as a future hotspot for digital nomads and offering a list of recommendations and suggestions for policymakers.

In closing, we believe that the following volume will share new and exciting perspectives on transformative trends of coworking and other flexible work environments. Coworking spaces will continue to develop amidst the pandemic and have the potential to re-emerge as one of the cornerstones of the new economy. We hope that our readers enjoy this volume, and hope that some of the chapters will become the basis for their future scholarly work.

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Contents

Part I
Coworking as a Tailored Flexible Workspace Model

Beyond Coworking: From Flexible to Hybrid Spaces

Alessandra Migliore, Irene Manzini Ceinar, and Chiara Tagliaro

Abstract The gig economy and novel technologies are bringing about new ways of working, living, and socialising that are changing common habits in the design, management, and use of space. The built environment is required to be increasingly flexible, which determines a phenomenon of 'hybridisation', meaning the co-presence and co-existence of multiple functions, users, and building types. This trend generates original types of spaces and calls for a new understanding of the landscape of work to support the creation of modern facilities. Due to the relative novelty and complexity of such a dynamic, an overarching interpretation and comprehensive classification of hybrid spaces are still missing. This chapter proposes a systematic reflection on what determines hybrid spaces. Given its intrinsic flexibility, the coworking industry represents a privileged environment for studying hybridisation, offering the opportunity to delve into multiple stakeholders, complex managerial mechanisms, and different uses.

Starting from seminal definitions of coworking spaces and of hybridisation, this chapter deconstructs the concept of 'hybrid' in multiple elements and applies them to a set of examples from Italy, the UK, and the USA. This contribution advances the concept of coworking space to include hybrid trends, thus expanding the existing taxonomy of new working spaces.

Keywords Workplaces · Hybridisation · Hybrid spaces · Coworking · Flexibility

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Introduction

Demo projects such as *Hybrid Urbanism: Planning Paradigms for the Information Communication Age* by Hybrid Space Lab[1] and exhibitions like *Nub: New Urban Body* by Fondazione Housing Sociale (2019)[2] have recently fostered the discourse on workspaces overlapping with extra features and functions, thereby nurturing the concept of hybridisation. Despite this buzzword becoming increasingly popular, an in-depth understanding of its multifaceted forms and complex meaning has not been reached yet, potentially generating poor-quality projects and simplistic studies of new working spaces. At the same time, an overarching analysis that considers coworking spaces as processes of hybridisation does not exist (Yang et al. 2019). The diverse definitions of coworking in the literature still present a gap in classifying the determinants of its complexity. Given its intrinsic flexibility though, there is room to interpret the coworking economy under the lens of hybridisation. Previous studies attest that hybridisation can be considered on multiple layers, including spatial indeterminacy and flexibility of forms and functions; temporal contingency among unplanned and planned uses (Bishop 2012; Madanipour 2017; Harris 2017); managerial negotiation of regimes of control, access, and appropriation of spaces; formal or informal inclusion of diverse groups; etc. (Marchegiani and Arcese 2018).

This contribution aims at establishing a meaningful array of hybridisation layers in order to apply them to the coworking environment. Specifically, a set of coworking spaces from Italy, the UK, and the USA helps apply a theoretical classification of hybrid layers to practical examples. This allows an expansion of the existing taxonomy of new working spaces by delineating a new interpretation of hybrid trends, setting the way for the evolution of coworking in the future.

The chapter is organised as follows: Section "Literature Review" explores hybridisation of coworking environments by reviewing the existing literature about its social implications, direct and indirect effects on spatial patterns, and functional aspects. This part ends with a scheme of layers that sets up the concept of hybrid in coworking spaces. Empirical confirmation of this theoretical scheme is built up from the analysis of six case studies in three different contexts (Milan, London, and New York), which is presented in section "Methodology", while section "Findings" discusses the findings from both the literature review and the cases. The section "Conclusion and Future Trajectories" considers further trajectories for hybrid dynamics and future opportunities for coworking spaces.

[1] Info is available at http://hybridspacelab.net/project/hybrid-urbanism/. Accessed: 17th March 2020.

[2] Info is available at http://www.newurbanbody.it/. Accessed: 17th March 2020.

Literature Review

Hybrid Dynamics in the Coworking Environment

Coworking spaces (hereinafter CSs) represent one of the most flourishing workplace models. They especially meet the needs of digital nomads in the tertiary sector (Florida 2002), such as freelancers and entrepreneurs working in the creative and digital economy (Gandini 2015; Jamal 2018), through the dematerialisation (Mélypataki 2020) and spatial and functional fragmentation (Friedman 2014) of work. CSs offer flexible spatial and virtual solutions that benefit not only individuals but the urban environment at large. They are characterised by extreme flexibility of access depending on individual working time, diversity of functions co-located in the same space, and a unique mix of domestic and business atmosphere (Kingma 2016; O'Mara 1999). They stimulate knowledge exchange and collaborative business development (Pais 2012), prevent individual workers' isolation (Gandini 2015; Merkel 2019), and nurture a sense of local place and community (Garrett et al. 2017). If in 2015 there were 8900 CSs worldwide, more than 26,000 CSs are predicted to exist by the end of 2020 with over 2.6 million members (Deskmag 2019), as a result of changes in how people work globally.

While this phenomenon is gaining strength, definitions of CSs are multiplying and tend to slightly differ across authors.

Spinuzzi (2012, p. 399) provided a seminal definition of CSs, focusing on their spatial and functional scope, as 'open-plan office environments in which [professionals] work alongside other unaffiliated professionals for a fee'. The definition of CSs soon spans from 'milieu' for collaboration and knowledge sharing (Moriset 2014) to 'urban social practice' that emerged as a bottom-up solution to reclaim and re-appropriate urban space (Merkel 2015). Private and public life dwells within coworking, making it a constantly living space (Fernàndez Per et al. 2014).

Interpreting CSs as places characterised by informal socialisation where people can gather and interact on a neutral ground, most literature associates CSs to 'third places' (Oldenburg 1997). According to Oldenburg (2001), third places are neither workplaces (second place) nor private homes (first place) but represent the heart of a community's social vitality, conviviality, and inclusion. Morisson (2018) argued that CSs are not third places strictu sensu but involve the hybridisation of second and third places (work and leisure spaces), by creating a 'fourth place' able to trigger knowledge sharing both in the work sphere and in the personal sphere. Based on this idea, CSs can be conceived as hybrid spaces by their very nature. Simões Aelbrecht (2016) refers to the concept of a hybrid 'fourth place' applied to public spaces. In order to be hybrid, a fourth place should enable the suspension from home/work routines, should welcome a range of varied users and functions, and should provide spatial features adaptable from time to time.

Hybrid spaces can also be considered as 'boundary objects' that create a conceptual bridge from micro- to macroscale (Schmidt 2019). Hybrid spaces can be conceived at different levels and material states ranging from multifunctional

architectural and landscape entities (Krasilnikova and Klimov 2016; Colombo 2020; Fernàndez Per et al. 2014) to virtual spaces created by portable devices connecting multiple users (De Souza and Silva 2006). They have been defined as objects that allow different groups to share, *without consensus*, a place with fluid boundaries and functions (Star 2010); as emerging typologies, designs, and building practices characterised by *in-betweenness* and *indeterminacy* (Simões Aelbrecht 2016); or as transitory spaces chosen temporarily for specific purposes (Di Marino and Lapintie 2015). Moreover, hybridisation is happening in multiple realms of the real estate and design industry. The retail sector, for example, is integrating healthcare services and workspaces into its traditional commercial function (Cardinali 2018). The hotel sector is offering 'mobile offices' (Vuokko et al. 2015) and rooms for work-related activities (Scullica and Elgani 2019).

Over time, different models of coworking have developed based on the idea of 'community' (Spinuzzi et al. 2019). Business model, industry, available services, accessibility and membership criteria, and governance are factors that determine the community vibe (Brown 2017). These features can be simultaneously present with different specifications, which makes the literature on coworking spaces blurring with that on other flexible spaces (Schmidt et al. 2014; Brown 2017).

Hybrid spaces recall the concept of 'heterotopias', a term coined by Michel Foucault (1986) to identify *espaces autres* of non-conformity or resistance to conventional categories of spaces. Hybrid spaces are the 'celebration of complexity' proposing the cross-fertilisation of environments (Fernàndez Per et al. 2014).

Through the lens of hybridisation, the following sections explore the complexity of the coworking model especially expressed in the co-presence of different features. This will allow an interpretation of coworking not only as an evolution of the office but as an original type of 'place' generated by a layering process that evolves over time.

Multiple Layers of Hybridisation

Considering the phenomenon of hybridisation as a mere overlap of functional layers is not sufficient for grasping its more profound implications on buildings and urban spaces. Additional layers must be considered in order to understand the complexity of hybrid dynamics especially in coworking environments, where several new functions and users generate unprecedented and unexplored solutions.

In the literature, several layers have been identified as the determinants of hybridisation in CSs, namely, spatiality, temporal 'in-betweenness', user diversity, occasionality of access/presence, activities and functions, managerial regimes, and publicness and openness.

The first is the level of 'spatiality', intended as indeterminacy of spatial form that involves flexibility of uses, 'which allow competing and often unforeseen activities

to happen' (Simões Aelbrecht 2016, p. 145). This entails balancing communal space with private space in order to find an optimal proportion of the two functions (Yang et al. 2019). Coworking companies seek out spaces that are large and open and allow for flexible use of workstations (Orel and Alonso-Almeida 2019). Spatial hybridisation also happens at the building and neighbourhood level through the overlapping of contemporary and historical architectural solutions and by offering semi-public access that contributes to spatial complexity.

The second layer of hybridisation is related to 'temporal "in-betweenness"' of activities and interactions. The 'time-out mood' allows both unplanned activities to happen outside or in between the times of planned uses (Simões Aelbrecht 2016; Bishop 2012; Madanipour 2017; Harris 2017) and planned events to happen for a temporary duration (Simões Aelbrecht 2016). These are triggered by the so-called threshold spaces typical of bars, common areas, restaurants, and storage areas inside CSs or by the 'interstitial spaces' where individuals interact occasionally and informally around joint activities to which they devote limited time (Furnari 2014). Temporal in-betweenness happens in two directions. On one hand, work is spreading across various realms of life and is hosted in transitory workspaces (Di Marino and Lapintie 2015), such as libraries, coffee shops, parks, and other public spaces that would be normally used outside of working hours. On the other hand, workplaces, and CSs in particular, temporarily host multiple activities other than work, such as physical and wellness activities and cultural events, which attract and retain people in those spaces, when they would normally be elsewhere than in the office.

The third layer of hybridisation is related to 'users' diversity'. Categories of members in CSs classified by their employment status are coworkers, freelancers, small-scale entrepreneurs, and organisation members (Uda 2013). These four groups are differentiated by the amount of physical and communicative interaction they have with others and the 'diversity' of that interaction. Among the spectrum defined by Uda (2013), coworkers have the highest amount of interactions and the highest level of diversity of interactions with 'strangers'. Living and interacting with diverse people is beneficial for social cohesion (Simões Aelbrecht 2016; Jacobs 1961), while studies on proximity (Allen and Henn 2006) demonstrate that a community made up of diverse people – in terms of employment status and of age – is the key success factor of chance encounters in CSs. Diversity of users makes CSs 'hybrid or intermediary organizational forms' (Marchegiani and Arcese 2018, p. 55) uniting a wide range of people affected by the same issues of finding a place to work, live, and share. As a matter of fact, Marchegiani and Arcese (2018) express this hybridisation by categorising vertical and horizontal CSs where the former are open to members of the same industry (or sometimes niche CS, targeted for specific user groups) while the latter to members of different fields and disciplines. Moreover, CSs welcome not only the community of members but usually seek to be a 'neutral territory' where workers meet external clients (Kingma 2016), visitors, and sporadic users.

A fourth layer of hybridisation can be recognised in the *occasionality of access*, meaning different levels of temporal presence and privacy (Kingma 2016). Depending on various factors, access to CSs is allowed on a daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis and can translate into higher quests for privacy. With respect to other functions allocated in a CS, accessibility can be related to a specific moment of the day (e.g. for an event).

The fifth level refers to the hybrid overlap of *activities and functions* that CSs can concurrently offer on demand, such as desk rental, studio/small office rental, event spaces, kitchen catering, etc. (Ross and Ressia 2015). Studies on how to design hybrid spaces have been conducted within urbanism theory and architectural theory (Krasilnikova and Klimov 2016; Fernàndez Per et al. 2014; Willis and Aurigi 2011), where hybrid spaces appear as multifunctional places (Krasilnikova and Klimov 2016). Moriset (2013) associated the hybridisation of CSs with other types of spaces (i.e. telecentres, flexible offices, and incubators) that adapt to the occasional necessities of customisation raised by its users. Considering the typical temporal in-betweenness of CSs, flexibility of internal functional borders allows, for example, typical 'non-working' areas to be used also for business purposes or an office to be transformed into a dining room in the evening (Scapolan et al. 2020). The level of flexibility offered by the space is the key factor facilitating the expansion and contraction of several activities and functions.

The sixth level considers *managerial regimes* as hybridised forms of creation, control, and operation of CSs. Like third places, many CSs are privately owned but publicly accessible. However, decisions upon the space are less centralised than in other second and third places; several stakeholders can generally participate in the creation of networks, in the organisation of events, and even in the design, arrangement, and management of the space. CS implies several internal managerial dynamics that allow users to personalise or co-design the user experience. These hybrid managerial regimes (Simões Aelbrecht 2016) encourage users to take care of the space in a process of constant negotiation and creative appropriation of some parts of the space.

Finally, the seventh level of hybridisation implies 'publicness and openness' of the spaces. Simões Aelbrecht (2016) refers to multiple publics and various degrees of publicness, meaning the partial or total accessibility of these spaces to a diverse range of users (also non-official members). CSs can be freely accessible by citizens, travellers, and tourists while reserving special services to paying members. At this layer, CSs as 'in-between spaces' (Yström and Agogué 2020) merge both the concept of 'relational spaces' (Kellogg 2009), which flatten hierarchical relationships in an informal manner, and of the 'interstitial spaces' (Furnari 2014), where individuals interact and temporarily break free from existing institutions and collectively try out new activities and ideas.

Table 1 summarises the multiple layers of hybridisation recognised and a description of each.

Table 1 Multiple layers of hybridisation of coworking spaces

Hybrid coworking spaces (CSs)	
Hybridisation at the layer of	Description
Spatiality	Indeterminacy of spatial forms in terms of flexible furniture; complexity of the layout among multiple spatial combinations; historical overlapping of architectural characteristics and of relationships with the neighbourhood
Temporal 'in-betweenness'	Planned events or uses for temporary duration or unplanned uses and interactions in between the planned activities. Spatial characteristics trigger these uses (i.e. interstitial spaces, threshold spaces, event spaces)
Users' diversity	Accessibility to different professional categories, but also to different demographic categories
Occasionality of presence	Accessibility in relation to different needs of use (e.g. monthly, quarterly, annual subscription; single access)
Activities and functions	Level of flexibility offered by the space to perform various activities and functions
Managerial regimes	Management structure of the space, stakeholders involved, control of the space to different extents (both top-down and bottom-up)
Publicness/ openness	Accessibility by non-official members and any local or neighbourhood strategies of services/products offered to members

Methodology

The above-mentioned theoretical layers of hybridisation have been used as an interpretive scheme for case study analysis. The goal is to verify the extent to which these layers apply to existing CSs and can contribute to expand the CS concept. Six exemplary cases have been selected in three cities: London, New York City, and Milan. These cities represent unique locations for CSs and offer the opportunity to compare the extent of hybridisation in markets that are characterised by different paces of growth. In particular, London and New York register the highest coworking growth in the world. A new coworking space opens in London every 5 days and in New York every 7.5 days (Coworking Resources 2019). Milan was identified as a counterexample as it presents the highest concentration of CSs in Italy (Italian Coworking 2019), despite coworking growth per capita in this country registering very low rates (close to those of Bangladesh and Kenya). First, existing CSs in the three cities were gathered from the open-source website *Coworker.com*. This source was appropriate for an initial screening because it includes the majority of the world's cities within 168 countries and is the most updated website (last data entered in March 2020) collecting verified coworking spaces. All the CSs listed on *Coworker.com* in the three cities were collected, and the available data was combined with information from previous work by the authors (see "Acknowledgements" section). For Milan, information was gathered from existing databases built up in collaboration with *italiancoworking.com*, whereas for London, data was integrated with *coworkinglondon.com*. The final database accounted for 320 CSs in London, 264 in New York City, and 129 in Milan. From this massive database, a few cases per city

Table 2 Selection of case studies according to the hybridisation layer of temporal 'in-betweenness'

		CS 1	CS 2	CS 3	CS 4	CS 5	CS 6
CS characteristics		London	London	New York City	New York, Jersey City	Milan	Milan
Categories	Items						
Equipment	Photo studio			●		●	●
	Recording studio	●	●	●		●	●
Facilities	Makerspace	●					●
	Co-living accommodation						●
	Childcare						
	Kitchen	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Event space for rent	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Retail space	●	●		●		
	On-site Airbnb						
Caffeine fix	On-site/coffee for purchase	●	●	●	●	●	●
Community	Events	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Workshops	●	●	●	●	●	●
	TEDx host space		●				
Relax zones	Lounge/chill-out area	●	●		●	●	●
	Yoga studio		●	●	●		
	Meditation room			●			
	Nap room						
	Outdoor spaces	●	●	●	●		●
Cool stuff	Library		●				
	Gym	●	●				
	Art gallery	●	●		●		●
Catering	Restaurant	●	●			●	●
	Catering kitchen		●			●	●
Total number		13	16	10	10	10	14

were shortlisted that would better present appropriate hybrid potential. *Coworker.com* considers a total of 100 characteristics of CSs, out of which 23 items were identified as the best determinants of hybridisation opportunities (see Table 2).

A preselection of the cases to be examined was made by summing up the number of items that each CS in the database presented. A threshold of 10 characteristics was established to assure that the selected CSs offered an appropriate level of complexity. As the number of CSs was still large for a meaningful analysis, an additional qualitative selection was based on the design and architectural characteristics that regarded the hybridisation layer of spatiality. After this final screening, an in-depth analysis based on desk research was performed on two examples per city. The selected cases are Eat Work Art Netil House (CS 1) and Second Home Spitalfields

(CS 2) in London, Class&Co (CS 3) and New Women Space (CS 4) in New York, and inEDI (CS 5) and Burò at BASE Milano (CS 6) in Milan (see Table 2).

A score was assigned to each level of hybridisation to build up a comparative analysis of these cases. The level of *spatiality* was assigned a score based on the multiple superfetation that each premise was subjected to before hosting coworking, the relationship with the surrounding urban area, and the flexibility of the spatial arrangement, both in terms of layout and furniture. *Temporal 'in-betweenness'* was evaluated according to the number of activities that the spaces can accommodate, from morning to evening and night. *User diversity* was judged according to the target attracted to the spaces. *Occasionality of access* was interpreted based on the bonds that members establish when they enter the space and make use of facilities and services. In principle, the more flexible the contracts or registration fees, the higher the opportunity for hybrid use for members. *Activities and functions* were judged based on the different spatial arrangements that are offered to members. The *managerial regime* was evaluated based on the number of actors, both public and private, that are involved in running the CS, since its foundation. *Publicness and openness* were scored considering the access control to the space and its events, whether restricted to paying members or freely open.

The following sections will briefly present each case study in order to give a general overview of the respective context and then will discuss the results of analysis.

Findings

From the above explained methodology, six CSs have been selected as exemplary (Table 3).

Eat Work Art Netil House is a medium-sized CS located in Hackney, the epicentre of London's 'hipster' scene and, increasingly, a renowned area for craft production and retail (Schreiber and Treggiden 2015). Netil House is run by the company Eat Work Art that transforms empty buildings into CSs that 'become home to exceptional communities' (Harris 2018). Netil House was a previous council-owned building erected in the 1960s and left vacant for several years until 2009 when Eat Work Art acquired the property and renovated it. Today the building hosts flexible and creative spaces for coworkers, an on-site café, and the iconic rooftop Netil360, which is usually used for events open to the public. The CS is affiliated with Netil Market that occupies an ex-carpark with several temporary units, mostly made from shipping containers. The members of Netil House pay a membership to work and trade from pop-up units.

Second Home Spitalfields in London is a large CS with a total area of 2400 m^2, located in the East London area, the truly creative area of the city. In 2014, the previous carpet factory became an open workspace for members only with an on-site cafeteria accessible to the local community. Located on the opposite side of Hanbury Street, the bookshop *Libreria* by Second Home offers members and local

Table 3 Summary table of selected coworking spaces

Selected coworking spaces		District/area	Year of foundation	Fee private office/ month	Fee dedicated desks/month	Fees hot desks/ month	Type of building
London	Eat Work Art Netil House	Hackney	2009	£2500.00	–	–	Industrial building/ex council-owned building
	Second Home Spitalfields	Tower Hamlets	2014	£550.00	£350.00	£250.00	Industrial building/ex carpet warehouse
New York	Class&Co	East Williamsburg	2018	$999.00	$450.00	$249.00	Traditional exposed-brick building
	New Women Space	East Williamsburg	2016	$50.00/year for the membership and then by hour			Traditional exposed-brick building
Milan	inEDI	Sarpi	2017	€650.00	€230.00	€120.00	Traditional low-rise building
	Burò at BASE Milano	Tortona	2014	–	€350.00	€310.00	Industrial building

communities a 'digital-free zone' (Silva 2016 in Clark 2016) and the hotspot for social interaction events organised by Second Home. From an architectural point of view, Second Home represents a good example of integration between a historical post-war building used as a factory and contemporary architectural additions of organic shapes and colourful timbre to create a new gateway for the area, respecting the existing terraced houses around it and reclaiming the colour of the traditional bricks.

Class&Co is a medium-sized CS founded in 2017 and based in a traditional exposed-brick building in the heart of East Williamsburg, Brooklyn, the neighbourhood of the New York's creative scene (Florida 2002). Class&Co is defined as a 'boutique coworking home' or 'second home' (Cece 2019) that boasts workstations and flexible interior spaces ranging from private offices to a reimagined train cart for private phone calls. Support for the community is given by the Polar Vortex Market, a community-building event involving coworking members as well as local residents. In terms of activities, Class&Co spans from on-site classes and events, such as storytelling workshops, to filmmaking seminars and concerts.

New Women Space is a weekly drop-in coworking spot located in Brooklyn, New York. The space was founded to meet the increasing demand for a tech-oriented female-only coworking space. New Women Space was originally opened temporarily as a 30-day pop-up space in 2016. After a successful crowdfunding campaign, the space became permanent and is centred on gender equity, creative expression, and celebration of identity, by offering events. New Women Space boasts an open seating plan in a traditional industrial site resulting from the conversion of an industrial brick building. Today, the CS sits on 200 m^2, and the interior configuration is mainly shaped playing with natural light, in order to allow privacy: curtains for added privacy and optimal for dimly lit gatherings – movie screenings, readings, performances, and wellness classes – are provided to create a homely and 'safe' atmosphere.

inEDI in Milan is a small CS dedicated to professionals of cinema and advertising. inEDI was founded by the biggest Italian post-production company (EDI) with the aim of being a cultural hub capable of connecting freelancers with professionals from the movie world and creating synergies in Milan's creative industry sector. In fact, inEDI is a coworking location for artists and creatives, flexibly offering different types of spaces: fixed, mobile, closed, open workstations, cinema room, soundstage, common areas, bar, and restaurant. The interior configuration is innovative and hosts diverse functions from a permanent 25-seat cinema projection room to a temporary barber shop station and periodical theatre workshop spaces.

Burò at BASE Milano is a large-sized CS for 'cross-pollination between the arts, enterprises, technology and social innovation' as explained on their website, located within the ex-Ansaldo area in the Savona-Tortona neighbourhood of Milan. In 1990, Milan City Council bought the industrial Ansaldo complex initiating a process of development of the area for cultural purposes. In 1994, the *Laboratori della Scala*, the Scala Theatre workshops, moved into the area, followed by MUDEC – Museum of Cultures – which opened in 2015. A public call for proposals in 2014 resulted in

the remaining spaces being assigned to a social enterprise that created spaces for events, work, and cafés.

Today, the goal of BASE is to establish new connections between different arts, disciplines, and languages, in a refurbished historical place including spaces for exhibitions, performances, workshops, conferences, and a large studio and artists' residence. The nature of BASE is characterised by new models of collaboration between public and private: a state-owned building, entrusted by Milan City Council to a private, non-profit social enterprise.

A comparative analysis of the six cases (see Table 4) helped evaluate the potential of hybridisation for further developments in future initiatives. In terms of *spatiality*, the selected cases demonstrate that CS usually occupies existing buildings that have been refurbished to host new uses. From warehouses to Victorian housing complexes, CS takes advantage of the unique character that urban renewal projects generate and adapts to a wide range of building shapes, sizes, and layout. The peculiar features offered by pre-existing sites, rather than limiting, become an inspiration for new functions. In sum, the available space is never interpreted in a rigid way but allows inclusion of multiple uses at the same time or changes them quickly, welcoming a variety of users, from CS members to citizens at large in the same space. Second Home Spitalfields gained the highest score because of the original way it reinterpreted the existing Victorian terraced house according to biophilic design principles, whereas New Women Space gained the lowest score because, despite an open and flexible plan, it does not intervene in the pre-existing building to serve the new function. *Temporal 'in-betweenness'* shows a wide range of activities that the different spaces can accommodate in the mornings, evenings, and nights. While New Women Space mainly works as an event space – hosting classes occasionally – Eat Work Art, Second Home, and Burò provide their users with a wide variety of social gatherings, workshops, classes and educational initiatives, games, fitness activities, music concerts or movie screenings, and so on. These activities can happen one after the other in the same space or at the same time thanks to flexible spatial arrangements that help separate potentially conflicting activities. The target people attracted to the spaces reflect high *user diversity* particularly in the attempt to bring together people in different maturity stages of their professional and private lives in order to foster cross-pollination and growth based on knowledge and experience exchange. This ranged from a vast array of practitioners in the creative industries, such as in Eat Work Art and Second Home, to more restricted groups of people with specific needs, such as the cinema industry in inEDI and gender nonconforming individuals in New Women Space. For *occasionality of access*, the highest scores were registered by the spaces that offer various memberships, thus enabling their users to switch from one contract to another on a pay-per-use principle. All the selected CSs offer short- and very short-term passes. The only space offering an annual pass is inEDI, but typically terms are shorter. Burò, for instance, offers multiple-day passes to monthly passes, and NWS only provides weekly drop-in coworking sessions for a half or full day. In the case of *activities and functions*, the possibility to pick and choose from different customisable spatial arrangements determined the highest ratings. In addition to common offerings for hot desks,

Table 4 Cross analysis of the hybridisation layers in the selected cases (continued on the next page)

Name	Eat Work Art Netil House	Second Home Spitalfields	Class&Co Williamsburg	New Women Space (NWS)	inEDI	Burò at BASE Milano
City	London	London	New York City	New York, Jersey City	Milan	Milan
Foundation	2009	2014	2017	2016	2017	2014
Spatiality (average 3.5)	Four-floor industrial warehouse, which is located right behind the railway in a mainly residential neighbourhood	Three-floor Victorian terraced housing completely refurbished in a commercial and residential neighbourhood	Located in a residential neighbourhood, the ex-residential building offers vintage-looking, modular space, with many big windows. Fully customisable offices are available	110 m^2 (2100 ft^2) space is located in a mainly residential neighbourhood, on the ground floor and basement of a modern residential building. The space can be partitioned with curtains for privacy	Up to 1500 m^2 (17,000 ft^2) with over 50 workstations. Close to Milan's Chinatown, a lively neighbourhood full of clubs, shops, and restaurants	12,000 m^2 of multipurpose space, located in the ex-Ansaldo industrial site. The spaces have been completely refurbished with a modern industrial style
	●●●●○	●●●●●	●●●○○	●●○○○	●●●○○	●●●●○
Temporal 'in-betweenness' (average 4)	Events and workshops, such as market, street food, pop-up stalls, music	Events, workshops, TEDx host space, HIIT, meditation, surfing, language classes	Classes, events, talks, incubator programme, concerts, shows, yoga, film screenings	Events and internal reunions, among which movie screenings, readings, performances, and wellness classes	Graphickton events, common areas such as the restaurant-bar, barber shop, relax area with games	Events and workshops for the different categories of professionals and labs for continuous education
	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●○○○	●●●○○	●●●●●

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

Name	Eat Work Art Netil House	Second Home Spitalfields	Class&Co Williamsburg	New Women Space (NWS)	inEDI	Burò at BASE Milano
City	London	London	New York City	New York, Jersey City	Milan	Milan
Foundation	2009	2014	2017	2016	2017	2014
Users' diversity (average 4)	Broad spectrum of creative practitioners	Advertising, branding and creative agencies, architecture and property, art, culture and music, consultancy, design, education, environment and sustainability, fashion and retail, film, photography and production, fitness and wellbeing, food and hospitality, global corporates, healthcare and beauty, human resources and legal, PR and communications, social impact and not for profit, technology, travel and tourism	Professionals from different sectors, from freelancers, to start-ups and small businesses	The mission is to build strong relationships, create economic opportunity, and inspire possibility for women, femme, queer, transgender, and gender nonconforming individuals in an accessible, supportive, safer space	Focusing on cinema and advertisement, it is open to artists and creatives of all kinds, from visual artists to 3D specialists, composers, photographers, and video makers	Membership available upon selection. Both freelancers and young companies are welcome, from the artistic world, especially with a social vocation in their mission. Project for cross-pollination between the arts, enterprises, technology, and social innovation, to scout for ideas, talents, partners, and suppliers especially in the industries of visual arts, publishing, music, audio-video production, media, communication, design, fashion, and textile arts
	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●●○

Occasionality of access (average 3.1)	Monthly	Monthly	Daily and monthly passes	Weekly drop-in coworking sessions for half or whole day purchase. Yearly membership for discounts on space rental and access to membership-only events	Monthly, quarterly, and annual passes	Free access to the lounge and bistro areas, 8-day pass, 12-day pass, and monthly pass
	●●●○○	●●●○○	●●●●○	●○○○○	●●●○○	●●●●●
Activities/ functions (average 2.8)	Private studios, workstations, hot desks, shared makerspaces	Private offices, workstations, hot desks	Desks, private offices, and conference rooms	Seating for 50 individuals (40 of which are stools)	Fixed and mobile workstations, open and closed desks, cinema, soundstage	Workstations and hot desks
	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●○○	●○○○○	●●●●○	●●○○○

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

Name	Eat Work Art Netil House	Second Home Spitalfields	Class&Co Williamsburg	New Women Space (NWS)	inEDI	Burò at BASE Milano
City	London	London	New York City	New York, Jersey City	Milan	Milan
Foundation	2009	2014	2017	2016	2017	2014
Managerial regime (average 3.8)	Netil House belongs to a community of creative leaders driving culture	It is owned and managed by Second Home company	Family owned and operated	Kickstarted by a crowdfunding campaign that raised over $17 K in less than 2 weeks, NWS maintains its operations through community organising, fundraising, and strategic partnerships with mission-aligned groups Community-run; every couple of years, the guardians change	It is owned and managed by EDI *Effetti Digitali Italiani*, the largest Italian post-production company	Self-funded thanks to a public-private partnership. The state-owned building was given by the Milan Municipality to a private social enterprise, no-profit, born from the merge of 5 associations and private companies
	●●●●●	●●●○○	●●○○○	●●●●●	●●●○○	●●●●●

Publicness/ openness (average 3.8)	Most open spaces are accessible to citizens. Residents and the public are invited to enjoy the events that pop up all year round including markets, art galleries, theatre productions, workshops, gigs, street food, and live music. The Netil Radio hosts interviews to residents and renowned labels and artists	Community lunches and weekly members' drinks. Provides free facilities for local charities.	Classes and events open to the public for a fee, while they are offered at discounted rates to members	Most events are accessible publicly by donation.	With membership only. Clients and collaborators can access with one day's notice at the reception. All guests can enter only the common areas oi inEDI.	Open to citizens; whoever supports the space can benefit from ArtBonus tax relief (a government plan to protect the cultural heritage) and will be given one m^2 of space in the building
		Cultural programme and cafés are all open to the public		100% of their programming is led by self-identified women, femme, queer, transgender, and gender nonconforming individuals	They organise events and classes in partnership with universities	
	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●○○○	●●●●○	●●○○○	●●●●●

dedicated workstations, private offices, and meeting/conference rooms, interesting is the possibility offered to Eat Work Art members to access a shared makerspace and for inEDI members to rent out specialised labs. The *managerial regime* for all the spaces includes multiple actors, except Class&Co that operates as a family-owned business. All the others derive from some sort of public-private partnerships, either involving public institutions, as in the case of Burò at BASE, or the general public at large, in the case of NWS. This confirms the importance of involving multiple stakeholders in the creation of these projects but also in the daily management and organisation of events. Finally, analysis of *publicness and openness* scored low in the cases where access is mostly restricted to paying members or is open to the public for an established fee on the occasion of specific events, such as in Class&Co or in inEDI. Conversely, Eat Work Art, Second Home, and BASE are generally accessible to everybody with open markets, street food, and live music, with facilities for free use by local charities and tax relief to encourage the broadest participation in the space.

Overall, coworking opens up multiple levels of flexibility and opportunities. This cross-case analysis confirms that all the levels of hybridisation identified in the literature are theoretically met by CSs in different geographical and economic contexts. Most of them on average scored above 3.5 points out of 5 (see Table 4). Each level would deserve a specific in-depth analysis to understand its specific value at different scales, from the neighbourhood, to the society, and economy more generally.

These preliminary results show that user diversity, temporal 'in-betweenness', and publicness/openness are the most developed levels of hybridisation. Most of the spaces reached a high score in these classes, which demonstrates good intentions in the inclusion of different users and different activities within the spaces. Spatiality and managerial regime scores show that the initiation and management process of CSs are intrinsically starting not from scratch but from existing spatial and social contexts: that they aim at enhancing as the first mission. Perhaps more could be done in terms of co-creation and co-design of initiatives such as public events, but also in the co-funding of the spaces themselves, as they often face financial difficulties. Public authorities could play a role in supporting the economic sustainability of CSs. Finally, occasionality of access and activities/functions – that, respectively, reached a score of 3.1 and 2.5 – seem to still have potential for fostering flexibility and hybridisation. While monthly passes guarantee a minimal financial stability for CS management – thus important for the feasibility of regular operation – shorter-term special passes would encourage the participation of common people in cultural events, classes, and so on. Similarly, enriching the spaces with an array of functions and services to attract diverse generations and types of people (e.g. nurseries, social care, and more) would not only enrich the communities by triggering engagement but also contribute to the economic sustainability of CSs.

Conclusion and Future Trajectories

The CS phenomenon is expanding more and more, while it enhances its complexity. As spaces need to be increasingly suitable for change and ready to face an unknown future, hybridisation is emerging as a strategy to address this trend. Some scholars consider coworking per se a hybrid phenomenon because it is 'characterised by different degrees of sharing' (Ivaldi and Scaratti 2019, p. 139). While 'hybrid' is becoming a buzzword, an overarching interpretation of hybrid dynamics in the landscape of work is still missing. This chapter investigated the extent of complexity and flexibility in the workplace realm, by classifying different layers of hybridisation in CSs, namely, spatiality, temporal 'in-betweenness', user diversity, occasionality of access/presence, activities and functions, managerial regimes, and publicness and openness. The analysis of six cases in Milan, London, and New York City demonstrates that hybridisation not only emerges as a founding asset of CSs but also defines a new concept of coworking. As a result, the definition of CSs can expand beyond the idea of evolved workspaces to that of places that embrace uncertainty.

The mission of CSs to be *intermediate territory* endorsing distributed organisational practices, made of physical and digital connections or formal and informal interactions (Kingma 2016), sets a common layer of relational hybridity. However, CSs undergo a multi-level hybridisation process that configures them as transitional, *in-between* spaces (Simões Aelbrecht 2016) or 'liminal spaces' (Turner 1969), which go far beyond the two 'dominant spaces' hosting domestic and business life (Dale and Burrell 2008).

This peculiar characteristic permits great resiliency. For example, in the recent pandemic period, hybrid CSs have evolved rapidly to welcome additional user categories (potentially including students and common citizens), to add new services to members (e.g. food delivery), and to re-arrange meetings into virtual workshops and events (Coworker.com, 2020).

This chapter shows that hybridisation is a multi-level mechanism, deserving further enquiry. There is room for future studies on the different levels of hybridisation from the pre- to the post-design phases, which are key stages to create consensus, to stimulate users' engagement, and to increase positive impact on the society. Especially, an analysis of the micro-sociology and micro-design that affect social interactions (Simões Aelbrecht 2016) will be crucial to further increase hybridisation. Also, the benefits of hybridisation should be proved in the twofold potential of making the new spaces for working more resilient and enhancing their purpose for the whole society.

CSs are not only original places for working; they exceed the scope of third places and become complex territorial entities enabling a more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable future for all. A deep appreciation of their complexity might contribute to expanding the hybridisation principle to other built environments.

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The Coworking Phenomenon – An Organizational Revolution or a Continuous Evolution?

Miryana Stancheva

Abstract This chapter evaluates whether the coworking phenomenon is a result of continuous organizational evolution or if it is a revolutionary novel organizational approach. The context of the origin and development of the coworking phenomenon is explored by a concise review of the contemporary socio-economic conditions and through the use of the Erikson's lifespan model as an instrument to evaluate the movement's growth and challenges. A theoretical analysis of Scott's classification of organizational systems is performed in order to find the place of the coworking phenomenon within this framework. Lastly, an empirical study based on Quinn's competing values framework is used to compare the organizational culture in two seemingly distinct organizational structures – a corporate banking structure and a coworking enterprise structure.

Keywords Coworking · Organizational culture · Development

Introduction

The world economic situation in the last two decades was marked by two global recessions, fast-paced technological progress and significant changes in the way people live and work globally (Berger and Frey 2016; Manyika et al. 2020). For many, this global picture triggers a sense of isolation and alienation, and creates the need to find alternative ways to reconnect with society (Adibifar 2016). These processes have naturally led to the appearance of different and new socio-political and economic tendencies toward finding new approaches in human interaction which focus more on direct communication; mutual help; and sharing of goods, knowledge, and resources. As a result, the sharing economy developed and provided a new way of consumption and utilization of the available resources and services; it shifted the focus from possessing objects to sharing them with others and supporting each other through continuous exchange (Botsman and Rogers 2010).

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This wave of economic changes and volatility inevitably influenced the labor market as well – both the employees and the employers. Due to automation and digitalization, an increasing number of companies started restructuring their teams and a great number of skilled professionals faced the challenge of finding a job position that is a good fit for them (Degryse 2016). On the other hand, technological change led to the emergence of companies with new values where flexibility and employee satisfaction became central (Giovanis 2019). Meanwhile, the choice to develop one's ideas or start a business outside the corporate world has become a viable option for many. As a result of these changes on the labor market, we witnessed the rise of the freelance (Gandini 2016), entrepreneurship, and startup movements (Rossetti et al. 2018). Embracing these new ways, many have started working from their homes, from local coffee shops, or from small private offices.

Nevertheless, this way of living and working has led to an emerging sense of isolation, a lack of community of like-minded people and a lack of professional circles (Foertsch 2017). Those challenges have provoked the need of creating spaces where people with different professional backgrounds, who develop independently their ideas and projects, work together and strive to collaborate, share, and exchange knowledge, skills, and resources. As an organizational response to these needs, the coworking phenomenon emerged in the early years of the twenty-first century (Spinuzzi 2012; Bouncken and Reuschl 2018; Waters-Lynch 2018; Orel and Dvouletý 2020) and put in the center of its business model the community and its collaboration potential (Spinuzzi et al. 2019).

Since then, the coworking concept has transformed significantly (Waters-Lynch 2018) and, once perceived as an informal gathering of professionals, has now turned into a working business model that supports and fosters interaction and innovation (Cabral and Winden 2016). From a movement that was once started by a group of like-minded people with shared values (Spinuzzi 2012), it is now disrupting the real estate industry (Ropes and Gray 2019). Despite the dynamic growth of the coworking movement, since its emergence, its organizational essence has not been clearly defined and still remains vague. In this respect, two central questions remain unanswered: *Is the coworking phenomenon a result of an organizational revolution or an organizational evolution?* and *How does the coworking phenomenon differ from the well-known hierarchical organizations?* This chapter attempts to answer these questions and define more concretely the organizational essence of the phenomenon. The next section is a theoretical and literature review, which explores Erikson's lifespan model (Erikson 1959) as an instrument to evaluate the movement's growth and challenges, Scott's classification of organizational systems which is used to define the place of the coworking phenomenon within this framework, and Quinn's competing values framework, which is used as a basis for the conducted empirical study (Cameron and Quinn 1999). The two further sections present the methods and results from the empirical study which compares the organizational culture in two seemingly distinct organizational structures – a corporate banking structure and a coworking enterprise structure. The last section presents the limitations and conclusions of this chapter.

Theoretical Review

Coworking Development and Lifespan Model

In order to understand better what the coworking movement has been through until now, we will use, as a metaphor, the lifespan model of the developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (Erikson and Erikson 1998) and draw a parallel between the psychosocial development of the human being and the development of the coworking phenomenon. According to Erikson (Erikson and Erikson 1998), the "ego" develops by successfully resolving crises, which are social by nature and occur on each stage of the personal development. The personality develops in a predetermined order, and builds upon each previous stage. The successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and the acquisition of basic virtues.

The first stage of the lifespan model is known as **Trust vs Mistrust**. In the context of the emergence of the coworking movement, one can relate this first stage to the initial period when a critical mass of people embraced the idea. This idea was built on mutual trust and group cohesion. With their actions, these people proved that they are trustworthy and consistent in their actions. As a result, the ability to trust the world has been developed due to the consistent care that was given to the coworking idea throughout this initial phase. The coworking concept went through this crisis successfully and internalized the sense of *Hope*, the basic virtue for this stage, and a critical one for the next stages of development.

The second crisis **Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt** comes with the main question *Can I do things myself or am I reliant on the help of others*? and its basic value is *Will*. In the coworking context, we observed that the coworking phenomenon asserted independence amongst the old, well-known office structures, crossed the borders of the continents, and established itself as a movement. It became capable of "making its own choices," which was embodied in the emergence of the coworking varieties. As a result, coworking reached a level of autonomy and integrated a sense of confidence.

As a next step in its development, the coworking phenomenon entered the stage **Initiative vs Guilt** which raises questions such as *Am I good or bad?* and its basic virtue is the *Purpose*. At this stage, the coworking started growing fast and its founders and advocates became proactive and confident to explore the coworking abilities. They started applying the coworking power over the environment by planning activities, accomplishing tasks, and facing challenges. As an outcome, the coworking movement "learned" how to initiate activities, how to collaborate between each other's spaces, and how to lead and integrate the new spaces in the movement. All this gave the coworking a sense of purpose and direction.

This led the coworking movement to the moment when it started asking *How can I be good?* That was the stage of **Industry vs Inferiority** where the central virtue was the *Competency*. We witnessed how the coworking supporters began to develop

a sense of pride in their accomplishments and abilities, how the coworking social influence increased dramatically, and how by demonstrating competency and capability, coworking phenomenon formed a strong self-concept. During social interactions, the coworking founders and advocates discovered that its specifics are highly prized by others, which led to a sense of confidence.

What is happening in the present moment and what has been gradually evolving in the last two or three years of the coworking lifespan is the **Identity vs Role Confusion** crisis. This period emerges at the age of 12–18 in human's development and raises the important question *Who am I*? which is linked to the basic virtue is *Fidelity* (Erikson 1968). What we currently witness is that together with the coworking spaces, more and more real estate businesses, serviced offices, and hospitality businesses occurred on the flexible spaces market (Ropes and Gray 2019). This burst on the market led to confusion and difficulty in defining the role of the coworking; it is wandering between being all and only about the community on one hand and, on the other, going to the other end of the continuum, being the office rental industry that we remember from the past.

While conducting the empirical study, presented further in this chapter, a side observation was made, which later on gained greater importance. During informal conversations, it was noticed that space operators were often trying to differentiate their spaces from one another, based on whether they are community-driven (usually independent coworking spaces) or real estate–driven spaces (usually big chains). They were founded for different reasons (building a community versus running a rental business); they had different values (collaboration and openness versus profit-focus) and set themselves different goals (sustaining strong community versus sustaining full occupancy). For many who were part of the early emergence of the coworking phenomenon, there was a sense of disappointment when the real estate–driven spaces started influencing and transforming the community-focused coworking movement into a services and facilities industry. Gradually, it was realized that in order for the flexibility, freedom, "outside-of-the-box" attitude to be sustained, there is no way the profitability side of the business to be ignored (Foertsch 2019).

This inherent ongoing tendency of splitting the initial "unified coworking identity" into intangible community values and tangible economic results is the *identity crisis* the coworking phenomenon is currently going through. On the one hand, this process can be seen as a cause for this dynamic role confusion, but on the other, it can also be a chance for the movement to build and attain role integrity and cohesion. The thread that stands before the coworking movement if it fails to go through this stage successfully, however, is the risk to lose its essence, to melt down into other already well-known structures and concepts. This will then lead to dissatisfaction and sense of isolation which will influence its further development.

Organizational Systems and the Place of Coworking in Them

While following the developmental path of the coworking phenomenon within the socio-economic context, we also need to define the terms "revolution" and "evolution" in relation to the coworking context, in order to answer the titular question. Revolution can be defined as *a forcible overthrow of an existing order, in favor of a new system*, while evolution states for *gradual development of something* (Oxford Dictionary). Knowing the essence of the coworking phenomenon and understanding the socio-economic environment of its emergence and the stages of its development allows us to compare the coworking organizational model with the already established, well-known organizational systems, and potentially, affiliate it with one of them. This approach will be the first step in an attempt to answer to the following questions:

- Is the coworking phenomenon (structure and culture) a revolutionary new organizational approach, or is it a result of the systematic continuous organizational evolution?
- Does the coworking reject the status quo of the already well-known types of organizations? (this would be defined as revolution). Or is it seen as part of an organizational continuum? (this would be defined as evolution).
- Is coworking an evolutionary organizational result that revolutionizes the current perception of work and workplace?

In his book *Organizations and Organizing: Rational, Natural and Open Systems Perspectives* (Scott and Davis 2007), W. Richard Scott has outlined 5 main elements that each organization consists of – environment; strategy and goals, work and technology; formal organization; informal organization; and people. He states that "…organizations are, first and foremost **systems of elements,** each of which affects and is affected by the others" (Scott and Davis 2007, 25). Based on their dynamics, he has defined three main organizational systems or paradigms.

The **environment** refers to the specific physical, technological, cultural, and social elements outside the organization to which it must adapt in order to survive. Coworking exists in a highly dynamic, constantly changing business and social environment, where adapting quickly, changing directions and approaches, and innovating and creating have become must-have characteristics in order for it to survive, not only as a business, but also as a concept.

Organizational **strategy** and **goals** outline the organizational decisions toward clients and markets, together with the end business goals organizations set for themselves. Unlike many other business models, the main coworking goal is to build a community of like-minded people and foster the collaboration between their members while keeping financial independence. Strategy-wise, the coworking market or target, if we can say so, has expanded a lot throughout the years. In the beginning, the main target was freelancers, digital nomads, and solopreneurs; later on, the focus was directed to the startups, the small and medium enterprises, and the

entrepreneurs; and in the last few years, we observed an increasing interest toward the bigger companies and corporates. What is interesting is that until now, regardless of the target expansion, none of the groups have become obsolete. Moreover, the used strategy and approach has diversified, aiming to meet the needs and expectations of each group.

In order for these goals to be accomplished, organizations need to have a set of specific tasks and **technology** to execute the **work**. The work that needs to be done in a coworking space is very diverse and combines conceptual, physical, and business-oriented tasks – from accommodating workstations for individuals and companies, organizing community events, and building a community, to hosting external events, dealing with logistics, handling finance, and providing security to the members. With this complex work concept comes the complex technology, used by most of the coworking organizations – on one hand it is needed to be familiar with the social psychology and the psychology of crowds, to know and manage group dynamics, but on the other, it is necessary to have high-tech systems to manage the physical space and internal processes.

In addition, there is a need of **formal organization** of the work and its interconnected elements. Usually, this formal organization is manifested in the structure of the organization, the design of the jobs, and the recruitment processes. Even though most of the coworking teams characterize with relatively flat structures, a formal organization is still needed to manage the work tasks and coordinate the efforts towards reaching the set goals. There are well-defined roles which are established in almost each coworking space, such as community manager and event manager.

On the other hand, there is also **informal organization** in the face of culture, norms and values, social networks, power and politics, actions of leaders, which influence the way the organization operates. Coworking spaces seem to expose publicly their informal organization – usually their core values are manifested, they are a part of bigger social networks and even themselves, and they create social networks for their members. Their culture combines the community and the team cultures which highly influences the way the coworking organization operates and the type of shared organizational climate.

And lastly, the **people** are the vital element for each organization to function, to operate, to follow goals, to execute tasks, and to adapt. This is the element that perhaps most explicitly highlights the specificity of the coworking phenomenon; on one hand there is the community that uses the space (Spinuzzi et al. 2019), and on the other there is the team that runs the space. Therefore, reaching the organizational goals and completing the work tasks depends mainly on the interpersonal relations – first within each of these two groups and secondly, in between them. This peculiar synergy makes the coworking a unique organizational concept.

The essence of these five organizational elements of the coworking phenomenon and the dynamic nature of their correlation seems to outline it as an open, highly adaptive and flexible, socio-oriented organizational system. Following the attempt to see if the coworking organization can be attributed to one of the main organizational systems – rational, natural and open systems – I will summarize W. Richard Scott's concept about each of the systems. It is important to mention that these

systems also reflect the historical development of the organizations, since they became a subject of study (late 19th–early 20th century). W. Richard Scott (Scott and Davis 2007) analyzes the organizations and the organizational theories across two dimensions – rational and natural systems, and closed or open to the external world and environment systems.

The **rational systems**, also known as mechanistic organizational models, have highly formalized structures, aiming to make the organization behavior more predictable and easy to regulate. They are oriented to the pursuit of specific organizational goals and *the organizational structure is viewed as a means, as an instrument, which can be modified as necessary to improve performance.* (Scott and Davis 2007, p.38). The main focus is on the structure and efficiency of the organization, while workers' behavior is perceived as rational. An example of such an organizational system is Henry Ford's car manufacturing and the invention of the auto assembly line which was enabled by Frederick W. Taylor's work *Principles of Scientific Management* (Taylor 1911). According to him and his followers, *it was possible to scientifically analyze tasks performed by individual workers in order to discover those procedures that would produce the maximum output with the minimum input of energies and resources* (Scott and Davis 2007, p.40).

Unlike the rational systems, the **natural systems** (organic organizational model) look at organizations as collectivities; the pursuit goals can be both individual and organizational and the structures turn from formal to informal. The natural system theorists focus on *the complex interconnections between the normative and the behavioral structures of organizations* and way more attention is paid to the relation between the organizational goals and the behavior of the workers. These systems emphasize that the individuals *enter the organization with individually shaped ideas, expectations, and agendas, and they bring with them distinctive values, interests, sentiments, and abilities* (Scott and Davis 2007, p. 63) Natural systems are believed to be a combination of formal and informal structure. An example of a natural system is Elton Mayo (Mayo 2007) and his interpretation on the Hawthorne Studies.

Open systems appear not as rejecting the earlier rational and natural closed systems, but as an evolution of the already existing system views (Scott and Davis 2007, p.110). The main difference which the open system theories after the 1960s outline is that organizations cannot exist without taking into account the external environment and its influence on the work processes and employees. Well-known theorists of this concept are D. Katz and R. Khan (Katz and Khan 1978) who focus their attention on the problems of human organizations – the motivation to work, the resolution of conflict, the exercise of leadership – and examine the relations between organizations and their environments.

Based on the outlined specifics of the organizational elements of the coworking organizations and the evolution of the organizational systems, we can assume that the coworking organizations appear as an evolutional result of the organizational development from closed, rigid to open systems; and we can associate them mostly with the open natural systems described by W. Richard Scott. Furthermore, due to the specific structure, functions, operations, and flexibility that haven't existed in this

shape and form in the past, we can even suppose that the coworking phenomenon could be a potential precursor of a new era in the organizational systems. Unlike the described by W. Richard Scott systems, coworking has managed to challenge and revolutionize the perception of work both from employers and employees' perspectives. We are witnessing an evolution in the perception of "work" – less often perceived as a "9 to 5" job, and instead more frequently as a self-managed process and responsibility which is internalized and can be executed at any place, at any time (Azar et al. 2018). Employers have started providing flexible and remote-working options to their employees in response to the changing socio-economic environment and employee requirements, as well as a tool to increase the employees' retention and satisfaction levels (Grobler and De Bruyn 2011; Idris 2014; Singh 2019). Employees are constantly learning how to become more self-organized and capable of good time-management without direct supervision. Thanks to the free movement of people and new technologies, coworking spaces can accommodate this change. What also differentiates coworking from the previously discussed systems is that it allows and even fosters teams and individuals to be at the same time connected and engaged on personal and professional levels with their teammates and other peers from the community. This emphasis on the community is also what sets apart coworking spaces from already known organizational structures such as business incubators, which might appear similar on the surface. The mutually supportive environment can potentially boost one's creativity, professional skills and knowledge, and friendship connections. (Capdevila and Zhao 2015; Cabral and Winden 2016; Cuérel et al. 2019). Coworking revolutionizes with the fact that it does not only provide a workplace, but it is a social ecosystem that enriches your work experience on individual, social, and professional levels.

Competing Values Framework and Organizational Coworking Culture

Our second verification approach is focused on the competing values framework (Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1983, p.363–377), which aimed to evaluate the organizational performance and effectiveness (Quinn and Cameron 1983), and the measurement of the organizational culture (Cameron and Freeman 1991, p.25–35). R. Quinn and J. Rohrbauh (Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1983) suggested three value dimensions which represent different organizational dilemmas. The first one is related to the organizational focus – from internal focus, which emphasizes on people's development and well-being in the organization, to external, which focuses on the organizational development. The second dimension is related to the organizational structure and its two ends refer to flexibility and stability. The last one is related to the organizational means and ends and can emphasize either on important processes or on final outcomes. The third dimension was integrated into the other two and established the competing values framework (Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1983, p.369). Based

on these 3 criteria, R. Quinn and J. Rohrbaugh outlined 4 models of organizational analysis – human relations model, open system model, internal process model and rational goal model.

As a continuation, Cameron and Freeman (Cameron and Freeman 1991, p.25–35) used the competing values framework to define and measure the organizational culture. They explored the relationship between organizational effectiveness, culture, and strength, but used two of the three dimensions – control vs flexibility and internal vs external focus.

As we can see in Fig. 1, the human relations (Clan culture) and open system models (Adhocracy culture) emphasize upon *flexibility*, while the open system (Adhocracy Culture) and rational goal models (Market Culture) are primarily concerned with an *external focus* out toward the environment. The rational goal (Market Culture) and internal process models (Hierarchy Culture) are rooted in a value on *control*. Finally, the internal process (Hierarchy Culture) and human relations models (Clan Culture) share an *internal focus* inward within the organization (Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1983, p. 363–377). Similarly to what we observed in the organizational systems approach, and based on our previous description and understanding of how the coworking organizations function, we can recognize and analyze the coworking phenomenon mainly in and through the open system model (adhocracy culture) and the Human relations model (Clan culture). In its essence, coworking is

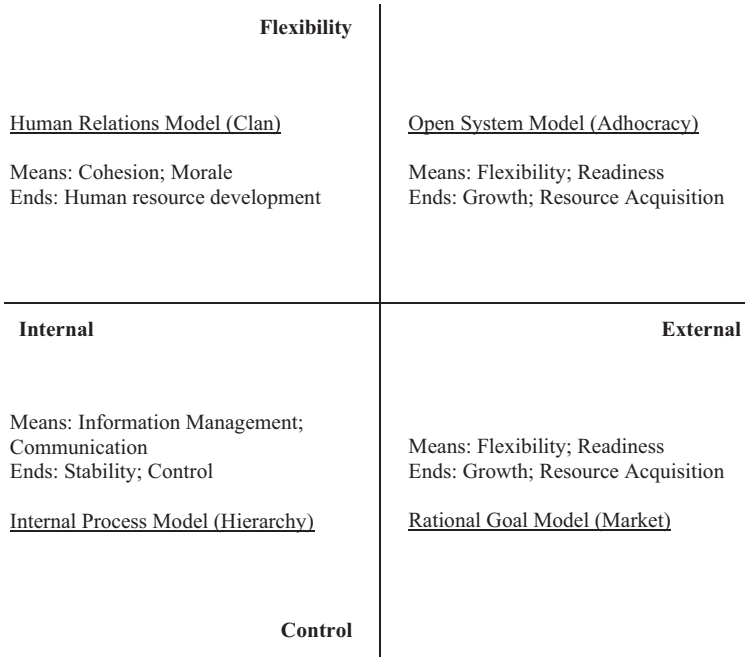

Fig. 1 Competing values framework and organizational culture, based on the work of Quinn and Rohrbaugh (Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1983)

characterized with high levels of flexibility and openness toward the external environment and prizes human relations and individual development.

Methods

In order to verify the assumptions about the organizational specificity of the coworking phenomenon which were outlined in the previous section, and find an answer to the research question *Is the coworking phenomenon (structure and culture) a revolutionary new organizational approach, or is it a result of the systematic continuous organizational evolution?*, a comparative study focused on the organizational cultures of coworking and corporate organizations was conducted (Stancheva 2017).

The main hypothesis of the study is that the coworking organizations have a specific organizational culture where the adhocracy-type dominates, while the bank organizations have as dominant the hierarchical and market organizational cultures.

The research sample consists of two groups. The first group consists of 42 employees from 14 coworking organizations based in Europe, as a representation of the flexible workplaces. 40.6% are Bulgarian residents, 2.5% are from Germany, while the rest (37.9%) are from other European countries – Italy, Netherlands, UK, Slovenia, Spain, Poland, Romania, Austria, Russia. The second group consists of 70 employees from an international bank institution, based in Bulgaria, as a representation of the corporate companies. All of them are Bulgarian residents.

For both groups, a simple random sampling was applied, based on the readiness of the respondents to participate in the survey. The study in the bank institution was conducted in 2012, while the one in the coworking organizations – in 2016. The studies were anonymous for both groups and were conducted online. They were conducted in different years, as they were initially part of different research projects. The idea to compare them came subsequently, as we saw an opportunity for this approach to give an answer to our research question about the coworking phenomenon and its organizational essence.

The demographics showed that more than half of the respondents identify themselves as women (Table 1). As shown on Table 2, the majority of all surveyed are in their young adulthood (Erikson 1968). It is interesting to observe that within the coworking group, more than two-thirds of the respondents are between 26–35 years old and there are no employees older than 45. This result could be explained with the novelty of the coworking phenomenon and business which seems to be driven by and attracting mainly younger people with less work experience (Table 3).

Table 1 Gender distribution of the respondents

Gender	Coworking representatives		Bank representatives	
	n	%	*n*	%
Female	27	64.3	44	62.9
Male	15	35.7	26	37.1

Table 2 Age distribution of the respondents

Age	Coworking representatives		Bank representatives	
	N	%	*n*	%
Under 25	8	19	16	22.9
26–35	32	76.2	34	48.6
36–45	2	4.8	10	14.3
46–55	0	0	7	9.9
55+	0	0	3	4.3

Table 3 Work experience distribution of the respondents

Work experience	Coworking representatives		Bank representatives	
	N	%	*n*	%
20+ years	0	0	9	12.9
16–20 years	1	2.4	5	7.1
11–15 years	4	9.5	8	11.4
6–10 years	17	40.5	17	24.3
3–5 years	14	33.3	17	24.3
1–2 years	5	11.9	9	12.9
Less than 1 year	1	2.4	5	7.1

As expected, we observed a positive correlation (Pearson's correlation) between the age of the respondents and their work experience – for the whole sample, there is a strong correlation ($r = 0.788$; $p \leq 0.000$); however, when analyzed separately, we found out that this correlation is stronger for the employees from the bank industry ($r = 0.842$; $p \leq 0.000$) than for those from the coworking industry ($r = 0.415$; $p \leq 0.006$). The moderate correlation observed in the coworking group can be explained with the narrowed age range of the respondents.

For the aim of the study, we used a quantitative method based on K. Cameron and S. J. Freeman's Organizational Culture Questionnaire (Cameron and Freeman 1991). It consists of 16 statements which measure the 4 types of organizational culture. We used a 5-point Likert scale to assess to what degree each statement represents the culture of the organization (1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 – Agree; 5 – Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was adapted to the coworking and bank reality and showed very good psychometric properties and high reliability, with Cronbach Alpha α = **0.825** for coworking employees and α = **0.731** for bank employees. For the results analysis, we applied Pearson's correlation, two-tailed independent T-test, and linear regression.

Results

The culture in the coworking spaces is perceived as dynamic, open to challenges, and stimulating entrepreneurship, which are characteristic of the **adhocracy culture** (Mean = 3.98, SD = 0.77; Min = 1; Max = 5). The surveyed teammates see

their colleagues as professionals who are not afraid to risk in order to achieve the organizational goals. They value the focus their coworking organizations have on growth and development and believe in the organizational capacity to face and deal with new challenges. They share that one of the main factors that keep the coworking team together is their engagement with the upcoming novelties and ongoing development. Together with that, the respondents see the shared organizational culture as a **clan culture** (Mean = 3.77, SD = 0.76; Min = 1; Max = 5). Their teammates are perceived not just as colleagues but as a big family where they feel secure and receive the needed support. They see themselves as important for the organization and highly value the significance that their coworking spaces attribute to the team cohesion and collegiality. Loyalty and traditions are also important factors for keeping the team integrity. Not only does the coworking culture have dominant adhocracy and clan traits, but it also shows characteristics of **market culture** (Mean = 3.19, SD = 0.87; Min = 1; Max = 5). Coworking spaces are oriented toward achievements and keep a healthy level of competency which helps the movement to evolve. The results show that the third main factor for the stability of the coworking organizations is the successfully accomplished team goals.

The coworking teams' representatives see their culture as **hierarchical** to a lesser extent (Mean = 2.61, SD = 0.80; Min = 1; Max = 5). This is expected to a certain degree, taking into account the typical flat structure of the coworking teams. The respondents shared that they see their organizational structure as barely formalized, structured, and bureaucratic. The presence of formal rules and procedures are not recognized as factors that could strengthen their team stability and cohesion. Nevertheless, they admit that perseverance and effective actions are important for the smooth workflow and process.

A Pearson's correlation analysis between the four types of culture for the coworking group showed moderate positive correlations between the dominant culture (adhocracy) with the other three (Table 4).

A moderate correlation is demonstrated between the most and least present organizational cultures – adhocracy and hierarchy ($r = 0.479$; $p \leq 0.01$). A possible explanation of this result could be that in case the management of a coworking space decides to intensify and further develop entrepreneurial and innovative ideas in their space (adhocracy culture), a need for introducing more rules, procedures, and structure will arise.

Table 4 Correlations between adhocracy, clan, market, and hierarchy cultures for the coworking sample group

Type of culture	n	M	SD	Adhocracy	Clan	Market	Hierarchy
Adhocracy	42	3.98	0.77	1	**0.570****	**0.338***	**0.479****
Clan	42	3.77	0.76	**0.570****	1	0.011	0.230
Market	42	3.19	0.87	**0.338***	0.011	1	0.270
Hierarchy	42	2.61	0.80	**0.479****	0.230	0.270	1

*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$

As visualized on Fig. 2, the coworking industry is mainly dominated by adhocracy and clan organizational cultures, while in the bank (corporate) industry, the market and hierarchical cultures are dominant. These results characterize the coworking spaces as specific organizations which have established a balance between social orientation and economic business objectives. The orientation of the coworking movement toward social connectivity, reciprocity, and innovation is a counterpoint to the strongly formalized and market-oriented nature of the corporate world.

In order to verify the comparative analysis between the coworking and the corporate cultures and confirm our assumption that the coworking culture is significantly more adhocracy-oriented and clan-oriented than the bank (corporate) culture, we executed a two-tailed independent sample T-test for the four types of organizational culture. For the **adhocracy** culture, the T-test showed that the difference in perception between the 42 participants from the coworking industry compared to the 70 participants from the bank institution is statistically significant (see Table 5) and that the adhocracy is stronger within the coworking culture. A similar result was

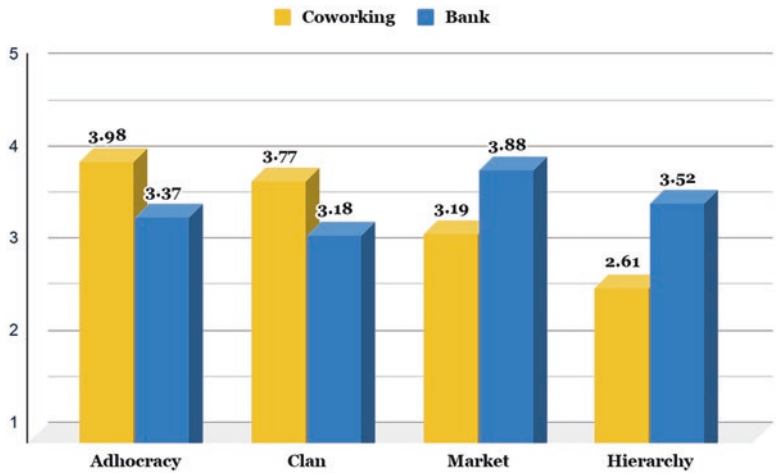

Fig. 2 Organizational culture in coworking and bank organizations, based on studies conducted respectively in 2016 and 2012

Table 5 Two-tailed independent sample T-test for market and hierarchy cultures within the coworking and bank industries

Type of culture	Coworking industry		Bank industry		t(112)	*p*	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Adhocracy	3.98	0.77	3.37	0.64	4.477	0.000	0.853
Clan	3.77	0.76	3.18	0.57	4.63	0.000	0.869
Market	3.19	0.87	3.88	0.51	−5.353	0.000	−0.977
Hierarchy	2.61	0.8	3.52	0.51	−7.394	0.000	−1.363

confirmed for the **clan** culture, where the perception of the coworking group is significantly higher compared to the bank group. As previously hypothesized, we observed the opposite tendency for the other 2 types of culture – market and hierarchy, where they appear as dominant for the bank industry (Table 5).

For the coworking teams, engagement with the upcoming novelties and ongoing development, loyalty and traditions, and reaching team goals are the leading factors for their cohesion (adhocracy and clan cultures). While for the bank industry, these factors are embodied in the accomplishment of the organizational goals and following strictly the formal rules and procedures (market and hierarchy cultures).

It is exciting to observe these different organizational culture combinations and assume that the occurrence of the coworking movement has revolutionized the way organizations and teams can function, develop and be successful. This balance between external orientation, characterized with flexibility and adaptation, stimulating innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship, led by the economic market mechanisms, on one hand, and internal focus, caring about the individuals and supporting and stimulating teamwork and partnership, proves that coworking is an open, flexible, socio-centric system. In addition, the specific coworking structure, which includes coworking teams and community, adds another level of complexity of the way these organizations function, market themselves and take care of their customers. Their customers are their community; therefore, their business success relies on their capacity to sustain, advocate, and spread their culture not only among the team, but also among their members.

Since the time the second study was conducted in 2016 until now, based on further observation and personal experience in the coworking industry, we can state that coworking has remained the ultimate flexible, open work environment that welcomes and fosters collaboration, interaction, community, and belonging.

As a next step in the data analysis, a l**inear regression analysis** was performed using 3 main demographic factors, as explanatory variables (age, sex, work experience, and difference between coworking and bank organization) against 4 separate target variables (adhocracy, clan, market, and hierarchy cultures). However, the results did not show any significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables apart from the difference between the type of organization (see Appendix 1). As this relationship was already confirmed by the performed T-tests, it was decided that a detailed discussion of the regression analysis results brings no additional useful information.

Limitations

It is important to note the limitations of the presented empirical study. A major limitation of the current research is the small and relatively inconsistent sample groups, which does not allow the findings to be generalized. The data for the two sample groups used in the empirical study is collected in different time periods and cover different demographic populations. Overcoming these limitations might be a good

direction for future research. Moreover, given the still limited amount of research conducted in the area of coworking culture and coworking organizational essence, the presented theoretical analysis and the empirical study do provide insights about the position of the coworking phenomenon into the organizational systems' framework. Questioning the coworking origin and studying its development provides a new perspective for future research and analysis. An improvement over the current approach is to conduct a comparative study with a possibly larger sample which includes organizations with similar sizes from other sectors and industries. A longitudinal study would allow tracking empirically the development of the coworking phenomenon and providing sufficient data to make conclusions on its evolutionary or revolutionary organizational origin and development.

Discussion

The coworking phenomenon has emerged in a complex socio-economic environment and dynamically changing, digitally mediated, and hard-to-predict times (Degryse 2017; Manyika et al. 2020). These prerequisites of the present can be perceived both as a unique chance and as a threat to the organizational status-quo, survival, and development. Organizational characteristics such as openness, flexibility (Yukl and Mahsud 2010; Prommarat et al. 2015; Giovanis 2019), adaptiveness, and innovation (Ahlstrom 2017) will become decisive factors for the future growth and success of the organizations. These organizational traits are already recognized as important both for the employees' well-being and satisfaction (Garazi et al. 2013) and for the external relationships with clients, partners, and vendors.

It seems like the labor market, following the trends of the present situation, is gradually evolving toward absolute system openness, and the coworking emergence and development is a proof for this process (Waters-Lynch 2018). This gives us the confidence to state that from an *etiological perspective*, the coworking phenomenon seems to be an evolutionary response to the existing closed, rigid, hierarchical organizations which seem to go through these times without changing their established organizational approach. Moreover, the opposing results of the study on the organizational cultures of these two organizational types can uphold this statement.

Nevertheless, from a *gnoseological perspective,* coworking seems to be a revolutionary phenomenon, on one hand, because of its specific structure, functions and business model, and on the other, because of its intensive social focus. It supports, facilitates, and stimulates a change in the way people perceive their jobs, their workplaces, their sense of belonging, and their team relations – a change that aims to exclusively take into account the personal satisfaction, well-being, work-life balance, and social needs (Spinuzzi et al. 2019). We can even perceive this revolutionary uniqueness of the coworking phenomenon as a potential trigger of a new type of organizational systems. In order to confirm or decline such a bold assumption, however, future longitudinal studies need to be carried out.

Lastly, we should not neglect the identity crisis which the coworking movement is currently going through, as described earlier in this paper. Too much focus on the profit and financial stability side of the coworking will inevitably blur the social concept which it was initially aiming for, and will not leave enough space and capacity to be sustained and fostered. Moreover, this will, most likely, limit the flexibility and adaptivity which the coworking phenomenon is known for. On the other hand, while cultivating a healthy community, coworking spaces cannot ignore the economic factors which affect their business. Therefore, the way in which the coworking phenomenon will develop depends on the outcome of this current crisis and the ability to remain in balance in the context of the role confusion. Either it will lose momentum and keep the sense of role confusion, which will gradually lead to a loss of identity and eventually become indistinguishable from the already existing and familiar organizational structures and concepts, or it will form an identity and continue to follow its evolutionary pace, while shaping the emergence of a new organizational system and the future of work.

Appendix 1

The results from the regression analysis are presented in this section (Tables 6, 7, 8 and 9). Ordinary least squares are used as a method to analyze the relationship between the independent variable (the four types of cultures: Clan, Adhocracy, Hierarchy and Market) and the socio-demographic factors (Sex, Age and Organization). Due to the high correlation between age and work experience, the latter was excluded in the results presented below. The same analysis was carried out with work experience and excluding age, and the results are very similar. For the purposes of conciseness it was decided to omit the latter set of results. Organization is a dummy variable for the type of organizational structure: bank enterprise or coworking enterprise.

Table 6 Results from OLS regression analysis on Clan culture

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Intercept	2.917	0.263	2.397	3.438	0.000
Sex	0.023	0.071	−0.117	0.163	0.747
Age	0.131	0.128	−0.123	0.386	0.309
Organization [a]	0.593	0.130	0.335	0.851	0.000

Note. total $N = 112$. *CI* confidence interval, *LL* lower limit, *UL* upper limit
[a]0 = Bank organization, 1 = Coworking organization

Table 7 Results from OLS regression analysis on Adhocracy culture

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Intercept	2.872	0.277	2.323	3.421	0.000
Sex	0.069	0.074	−0.079	0.216	0.358
Age	0.212	0.135	−0.056	0.480	0.120
Organization [a]	0.628	0.137	0.356	0.900	0.000

Note. total $N = 112$. *CI* confidence interval, *LL* lower limit, *UL* upper limit
[a]0 = Bank organization, 1 = Coworking organization

Table 8 Results from OLS regression analysis on Hierarchy culture

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Intercept	3.654	0.255	3.149	4.159	0.000
Sex	0.040	0.068	−0.096	0.175	0.563
Age	−0.138	0.125	−0.385	0.109	0.269
Organization [a]	−0.893	0.126	−1.144	−0.643	0.000

Note. total $N = 112$. *CI* confidence interval, *LL* lower limit, *UL* upper limit
[a]0 = Bank organization, 1 = Coworking organization

Table 9 Results from OLS regression analysis on Market culture

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Intercept	3.605	0.267	3.076	4.135	0.000
Sex	−0.044	0.072	−0.186	0.099	0.545
Age	0.226	0.131	−0.033	0.484	0.087
Organization [a]	−0.716	0.132	−0.979	−0.454	0.000

Note. total $N = 112$. *CI* confidence interval, *LL* lower limit, *UL* upper limit
[a]0 = Bank organization, 1 = Coworking organization

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Coworking Spaces for Public Administration

Felix Gauger and Andreas Pfnür

Abstract Coworking spaces are an emerging form of work within organizations; however, this work arrangement is rare in public administration. In this chapter, we analyze the potential of coworking spaces for public units (public coworking spaces, henceforth). We show how they can enhance the attractiveness of the public sector and foster collaboration among units and citizens. The chapter analyzes values for public coworking spaces and changes in the work environment and derives changed user needs. Among the benefits are greater flexibility, reduced commuting time, and user responsiveness. Public units can adapt their workplace strategy step by step. Starting the transformation within their own office, they can gradually open their workspace for other units. Finally, sharing their offices with other sectors, they can profit from reduced-boundary governance.

Keywords Coworking space · Public administration · Coworking

Public Management and the Transformation of Work

Coworking spaces are shared working environments that offer both tangible and intangible resources for individuals, freelancers, small- and medium-sized companies, and also large corporates (Fuzi 2015; Gauger and Pfnür 2019). One of their main success factors is collaboration among the workers for whom they provide an institutional setting with the possibility of a flexible work style.

While the private sector makes use of coworking spaces, the question arises as to why this work arrangement has not yet been considered by public administrations. For public management, this form of physical organization of work is still a new territory.

A massive transformation process triggered by a social and technological change affects all sectors of the economy. These societal changes and technological

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advancements affect work and employees' expectations from their employer. Information and communication technologies (ICT) fundamentally change society, economy, politics, and administration (Randma-Liiv and Drechsler 2017). For public administration, the greatest challenge is the aging of the workforce and the retention of employees due to low attractiveness of the public sector. Public employers are struggling to find employees with key qualifications and are becoming increasingly creative in the competition for new talent (Oberholz 2018; Perry et al. 2006). A recent study by the International City/County Management Association (2014) states that attracting the next generation of workers is the top management challenge. For more than a quarter of survey respondents, this challenge is more pressing than building community trust, communicating with elected officials, or engaging with department heads (Lawson 2017).

Furthermore, tasks in public management are also becoming more complex, more distributed, and more often performed in collaborative teams as societal problems become more wicked (Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010). Social aspects of work are becoming increasingly important such as "time for interaction, being creative and having private thinking time if the completion of a given task requires it" (Fuzi et al. 2018, p. 1). Boudreau et al. (2017, p. 575) note that there "has been considerable interest in the policy arena in fostering collaborations" in recent years.

Only a few studies have investigated the implementation of coworking spaces in the public sector. Ganapati and Reddick (2018, p. 5) analyze the sharing economy in the public sector and note that "co-working in large government agencies result in more efficient utilization of the government offices and reduces the real estate required for the agencies." Stewart-Johnson and Cruz (2013) show the case of a federal agency that consolidated their office to achieve cost savings. Houghton et al. (2018) describe the trial of Australian government employees to work in coworking spaces and its impact on productivity, staff retention, and work–life balance and find that the alternative work venue was highly praised and appreciated. Intaratat (2018) outlines the effort of government agencies in Asia to establish coworking spaces or SMART hubs that serve the growing demand in the new knowledge economy and focus on the impact of digitalization of work. The Canadian government recently launched a pilot project where federal employees were given access to coworking spaces as a touchdown point between meetings or as a temporary workspace when they are teleworking. "These sites offer an inclusive community environment that will drive collaboration, innovation and productivity among users" (Public Services and Procurement Canada 2019, p. 1).

However, while these studies discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a specific case, literature still lacks public management requirements for new working environments. It is also of interest how the knowledge and experience of coworking spaces can be transferred to public administration. As Negoita (2018, p. 10) states, "public sector organizations still have specific circumstances that differentiate them from private firms." In fact, research that has addressed whether public administration has specific requirements that hinder it from adopting flexible work environments is scanty in extant literature. In particular, the question is how can coworking spaces encourage a challenging work environment in public administration? To

address this research question, this chapter examines how public coworking spaces have to be organized to meet the specific needs of public employees to address the values of the public sector.

The findings reveal that coworking spaces in public administration can be used through a dense network of public agencies in a city. They foster collaboration, innovation, and social interaction. Services like childcare, high accessibility, and a high service level are the specific needs of public employees.

New Needs and Performance Criteria in (New) Public Management

The growing influence of managerial ideas and practices, such as efficiency, effectiveness, and competition, has sparked interest in New Public Management (NPM), which has become the dominant approach in public administration in the 1980s (Bryson et al. 2014).

NPM focuses on output and results rather than sticking to the general rules of procedure. As a response to the challenges of a networked, multi-sector world, a new approach with values beyond efficiency and effectiveness has emerged (Bryson et al. 2014). This emerging approach, commonly referred to as Public Value Management (O'Flynn 2007) or New Public Governance (NPG), actively engages citizens and emphasizes collaborative problem-solving (Bozeman 2017). Hartley (2005) particularly emphasizes the collaborative innovation of multi-actors across organizations to create public value.

Collaborative arrangements are increasingly implemented at all levels of public organizations to counteract complex problems and overcome the limitations of single organizations (Ansell and Gash 2007; Mandell and Keast 2007). Many professional organizations and government agencies, such as the Canadian Privy Council Office, the Australian Public Service Commission (Houghton et al. 2018), the New Zealand State Services Commission, and the South African Department of Public Service and Administration, promote the practice of collaboration (Silvia 2018). Within the European Union (EU), the European commission and other EU research projects note the relevance of employee-led innovation (Kesselring et al. 2014).

An emerging body of literature shows the importance of values like innovation (Ansell and Torfing 2014; OECD 2010), cooperation (Lindsay et al. 2018), collaboration (Hall and Battaglio 2018; Steen and Schott 2018), and co-production (Bovaird 2007; Chen et al. 2019; Voorberg et al. 2015). Furthermore, growing expectations to act in a responsive way, interacting and co-producing with citizens, and engagement are among the shifts in public work, occasionally termed "adaptive" or "agile" governance (Ganapati and Reddick 2018). Table 1 gives an overview of the emerging performance criteria in public management in the last decades.

Collaborative working offers opportunities to build and manage relationships based on trust, communication, and commitment. In this context, collaboration is a

Table 1 Performance criteria in public management (own representation)

1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
Efficiency	Efficiency	Efficiency	Efficiency	Efficiency	Efficiency
	Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness
	Productivity	Productivity	Productivity	Productivity	Productivity
		Competition	Competition	Competition	Competition
		Flexibility	Flexibility	Flexibility	Flexibility
			Innovation	Innovation	Innovation
				Sustainability	Sustainability
				Collaborative governance	Collaborative governance
				Cooperation	Cooperation
					Engagement
					User responsiveness
					Non-territorial work
					Next-generation workplace

Table 2 Next-generation workplace strategic areas (Lawson 2017)

1. Recruiting and hiring	Leveraging social media; mobile recruiting; speed up hiring; enhancement of interviewing practices
2. Benefits	Flexible benefit packages; facilitating a better work–life integration with alternative work methods, including flexible schedules and telecommuting
3. Marketing	Promote the organization and the community
4. Culture and philosophy	Fostering better supervisor/employee relationships; integration of employee feedback; leveraging employee innovation
5. Employee development	Propose leadership development opportunities; help secure career growth opportunities outside of their regular duties
6. Physical environment	Support next-generation workforce with physical space that facilitates social connections and creative collisions; make space where all ideas are shared without fear

capability that allows agencies to adapt quickly to a changing environment (Castilho and Quandt 2017).

User responsiveness enables a fast and agile exchange with citizens and increases the adaptability and visibility of the public sector. Non-territorial work and next-generation workplaces are performance criteria to specifically address the increasing labor shortage in the public sector. The next-generation workplace in a wider sense includes how the use of new technologies shapes the workplace, how strategies are applied to deal with the change, and how the workplace design can be leveraged with regard to engagement, collaboration, and performance. Lawson (2017) identifies six strategic areas for the next-generation workplace (Table 2).

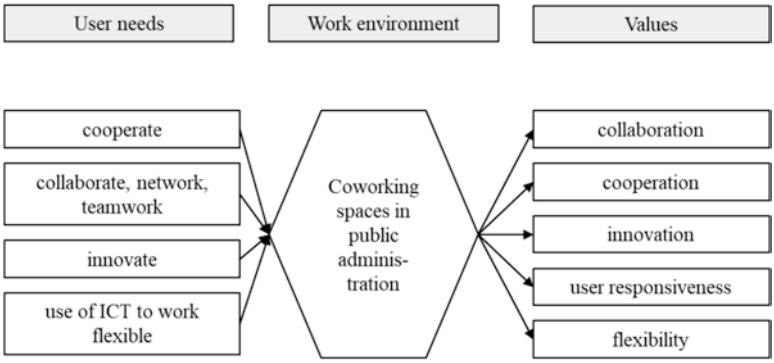

Fig. 1 Research conceptual framework

These six areas of the next-generation workplace can be seen as a potential road map for agencies to attract and retain employees and to cope with the structural workplace changes. The physical work environment can be regarded as a necessary enabler for the other strategic areas.

This paradigm shift in public management emphasizes the need for collaboration and innovation across organizations to create public value (Chen et al. 2019). On the other hand, the physical work environment affects work outcomes like satisfaction, productivity, and organizational performance (Ross et al. 2017).

Building on this outline, we assume that these values can be enhanced by the use of coworking environments to handle the challenging work environment (Fig. 1).

This section has outlined the central findings from the subject literature and has described the crucial features coworking spaces provide to enable opportunities for innovative and collaborative activities to emerge.

Empirical Case of Berlin

In the following section, we describe the case of Berlin's public administration and their attitude toward coworking. In this case, data relating the general attitude toward work, working methods, and flexibility were collected by survey. The special needs for coworking spaces in public administration were discussed in focus group discussions with experts from the public sector.[1] A total of 179 survey responses was received and used for the analysis.

The context of this study, Berlin, offers a dense network of public agencies and hosts the most important institutions of the government with their ministries as well

[1] Twenty-eight decision-makers from different public agencies were invited for 1 day. All participants had at least 5 years' working experience in the public sector and came from different functional areas such as property management, environmental, regulatory, and educational departments.

as numerous embassies and state representations. Furthermore, as the capital of Germany, with a population of approximately 3.72 million and an area of 892 square kilometers, Berlin hosts regional, federal, and state administration (Amt für Statistik 2018). Berlin has a positive immigration rate, and the forecast population for 2030 is 3.83 million (Frei et al. 2018). Additionally, the demand for public employees will immensely increase in the coming years.

The work preferences of new work environments were retrieved in order to assess the attractiveness of coworking spaces. Thirty-two percent of respondents regarded their workspace as a place for productive working, 25% as a location for social interaction, 18% as a place to review work, and 12% as a place for creative work. For some, it was a location to deal with a necessary evil (7%), and 3% regarded their workplace as their second home. To estimate if public employees are open to a new working environment, collaborative behavior was analyzed. Nine percent of the respondents work "strongly autonomously," 51% "slightly more autonomously," 34% "slightly more collaboratively," and 6% "strongly collaboratively." Further, participants were asked when they preferred to work (Fig. 2). While 35% preferred a classical working model, e.g., working from nine to five, 65% preferred to work more flexibly. The adoption of a flexible approach can lead to a higher commitment of high-quality workers. The results thus correspond with the values proposed in our research framework. The analysis shows that there is no significant correlation between the degree of work autonomy that employees prefer and their working time preference.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of criteria that were regarded as relevant. Thirty-seven percent of respondents emphasized the importance of the work environment as a creative and modern space, whereas about one-fourth of respondents preferred a coworking space that reduces their commuting time. Finally, the authors asked participants for characteristics of a coworking space, if employees would hypothetically work in these work environments. Easy access and additional services, such as *free beverages*, *education concepts*, *sport courses*, *technical support*, *after-work events*, and *parcel services*, were cited by the participants.

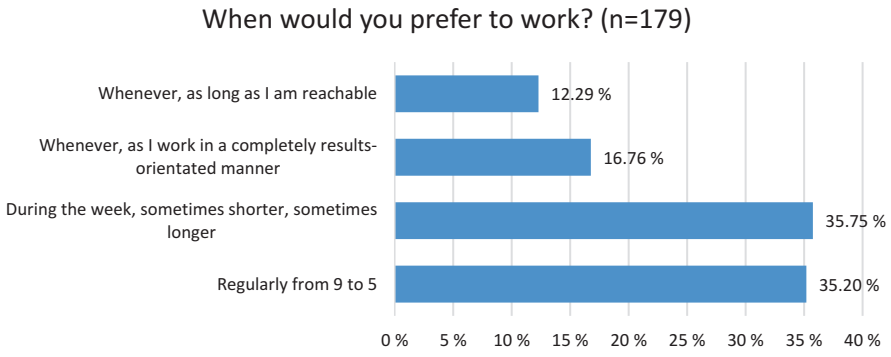

Fig. 2 Preferred working time

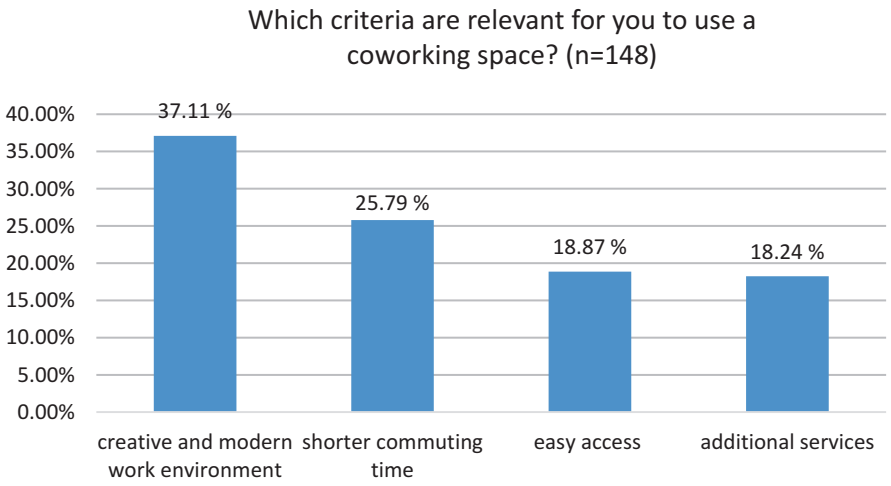

Fig. 3 Necessary criteria of a coworking space

Table 3 Current challenges and solutions in public administration workspaces

Challenge	Solutions
Lack of trust, existing traditional work culture	Result-oriented work, trust instead of control, less hierarchy, more cooperation, establish a new management culture
Create an atmosphere that promotes well-being	Spatial combination of leisure, work, and meeting zones; platform to book available workplaces; creative and innovative design
Need to stay close to citizens	Hubs as meeting points for citizens
	Openness: foyer with coffeehouse for public
Dysfunctions as a team	Coworking space with a strong focus on the community; coworking as a solution for the combination of work and leisure; provision of meeting rooms, break-out rooms, and leisure space; social interaction enforced through spatial design
Own office acting as a status symbol	Reduced hierarchies, no "corner offices," open space areas
Lack of interaction and exchange	Knowledge spillovers due to spatial arrangements and collaboration with other units

Source: Research data

Findings from the Workshop Focus Groups

The workshop started by outlining challenges in the current administration work environment that could be met by coworking spaces. Table 3 lists the results of the focus group discussions after a coding and clustering process.

The next discussion point with the focus group was to ascertain how public coworking spaces should be designed and what values are of utmost importance for

Table 4 Success factors for a public coworking space addressing the values in public administration

Cluster	Success factor
1. Flexibility	Flexible use (24/7) and flexible furnishing
	Experimental and project workspaces as room-in-room concepts
2. Childcare	Childcare center
	Parent–child rooms
3. Access	Reduced commuting time
	Less employee fatigue
	Occasion-related choice of work location (short distances)
	Enforcing local communities
4. Collaboration and user responsiveness	Digital collaboration tools
	Collaborative work opportunities and retreat rooms
	Hub concept in outlying area to meet with citizens
	Shared spaces with external workers
	Sharing concept of employees, bundling of different administration units
	Application with check-in, room booking, team communication, and finding colleagues
	Integration of community
5. Infrastructure/services	Free basic supply (coffee and water)
	Bike- and car-sharing
	Concierge/space manager
	Cloud-based digital document management system and IT support
6. Well-being	High focus on well-being
	Healthy and sustainable workplace
	High ratio of meeting and informal places
	Various retreat and leisure rooms (can be used also after work)
	Ergonomic equipment

Source: Research data

public administration. The discussion resulted in six clusters that incorporate the most commonly mentioned aspects important to decision-makers. Table 4 lists the success factors of flexible work environments in public administration. Our findings also show factors that were not derived from previous studies.

Success Factors for a Public Coworking Space

First, flexibility is the highest ranked cluster (emphasized by every focus group). This is consistent with previous studies (Groen et al. 2018).

Second, our findings reveal a clear need for a family-friendly policy, which is related to the high proportion of female participants. There is an obvious demand

for having the possibility to bring a child to work, especially among part-time workers. Another important factor that emerges in this study is the need to design a public coworking space to reduce commuting time and empower local communities (third cluster). With an increasing number of coworking spaces in the city, commuting time decreases, and employees can freely choose to occasionally work in a nearby *hub*. We assume that the reduction of commuting time leads to a significant increase in well-being (Nie and Sousa-Poza 2018), which was highlighted in the sixth cluster.

The way collaborative structures can be observed in this setup is twofold. First, there is a need for "innovative, digital collaboration tools" (transcript, 2019). Second, collaboration both within teams and with external workers from the private sector should be encouraged as the participants demanded more "proximity to citizens" (transcript, 2019), which is encouraged by a "facilitating and inspiring layout of the workspace" (transcript, 2019). This need aligns with extant literature; for example, as Merkel (2015) points out, the physical design of a coworking space (open spaces, arrangement of tables to enable eye contact between coworkers, or actual location of social areas) has an important role in transforming the space into one that is collaborative. The focus group also emphasized the importance of infrastructure and additional services when designing coworking spaces (fifth cluster).

Flexibility, collaboration, and innovative workplaces were the main factors from all data sources (literature review, survey, and focus groups). The results from our survey analysis show that easy access and short commuting time were important. Our findings from the workshop also emphasized accessibility and reduced commuting time as a benefit as well as a focus on well-being. High-quality services and infrastructure were demanded from the survey participants and corroborated in the qualitative findings. In particular, our focus group findings have shown that childcare is an important service, which is demanded by public workers. Through triangulation from literature study and our qualitative findings, we derive the following coworking space framework, which includes new insights from our empirical research. Incorporating user needs from our framework, coworking spaces enable "collaborative governance" through the physical design of the work environment. Addressing the proposed values will impact on an attractive work environment (Fig. 4).

A Transition Path to Coworking

Based on the literature and the research findings, three strategies for public coworking spaces can be derived. First, coworking success factors can be applied to one's own work environment. A high fit between the user needs and the physical work environment leads to a higher commitment and well-being of public workers and retains talent within the public workforce. Second, opening the office for other public units within a city promotes collaboration and co-creation with other public agencies. Furthermore commuting time can be reduced when workers can

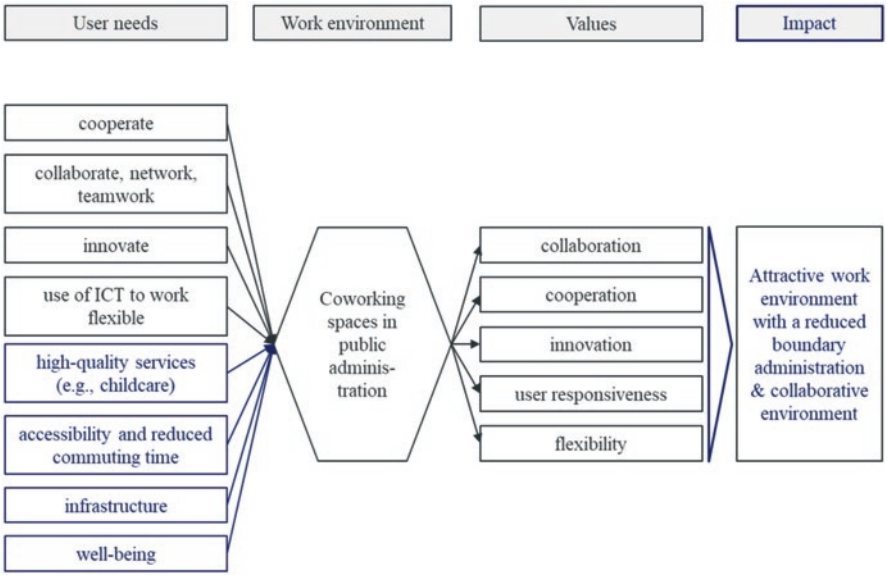

Fig. 4 Public coworking space framework as a response to the changing needs in public administration

(occasionally) make use of offices of other public units within a dense network in the city. Third, in the next expansion stage, offices could be opened for externals, citizens, and entrepreneurs to interact with the public and enhance user responsiveness. This is also achieved when external coworking spaces are used and act as a substitute for the office and work is fully conducted in these flexible work environments (Table 5).

Opportunities for Public Management

Public management can benefit from coworking in many ways. Over the past few decades, it became obvious that agencies benefit from working together and need to collaborate to look beyond traditional, organizational, and structural boundaries (Hall and Battaglio 2018). Public service is increasingly accomplished together. This reduced-boundary governance can be specifically promoted by coworking spaces. The spaces offer an institutional setting where public and private sectors coincide and not only collaborate on an ad hoc or one-off basis but are also able to form strategic partnerships and deliver high-quality services.

As the needs and performance criteria of New Public Governance approached those of the private economy, it is only a matter of time until the physical organization of work will also adapt to the principles of the private economy. Hence, it will become necessary for public management to re-organize its physical work

Table 5 Transition path to coworking environments

Transition path	1. Apply the coworking success factors to the own office	2. Coworking as a means to promote collaboration and co-creation with other public units	3. (a) Coworking as a means to promote user responsiveness and collaborative governance	3. (b) Coworking as a substitute for the office
Description	Design the physical environment with open spaces, infrastructure, and services to promote interaction and collaboration within public units	Open the workplace for other public units as a touchdown point or hub nearby. This fosters collaboration with other public units, reduces commuting time, and gives easy access to public workers	Coworking spaces are offered to other units and agencies and externals as a new way of interacting Close engagement with citizens	External coworking spaces are used as an alternative work environment
Example of use	Zamani and Gum (2019) show the fit between the physical environment and user needs impacting satisfaction and collaboration	Public Services and Procurement Canada (2019) shows the case of Canadian federal employees given access to coworking spaces as a touchdown point between meetings or as a temporary workspace	Pohl (2018) shows the case of a cooperative bank in Germany that owns a coworking space with an integrated branch bank. Employees work with other private workers and share their workspace	Houghton et al. (2018) show the case of Australian government employees working in coworking spaces to promote collaboration

Source: Own source based on Yang et al. (2019)

environment into shared workspaces and adopt the principles of the private economy in order to attract and retain young talent.

On the one hand, public administration offers an ideal prerequisite for coworking in its own premises due to its large number of distributed locations and administrations. During the first step, workplaces would be opened to other employees from the public administration; thus, employees would benefit from higher collaboration between units.

In the second step, premises would be also opened to the public. Public companies, such as banks and post offices, are already taking advantage of this. Affected by societal change and transformation processes, they have redesigned their business models and use too large premises for coworking as a new form of business. For banks, coworking spaces can be an attractive addition to the portfolio of services offered.

On the other hand, public employees could also use regular coworking spaces and benefit from the advantages of coworking even if only used occasionally. Houghton et al. (2018) state that when public workers were in the main office after spending some time at coworking spaces, their productivity was higher because

they were less fatigued and had improved moods. The use of different work locations and workstations stimulates new ideas. Solutions are born when workers change locations and workspaces frequently, collaborating with and being inspired by workers from other units. Performing self-reliant work in a coworking space leads to increased satisfaction and efficiency. Another benefit would most likely be the reduced travel time.

Though our findings show similarity with previous studies, new themes also emerged. Our findings indicate that Berlin public employees have a positive attitude toward work flexibility and appreciate working in new working environments. This positive attitude was found to be consistent across gender and age. While older respondents had a slight preference for working more autonomously, younger respondents were found to collaborate and often work in teams. Most of them perceived their office as a workplace of productivity and interaction, both of which can be facilitated by coworking spaces because these spaces cater to current needs with their spatial concepts. The focus groups showed a clear desire for more services, good accessibility to reduce commuting time, and high-quality workspaces. Furthermore, employees wanted flexibility, childcare, and proximity to citizens.

There are, of course, constraints. A flexible work environment cannot be used by all units and does not suit all types of workers. Nevertheless, we hope that the inspiration gleaned from this chapter will help shape future public and government discussions and influence workplace strategy decision-makers, human resources departments, and public real estate managers. In the next few years, the change toward new forms of work will continue to increase as will the demand for high-quality workers. More millennials will enter the workforce—a generation used to working flexibly and in multiple locations and collaborating with others.

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The Evolution of Coworking Spaces in Milan and Prague: Spatial Patterns, Diffusion, and Urban Change

Pavel Bednář, Ilaria Mariotti, Federica Rossi, and Lukáš Danko

Abstract During the last two decades, the labour market of the advanced economies has changed, with the increased use of short-term contracts and higher flexibility in terms of working spaces and work organization. Due to ongoing processes of the globalization and the Industry 4.0 Revolution, distance, location, and time are often no longer considered necessary conditions to make business. In this context, we have witnessed the development and diffusion of coworking spaces (hereinafter CSs). This chapter aims to investigate and compare development, typology, and dynamics of spatial distribution of CSs in two alpha global cities, Prague and Milan, between 2015 and 2019. Using two original geo-referenced databases, the chapter firstly proposes two metrics for quantitative mapping of CSs within basic settlement units in Prague and local identity units in Milan. Local spatial autocorrelation is used to identify spatial clusters in given years, and local spatio-temporal analysis investigated by differential spatial autocorrelation is applied to identify whether changes in spatial patterns over time are spatially clustered. Based on these findings, the chapter highlights similarities and differences in spatial patterns, spatial diffusion, and evolution of CSs in the two cities. Secondly, the chapter provides a discussion on micro-location of CSs in relation to the internal urban spatial structure and its transformation (urban core commercialization, inner city urban regeneration, and gentrification) and thereby the transition to the polycentric city model.

Keywords Cluster · Coworking spaces · Spatial patterns · Urban change

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Introduction

During the last two decades, the labour market of the advanced economies has changed, with the increased use of short-term contracts and higher flexibility in terms of working spaces and work organization. The ICTs, indeed, have fostered the flexibility and hybridization of workplaces, which now include private homes but also unusual places like libraries, cafes, restaurants, airport lounges, etc. (the so-called third places, Oldenburg 1989).

Within this context, we have witnessed the development and diffusion of new working spaces like coworking spaces (hereinafter CSs), which try to answer to the self-employed and freelance workers' needs of social and professional interaction by increasing meeting opportunities and therefore reducing the risks of isolation (Johns and Gratton 2013; Moriset 2014). Indeed, as underlined by Spinuzzi (2012) and Parrino (2015), relational and geographical proximity within CSs may foster information exchange and business opportunities, creating a collaborative community.

The present chapter aims to investigate and compare the development, typologies, and dynamics of the spatial distribution of CSs in two alpha global cities, Prague and Milan.

In Italy, CSs are mainly concentrated in regions with large urban areas (i.e. Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Tuscany, and Piedmont), and about 50% are located in Italian metropolitan cities as Milan (99), Rome (50), Turin (23), and Florence (17). Similarly, in the Czech Republic the three major urban agglomerations (Prague, Brno, and Ostrava) host 50% of all CSs. Nevertheless, we have witnessed to a rapid growth of CSs in Czech and Italian medium-sized cities and peripheral areas (Vlach 2020 for Czech; Mariotti et al. 2020 for Italy), following a pattern of hierarchical spatial diffusion.

Milan is the Italian city hosting the majority of CSs; it is located in the northwest of Italy, it is the capital city of Lombardy region and represents the core of the national knowledge-based, creative, digital, and sharing economy, and it is the main financial and economic hub of the country (Mariotti 2018). Milan's GDP is 22% of the country's total, and it is almost double the average Italian GDP per capita (49,000 EUR in Milan and 26,000 EUR Italian average), while its population is 17%. Besides, the city shows a leadership in terms of patents (32%) and scientific research (27%). Specifically, Milan is the favourable location of inward foreign direct investments (FDIs).

Prague is the capital of the Czech Republic having similar population to Milan within its city limits (1,3 million). The population size of its metropolitan area is comparable to Milan as well (3 million), however, with remarkable less population density. Prague is responsible for 25% of GDP of the Czech Republic although its share on the country population reaches 12% only. Prague's GDP per capita in PPP (56,200 EUR) makes the city the seventh richest region in the EU 28 as a percentage (187%) to the EU average (Mayerhoffer 2020). Due to presence of almost all national authorities of the public sector administration, headquarters of the largest

domestic corporations and conglomerates by revenues, and institutes of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague is considered as one of the primary business and innovation centres in Central Eastern Europe along with Warsaw and Budapest. Such condition attracts both domestic and foreign direct investment in knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS) resulting in 75% employment in service sector and the lowest unemployment among the EU 28 regions before the COVID-19 pandemic having been below 2% in the last several years (Mayerhoffer 2020).

The first CS in Milan was opened in 2006, while it is only after 2012 that the city has witnessed to the "boom years", pushed by bottom-up initiatives, both profit and non-profit. As underlined by Mariotti et al. (2017), there are three city's characteristics fostering the spread of CSs: (1) the crucial role of private actors, higher education, cultural institutions, and local authorities in implementing urban agenda; (2) the increase in the demand and supply of economic and social innovation, in particular, the city council assigned public abandoned spaces to private initiatives in order to develop innovative working places, providing economic subsidies for CSs; and (3) after the economic crisis of 2008, the city has enhanced its high levels of entrepreneurship and social cooperation, integrating them with both ICT innovations and the sharing economy growth.

Instead, Prague shows a time delay in the development of CSs: the first was founded in 2009, and an intensive increase in their number begins in 2015. This delay stems from the hierarchical diffusion of innovations, as Prague lies outside Europe's main economic axis – the so-called Blue Banana. As Mayerhoffer (2020) suggests, Prague currently undergoes the internationalization of CS activities which is a result of the entry of the international/global CS providers who implement their activities into the new property-led office development projects in the centre and the inner city. This is reflected in the spontaneous spatial dissemination of CSs encouraged by the neoliberal environment of the city's public policy. The city has not yet intervened in this process, and everything is left in the hands of the market.

By using two original geo-referenced databases, the chapter offers a twofold empirical contribution: (1) a time-space quantitative mapping of CSs within basic settlement units in Prague and local identity units in Milan, applying research design used by both Feng et al. (2016), and Grekousis and Gialis (2019), i.e. combination of local spatial autocorrelation and local differential spatial autocorrelation techniques in order to identify spatial clusters in given years and spatial cluster of changes in spatial patterns over time, respectively, and (2) a discussion on micro-location of CS in relation to the internal urban spatial structure and its transformation (urban core commercialization, inner city urban regeneration, and gentrification) and thereby the transition to the polycentric city model.

The chapter is structured into five sections. The introduction is followed by a literature review focusing on CSs and their location patterns. Section "Data and methods" describes data, and section "Results" presents the empirical analysis and the results. Concluding remarks and further research follow.

Literature Review

The provision of a physical space with desks, technological equipment (Wi-Fi), meeting rooms, and other services for users (i.e. kitchen, relax area) is just one component defining a CS. Indeed, the crucial characteristics of this type of spaces are the establishment of a community and the practice of "working alone together", which implies both a shared working environment and the performance of independent activities (Bilandzic 2016; Capdevila 2014).

In addition to the intangible concept of community, Fuzi et al. (2014) identified the following CS values: the willingness to collaborate and cooperate with the other coworkers, the sustainability issues, the openness which allows to share ideas, and the accessibility, declined both in a financial meaning and in a physical one. As underlined by Moriset (2014, p. 7), a CS should be first "an atmosphere, a spirit, and even a lifestyle".

Therefore, by integrating knowledge, creative, and digital workers (Moriset 2014) with geographical proximity and non-hierarchical relationships, CSs may generate socialization – CS as a "relational milieu" (Gandini 2015, p. 200) – and, consequently, business opportunities (Spinuzzi 2012).

The phenomenon of CSs was the subject of academic papers across several disciplines: sociology, anthropology, geography, planning, business and management, and economics.

Since the aim of the chapter is to identify spatial clusters within the cities of Milan and Prague, and possible changes in spatial patterns over time, we give special attention to the literature on the location factors of service firms belonging to creative industries. Indeed, as found by Akhavan et al. (2019), CSs mainly (74% of CSs in Italy) belong to these sectors.

There is a robust empirical evidence that creative industries geographically concentrate in metropolitan areas, around medium-sized and large cities, and in cross-border areas (among others, see Cruz and Teixeira 2014; Boix et al. 2015). In particular, Lazzeretti et al. (2012) found that the historical and cultural endowments, the average size of creative industries, the size of the place, the productive diversity (Jacobs knowledge spillover), and the concentration of human capital and creative class (Clifton and Cooke 2007) are the factors boosting the concentration of creative firms and creative employment in Italy and Spain. In addition to these factors, creative industries prefer locations with good access to clients, specialized labour and firms, universities, good transport accessibility (airports, freeways, train stations), as well as the presence of urban amenities, such as restaurants, cafes, shops, and cultural and entertainment services (e.g. theatres, museums, cinemas, etc.) (Sivitanidou 1999; Van Oort et al. 2003; Curran et al. 2016).

Specifically looking at the location patterns of CS in large cities, Moriset (2014) found that, in 2014, CSs are mainly concentrated within the so-called creative cities of advanced economies (i.e. San Francisco, London, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, Barcelona, and New York). Looking at the location of CS in the Netherlands, Stam and van de Vrande (2017) found that most of them are in large cities, with good

accessibility, and sometimes within (temporarily) abandoned areas. Moreover, they underlined the positive role of CSs proximity to coworkers' homes (i.e. most of coworkers (55%) travel by bike (73%) or walk (12%) to coworking locations) in reducing the pressure of inner city traffic. Mariotti et al. (2017) explored the case study of CSs in the city of Milan, highlighting similarities in the location patterns of CSs and service firms in urban areas. Specifically, they found that CSs prefer locations with high density of business activities, which are close to universities, research centres, and to the local public transport network.

Therefore, cities can be seen as the cradle of innovation, where colocation of firms (including CSs), which belong to both the same sector and different ones, could exploit the cross-fertilizing ideas through formal and informal exchange of information (Caragliu et al. 2016; Van Winden and Carvalho 2016).

Data and Methods

To compare the spatio-temporal patterns of localization and concentration of CSs in both cities, sources of primary and secondary data on the specified variables have been found. In case of Milan, data on CSs have been provided by Mariotti and Akhavan (2020a) who updated the CS database developed by Mariotti et al. (2017), through desk research and direct contacts with CS managers. In the Czech Republic, it was used as the most complete freely accessible and periodically updated database covering the entire territory of the country (Vlach 2020), and it was complemented with Mayerhoffer (2020) by selecting CS development projects of international/global CS providers that took place in the territory of Prague in 2019. The authors verified the data and added information – coming either from the websites or from interviewing the CS managers – on the creation, characteristics of the urban spaces, and the activities of the CSs.

Based on comparison of the databases and the results of previous research, the years 2015 and 2019 were selected in order to compare temporal development of CSs. The location data on CSs was transferred to point geo-reference databases (one for each city). These were subsequently aggregated by spatial join into administrative territories – Nuclei di Identità Locale (local identity units – NIL) for the city of Milan and basic statistical units (BSU) for the city of Prague.

Based on the results of spatial autocorrelation and for the purpose of describing the outcomes, city districts with positive spatial autocorrelation were delimited within NIL and BSU as significant local spatial clusters of CSs. Before the analysis of spatial autocorrelation, which is a tool for detecting the concentration of clusters or spatial-temporal development of CSs clusters, it was necessary to define spatial weights to determine the spatial links of the relevant administrative unit to the neighbouring units. The results of the spatial distribution of CSs in Milan according to Mariotti et al. (2017) and Mariotti and Akhavan (2020a) were used to define the weights as well as the principles of concentration of creative industries (Sivitanidou 1999; Van Oort et al. 2003; Curran et al. 2016) and knowledge-intensive business

services settled in areas with a high density of business activities according to the assumptions of localization and urbanization economy.

On this basis, the method of first-order queen contiguity spatial matrix was selected in which polygons of the given administrative units share an edge and/or a corner. Two specific methods of local spatial autocorrelation were used for the analysis of spatial patterns. The first one was used to identify spatial clusters in given years (LISA – Anselin 1995); in the second, local spatial-temporal autocorrelation statistics (differential LISA – Grekousis 2018) was applied to identify whether changes in spatial patterns over time are spatially clustered. In accordance with Grekousis (2018) the logic of spatial autocorrelation is that it measures how much the value of a variable in a specific polygon (here administrative unit) is related to the values of the same variable at its neighbouring polygons. When the nearby administrative units have similar values as the observed administrative unit, there is an indication of a positive spatial autocorrelation existence. If the nearby neighbouring administrative unit shows significantly different values relative to the given administrative unit, then a negative spatial autocorrelation exists. Local indicators of spatial association are used for the detection of significant local spatial clusters in case of positive spatial autocorrelation, as well as for diagnostics of local instability, significant outliers, and spatial regimes in case of negative spatial autocorrelation (de Dominicis et al. 2011, p. 13).

Results

Data about CSs in Milan and Prague are shown in Table 1, where a total of 140 active CSs are in both cities at the end of the year 2019. Their distribution before 2015 and in 2015–2019 suggests similar shares. In both cases, the CSs have grown in the second period, when the share is approximately two thirds of the total current number of CSs in both cities. This also corresponds to the world trends (see, namely Avdikos and Iliopoulou 2019, and Mayerhoffer 2020). The database also suggests existence of a time delay in development of CSs in Prague if compared to Milan. The first CS in Prague was established in 2009 (Mayerhoffer 2020), whereas the same happened in 2006 in Milan (Mariotti et al. 2017). This is related to the

Table 1 Development of currently active coworking spaces in Milan and Prague in the selected periods of time

	City			
	Milan		Prague	
Time period	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Before 2015	38	38.4	14	34.1
After 2015	61	61.6	27	65.9
Total (2019)	99	100.0	41	100.0

Source: Authors' data compilation based on Vlach (2020), Mariotti and Akhavan (2020a), and Mariotti et al. (2017)

traditional West-East gradient of spatial diffusion of innovations, given by the post-communist transformation of Prague (Sýkora and Bouzarovski 2011) and by the different position of both cities within the ranks of global cities: Milan occupies alpha level, whereas Prague is recognized as alpha-level city (Loughborough University 2018a). Although both cities represent the economic cores of their respective countries, Prague is a business centre of the Visegrad Group countries (Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary), whereas Milan has more intensive ties to global alpha++ and alpha+ cities (Loughborough University 2018b) thanks to its position as one of the global clothing centres since the 1970s (Merlo and Polese 2006).

The Evolution of Coworking Spaces in Milan

The 99 CSs located in Milan represent 18% of CSs in Italy, since at January 2018 the country was hosting 549 CSs (Akhavan et al. 2019). This confirms the high attractiveness of the global city, which also hosts some international/global providers of CSs. As it happens in Italy, CSs in Milan are mainly bottom-up initiatives established by private and non-profit entities and member of the creative class. The majority of bottom-up CSs belong to "Rete COWO", which is a CS network offering consulting services to CS managers, and even the director of Rete COWO manages his own CS.

The CSs tend to be specialized in one prevailing sector or industry: architecture and design (18%, in Tortona Navigli neighbourhood), digital (10%), communication and information technology (8% each, in Isola-Sarpi), and social innovation (5%). Besides the largest CSs prefer peripheral areas due to the availability of premises (previous industrial buildings) at lower prices; vice versa the smallest are settled in central areas because they used to be traditional offices that have been transformed into CSs (Parrino 2015; Mariotti et al. 2017).

An interesting issue characterizing Milan are the policy measures promoted by the municipality favouring CSs through vouchers assigned to coworkers to pay the rent of the desk and by the city council which assigned public abandoned spaces to private initiatives in order to develop innovative working places. Since 2013, the Milan municipality has started to provide economic incentives to young coworkers, who want to promote innovative business activities located within CSs. In 2013, the first public tender received 223 applications: 152 coworkers were financially supported for a total amount of 134,608 EUR. In 2015 there was a second tender addressed both to coworkers and CSs, where 65 coworkers applied and 49 were funded having received 69,567 EUR, while 25 CSs applied and 22 were financed in amount of 280,633 EUR. In particular, the latter received a maximum of 20,000 EUR each, as long as they privately invested in the CS the same amount received by the municipality (according to the rule 1 EUR from the public sector equals 1 EUR from the private sector).

In 2017, thanks to the last tender, 23 CSs were financially supported (35 applications received), for a total amount of 296,000 EUR. The municipality provided a

maximum of 20,000 EUR for the creation of new CSs, and a maximum of 10,000 EUR for already active spaces, giving priority to those located in peripheral zones of the city.

Moreover, the Milan municipality fostered the creation of a qualified register of CSs located in the city. In order to be registered, the CS has to comply with some quality requirements: having a minimum of ten workstations, Wi-Fi connection, some common areas, some services equipment, a website, being in compliance with regulations, being accessible for disabled people, and carrying out cultural and training activities. Finally, also the Lombardy region implements some policies addressed to CSs, such as vouchers for spaces and coworkers.

Coworking Spaces in Milan: Spatial Patterns, Diffusion, and Urban Change[1]

The spatial dimension of the evolution of CSs in Milan before 2015 was analysed using the local indicator of spatial autocorrelation (LISA). In Milan, CSs are more willing to be in areas characterized by (1) high intensity built-up areas and business activities, (2) good transport accessibility, and (3) existence of agglomeration and urbanization economies. The analysis has been run at the NILs (local identity units) level, that are, the 88 local units, which compose the municipality area according to the services plan (Piano dei Servizi) of the Piano di Governo del Territorio (PGT) as of 2020.

The results of Local Moran's I of spatial distribution of CSs in Milan, before 2015, are depicted in Fig. 1, which highlights significant local spatial clusters of high-high values within the NILs on the right side of the city centre (A: Brera, Porta Garibaldi, and Porta Nuova) and within the northeastern area (B: Buenos Aires, Casoretto, Città Studi, Loreto, Nolo, Porta Monforte, and Porta Venezia; C: Cimiano, Q.re Feltre, and Rottole). While the majority of CSs located in the central area (A), and specifically in Duomo, tend to be smaller and more "office-like" (Mariotti et al. 2017), the more we move further from the centre, the higher is the chance to find larger CSs in previous industrial sites, as in the case of C cluster. Generally, the majority of CSs are in the higher-density NILs, with functional mix, universities and research centres, and good accessibility to local public transport. The location is explained by the fact that localization and urbanization economies, market size and the "productive amenities" (good access to customers, skilled human resources availability, specialized services, universities, research centres, transport accessibility), and "not productive amenities" – bars and restaurants, shops, cultural and entertainment activities, and good urban quality (Florida 2012; Van Oort et al.

[1] The analysis about the location of CSs in Milan and its change in 2015–2018 differs from the one developed by Mariotti and Akhavan (2020a) since the present is run through Local Moran's I, while the other concerns the change rate of CSs and their location.

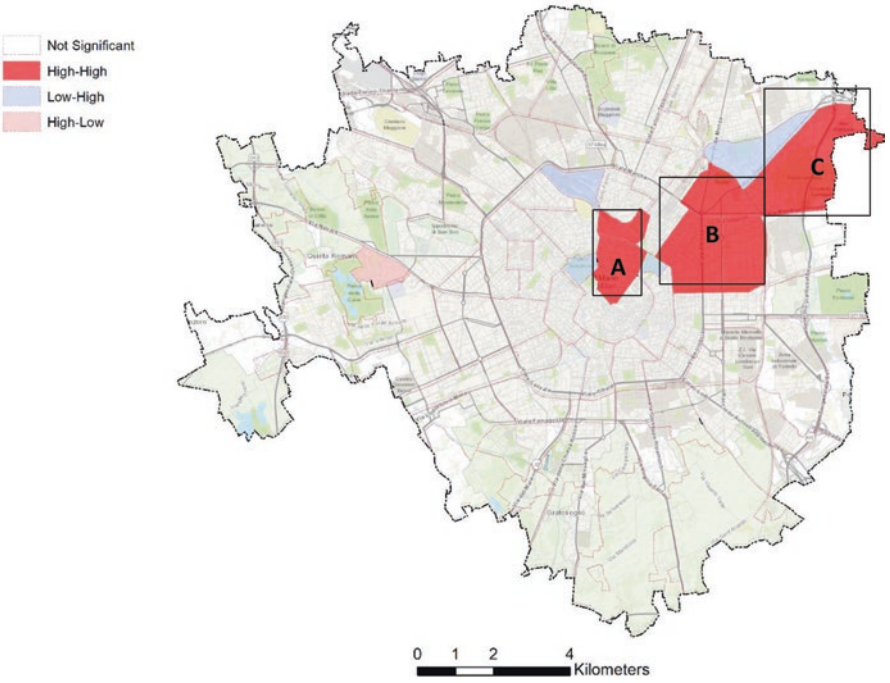

Fig. 1 Local Morans' I scatterplot map for coworking spaces in Milan NIL established prior to 2015
Source: Authors' development based on Mariotti and Akhavan (2020a) and Mariotti et al. (2017); base map City of Milan (2020)
Note: Local identity units (NIL) A = Brera, Porta Garibaldi, Porta Nuova; B = Buenos Aires, Casoretto, Città Studi, Loreto, Nolo, Porta Monforte, Porta Venezia; C = Cimiano, Q.re Feltre, Rottole

2003) – are the drivers of the attractiveness of the NIL. The largest and more hybrid CSs host services for coworkers (meeting rooms, kitchen, relax areas, or gardens) and for people outside (cafè, restaurants, rooms for exhibitions, and events). Besides, they tend to be more located at the ground floor of buildings with windows by the streets so to be more visible and integrated with the neighbourhood.

The spatial distribution analysis of the CSs located in Milan after 2015 (Fig. 2) shows a change of the clusters with high-high values: in addition to the NILs of Fig. 1, CSs were also spatially clustered within the surrounding areas (B: Isola, Farini; C: Ponte Seveso, Stazione Centrale; D: Guastalla, XXII Marzo). This spatial pattern might be related to the new urban development project of Garibaldi-Repubblica where the "Bosco Verticale" skyscraper is located,[2] which hosts UniCredit bank headquarter. This area has attracted several foreign and national

[2]The Vertical Forest, designed by Boeri Studio, was inaugurated in October 2014 in Milan in the Porta Nuova Isola area, as part of a wider renovation project.

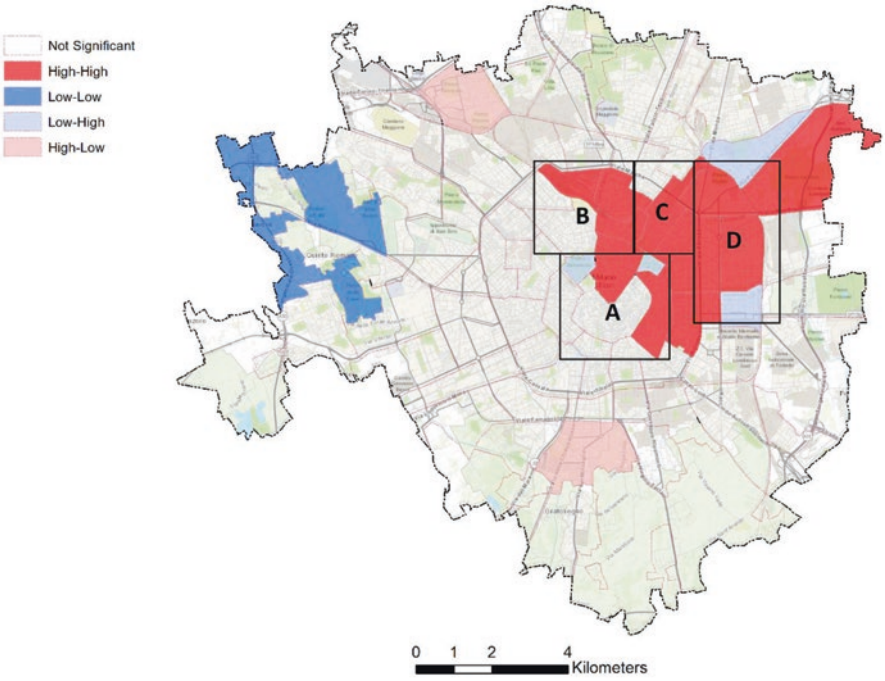

Fig. 2 Local Morans' I scatterplot map for coworking spaces in Milan NIL established in and post 2015
Source: Authors' development based on Mariotti and Akhavan (2020a) and Mariotti et al. (2017); base map City of Milan (2020)
Note: Local identity units (NIL) A = Brera, Porta Garibaldi, Porta Nuova; B = Isola, Farini; C = Ponte Seveso, Stazione Centrale; D = Guastalla, XXII Marzo

MNEs like Google, Samsung, and Microsoft that have settled there (Mariotti 2018). Besides, even the central railway station area has been regenerated, and Copernico company rented three buildings in the area supplying office spaces as well as CSs. The area has, indeed, the best accessibility level of the city. Another interesting area is Isola-Farini, which borders Garibaldi-Repubblica and has experienced a gentrification process starting from the mid-1990s and attracts creative, young, and medium-high income class. Similarly, the NIL of XX Marzo is close to the new development area at the south of Porta Romana where Prada Foundation and the Symbiosis technological Business District have been recently located.

Figure 3 shows the statistically significant changes of CSs over time in each NIL, which are related to that of its neighbouring NILs. The first positive spatial-temporal autocorrelation variation (high-high values) concerns the historical core (A: Duomo), the B (Dergano) and C clusters (Ponte Seveso, Stazione Centrale). Both cases referred to a NIL where the number of CSs change in 2015–2019 period is statistically related to that of its neighbouring NILs. This confirms the highest CS growth dynamics in the historical core and the Central Station area in 2015–2019,

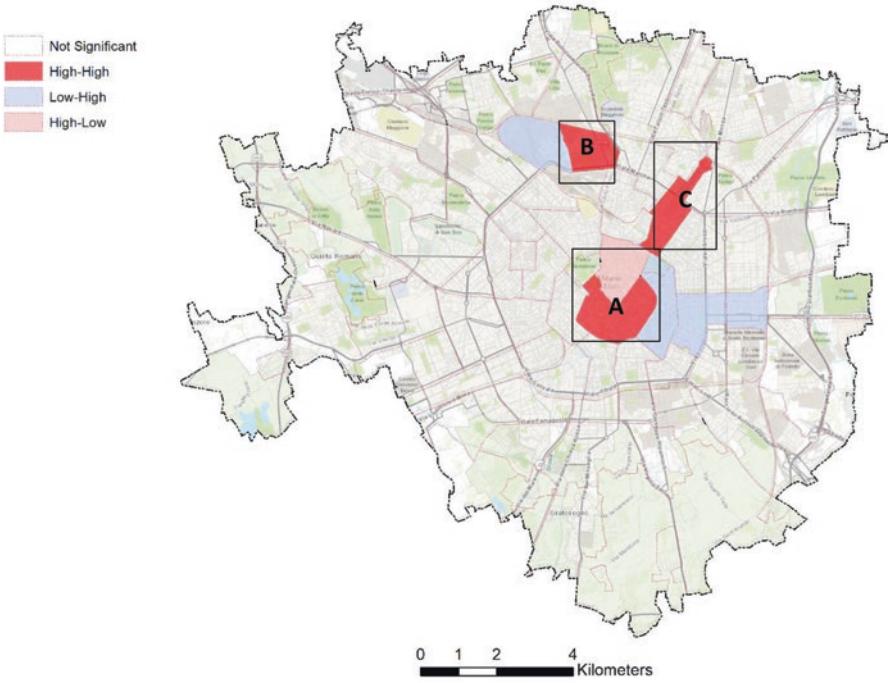

Fig. 3 Differential local Moran's I scatterplot map for coworking spaces in Milan NIL 2014–2019
Source: Authors' development based on Mariotti and Akhavan (2020a) and Mariotti et al. (2017); base map City of Milan (2020)
Note: Local identity units (NIL) A = Duomo, B = Dergano; C = Ponte Seveso, Stazione Centrale

which, as already described, became an attractive place in the last 5–10 years. Besides, Dergano NIL became more attractive after 2015, and this can be related to three factors: (1) proximity to Isola and Garibaldi Repubblica; (2) lower real estate prices, on average; and (3) proximity to the newly announced large urban transformation project of "Scalo Farini" (Farini railyard).

The Evolution of Coworking Spaces in Prague

The 41 CSs in Prague represent 36.9% of CSs in the Czech Republic (Vlach 2020). This confirms the dominance of Prague as the economic centre of the country and which is further strengthened by the presence of several international/global providers of CSs (see Mayerhoffer 2020, Table 1) giving Prague precedence over two other most populous cities (Brno and Ostrava) where only one global CS provider, Hub Ventures (ImpactHub), operates.

Considering the CS taxonomy, the first phase is characterized by a prevalence of CSs focused on supporting female entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship

and community development. These CSs were established by both private and non-profit entities and member of the creative class, respectively. Some of them were supported by partnering companies, thus promoting the development of entrepreneurial activities in low level and low flexibility rent communities. The objectives of these CSs differ, including support to female entrepreneurship by providing baby-sitting services, support to practising English among domestic users and digital nomads from abroad, and support to individuals, freelancers, and start-ups by providing opportunities for consultations, range of workshops, and community events. Using the CS taxonomy, according to Bouncken et al. (2018, p. 401), these are independent CSs with social entrepreneurship combining economic returns and supporting social causes. For the reasons listed above, the taxonomic definition for these CSs is community-oriented CSs instead of community-led CSs, which are mostly based on non-profit ventures as defined by Avdikos and Iliopoulou (2019). On the contrary, the post-2015 period is characterized by dynamic development of business-oriented CSs (Bouncken et al. 2018, p. 401), which Avdikos and Iliopoulou (2019) also call entrepreneurial-led CSs. These are oriented exclusively on economic return. The development and the transformation of the business model are accompanied by the internationalization of providers' activities. The providers of CSs invest into renting vast areas for shared business activities, as indicated above. In other cases, some CSs start to specialize with a focus on selected (KIBS), creative industries and high-technology (high-tech) CS. These changes increase cognitive proximity (Boschma 2005, p. 65) and implicit knowledge within projects collaboration while competing for the same resources and the same client (Bouncken et al. 2018, p. 402).

Coworking Spaces in Prague: Spatial Patterns, Diffusion, and Urban Change

As for Milan, the spatial dimension of the evolution of CSs located in Prague before 2015 was analysed using the LISA. In Prague, the CSs are more willing to be located in areas characterized by (A) high intensity built-up areas and business activities, (B) good transport accessibility, and (C) existence of agglomeration and urbanization economies. Accordingly, the VSU of Prague were divided because of the morphogenetic zones in terms of urban fabric according to prevailing construction period and housing types. Subsequently, the morphogenetic zones of Prague were classified according to (1) the housing types defined by Špačková et al. (2016, p. 833) – (A) historical core, (B) tenement houses, (C) villa neighbourhood, (D) working-class houses, (E) housing estates, (F) suburban periphery – and (2) distinction of inner city zone by Kährik et al. (2015), which includes housing types B, C, and D in different proportions, and different proportions of brownfields resulting from the abandonment of industrial areas due to deindustrialization and commercial suburbanization. By combining these approaches, a new division of morphogenetic

zones is created and follows, accounting for the approach of Ouředníček et al. (2012, p. 278, 284): (A) historical core (including central business districts – CBD, Kährik et al. 2015); (B) inner city built in the nineteenth to early twentieth century by tenement houses and working-class houses; (C) villa neighbourhoods from the early twentieth century; and (D) housing estates built in communist era (1948–1989). The inner city was divided into city districts: Smíchov, Holešovice, Karlín, and Vinohrady together with Žižkov district.

Results of Local Moran's I of spatial distribution of CS in the Prague BSU before 2015 are depicted in Fig. 4 and showcase significant local spatial clusters of high-high values ("hotspots") in inner city districts of Smíchov (B), Holešovice (C), and Vinohrady (E). These hotspots are concentrated in districts further away from the historical core zone, with lower rents and higher availability of empty commercial areas. This spatial pattern is also connected to the prevailing CS business model in this period: independent social entrepreneurship-oriented CSs. On the contrary, the spatial clusters of low-low values (cold spots) are located in the suburban periphery zone, which support an initial idea of CSs location in areas gaining from localization and urbanization economy. Diagnostics of local instability shows high-low values in districts of the historical core, western part of Smíchov district (B), Karlín district (D), and the housing estates south and west of the historical core. This gives

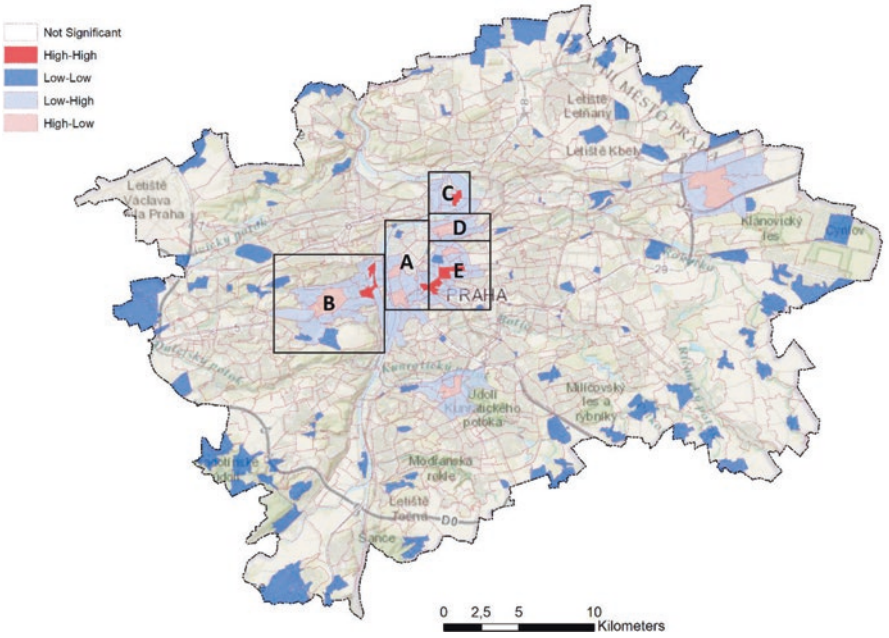

Fig. 4 Local Morans' I scatterplot map for coworking spaces in Prague basic statistical units established prior to 2015
Source: Authors' development based on Vlach (2020); base map ARCDATA PRAHA (2016)
Note: City districts A = historical core; B = Smíchov; C = Holešovice; D = Karlín; E = Vinohrady

evidence of isolated location of CSs in the BSU of these districts whose neighbouring units show a high decrease in CSs distribution, thus creating spatial heterogeneity in case of low-high clusters.

The spatial distribution analysis after 2015 (Fig. 5) indicated a change in the local spatial clusters of high-high values in inner city districts. The main concentration of CS clusters moved into Karlín (D) district, and, at the same time, a spatial diffusion occurred from the eastern part of Holešovice (C) district into its western part with higher rents and better public transport accessibility (underground). A similar, although less pronounced, process occurred in the eastern part of Smíchov (B) district. A significant change is the emergence of CS hotspots in the historic core, especially in proximity to the main shopping streets (Národní třída and Wenceslas square) where possibilities exist to revitalize commercial buildings or to demolish them and subsequently begin a new construction. Newly emerged CSs became sources of significantly deviated values (high-low values) in other districts of the inner city, north of the historical core (Dejvice and Libeň districts), or in the area of housing estates where an independent CS with social entrepreneurship (eastern part of the city) as well as a newly established open corporate CS (Bouncken et al. 2018, p. 398) of Microsoft were established.

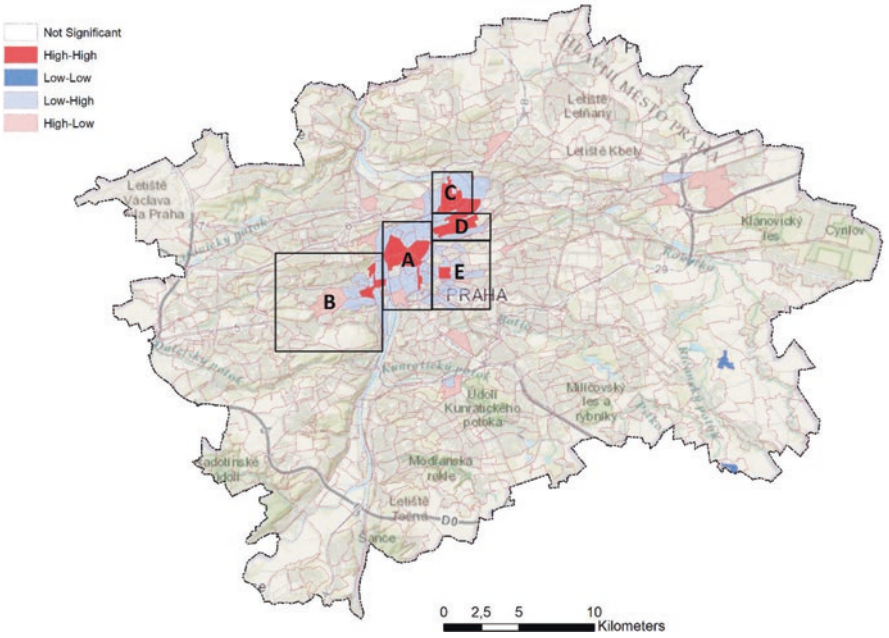

Fig. 5 Local Morans' I scatterplot map for coworking spaces in Prague basic statistical units established in and post 2015
Source: Authors' development based on Vlach (2020); base map ARCDATA PRAHA (2016)
Note: City districts A = historical core; B = Smíchov; C = Holešovice; D = Karlín; E = Vinohrady

A second form of spatial heterogeneity, spatial regime, is showed by the low-high values. These cases underline that the CS tends to localize exclusively in areas with a high concentration of commercial activities (historical core and Smíchov district) or in areas with intensive processes of commercialization and gentrification (Karlín and Holešovice districts, Kährik et al. 2015). Outside these areas with prevailing residential function, or tourism facilities (centre and northern historical core), they are almost absent.

Figure 6 shows statistically significant changes of CSs over time (2015–2019) in each BSU which is related to that of its neighbouring BSUs. The first positive spatial-temporal autocorrelation variation (high-high values) characterizes the historical core and Karlín (D) district. These cases show local spatial clusters of BSUs in which the number of CSs changes is statistically related to that of its neighbours. This confirms the highest CSs growth dynamics in historical core and Karlín (D) district in 2015–2019 and the spatial diffusion of these activities from Vinohrady (E) district. Vinohrady district itself shows low dynamics, and the number of CSs is still similar to 2015 (low-low values). At the same time, the significance of Karlín (D) district as a district with one of the most important concentrations of CSs in Prague is growing. The negative spatial-temporal autocorrelation variation (low-high values) creates spatial instability in BSUs in close spatial proximity to

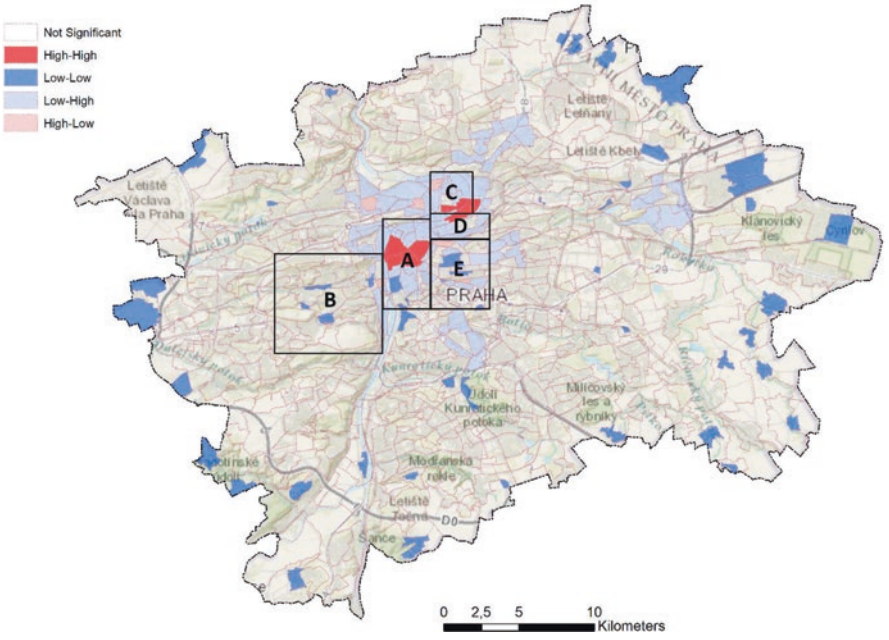

Fig. 6 Differential local Moran's I scatterplot map for coworking spaces in Prague basic statistical units 2014–2019
Source: Authors' development based on Vlach (2020); base map ARCDATA PRAHA (2016)
Note: City districts A = historical core; B = Smíchov; C = Holešovice; D = Karlín; E = Vinohrady

high-high clusters. The spatial dynamics of CSs development in Prague is a very selective process related to intense urban change in physical, functional, and social spatial structure of the city – commercialization, intensification of urban fabric, brownfields regeneration, and physical renewal. On the contrary, high-low values are represented by isolated BSUs of spatial instability especially west of Holešovice (C) district and north of historical core in the area of Dejvice where a single CS was established and it is spatially tied to important infrastructure and tertiary education in the field of architecture.

The spatial distribution of CSs in Prague can be explained by the city's urban changes, which mainly concern the urban and social transformation during the post-communist period (Sýkora and Bouzarovski 2011, p. 46; Ouředníček et al. 2012; Kährik et al. 2015). The concept of Prague's social transformation includes the above-mentioned internationalization of CS activities in Prague with the resulting change of economic structure of the transformed areas evidenced by the increase in KIBS activities and hi-tech industries, as well as the change of spatio-temporal patterns in use of the city and commercial office spaces. The results of this economic component of social transformation also include the social component in the form of increasing social polarization of the affected areas (Kährik et al. 2015). Furthermore, the changes suffer from the neoliberal approach of post-communist cities to their urban development (ibid), which is reflected in property-led urban regeneration. This approach is further supported by the novelty of CS as a part of shared and creative economy. The CSs in Prague are so far in no way supported or regulated by public policies. Except for international/global CS providers, the renters who are freelancers or micro-enterprises do not have the lobbying power.

Conclusion Remarks

Digitalization and the increase of creative and innovative industries enhanced the concentration and colocation of CSs and the emergence of the clusters of input suppliers (Johansson and Forslund 2008) in selective, spatially sharply delimited parts of the cities. This strengthens the statements of Boschma (2005) on the mediator role of spatial proximity to other types of proximity (organizational, social, institutional, and cognitive) and a need for face-to-face contacts for the implementation of project-oriented activities of creative industries and other KIBS (Mariotti and Akhavan 2020b). The environment of the clusters can support horizontal spillover externalities (Jacobs knowledge spillover) between individual CS and help to develop a creative milieu desirable for producing innovations and sharing tacit knowledge.

The analysis of the CSs location and diffusion in Prague and Milan shows differences and similarities. The main location factors of CSs in Prague and Milan refer to those of the service sectors with a slight difference in the two cities. Besides, the sectors of the CSs mainly belong to the creative industry, and those in Prague, established before 2015, offer several social services: from support to female

entrepreneurship by providing babysitting services to support to individuals, freelancers, and start-ups by providing opportunities for consultations, range of workshops, and community events. In Milan these services are supplied by few CSs; however, CSs may impact on community building, with the subsequent creation of social streets, the improvement of the surrounding public space, and urban revitalization, both from an economic and spatial point of view (Akhavan et al. 2019).

As concerns differences, Prague started attracting CSs later than Milan. The first CSs in Milan were born in 2008, during the economic recession, and have experienced a significant growth rate in 2013 and 2014. In contrast with Milan, Prague shows a very limited colocation with innovative infrastructure (universities and research centres); besides, in Prague the neighbourhoods where the number of immigrants from developed countries (Western Europe, the USA, and Canada) is, on average, higher are more attractive. Even in Milan the gentrified areas are more attractive, but they are not massively populated by immigrants from developed countries. Differences also refer to the CSs business models, with CSs in Prague before 2015 being mainly community-oriented CSs supporting social causes while those after 2015 mainly business-oriented CSs owned by global CS providers. Specifically, in the first phase, the inner city went through the spatial pattern of selective spatial concentration by business-oriented CSs and community-oriented CSs. In the second phase (after 2015), the business-oriented CSs and internationalization caused a radical change of spatially pattern of CSs localization. The future challenge lies in the currently under-construction CS of IWF provider (Spaces) in Pankrác area south of Vinohrady. Together with Microsoft's open corporate CS, it can lay foundation to new spatial diffusion with the first large-scale concentration of CSs in new secondary commercial centres outside of the historical core and the inner city.

Milan, on the other hand, has been mainly characterized by private CSs developed within a bottom-up approach and in several cases subsidized by the Municipality of Milan and by the city council which assigned public abandoned spaces to private initiatives in order to develop innovative working places. After the economic crisis of 2008, the city has enhanced its high levels of entrepreneurship and social cooperation, integrating them with both ICT innovations and the sharing economy growth.

Finally, the analysis of the micro-location of CSs in relation to the internal urban spatial structure and its transformation underlines that in both cities a transition to the polycentric city model occurred.

In Prague this has been favoured by foreign providers, in cooperation with local or international landlords, which focused on different types of urban transformation such as intensification of urban fabric (WeWork), urban regeneration of outdated office spaces (WorkLounge), or reconversion of already existing large-scale professional spaces into CSs – Spaces and HubHub. With other local CS providers, we may expect more of reconversion rather the commercialization, which took place in the historical core as early as the 1990s due to the absence of business spaces in connection with the transition to the market economy (Sýkora and Bouzarovski 2011).

In Milan, the new urban development projects (Garibaldi-Repubblica, Porta Romana, and Scalo Farini) have attracted and are attracting CSs, which moved to

these areas when the real estate prices were still lower than the average in more central areas. These areas became new centralities of the city.

The present chapter presents some limitations mainly related to the lack of direct interviews addressed to the CS managers in the two cities, which might have allowed to better understand the development, typology, and dynamics of spatial distribution of CSs. Further research might focus on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on CSs and coworkers in the two cities to understand the drop of the occupancy in the CSs as well as their "mortality" rate. Besides, it should be interesting to investigate whether the negative effects of the pandemic differ in the two cities and whether policy measures have played a role in containing the crisis of the CS model.

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Part II
From Traditional, Corporate to Rural Coworking Spaces

Corporate Coworking – A Catalyst for Collaboration, Creativity, and Innovation

Viktoria Heinzel, Stavros Georgiades, and Martin Engstler

Abstract This chapter aims to draw an overview on the topic of corporate coworking and to provide insights into the potentials of the new working model for companies. In addition, interrelations of corporate coworking with important sub-themes such as the collaboration with creative industries, the promotion of a company's innovation capability and transformation in company's culture are explained in more detail. The results of this chapter are based on a narrative literature review, which has been conducted from October´19–March´20 focusing on corporate coworking as a new phenomenon within the work culture of companies. Furthermore, the findings of the literature review can be selectively exploited in various areas due to the inter- and transdisciplinary nature of the research field, such as management, real estate, creativity, and innovation research as well as labor research.

Keywords Corporate coworking · Creative industries · Creativity · Innovation · Cultural change · Employee engagement

Introduction

Coworking is a new work concept for working together, cooperating or collaborating in a specific work environment. It is a prospective concept within new work approaches (Hofmann and Günther 2019) that offer individual work situations and additional services at a branded (semi) public place. Today, mainly entrepreneurs, start-ups, freelancers, creative actors, and digital nomads use coworking spaces to

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work there in order to profit from each other. Within the coworking scene, five core values have become established, which were formulated by "Citizen Space," one of the first coworking spaces in the United States. These core values include community, collaboration, openness, accessibility, and sustainability (Hillmann n.d.). In particular, it is the developing community, in which people work and communicate side by side, that will be decisive for the feeling of togetherness. So the perception of community can accordingly influence the success of a coworking space (Spinuzzi et al. 2018; Garett et al. 2017; Rus and Orel 2015; Kwiatkowski and Buczynski 2011).

Coworking enables people "working alone together" (Spinuzzi 2012, p.399) from any location and at the same time to be networked with each other here and now. Coworking can also be seen as a fourth place of work and (social) communication between the corporate workspace, the home office, and the café (Kremkau n.d.). It can be integrated new concepts of individual work and life such as work-life-blending or workation. In 2005, the first workspace officially called "coworking space" – the Hat Factory in San Francisco – was opened (Hasenöhrl and Sigl 2017). Current forecasts of the Global Coworking Survey predicted the number of coworking spaces worldwide would be 22.000 with 2.2 million members by the end of 2019 (Foertsch 2019). Although the use of coworking initially started by actors of the creative industries (CI), within the last years, a growing number of companies have become aware of the advantages of the new working model (Bauer et al. 2017, 2019). Since innovation and creative work is also carried out in other branches outside the CI, new forms of work will emerge here in the future, which will be determined in particular by the interactions between corporates and creatives.

Methodology

The narrative literature review has been conducted from October 2019 until March 2020. The following databases were used to find different types of publications on the specific research topic: Coworking Library, JSTOR, Google Scholar, PubMed, Researchgate, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, Scopus. The keywords for the search through the databases were then defined. In addition to the term *coworking*, available literature also contains the term *corporate coworking*, which has been in particular established by the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO) (Bauer et al. 2017) and the terms *corpoworking* and *corpoworking environments*, which first use can be traced back to the conference paper by Campos et al. (2015). In addition, the term *new work* was included in the selection, as coworking is based on the fundamental values of the new work movement (Bergmann 2004). Since corporate coworking is a relatively new field of research, most of the publications have been found through *coworking* as a generic term. In addition, the bibliographies of already identified publications served as a useful source for further hits.

Due to the chosen specification in the topic, no key journal could be identified, which mainly publishes papers on corporate coworking. Rather, the scope of the topic and its increasing importance for various disciplines such as management, real

estate as well as urban and regional development became clear. Publications could be found, for example, in the *Journal of Corporate Real Estate*, *International Journal of Regional Development*, *Collaboration in the Digital Age*, *Review of Managerial Science*, *Frontiers in Psychology*, and *Creativity and Innovation Management* – just to name some of them. In addition, contributions from books, anthologies, studies, conference papers, and internet articles were considered for the literature review.

Corporate Coworking as New Working Approach

Managing continuously innovation processes is challenging and demanding for many companies (Gryszkiewicz et al. 2016a). In order to be able to break out of the stalled patterns of thinking and mental barriers, many companies use new working models and workspaces for the targeted promotion of innovation (Bauer et al. 2019; Viki 2017; Gryszkiewicz et al. 2016b; Christensen and Raynor 2003) such as: Coworking Spaces, Innovation Labs, Makerspaces, or Fablabs. Especially *corporate coworking* (Bauer et al. 2017, 2019) and *corpoworking environments* (Mitev et al. 2019; Campos et al. 2015), which both refer to the same coworking model, are increasingly being applied by companies from different branches (Sargent et al. 2018; Arora 2017; Spreitzer et al. 2015) in various forms. Here, multiple competences, ideas, and talents come together to work in flexible structures and more informal interactions, resulting in a collaborative working community (Orel and Dvouletý 2020).

Those *corporate coworking* workspaces are often used on a project-by-project basis (Bauer et al. 2017, 2019), and individual employees or entire project teams are sent for a certain period of time to these different and creativity-enhancing premises (Magadley and Birdi 2009), before finally returning to their original organizational units, and hopefully fertilize other colleagues and departments with a more collaborative and flexible work culture. With regard to the company's mindset, Bauer et al. (2019) argue that this is about letting go of established patterns of behavior and thinking that have been suitable and successful for previous innovation activities, but which do not necessarily have to apply to future endeavors. It is here that disruptive potentials are to be expected and not in the established environments or on established paths (Christensen and Raynor 2003; Christensen 1997).

Breaking out of existing structure or immersing in another reality through the use of coworking holds enormous potential for many companies (Reuschl and Bouncken 2018). Both lead to social interactions and thus to an exchange of knowledge and ideas, which can also facilitate entrepreneurship and education beyond the shared use of workspace. Also, Coworking Spaces promote the finding of cooperation partners for different projects. In their developed model, Bouncken and Reuschl (2018) emphasize that the performance, especially entrepreneurial performance of the company employees, improves through the use of coworking practices and the adaptation of coworking values. With regard to the use of coworking, Vallejo et al.

(2014) emphasize the opportunity for companies to professionalize collaboration with their networks of suppliers, customers, and business partners. To this end, companies make their premises and infrastructure available for the temporary installation of their suppliers, partners, and customers. This spatial integration and proximity of the cooperation partners promotes the tangibility of co-creation, coworking, and co-innovation within the company itself. Examples of this kind of collaboration are SNCF Trains (OUI.sncf 2020) in Paris, and Zappo's Campus26 (Office Snapshots 2013) in the United States.

Considering the effects that coworking has on the culture of collaboration as well as the individual and organizational learning, Josef et al. (2019) have developed five basic use scenarios of coworking from a business perspective: "Coworking for specific roles and teams" (1), in which coworking spaces are used as project workspaces or "labs." The spatial distance to the own office space is specifically sought in order to allow the innovation team to partially break out of the existing company culture (Ratmoko 2017). In the scenario "Coworking as an alternative place of work" (2), employees can also use coworking spaces in addition to the other options for flexible work, such as home office or mobile working. This use scenario can be granted to all employees as an option or it can be limited to specific persons or groups (HHM 2020). In the scenario "Coworking on own premises" (3), the organization establishes an internal coworking space, which can also be used as a workplace by external parties such as customers and partners of the company (Leader Digital 2019). In the scenario "Coworking instead of owning an office" (4), organizations rent a coworking space temporarily or permanently. This option is interesting for those companies that are entering a new market, are looking for proximity to a start-up ecosystem, want access to specific target groups, or waive to open their own office in certain regions (e.g., Microsoft 2018). In the scenario "Coworking as a line of business "(5), companies themselves act as coworking providers, either to complement the existing core business or to open up new markets (Witzig 2020).

The presentation of these different use scenarios makes it clear that different work modes – concentration work, collaboration, learning, exchange, and networking – sometimes require different room settings and infrastructure. This physical configuration of a coworking space is a significant aspect for the promotion of working methods, but also for the well-being of the users. Related to this, in recent years, the creation of an inspiring and stimulating "atmosphere" has become an urgent issue in the field of workplace studies, innovation environments, and coworking spaces (Brenn et al. 2012). Through different approaches coworking spaces are able to attract potential users of the workspace, build a bond between them, and develop an environment that encourages interaction. Through various criteria of spatial design of the coworking space, the desired strategic goals and outputs of coworking management can be achieved. In this context, Orel and Almeida (2019) argue that spatial comfortability is an important prerequisite for coworking space users to engage in conversation and cooperation.

Looking at the publication years of the various and by no means exhaustive publications that analyze the phenomenon of corporate coworking, one will see that this is still a relatively young field of research. It was the Fraunhofer IAO that undertook

a first in-depth examination and made a first attempt to develop a possible taxonomy of corporate coworking in its study "Coworking – Driver of Innovation for Companies" (Bauer et al. 2017).

Taxonomy of Corporate Coworking

Within their explorative study, the Fraunhofer IAO asked several companies from various sectors about the current use of coworking as new work model and the potentials as well as challenges it presents. In total, nine different coworking models could be identified in the course of the investigations, each of which has its own specific advantages and disadvantages. In the following section, these elaborated models are briefly explained (Bauer et al. 2017):

Model 1 – Coworking instead of home office: Employees who occasionally or regularly use a home office are given the option of working in a coworking space instead.

Model 2 – Temporary rental of team or project space: The company rents a fixed work area or workplaces for teams in a coworking space. The incentives for this model can be very different; for example, it can be specifically used for development projects or entire organization units can get the opportunity to exchange ideas with coworkers from the CI (e.g., freelancers, entrepreneurs, startups) or just simply to work "off-site."

Model 3 – Part sabbatical or Innovation camp: Employees are offered the opportunity within the scope of a "part sabbatical" or "innovation camp" to work for a while in a coworking space at a holiday location close to nature and to combine work and leisure there. Also they can benefit from the community activities.

Model 4 – Coworking with suppliers, service providers, or development partners: A coworking space, which is established for service providers, suppliers, or development partners. It can also be used by a company's own staff members for carrying out work together. It involves an intensification of the cooperation with some service providers and/or suppliers, and the carrying out of development projects with relevant partners.

Model 5 – "Think Tank" – operating your own coworking space, including for freelancers and startups: Here the company operates its own coworking space, which is available to both employees and freelancers and startups, to allow the exchanging of ideas and forming of interesting contacts, among other things. This model is being realized in quite a variety of forms; and different terms such as "innovation labs," "digital labs," "corporate think tanks" among the term of "coworking" are used to describe the ambitions connected with the physical space.

Model 6 – Coworking within the framework of accelerator or incubator programmes: Accelerators are run by companies to help startups grow faster within a certain period of time (e.g., three months) through coaching. Incubators are

organizations that help companies in their formation stage on the road to startup. They are clearly seen by the mentor companies as interesting approaches to benefit from product developments, long-term partnerships. or from being involved with promising startups.

Model 7 – Coworking spaces as development service providers: Due to the fact that currently in-demand qualifications can often be found in coworking spaces among freelancers and startups, businesses can use coworking spaces as required, for example, to have a product or service developed there.

Model 8 – Internal coworking space: An internal coworking space is created within a company, which employees can use, for example, for a temporary retreat, concentration, inspiration, or getting to know employees from different, interdisciplinary departments. The key difference to model 5 (think tank) is that the coworking space is simply located within the company premises and made available especially for internal staff members. An important incentive for such internal coworking spaces may be the improvement of the company's in-house communication on a cross-departmental basis.

Model 9 – Coworking in association with other companies: Two or more businesses provide mutual or common office space for employees, for example, to establish partnerships, create common areas of development, and reduce staff commute times.

These different models of corporate coworking all have in common that the orchestration of the community in terms of creativity, exchange, and collaboration will ultimately be decisive for the attractiveness and success of the respective space. Moreover, by no means everything that is called "coworking" is not coworking at its core. The differences here can be very considerable, so that the actual specific strengths of the concept are implemented in the same way in every corporate coworking space. Especially companies that have not yet intensively studied the coworking values run the risk of not being able to really use the true potential of the coworking. This can even lead to the termination of their coworking project. The coworking models presented are more or less suitable for different objectives. A first step to test this way of working and to gain practical experience could be by sending project groups to coworking spaces temporarily before deciding which specific model to apply.

Important chances and potentials, which result from the application of the different models, are the improvement of the innovation ability, the increased employee motivation, the gain in know-how, the feeling of being at the pulse of time, the increase of the spatial-organizational flexibility, and – not be underestimated – the reduction of project durations. On the other hand, risks are also taken with regard to higher costs, the deterioration of information security, the sometimes more difficult organization of cooperation, the allocation of patents and property rights, and the legal situation. However, the companies surveyed rated the risk characteristics presented for selection on average far less often as high risks than on the other hand as high potentials (Bauer et al. 2017).

Creative Industries as Decisive Cooperation Partners

As "serendipity accelerators," coworking spaces are designed to "host creative people and entrepreneurs who endeavor to break isolation and find a convivial environment that favors meetings and collaboration" (Moriset 2014, p.1). Especially the exchange with coworkers from the creative industries (CI), such as freelancers, entrepreneurs, or startups, is increasingly sought by companies (Pepler et al. 2018; Lange et al. 2016). The CI are globally an important and decisive economic factor, both in urban (Engstler and Heinzel 2019; Engstler et al. 2015; Domenech et al. 2014; Florida 2005, Florida 2002) and rural (Engstler and Pepler 2019; Engstler and Mörgenthaler 2018, 2014) regions, and should be better placed in the focus of current and future cooperation work.

It is the expected knowledge creation and the entrepreneurial orientation of creative actors (Gertner and Mack 2017), which is characterized by the dimensions of innovation, proactivity, risk-taking attitude, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy (Kuckertz 2017), which makes them attractive for companies coming from branches outside the CI. Furthermore, it is their use of the latest technologies, the deep-rooted willingness to cooperate, and the expected role as creative thinkers which give them a unique position regarding the idea of open innovation (Lange et al. 2016; Chesbrough et al. 2008). Advancing technological change even fosters the ability of creative workers to innovate, since the launch of new information technologies significantly minimizes the costs of production, distribution, networking, and marketing. These short development processes present companies from other branches with major challenges today. Therefore, actors of the CI who often work in free structures could provide valuable impulses on different levels such as in the field of working methods, prototyping, but also in process and product development (Engstler and Heinzel 2019; Lange et al. 2016).

In terms of their concepts for organizing work and cooperation, the actors of the CI have an influence on other economic and industrial sectors and society beyond their own sector. For this reason, the creative economy is regarded as a decisive innovation driver and pioneer of the digital transformation (Engstler and Heinzel 2019; Domenech et al. 2014; Florida 2002, 2005). In this regard, the term "innovation" covers technical innovation, product and process innovations, and non-technical or hidden innovations such as the improvement of product properties, the development of new business fields and models, and the change of established work processes (Heimer et al. 2016; Green and Miles 2007).

Since the future of work is changing and with it the design of work processes and forms involving place and time, the creative economy in particular with its often atypical forms of work and organization is considered to have a great deal of transformation potential in this context (Engstler and Heinzel 2019; Pepler et al. 2018; Engstler et al. 2015). Therefore, a stronger focus on the cross-sectoral cooperation (spill-over effects) between actors of the CI and companies from other sectors could represent a way out of the innovation trap of many companies and thus be of mutual value for those involved (Lange et al. 2016).

Furthermore, traditional organizations have recognized the potential of coworking in terms of a company's human resource management. For example, coworking can be useful for the HR manager in designing recruitment and motivation activities. Beyond their project-based work in a coworking space, they can recruit young talents (entrepreneurs, freelancers, etc.) on the basis of their individual skills and employability as needed (Mitev et al. 2019).

The Importance of Creativity and Innovation for Companies

Cooperative work with actors of the CI promotes the creativity and creative skills of company employees (Fuzi et al. 2014). Skills that are described as one of the four essential learning skills of the future together with critical thinking, collaboration, and communication (P21 study 2018). The targeted promotion of these four work skills enables people on the one hand to deal with new, more complex educational structures and work processes in the future and on the other hand improves their personal innovation capability. According to the model of Amabile and Pratt (2017) – the "Dynamic Componential Model of Creativity and Innovation in Organizations" – individual creativity is also the most crucial element of organizational innovation. Regarding organizational theory, a crucial organizational component – the motivation to innovate – is explained by Amabile and Gryskiewicz (1987) as the organization's fundamental focus on innovation.

This orientation should ideally come from the highest levels of a company, the top management. The motivation is often reflected in the "mission" and "vision" of the company, which is pursued throughout the company. Since in many large companies' missions and visions can be just empty phrases, companies should, if they are really motivated, build a basic system for developing new ideas. This system is further defined in the other two important organizational components of the "component model" (Amabile and Pratt 2017): resources and capabilities. The company's motivation should also promote a culture that is truly open to different ideas and there has to be an offensive strategy for implementing these ideas. Also, a risk-taking attitude could help to overcome sticking to the status quo (Amabile and Gryskiewicz 1987).

Furthermore, a very important finding is that relatively subtle changes in the working environment can lead to a considerable increase in individual creativity (ibid.). However, this confirms that the attitude of creative employees is not sufficient, but the entire organization must be able to build up a work environment to facilitate and even stimulate creativity and innovation. The development of extended or new approaches, values, and norms within the framework of the corporate culture can be decisive for this.

Cultural Change Through Corporate Coworking

Coworking enables companies to break out of their own corporate culture and at the same time to immerse themselves in the world of creative professionals. If coworking is seen not only from the perspective of an expanded space or even as competition to the corporate office, but rather as an instrument that can promote cultural change and a company's ability to learn, the growing interest in coworking on the part of many established companies is absolutely understandable. The conscious evocation of new ways of working and thinking as well as a new way of dealing with mistakes is sought by many companies by using coworking (Bauer et al. 2019; Josef et al. 2019; Viki 2017; Gryszkiewicz et al. 2016a, November 3; Christensen and Raynor 2003). This effort will also be decisive for the successful and sustainable adaptation of coworking in the company, which is why important supporting measures in the field of cultural change as part of change management processes are only to be recommended.

In order to initiate a new work and innovation culture interested or selected employees could formulate guidelines for work in the coworking space together with the management in the phase prior to the use of new premises. The basic values of coworking (Hillmann, n.d.), for example, can provide an initial impulse for the formulation. These guidelines should also provide a stimulus for the implementation of a new culture of failure. It should be clear to all (project) staff and potential users that their views and ideas are valued and seriously discussed in the coworking space – nothing should be dismissed or ignored, not even ideas that initially seem absurd. Ideas that turn out to be useless at a later stage of their development should nevertheless be respected – after all, they have contributed to a learning success. In their study, Barsh et al. (2008) identified not only extended tolerance for failures but also openness to new ideas, willingness to experiment and a risk-taking attitude as core characteristics of a corporate culture that contribute to the promotion of innovation. In this respect, the requirement for a consciously desired cultural change through coworking could in individual cases already start with these characteristics, which are taken for granted from today's perspective.

There is ample evidence that companies that want to support a cultural change through the use of coworking are also striving for cultural change to improve innovation and creativity capabilities and their agility (e.g. Brown 2017; Merkel 2017; Tran and Sweeney 2017; Fabbri and Charue-Duboc 2016). Among the most important criteria for supporting a robust culture of innovation are the following identified by McKinney (n.d.): People (1), i.e., all employees of the organization should feel responsible for the innovation agenda and be able to contribute to it; ideas (2), which are brought in by everyone and are not criticized or belittled; alignment (3), so that all resources are aligned with the innovation agenda and everyone pulls together; and communication (4), which should be clear, honest, respectful, and transparent to promote confidence building in the organization.

This in-depth examination of important framework conditions for the promotion of an innovation culture makes it clear that corporate culture is primarily a

management task. It is up to the management to shape an innovation agenda and actively promote it with the help of the appropriate management culture. In this context, Narasimhan (2018) emphasizes the urgency of clearly formulated tasks or concepts to be implemented, because, when change management processes in companies go wrong, it is generally assumed that the source of error lies in their implementation. This assessment, however, is a mistake, because the retrospective shows wrong expectations toward the previous management, what exactly should be changed. Accordingly, measures based on wrong expectations and corresponding transformation processes can't succeed. In addition, the lack of an innovation-friendly culture and the lack of appropriate leaders as well as non-resilient internal processes are responsible for the failure of many innovation projects (Narasimhan 2018; Henningsen 2017; Viki 2016).

Coming back to the corporate coworking theme, it may be necessary to draw once more the connection of coworking spaces and the promotion of a corporate's innovation culture through cultural change. As spaces of "freedom" (Bauer et al. 2017; Nönnig et al. 2012) and "independence" (Gerdenitsch et al. 2016; Bauer et al. 2017), new forms of work can be tried out in coworking spaces, which in turn promote new ways of thinking, behaving, and dealing with each other. In addition, new forms of development work are experienced in practice due to the limited project duration. Also, Nönnig, Krzywinski & Brenn et al. (2012) argue that certain degrees of freedom must be allowed to knowledge workers and their environment, in order to maximize their creative and innovative potential. They also believe that a certain degree of non-organization can be an effective means of directly involving knowledge workers in organizational processes. This gives them the essential freedom to change and adapt their social environment in terms of non-formal interaction, flexible team structures, and project requirements. Non-organization does not mean absence of organization, but rather emphasizes the fact that the participating employees and stakeholders should be given the opportunity to shape their work processes themselves and thus bring about dynamic self-organization. This could be implemented in practice by granting free time and space budgets, offering free resources of manpower and equipment, and granting freedom within the organizational structures and company policy. The most important thing is that these measures should not be regulations, but free offers (Nönnig et al. 2012).

Since coworking spaces are often used by temporary and project-related by company teams, which return to their original organizational units after the project has been completed, there is a corresponding possibility, if not a conscious intention, that the knowledge and ways of working and thinking acquired in the space are communicated or transferred to other company employees. In this sense, the coworking space could be a nucleus of cultural change (Bauer et al. 2017, 2019). The expansion, conversion. or redefinition of existing working methods in the course of the advancing digitalization and increased flexibility of work not only requires a change in corporate culture, but also important measures should be taken in the context of employee engagement.

Employee Engagement Could Make the Difference

In any intended transformation process of a company, it is crucial to pick up the employees in their current work situation, prepare them for upcoming change processes, and accompany them continuously during this transformation. This also applies to the desired change in working methods and, linked to this, in corporate culture through the use of coworking. The measures for employee motivation within the framework of employee engagement (Georgiades 2015), as a field of action in change management, should have appropriate importance since many implementation criteria must be observed here.

First of all, it is necessary to identify concrete problems and desired goals in the course of the change in work and to specify the corresponding effects on all fields of action of a company. Here, the reference to the employees, who should actively participate in shaping the change processes, is indispensable. The formulation of a common strategy for the desired change processes should be carried out under strict consideration of the extended, and in some cases perhaps new cultural values of the company. In the next step, the establishment of a fixed instance responsible for controlling the strategy that has been worked out (e.g., advisory board of responsible persons from the various divisions of the company) could be an important contribution to the continuous review of initially defined goals in the course of the transformation process in order to make important adjustments in iterative cycles if necessary.

As important as it is to consider many fields of action in the transformation process, the actual implementation will be difficult if the employees do not follow, because they will be decisive for the successful implementation of a new work culture. Achieving an openness to new values and working methods in the sense of coworking, and, beyond that, the willingness for lifelong learning of the entire company workforce, will set the course for successful change management (Werther and Jacob 2014). These efforts are to be pursued through employee engagement. This task will be up to management, which should encourage employees through several ways to engage and be creative (Georgiades 2015).

Conclusion & Outlook

Coworking is much more than just an additional physical place of work for many companies that are brave enough to embrace its inherent values. Coworking empowers employees to freely reflect and experiment with a new culture of working together. This heralds a transformation toward a more flexible and collaborative work ethic, which can gradually, yet sustainably, affect the entire corporate work culture.

The literature review on corporate coworking has highlighted the potential of coworking as a progressive form of collaboration, creativity and innovation. The

limitations of research were mainly the lack of available and reliable data. Since, as already mentioned, this is a fairly new field of coworking research, there are only a few scientifically contributions on the specific topic of corporate coworking. This has also limited the scope of the analysis and the size of the sample. Although it was possible to identify initial correlations on topics such as the significance of corporate coworking for the creativity and innovation capability of companies, and thus also its effects on corporate culture, these are nevertheless initial approaches and observations that should be further analyzed in future research. In addition, there was limited access to certain databases and relevant journal articles, as corresponding licenses were not available.

For further discussion on the future development of coworking from a corporate perspective, several levels need to be considered. On the one hand, it will be exciting to see how coworking space operators will react to specific needs of the company employees in terms of the physical and content design of coworking spaces and how they will communicate their offers accordingly. It will also remain exciting to see how companies will adapt the corporate coworking models identified so far, which models will prevail in the long term and which new models – especially considering the collaboration on virtual level forced by the current pandemic – will unfold.

Virtual coworking is just about to make its way into the future and will most likely remain an optional working scenario. For future research in this field, it will be exciting to observe how different work processes will be designed on a virtual level. How will previous coordination and communication structures develop? What effects will this have on hierarchical structures or the distribution of roles? What role will virtual coworking play in the transformation of corporate culture? With regard to the decisive shaping of the coworking community, it would be interesting to get to know how its spirit will be promoted and held together on a virtual level.

Another field of interest that has hardly been researched to date and which has a very promising future in the wake of the transformations in work organization triggered by the pandemic is the topic of rural coworking from a corporate perspective – rural corporate coworking. A dynamic upsurge of new or expanded coworking practices in rural areas is quite possible and would have positive effects at several levels. Good reasons for the promotion of rural corporate coworking are the restoration of proximity between home and work, the relief of the transport infrastructure through less commuting, the improvement of quality of life, the increase of local value creation, and the revitalization of empty floor or retail spaces. On the business side, key measures to promote the outlined benefits of rural corporate coworking may include expanding home office capacity for employees and training measures to use virtual collaboration tools as well as investing in regional coworking spaces and premises.

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Coworking vs Corpoworking: Realistic Perspective

Monika Golonka

Abstract The number of freelancers and self-employed has risen steadily. These individuals can use a range of coworking spaces in which they can work, use shared facilities, and collaborate. A number of studies explored coworking and its rapid expansion from various perspectives. However, most studies use coworking and corpoworking interchangeably. The purpose of this paper is to understand various types of coworking and corpoworking practices and to clarify differences between them by considering realistic intellectual tradition, especially Aristotelian discoveries on a human nature. This study also explains the origins of corpoworking, based on analysis of the existing literature, and shows meaning of aim in both individual and organizational work, by incorporating the examples from entrepreneurial and organizational practice. The findings provide a foundation for future works as well as might inspire entrepreneurs, freelancers, employees, and managers.

Keywords Coworking · Corpoworking · Realistic intellectual tradition · Personal agency · Creative work

Introduction

With the growing number of freelancers and solo self-employed (e.g., Boeri et al. 2020), as well as practices of working and cooperating like coworking spaces and flexible working spaces, the literature studies on this topic have become increasingly common in recent years.

Coworking has been analyzed from the perspective of economy (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte and Isaac 2016; Clifton et al. 2019; Mayerhoffer 2020), sociology (Tanaka et al. 2017; Bandinelli 2020; Spinuzzi et al. 2019), psychology (Gerdenitsch et al. 2016; Robelski et al. 2019), organization (Gandini 2015; Garrett et al. 2017; Blagoev et al. 2019; Gandini and Cossu 2019), as well as knowledge and learning (Parrino 2015; Butcher 2018), innovation (Cabral and van Winden 2016; Bouncken

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et al. 2020), productivity (Bueno et al. 2018; Bouncken and Reuschl 2016), urban architecture (Merkel 2015; Grazian 2019), and real estate (Green 2014; Yang et al. 2019; Zhou 2019).

In several papers, the term *coworking* has been used to describe both the working practice of independent individuals, especially sole entrepreneurs, and the *corpoworking* (collaboration of employees within company office spaces offered by the companies or institutions to their employees and freelancers, etc.).

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the idea and practice of coworking as well as corpoworking in the light of realistic intellectual tradition. Realistic perspective allows to recognize and to explain the differences between coworking and corpoworking. It also helps to clarify the distinction between these two. This is to be achieved by considering the major discoveries of realistic philosophers on the human nature.

Based on the real-life examples from organizational and entrepreneurial practice, issues such as personal agency in man's cognitive and creative work, as well as meaning of an aim, and community in organizing and cooperating are explained.

In this theoretical, explanatory work, analysis of the relevant literature is incorporated. The analysis consists of three elements. First is the analysis of recent studies on corpoworking, and corpoworking, namely, peer-reviewed academic journal articles available in the scientific databases.[1] The articles were selected using keywords, *coworking* and *corpoworking*, and categorized by the disciplines (economy, sociology, etc.). Second is the analysis of origins of the concepts, based on the archival papers derived from the very first journal on management, *Harvard Business Review* (from 1921 onward). The papers were selected by keywords, defined after the initial analysis of titles and abstracts.[2] The final pool (903 articles) consists of all of the papers concerning people in organizations. The articles were categorized by decades (the 1920s, 1930s, etc.). The major part of the analysis consists of the papers published in 1921–1950, describing the very first ideas on managing the relationships between managers and employees. Third, the research covers analysis of both the coworking and corpoworking from realistic perspective, incorporating discoveries of philosophers, especially Aristotle, on the human nature.

In the first part of this paper, the term coworking is explained based on literature as well as management and entrepreneurship practice. In the next part, explanation of the origins of ideas related to corpoworking is provided. In the third part, from the perspective of realistic intellectual tradition is explained, and from that point, the distinguished types of coworking are explained. Finally, the conclusions are drawn based on the research results, and issues requiring future research are indicated. Both researchers and entrepreneurs might find this study inspiring for their further works.

[1] EBSCO, HeinOnline, ProQuest, SAGE, ScienceDirect, Springer, Wiley-Blackwell.

[2] E.g. *manager, leadership, supervisor, employee, worker, foreman, psychology, staff, team.*

What Does *Coworking* Mean?

The term coworking is used for a certain type of physical spaces. "Coworking spaces are workplaces shared by workers who are not members of the same organisation" (Bueno et al. 2018, p. 452, see also Gerdenitsch et al. 2016; Šviráková et al. 2015; Jylhä et al. 2015; Pohler 2012; Spinuzzi 2012, 2015).

As a Physical Space (Shared Workspaces)

Usually in such a space, working infrastructure is offered to the customers (desk, Internet connection, Wi-Fi, physical address of a firm, conference rooms, conference and business meetings facilities, IT equipment etc.). One of the first among such spaces was "c-Base," launched by a dozen of IT engineers in the 1990s in Germany (hackerspace c-Base). C-Base was from its very beginning a nonprofit venture ran by volunteers associated for the purpose of making computers available for anyone interested in the IT. Similarly, just like on other similar spaces (e.g., Metalab in Austria), operating expenses were paid by members—daily, weekly, monthly fee. Hackerspaces are open to any, mostly independent entrepreneurs, IT professionals, as well as nerds and computer/digital enthusiasts.

Another version of these spaces is places ran and operated by entrepreneurs offering similar facilities in the majority of largest cities around the world. Usually, the customers of such spaces are freelancers and sole entrepreneurs, especially IT professionals, architects, designers, and artists.

Coworking as a Way of Working (and Cooperating)

The term coworking has also been used to describe a way of working. DeKoven (2013) proposed that coworking may also mean people working together as equals but working on their own projects, pursuing their own separate business interests, and often using technology to support collaborative work. This is also the way it is described by Castilho and Quandt (2017), Blagoev et al. (2019), Spinuzzi et al. (2019), Garrett et al. (2017), and Spinuzzi (2012, 2015).

Such working practice is possible in most companies offering coworking spaces to their individual customers (sole entrepreneurs, freelancers, artists, designers, etc.) in numerous cities. Individuals might work on their own projects or customers' orders while cooperating with other individuals on realizing particular aim if needed. As DeKoven (2013) described, in coworking, people are free to help each other, and as a result, he noted that they show "surprisingly often, deeply shared fun" (ibidem, p.1).

It should be noted, however, that in some coworking spaces, the owners have an ambition to *build a community* of individuals where people work on a regular basis.

Coworking as Community

One of the first "collective workplaces" was created by Neuberg (2005) in San Francisco. "He wanted to find a way to combine the feeling of independence and freedom of working by himself with the community feel and structure of working with others" (DiRiso 2019, p.1). Another example is "Schraubenfabrik" operated by Stefan Leitner-Sidl and Michael Pöll Gründer in Vienna who introduced their place, as it might be seen on Schraubenfabrik' website, as "a place where we could meet like-minded people who not only wanted to be entrepreneurial, but also wanted to live comfortably." Entrepreneurs aiming in building such "community" offer working spaces equipped with additional facilities (e.g., possibility to prepare/eat meals, rest, and organize various workshops) in order to distinguish this kind of coworking spaces aiming at developing community.

Furthermore, the term coworking is being used to describe places available for both employees and independent individuals offered by existing organizations.

Coworking as Corpoworking

Corpoworking covers coworking initiatives within an organization (Dardori 2018; Keogh 2019). Numerous contemporary organizations, especially large high-tech companies, offer flexible working conditions to their employees, potential employees, and other individuals (freelancers, start-ups, newbie enterprises), mostly potential employees or collaborators. Also, in this group, the technology parks, technology campuses, hubs, or various types of science parks (often in cooperation with universities and institutions like city councils, etc., e.g., Lindholmen in Sweden,[3] Google campuses in number of countries, etc.[4]) might be considered here as well as coworking-like spaces in the offices offered by the companies for their employees.

The major purpose of creating such working environments is *enhancing innovation* (e.g., Cabral and van Winden 2016) as well as *increasing productivity* (e.g., Bueno et al. 2018), sometimes through enhancing *digital transformation* (Josef 2017).

One of the first attempts to create the environment for entrepreneurial creative work in order to *boost innovation* inside a large company was the "stress incubator"

[3] See, e.g., Lindholmen in Sweden (Innovative Power for Sweden).

[4] The company signed lease with IWG company, a large serviced office provider (including coworkig and flexible working spaces), to establish their new offices in Toronto (Wong 2019).

ran by IT engineer Lars Rasmussen in Google during the early 2000s. The idea of this particular venture was to "recreate the situation" (Sutter 2009) from previous years, when he was still an independent entrepreneur working together with his brother and two other engineers on an application for Internet users—Maps online. Their enterprise, Where2 Technologies, was acquired by Google, and in this way, Google Maps was introduced by Google to users. Lars became one of Google's employees. He himself explained the decision to join Google in these words: "Of all the investors and companies we had talked to, Google was the only place seemingly disinterested in how to make money from our maps. At the time it cared solely about making users happy, and argued that business models were much better determined after a product had become successful with users" (Rasmussen 2009, p.1).

However, soon after Lars realized that the creation of an innovative product inside the company was somehow difficult, his idea then was to "create special environment" in order to work on his next project, Google Wave, *as if* the 60-person team *was working as independent entrepreneurs*, a start-up within the Google company.

They had moved far away from the Google company headquarters to Sydney, Australia. Additionally, trying to "recreate" risk taken by the real entrepreneurs, "Google employees who wanted to work on Wave would have to take a risk to join the brothers [Rasmussens; Lars and his brother], a diluted version of what the Rasmussens faced when they started Google Maps. The team took cuts to their bonus pay, with the hopes of a big payout if Wave were to succeed" (Sutter 2009, p.1). And the project was a secret; even the software codes were not available to the rest of Google employees.

A few years later, Google Wave project was declined by Google managers. From Rasmussen's point, the decision to shut down the project was premature. He decided to quit Google. As he said, "We were not quite the success that Google was hoping for, and trying to persuade them not to pull the plug and ultimately failing was obviously a little stressful" (Hutcheon 2010, p.1).

Then he joined Facebook hoping that he would be able to create innovative products in a smaller company. However, 5 years later, Lars quit Facebook[5] and decided to run his own enterprise (Weav[6]).

Lars Rasmussen was not the only person who decided to quit innovative high-tech companies in order to be able to create innovative products for the sake of Internet users. Facing the growing rotation of talented employees, managers started to take "aggressive steps to stop to retain employees, particularly those with start-up ambitions" (Miller 2010a, b, p.1). One of such steps is to create "incubator-like" working environment inside of a company including coworking or flexible working, namely, *corpoworking*. Several companies followed Google's example.

[5] Lars Rasmussen explained: "I kept myself a little in the startup world by doing some advising, and I felt myself a little bit envious when I talked to those guys. So, it was a tough decision to leave Facebook, but it was definitely the right decision. I haven't regretted it at all." (D'Onfro 2015).

[6] https://www.weav.io

The Origins of *Corpoworking*

The idea of employees working *as if* they are not "regular" employees but rather independent entrepreneurs in the organization is not new. Tracking back the *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) archives and analyzing the content of the HBR papers published in this leading management and organization journal, it might be recognized that the very essence of the proposed theories by the authors and methods of managing was to dissuade employees from the idea of becoming independent and possibly quitting the company to run their own ventures (see Snider 1946). From the 1930s of the last century, both scholars and management consultants were offering ideas of "boosting" the entrepreneurial actions of the employees *as if* they were independent entrepreneurs, while working toward *the aims predefined by the managers*, from the very start aiming at increasing *innovativeness*, as well as *productivity*, understood more and more broader as *effectiveness*, which means incorporating all the abilities and capabilities for the interest of the employer (Golonka 2020; Riegel 1923).

Among the ideas proposed by the HBR authors, the most significant one of them evolves around convincing members of organizations, that *aims predefined* by managers (e.g., increasing effectiveness of the production) are also *the aims of the employees* (see Zaleznik et al. 1960); that both managers and employees *should cooperate with each other toward achieving them* (e.g., the concept of "participation" Mayo 2003; Given 1946; Jennings and Jennings 1951; "cooperative enterprise" Robbins 1943); that the members of organization are *tied by family-like relationships* with the company (the concept of organization as a "community" and even "a great happy family," see, e.g., Robbins 1943; Selekman 1947; or the concept of "work as a way of life," see Selekman 1947; Schoen 1957; Argyris 1958); and that people are *a part of the organization* and they are unable to realize their development potential outside of the company (e.g., Whyte 1956).

The implementation of these ideas in the companies was possible because of the active participation of employees themselves; they often willingly accepted them and gave up more and more of their autonomy, as well as their dreams to "become self-dependent" in exchange for the "guarantee" of employment[7] (Snider 1946), as well as various, increasingly sophisticated benefits (e.g., Sabsay 1947),[8] including more and more attractive working environment, currently also flexible working conditions, and coworking spaces, as it is seen currently in most of the high-tech companies. At present, numerous organizations also offer "family-like" working environment (e.g., Larry Page of Google literally said he wants to build family-like

[7] More and more companies, starting from Proctel&Gamble (1940s), offered a " guarantee" of employment instead of hourly rates, in exchange for acceptance of very unfavorable conditions for employees, including the possibility of termination of the contract by the employer, at any time (Snider 1946).

[8] For example, when office workers did not receive the expected promotions and " higher" status than workers, unhappy fed the " white-collar" trade unions, with more " glamor" than " blue-collar" unions (Strauss 1954).

organization: "Google should be like a family" (Lashinsky 2012)), "flat" structures, "flexible working," etc.

Such practices have been perceived both by managers and employees as a solution to the problem of "hierarchy" in organization, raised also by the creator of the *coworking* idea, DeKoven (2013). He sees *hierarchy* of the organization as a source of the employees' problems, namely, lack of "well-being," "happiness," or just a personal agency of individuals, and in his opinion the solution is "working *as* equal." "For the most part, people do not work together as equals, especially not in the business world where they are graded and isolated, categorized and shuffled into a hierarchy that separates them by rank and salary level" (DeKoven 2013).

There is actually no evidence on the effects of such efforts, since there is a very limited research on the connection between *coworking* spaces and collaboration, well-being, and creativity (Yang et al. 2019). However, taking into account the effects based on the described example of Lars Rasmussen, as well as a number of other individuals who left the companies offering such working environments, and the growing number of acts of dissatisfaction of employees,[9] it can be said that, as observed by one of the former Google employees, "you are given everything you could ever want, but it costs you the only things that actually matter in the end" (Edwards 2016, p.1, cf. Lashinsky 2012).

In order to understand what exactly "actually matters in the end" in humans' creative, entrepreneurial work, firstly it would be helpful to explore the very *human nature.* Thus, the discoveries of realistic philosophers, especially Aristotle, on human nature are to be incorporated in order to explain the described issues.

Realistic Perspective

Human Nature

Sensual Faculties

Two of the concepts described above—*coworking as a community* and *corpoworking*—are based on the underlying assumption of *sensual nature* of human being. In some coworking locations, as well as in a number of companies offering coworking to their employees, the owners state that they want to offer a kind of "home of working and well-being" (e.g., Neuberg's Spiral Muse, Schraubenfabrik). Here, as well as in corpoworking practices, *well-being* is understood as fulfillment of people's *sensual* needs such as being together (physically) with "alike people" in one physical place, living comfortably, eating together, and using additional services (e.g., body relaxation, massages, resting spaces, playing facilities, etc.).

[9] See, e.g., high turnover of employees (e.g., published by Payscale), protests of thousands of Google' employees, etc. (e.g., Campbell 2018; Elias 2019; Popper 2010; Fung 2019).

It can be observed that there are attempts to build a community based on sensual appetites, including *feelings* and *physical presence:* "*feeling* of independence and freedom of working by himself with the *community feel* and structure of working with others" (DiRiso 2019). It might be also noticed that coworking is perceived by some scholars as a remedy for *physical* isolation observed in telework (e.g., Bueno et al. 2018). Telework refers to workers who "work in locations, remote from their central offices or production facilities, with no personal contact with coworkers, but the ability to communicate with coworkers using ICT" (Bueno et al. 2018, Di Martino and Wirth 1990, p. 530). While the results of several studies show that "telework can reduce satisfaction and well-being" (Bueno et al. 2018; cf. Bertschek and Niebel 2016; Bentley et al. 2016; Anderson et al. 2015; Morganson et al. 2010), in the scholars' opinion, this results in "a *feeling* of not belonging to a community," and *coworking as community* is seen as an alternative option, a remedy for such *feeling of isolation* (Bueno et al. 2018; Lumley 2014).

Beliefs of dominant role of feelings, emotions, and broader *sensual needs* of human being in their work are derived from theories of modern philosophers (Dansiger 1997), namely, their assumption that a human's reason (intellect) relates to operational processes, while sensual (including emotional) faculties relate to *motivation* and *aspirations*. One of the consequences of such assumption is that a human being can be seen as an *object of influence* from the outside, and their internal faculties might be controlled from the outside (Danziger 1996). The theories of needs, as well as motivation theories, developed in the twentieth century in the academia, were indeed developed based on such an assumption (Danziger 1996; Golonka 2019, 2020).

Moreover, the very term *motivation*, as well as motivational methods and techniques from the very beginning, related to the sales and marketing techniques, aims to attempt to influence the buying decisions of the customers (see, e.g., Perrin 1923; Troland 1928; Young 1936; Danziger 1996). Thus, in companies, all of the facilities and benefits, including working environment, can be perceived as the means to employees' *happiness* (e.g., Google's promise of making employees "happy inside and outside" (Google Careers 2018)).

Rational Human Being

Considering realistic intellectual tradition, it might be recognized that human nature is not only sensual, but it is first of all *rational.*[10] From this perspective, human's sensual faculties cover physiological functions and feelings/emotions, while reason and aspirations (meaning *volition* or *rational desire*[11]; cf. Aristotle, Krąpiec 1998)

[10] Human being as *a rational animal;* Aristotle, *Met*. VII.11. (cf. Code 1986), see Aristotle (1924).

[11] Rational desire is a part of the desiderative faculty (Woźniak 2020). "Although it is a desire, it is different from the sensual desire. Sensual appetite is 'for present pleasure mistaken for absolute pleasure and good' (Ross 1923, 145), while rational desire is for future good. The former has as its object an 'apparent good,' while the object of the rational desire is 'the real good'" (ibidem p. 93, cf. Metaphysics XII.7.1072a28).

are *intellectual-volitional* powers but drawing cognitive contents from the senses (e.g., Aristotle, Krąpiec 1998; Woźniak 2018; Golonka 2020).

Thus, thanks to these powers, one's reason closely cooperating with their rational desire, human beings can voluntarily[12] *recognize* themselves and *choose*[13] *their aim*, leading to their real good, and *take actions* toward achieving them. This results in experience of happiness. Moreover, from realistic perspective, for the execution of one's *personal agency*, a *voluntary choice* is necessary; it constitutes an origin of external acts (Woźniak 2020).

Therefore, if the employee does not recognize the aim—*actually realized* by the company—as consistent with his/her own aim, leading to their real good, there is no chance for success (Golonka 2020; cf. Woźniak 2018; Nowicki and Kowalska 2016).

Hence, much of the efforts undertaken by the managers in order to "motivate" the employees, to convince them that realization of predefined aims often presented as good to them (even literally that can "make them happy"), as well as offering more and more sophisticated benefits (inter alia coworking environment, various flexible working conditions, "family-like" relationships, etc.), are *unrealistic* and cannot result in constructive effects in a longer term. This might be one of the major reasons of a high turnover of employees in the seemingly the most attractive, "creative," "innovative" high-tech companies (cf. PayScale reports), as well as voluntary departures of talented employees especially those with entrepreneurial ambitions (cf. Miller 2010a, b; Popper 2010) despite creating a particularly attractive work environment for them. Such environment *seems not* to be of *major importance* however pleasant, just as what Rasmussen mentioned: "I love it here and it took a lot for my wife and I to get past that hurdle that we will be leaving paradise" (Hutcheon 2010, p.1).

Meaning of Aim

From a realistic perspective, the voluntary recognition and choice of an aim by individual themselves is of a crucial meaning for the execution of one's *personal agency* and one's development. The aim is overriding one's cognition of reality as well as actions undertaken by a human being, and the actual *aim is organizing* them (Golonka 2020; Woźniak 2018 cf. Aristotle).

In coworking as physical spaces usually offered by entrepreneurs to their customers, the individuals—customers, "coworkers"—can use the space as well as the working infrastructure, facilities, etc., as resources for the purpose of their own individually chosen aims and work toward achieving them. Other individuals can

[12] Voluntariness is "that of which the moving principle is in the agent himself, he being aware of the particular circumstances of the action" (NE III.1.1111a13), thus a " person who has a capacity to judge about his/her own judgement is subject of Aristotelian voluntariness" (Woźniak 2020).

[13] "The act of decision is the judgment about what has been deliberated upon. The act of choice is an act of rational desire to take a particular course of action based on prior decision" (ibidem, p. 92).

voluntarily recognize those aims as their own, and they are free to join to help in achieving them.

In such a case, a working *community* is a natural *result* of voluntarily *choosing and realizing of the same aim by a number of individuals* (namely, unity of humans' rational desires in consenting to the same thing[14]). In such a situation, the community actually supports the development of individuals' rational human nature and what exactly the community—and, broader, society—is supposed to serve[15] (e.g., Krąpiec 2009). As such, the aim, recognized and voluntarily chosen by individuals using their reason and following rational desire, actually *organizes* not only the person but also the people who work toward achieving it. And this kind of organization actually results in people's happiness in collaborating—coworking—as sometimes observed by the author of the coworking idea (DeKoven 2013). In such an organization there is no need for any external attempts to "motivate" or "influence" working individuals from the outside.

In the example of Lars Rasmussen, he experienced that in his very first entrepreneurial venture while developing Maps online, he wanted to "recreate" such an experience inside of the Google company and next in Facebook, hoping that in a smaller-sized company it will be possible (Hutcheon 2010; cf. D'Onfro 2015). As he said, "to find something different and new" for Internet users was his aim (Rasmussen 2009; Hutcheon 2010), appreciated by the users and his coworkers. "Lars has a knack for building elegant, powerful products that people love" (Taylor 2010, p.1). Rasmussen described his view on termination of his venture by managers: "It takes a while for something new and different to find its footing and I think Google was just not patient" (ibidem, p.1).

At the beginning of collaboration, he recognized consistency between his aim and Google's aim. "At the time it [Google] cared solely about making users happy, and argued that business models were much better determined *after* a product had become successful with users" (Rasmussen 2009, p.1). However, it turned out that even though the mission statement of the company, reflecting such an aim, resembles the one from the very beginning of the history of this company (consistent with what Lars was aiming at), the *actual* aim set by Google managers had changed. And consequently, as Rasmussen noticed, "in the time that it took us to build Wave, the rest of the company changed direction" (Rasmussen 2013, p.1).

The new aim was specified shortly after by Larry Page, CEO of a new entity, "mother" company of conglomerate in which Google is one of the "daughters," namely, Alphabet (2015). "The new entity," he wrote, "was an alpha-bet (Alpha is investment return over benchmark), which we strive for!" (Sharma 2019, cf. https://abc.xyz/, p.1). Thus, this new aim actually organizes work of both the managers and the employees in all the dependent companies in the Alphabet conglomerate including Google.

[14] Cf. Thomas Aquinas on concord, and peace (ST, Vol. 34, Q 29, Art.1), see Aquinas (2006).

[15] The opposite understanding leads to subordination of human being to " the collective."

Since actual aim in the mentioned example of the Google company (investment return over benchmark) overrode the previous aim, the decisions and actions of managers also followed the actual aim, and as a consequence, the projects which were not serving this purpose were terminated. "Google had changed its strategy toward Google Plus … and Wave wasn't superaligned with that" (Rasmussen 2013, p.1).

Hierarchy in any organization supports the realization of an aim set usually by top managers or people who decide on the strategic issues. Even in organizations with a "flat" structure, there are still managers deciding on the aim of the organization and predefining goals for the employees (in this case performance/financial goals) as well as controlling their realization.[16] From this point, the actual realized aim as organizing decisions and actions of people is of a much more significant importance than rules and regulations, such as "grades," "salary levels," "ranks," etc., as mentioned by DeKoven (2013). Hierarchy as such is not contradictory to a real equality of working individuals. From a realistic perspective, equality is derived from the voluntary choices of individuals pursuing the same aim rather than imposed from the outside as of rules or regulations supporting the *impression* that everyone, both managers and employees, is *as if* equal. Thus, as every individual is different and has unique abilities, skills, ambitions, etc. (Krąpiec 1998; Golonka 2020), hierarchy might be helpful in achieving the common aim, if such an aim has been recognized as a real good by the individuals and voluntarily chosen by them. Contrary to the assumptions of DeKoven (2013), hierarchy is neither the source of problems in achieving that nor a major obstacle.

In the described example, it turned out that Google's new aim was not consistent anymore with Rasmussen's aim. In order to realize the aim chosen and recognized voluntarily—to execute Lars' personal agency and in order to remain faithful to the good he has chosen—he finally left the organization, and, after working for a few years with Facebook, he dropped all of the benefits including "financial bonanza" (see D'Onfro 2015) to pursue a new venture.

Conclusions

In the literature, coworking has been analyzed from various perspectives; however, the very term has been used to describe numerous concepts of working practices. Moreover, little research has explained the differences among described coworking ideas and practices, and more precisely, no research has been found that has looked at these concepts specifically, as well as at differences from the realistic perspective.

[16] Google' managers—however not called *managers* in order to make an impression of family-like organization—still decide, analyze, calculate, and evaluate the effectiveness of "creative production," toward the aim (investment return over benchmark), incorporating advanced analytical systems for this purpose (e.g., Shrivastava et al. 2018; Garvin 2013).

This study is an attempt to rectify this. In order to investigate different types of coworking, analysis of existing documents, literature studies, and research papers was conducted. Two major types of working were specified: *coworking* (coworking as a space, coworking as a way of working, coworking as a community) and *corpoworking*.

To clarify the differences, the discoveries of realistic philosophers on the human nature were incorporated. Some of these concepts were developed based on the incomplete vision of human nature (considering mostly sensual faculties) derived from theories of modern philosophers. Therefore, attempts to implement them in organizations are unrealistic and cannot lead to success in a longer term. Supported by examples from the working practice, it seems to be crucial to consider complete vision of human being, both sensual and—more importantly—rational.

Furthermore, in this chapter, the most significant meaning of *aim*, voluntarily recognized and chosen by the individual, was explained as crucial for the execution of one's personal agency and also as organizing both the cognition and actions taken by them. Also, the importance of an aim was explained in collaborating—and coworking—of individuals.

In this respect, researchers—as well as entrepreneurs, freelancers, employees, and managers of the companies—can benefit from the results of the analysis by enhancing their understanding of the different types of coworking practices as well as the importance of considering a complete vision of a human being.

Considering realistic intellectual tradition, particularly Aristotle's view on human nature, and taking into consideration its consequences for management and organization could be suggested as a major recommendation for future research.

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Coworking Spaces in Small Cities and Rural Areas: A Qualitative Study from an Operator and User Perspective

Michael T. Knapp and Alina Sawy

Abstract Although coworking spaces (CWS) in smaller cities and rural areas are on the rise worldwide, knowledge about these types is still limited. In this qualitative study, we examine various factors from both the operator and user perspective, highlighting the challenges in setting up CWS in suburban and rural areas. A major barrier is the adoption and diffusion of new (urban) workplace practices related to coworking, which are often not yet established in these geographical areas. Furthermore, the results imply that the public sector has a key role to play in enabling coworking in such areas in its function as operator and (financial) supporter. This is linked to certain objectives, in particular the revitalisation of village or small city centres and attraction of creative people.

Keywords Coworking spaces · Rural areas · Workplace practices
Operator models

Introduction

According to the Global Coworking Survey 2019, the share of coworking spaces (CWS) in small towns and rural areas has risen worldwide. Coworking as a flexible form of workplace practice is therefore not limited to large cities such as Berlin, London, or Vienna, but is also increasingly found in mid-sized cities (Jamal 2018), smaller towns, and rural areas (Fuzi 2015). This shows that coworking cannot only be implemented in big cities, but it can also function in suburban or rural areas. However, CWS in geographically less densely populated areas face certain barriers related to the wider environment in which they are embedded. The most obvious factor is the number of potential users. While urban centers have a sufficiently large creative scene with people working in different fields as freelancers, start-up founders, and employees (Merkel 2015), this is often very limited in suburban and rural

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areas. This makes community building (Garrett et al. 2017) more difficult and requires additional efforts of coworking operators and community builders.

In this chapter, we contextualize coworking by considering the geographical area in which the CWS is embedded as an important factor. Although CWS are basically structured similarly everywhere, they only function if they are integrated into the local communities and systems. The geographical area in which the CWS is located brings specific social, cultural, economic, demographic, and spatial conditions, which must be taken into account when building and operating a CWS (Bouncken and Reuschl 2018). By looking at a qualitative analysis of CWS in Carinthia (a rather peripheral region in terms of population density and economic development), we seek to provide insights into the functioning of coworking in a regional context. We identify different institutional factors that play a role in providing CWS and find several barriers that can hinder the diffusion of coworking in such peripheral areas. We contribute to the existing literature by examining the construction, operation, and use of CWS in relation to the wider social and geographic environment.

We begin our discussion with an overview of the yet limited literature on CWS in suburban and rural areas and summarize the main findings. Next, the research context of our qualitative study is presented in more detail. This includes the background of the interview material used here as well as information on the geographical region in which the CWS are located, including the spatial and economic conditions of this region. The main results are then discussed. We identify different factors that can foster or hinder the diffusion of coworking in such a context both on the supply side and on the demand side. In the context examined here, a dominant operator model is present, which mainly functions through the public sector. This is associated with a particular set of objectives and roles, location aspects, and ways of operation and managing that are evident in the context under investigation here. On the other hand, coworking depends on users who adopt certain workplace practices, values, and behaviors. As we show here, there are several factors (e.g., lack of knowledge of coworking, diverging work values, and perception of individual advantages) that can hinder the diffusion and adoption of such new (urban) workplace practices in a suburban and rural context.

Coworking Spaces in Suburban and Rural Areas

Very few studies have been conducted on the existence and development of CWS in smaller urban and/or rural areas. Existing research with a spatial and geographic focus suggests that CWS in mid-sized cities can provide a physical and social infrastructure that helps to create and promote social networks for creative workers, build partnerships across sectors, and promote knowledge spillovers and thereby promote local economic development and revitalization of urban centers (Jamal 2018; Mariotti et al. 2017; Nakano et al. 2020). CWS can contribute to the promotion and support of entrepreneurship, independent workers, and social innovations, thus bolstering the economic development of suburban and rural areas (North and

Smallbone 2006), but this has yet to be shown empirically. In parallel to these expected positive effects on regional development, Kojo and Nenonen (2017) argue that new ways of working, attractiveness of the region, work-life balance, economic efficiency, and sustainability are promoting factors behind the creation of CWS in more peripheral areas. Indeed, it could be expected that CWS in rural areas attract new regional activities, foster employment, and provide technology transfers (Kojo and Nenonen 2017).

Besides the positive supporting factors resulting from the existence of CWS in rural areas, challenges and barriers may be expected. Cowie et al. (2013) show that CWS and enterprise hubs are relevant network environments that can contribute, especially in urban areas, to the access creation to a variety of knowledge networks through the hub. However, these positive effects can be limited by infrastructural deficits in peripheral areas, for example in strains of broadband availability and speed (Cowie et al. 2013). Furthermore, another relevant barrier for rural entrepreneurs is the collaboration with new businesses and the gaining of access to new markets (Cowie et al. 2013). Thus, CWS in suburban areas with suitable equipment in terms of technical and social capital can overcome these hurdles and counteract the problems of isolation and lack of capacity and skills (Cowie et al. 2013).

In line with these findings, the study by Avdikos and Merkel (2019) emphasizes that the size of the city, the distance to larger urban areas, and the remoteness of the area determine and dictate the functions and capabilities of a CWS. The benefits of urban settings are absent in rural areas, so the challenges here are in the form of a smaller workforce pool and no urbanization (Florida et al. 2017). To overcome the challenges, CWS need to develop their local potentials in terms of broadening the capacities, increasing the knowledge development, and offering participatory local development actions (Avdikos and Merkel 2019). Further research has shown that CWS in more peripheral areas adopt hybrid or new coworking models (Orel and Dvouletý 2020) by combining coworking with alternative innovation-promoting concepts such as accelerator programs and incubators that can create a more efficient way of providing infrastructure in entrepreneurially weaker regions (Fuzi 2015).

Research Context

In order to investigate coworking in a suburban and rural context, we look at CWS located in Carinthia, the southernmost Austrian state. Compared to other regions of Austria, Carinthia is a rather peripheral region, has a comparatively rural structure, and can be characterized as relatively weak in economic terms (Aigner-Walder and Döring 2012). The population density in Carinthia with 58.9 inhabitants per square kilometer is clearly below the Austrian average of 106.1 inhabitants per square kilometer, making Carinthia the state with the lowest agglomeration density in Austria. Two smaller cities, namely Klagenfurt (101,303 inhabitants) and Villach (62,898 inhabitants), represent the central areas of Carinthia and can be considered as small

urban or suburban areas. These two cities are also the main hubs of the Carinthian coworking scene, which means that out of the total ten CWS that currently exist in Carinthia, six are operated in one of the two cities. The remaining four CWS are run in a rural environment, but are also located in relative proximity to these two cities.

Sample and Methods

To shed light on the specifics of coworking in suburban and rural areas, we will draw on a qualitative study with five CWS in Carinthia, located in the two cities of Klagenfurt and Villach and one rural location. The **sample** includes different types of CWS that may exist in these peripheral areas and provides information on a contextual perspective of coworking. A differentiating factor is the operator model and the financing of the CWS. In contrast to metropolitan areas, the public sector is an essential part of small urban areas and rural coworking. This is also reflected in this sample, according to which three CWS are publicly and two are privately funded and managed. Four of the five CWS contained in the sample are currently still in operation and therefore active; one private CWS has closed in the meantime and no longer exists. Table 1 summarizes the sample of CWS and the associated interview data.

A total of ten interviews were conducted in Carinthia, hence two interviews for each CWS, covering both the operator and the user side. The data collection was conducted through face-to-face interviews from the end of 2014 to the beginning of 2015. The average length of an interview was approximately 30 to 45 minutes, with a semi-structured interview guide being used to cover certain topics in the interviews. The interviews were comprehensively transcribed and re-analyzed here accordingly.

Our data analysis follows an inductive approach, as applied, for example, in the grounded theory methodology (Gioia et al. 2013), in order to analyze the barriers and challenges of building and operating a space in peripheral areas. In the first step

Table 1 CWS sample and interview data information

#	CWS	Location	Inhabitants	Status	Interview	Role	Gender
1	Public	Klagenfurt	100,000	Open	1	Initiator/community manager	Female
					2	User/coworker	Male
2	Private	Klagenfurt	100,000	Closed	3	Initiator/operator	Female
					4	User/coworker	Male
3	Private	Villach	63,000	Open	5	Initiator/operator	Male
					6	User/coworker	Male
4	Public	Villach	63,000	Open	7	Community manager	Female
					8	User/coworker	Male
5	Public	Moosburg	4500	Open	9	Major	Male
					10	Manager/user	Male

of the analysis, two interviews from two different CWS types were openly coded, meaning that phrases, descriptions, or terms related to the initiation, development, and operation of the CWS and its associated difficulties and challenges were assigned first-order codes. This was carried out for both the operator and the user side. The second step involved identifying codes across interviews that could be merged into higher-level nodes, but were still based on the language of the interviewees. These nodes were refined by working through the additional interviews to create first-order categories. The third step aimed at finding links among the first-order categories to create second-order themes. These themes capture different conceptual aspects that served as the basis of our analysis. In a last step, these second-order themes were organized into overarching dimensions that capture the relevant aspects of coworking in a regional context from both the operator and user side.

Results and Findings

The establishment and diffusion of CWS in smaller cities and rural areas depends on the extent to which the associated working practices can be adapted to the particular regional circumstances and the ways CWS can function as organizational units under these conditions. Emerged and developed in large cities with corresponding technological developments, large creative scenes and urban lifestyles, coworking is part of an urban work- and lifestyle that cannot be transferred one-to-one to suburban and rural areas. In principle, CWS in these more peripheral areas function in the same way as their urban counterparts, but they are nevertheless different in some important respects. The simple fact that there is a limited pool of (potential) coworkers in these areas makes it more difficult to establish a coworking experience with the same intensity as in bigger cities and to create the special attraction to this form of working.

In our analysis, we found that CWS in Carinthia are usually smaller, more often structured in fixed desk settings and are mostly organized for longer memberships than their urban counterparts. This has implications for the social workplace practices that may evolve in these organizational and spatial surroundings, which are dependent on these factors. A major barrier to the diffusion of coworking in such peripheral areas is the lack of knowledge about the specifics of these collaborative workplace practices and their associated values and meanings. This distance to the social knowledge on the practices of coworking is accompanied by uncertainties among different stakeholders and potential users about the differences to regular offices and the potential benefits of working in a CWS. The diffusion of coworking in the peripheral area examined here rests first and foremost on people discovering and adopting these social practices, which in turn depends on the CWS available.

As coworking is less widespread in these more peripheral areas and there are not so many potential coworkers, it is difficult to operate and manage CWS in a successful way financially. Therefore, the public sector is an integral part of coworking in

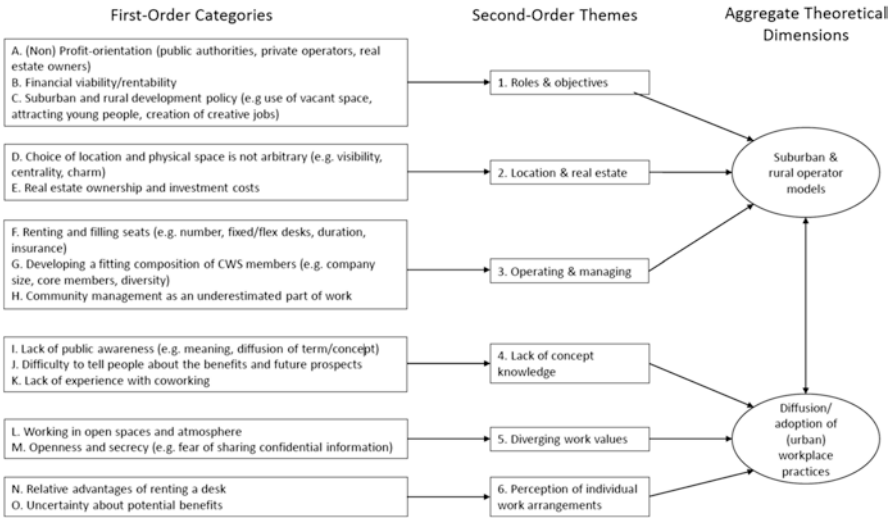

Fig. 1 Data structure

the regional context examined here, as it plays an important role as an operator and provider of coworking services. Although the public sector has a significant part in promoting coworking, it can also pose problems in the further development of private engagements in this sector. Figure 1 illustrates the overall data structure, showing the first order categories and themes from which we developed our findings on the interplay between operator models and workplace practices in smaller cities and rural areas. Additional evidence is shown in Table 2 which is interlinked with Figure 1 and which forms the basis of our results discussed here.

Suburban and Rural Coworking Space Operator Models

Roles and Objectives In peripheral regions, different ways of operating a CWS exist, which in turn are associated with the involvement of different actors and their roles, orientations, and objectives. While the majority of CWS in urban areas are operated in the form of a private business model, in peripheral areas the public sector is much more involved as operator, real estate owner, and financier. The operators interviewed here report that running a CWS privately as a business is often not profitable and financially viable in these peripheral contexts. Therefore, cities and municipalities play an important part when it comes to operating a CWS in small cities and rural areas. The public sector naturally has different interests and objectives when it comes to operating or financing a CWS than a private investor and/or operator. As a mayor of a rural commune explains, the public sector does not need

Table 2 Summary of dimensions, themes, categories, and data

Second-order themes and first-order categories	Illustrative and representative data
Overarching dimension: Suburban and rural CWS operator models	
1. *Roles & objectives*	
A. (non) profit-orientation (public authorities, private operators and real estate owners)	A1. "Because the public authorities do it; it can be passed on very cheaply, so the city of Klagenfurt makes no profit with this model. They do not add anything to the rent, so we have very cheap packages. (initiator/community manager; public CWS, paragraph 11) A2. "I'm not a private entrepreneur in that sense now, I just need to have 0.0. And I want to have that in the medium term, because there is already tax money in it anyway. Also in the promotion of the investment. I can't get that out anyway. But to have 0.0 in the operation of the CWS at least." (major; rural and public CWS, paragraph 39)
B. Financial viability/ rentability.	B1. "In terms of tasks it may work, but financially: You just can't really live from co-working. That's just it. It's a pleasant task, it's a cool task, but at the end of the day, it does not pay off. It's just a big problem. And I can understand why many co-working spaces are simply supported by the public sector, because financially, privately, there's no other way. (initiator/operator; private CWS, paragraph 93) B2. "The hurdles are that once it is economically successful, no matter who does it and you can also see in the private sector, it doesn't matter if it's Vienna or Klagenfurt or wherever that is, it didn't work without funding, because otherwise he can't do it. Quite simple. […] so, it has to be in the interest of the taxpayer to promote it." (manager/user; rural and public CWS, paragraph 37)
C. Suburban and rural development policy (e.g., use of vacant space, attracting young people, creation of creative jobs).	C1. "The philosophy of Hafen 11 is to use the existing building stock available in the city center of Klagenfurt; we don't need to build anything new, actually. We have enough vacant space in the city center that we can use. So, to do urban development with that, actually." (initiator/community manager; public CWS, paragraph 27) C2. "To give creative people a chance to work professionally in a network. And at the same time to give them the chance to create creative jobs in rural areas." (manager/user; rural and public CWS, paragraph 3)
2. Location & real estate	
D. Choice of location and physical space is not arbitrary (e.g., visibility, centrality, charm).	D1. "Does seventh floor in a building make sense, or is it perhaps better to have a ground floor location where you have visibility to the outside world. We have good visibility through the balcony from Villacherstraße, so it's important that you can see that something is happening there. (initiator/community manager; public CWS, paragraph 83) D2. "We have here the main square and I don't think there's a co-working space on the ground floor right next to the main square, which is certainly unique. Then you almost have to experience that you are at the neuralgic point of a place. That means, somehow making it more present to the outside and inviting people from the outside." (manager/user, rural and public CWS, paragraph 58)

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Second-order themes and first-order categories	Illustrative and representative data
E. Real estate ownership and investment costs.	E1. "Well, we are simply already convinced that inner-city properties or existing properties should be used, which means that certainly the owners are a hurdle. Because he has to be prepared... Uhm... a lot of things have to be rebuilt, we have also rebuilt, and the owner has paid two thirds of the rebuilding costs. Because anyone who said, "It's actually invested in my property, and when they sell it again after ten years, their property has been improved." (initiator/community manager; public CWS, 11, paragraph 37)
3. Operating & managing	
F. Renting and filling seats (e.g., number, fixed/flex desks, duration, insurance).	F1. "We have twelve seats. You can really work with that size. […] it is not so easy, even for Klagenfurt to fill these twelve places. 15 to 20 seats, I would dare to say, can be operated indirectly, but everything beyond that, in my personal opinion, is a step too big for Klagenfurt." (initiator/community manager; public CWS, paragraph 27) F2. "So it doesn't really fall under tenancy law, because for tenancy law you would need really locked premises rather. […]. So you can work well with the right of use. The right of use is just a bit better for the operator, because in tenancy law you always pay rent. […] you are also much more flexible. You also have to be from my point of view, because if a co-worker says today: "I'm going away next month because I have a job in Berlin or an offer or a project or something; then you simply have to be able to let him go. (initiator/operator; private CWS, paragraph 51)
G. Developing a fitting composition of CWS members (e.g.,company size, core members, diversity).	G1. "They were actually people who got along well with each other and who appreciate the atmosphere there, and so in the beginning it was through whoever you know and whoever feels like it, that a little bit of a core crew developed, half of whom have been around for three years. And the others just come along." (initiator/community manager; public CWS, paragraph 73) G2 "we really want diversity. We deliberately invite different people because we believe that we will get different perspectives, different perspectives, and that it will be even more enriching. Simply because many different perspectives come together." (initiator/operator; private CWS, paragraph 67)
H. Community management as an underestimated part of work.	H1. "I underestimated that myself, I must admit, because I thought at the beginning: Well, open up an office and let a few people sit in and that's the story. But, it's exactly this kind of community management that actually takes a lot of time, because that's what it is; sometimes you just have to go and ask: And, all right, what are you doing right now, how are you doing? Just listen for a quarter of an hour. And that's exactly what it's all about then. If you don't do it, the climate can already be affected, completely." (initiator/operator; private CWS, paragraph 79)
Overarching dimension: Diffusion/adoption of new (urban) workplace practices	
4. Lack of concept knowledge	

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Second-order themes and first-order categories	Illustrative and representative data
I. Lack of public awareness (e.g., meaning, diffusion of term/concept).	I1. "In the unfamiliarity of this new way of working. This is the biggest hurdle. Because far too little; both the people who would be affected by it or who are supposed to use it, i.e. our target group, and above all the institutions that are active in the fields, either don't really know what is actually behind the keyword, or if they do, they don't advertise it enough as an idea." (initiator/operator; private CWS, paragraph 33) I2. "The name Coworking. Who knows what that is? It's not even a proper name. In the countryside, it should be called: Community workroom; of course it doesn't sound so sexy. Or, I don't know: Office space for rent or, I don't know. So, we often get requests: What is this? "And people, people don't get it." (manager/user; rural and public CWS, paragraph 32)
J. Difficulty to tell people about the benefits and future prospects.	J1. "Because Hafen 11 was really a pilot for Carinthia, the first coworking space, it was difficult, simply because it was with the public authorities. To do all this work of convincing people what it can do, and if you don't know something yet, it's just difficult to tell someone that it's great and that it will actually become more and more in the future. (initiator/community manager; public CWS, paragraph 37) IJ2. "Then, when you do with the public sector, you have to say; you have to be convincing, especially in the public sector, when it comes to the issue: Local council, for example, and so on, because you have to agree to it once in a while, and that's not so obvious, because you can't see anything yet." (manager/user; rural and public CWS, paragraph 37)
K. Lack of experience with coworking.	K1. "That no one knows what it is. [...] that is something you have to experience. And it's easiest if you come in and work there, then you understand what it is." (initiator/operator; private CWS, paragraph 25) K2. "Because somehow that has to go out to the people, that they get to know coworking, because when I say that in Carinthia, they look at you first of all. Yes, they do not even know what that is. And then they are so frightened, because they think: Hmm, there are several people sitting in there and also young people, where they then come and say: "No. someone could copy something from me; I am not going in there. (initiator/operator; private CWS, paragraph 58)
5. Diverging work values	
L. Working in open spaces and atmosphere.	L1. "And of course you don't necessarily have the peace and quiet in this form either, unless you put the headphones in once: So now, for example, a writer will have a hard time in here if he has to concentrate because you are actually distracted all the time. [...]; it's all in the direction of communicative stuff." (manager/user; rural and public CWS, paragraph 50) L2. "It must of course be compatible on some level. So there must be a certain openness. I think it's very difficult to do that when you shut yourself off like that. You have to be prepared to be open, not to shut yourself off completely. But I think everyone benefits from it." (user/coworker; private CWS, paragraph 67)

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Second-order themes and first-order categories	Illustrative and representative data
M. Openness and secrecy (e.g., fear of sharing confidential information).	M1. "And what is perhaps also a bit of an argument is this feeling of being watched. I think it's just because of the community it always comes out a bit like that; you look at what the other person is doing. And of course, if you don't want that and don't like it, then you're wrong in the co-working space. So these are the psychological hurdles." (user/coworker; private CWS, paragraph 30) M2. "There are many; so you need a certain one; so you have to be very open. That means you assume it's someone who's dealing with the future or with some things that aren't normally, I don't know. You have to be permissive. Therefore, it's almost like you work in a bikini here. So you kind of show off everything you do, everything you can; almost strip." (manager/user; rural and public CWS, paragraph 50)
6. Perception of individual work arrangements	
N. Relative advantages of renting a desk.	N1. "It's certainly a disadvantage for someone who goes coworking specifically to take advantage of synergies. Someone who has the attitude that he's going in there to see that you're driving the business forward, and that someone else is cooperating in some way, and docking in there somehow. I see the advantages because we are all in the same boat, we all have similar challenges that have to be tackled in individual entrepreneurship" (user/coworker; public CWS, paragraph 44)
O. Uncertainty about potential benefits.	O1. "What I get to hear from the circle is that there is often interest in coworking, but the step ... To make it often seems to be very difficult. I can't confirm this for me now. All I get is that it can happen, for example when coworking is not so busy, that you are unsure who will come and really bring me something. (user/coworker; public CWS, paragraph 26)

to make a profit when operating a CWS, but should be able to at least cover the operating costs in the medium run:

> I'm not a private entrepreneur in that sense now, I just need to have 0.0. And I want to have that in the medium term, because there is already tax money in it anyway. Also in the promotion of the investment. I can't get that out anyway. But to have 0.0 in the operation of the CWS at least. Well, that should happen, I say, in the first two years; that would be quite good. Because it then crystallizes that you say: "Okay, it doesn't work at all; or: You're doing something wrong; or whatever." (Major; Rural and public CWS, paragraph 39)

Accordingly, it is also possible for these publicly funded CWS to offer cheaper workplaces than their private counterparts. This makes it difficult for private CWS to keep up with prices for coworking places in these peripheral regions, especially if you are not the owner of the building where the CWS is located and have to pay rent accordingly. This poses a certain dilemma for the public authorities since; on the one hand, they have an interest in private investors operating CWS, but on the other hand, they are themselves in the role of operator. Public subsidies therefore

flow primarily into the self-operated CWS, which can create effects of crowding-out private operators from these local markets.

Why is it important for the public sector to establish CWS in peripheral regions and what are the objectives for doing so? Various aspects are identified in the interviews, which can be attributed to political goals to develop these areas further. CWS are seen as a way to address specific problems or challenges that these areas face, particularly the emigration of young and well-educated people to metropolitan regions and the revitalization of vacant spaces in the village and town centers. In this context, the public sector perceives CWS as a useful instrument of using existing vacancies in the centers with office spaces for creative professionals or start-up founders. The goal is to establish a creative scene in suburban and rural areas that encourages young people to live and work here and to contribute new ideas and initiatives to regional development.

> Now I know that... uhm... well, that was the statement from the public authorities at the time, that even if it doesn't pay off, they know that such projects are important for the city, so that a certain flair, a certain atmosphere is created in the city. So that young people actually want to live and work here. So they would also accept losses, as long as they stay within a certain limit. (Initiator/Community Manager; Small-city and public CWS, paragraph 57)

Location and Real Estate (Accessibility, Centrality, Visibility) The appropriate location and the material infrastructure play a significant role in the establishment of CWS. Not every vacant building is suitable for use as a CWS. On the one hand, a certain visibility and accessibility is required, which can usually be achieved with ground floor premises. For example, the main square in a village is, as an initiator of a rural CWS reports, predestined for this purpose and enables the space to become more visible and anchored in village life:

> So that's where we have the main square and I don't think there's a co-working space on the ground floor right next to the main square, which is certainly unique. Then you almost have to experience that you are at the neuralgic point of a place. That means, somehow making it more present to the outside and inviting people from the outside, because it's all about that the people also, that we all somehow get orders in some way and you have to communicate that to the outside. (Manager/User, Rural and public CWS, paragraph 58)

Often the real estate owners represent an obstacle when it comes to use and constructional adaptions of existing buildings. This can lead to differences of opinion as to who should bear the reconstruction costs. This requires persuasion to convince the owners of suitable real estates to engage in revitalization efforts, thus increasing the value of the property in the end.

Different mobility conditions in more rural areas must also be taken into account when it comes to the location of a CWS. In many cases, public transport is not as well developed in more rural areas as in central areas. Therefore, most people are more dependent on their car to travel between home, clients, and a CWS. Here you also need appropriate parking facilities to get to the CWS relatively quickly and easily.

Operating and Managing CWS do not operate without a certain level of organization and management. The main function of a CWS is to offer collaborative workspaces and to provide and maintain the corresponding infrastructure. This concerns not only the physical surroundings such as maintenance, repair, and service of the equipment but above all the social infrastructure, hence the community of coworkers (Spinuzzi et al. 2019). An essential part of managing a CWS is not only to rent out desks to coworkers, who are willing to pay for such a workplace and the services associated with it, but also this kind of emotional and relational work that comes with operating a CWS (Gregg and Lodato 2018). As one operator reports, she underestimated this type of work and the effort involved, but this is essential for the functionality of CWS:

> I underestimated that myself, I must admit, because I thought at the beginning: Well, open up an office and let a few people sit in there and that's the end of the story. But, it's exactly this kind of community management that takes a lot of time, because that's what it is; sometimes you just have to go and ask: And, all right, what are you doing right now, how are you doing? Just listen for a quarter of an hour. And that's exactly what it's all about then. If you don't do that, the climate can already suffer, completely. (Initiator/Operator, Small-city and private CWS; paragraph 79)

Finding the right people who fit into a space is an integral part of operating a CWS. The interviewed operators mostly saw solo self-employed people who are not only working in creative industry sectors, but also in other knowledge-intensive sectors as their main target group (Bögenhold et al. 2014; Knapp 2020). Far more important than the specialization of potential coworkers is the fit into the community of people working "alone together" (Spinuzzi 2012) in a shared workspace. The composition is often not consciously determined as it is sometimes the case in metropolitan CWS and coworkers are not selected due to particular criteria, but rather it develops mostly on the basis of personal relationships and networks of the operators or the initial users of CWS:

> They were actually people who got along well with each other and who appreciate the atmosphere there, and so in the beginning it was through whoever you know and whoever feels like it, that a little bit of a core crew developed, half of whom have been around for three years. And the others just come along. But there is no industry in that sense. That's also important, because if there were seven architecture firms in there now ... that's not going well (laughs). There's not enough to do for that, I think. We'd rather tear each other apart. (Initiator/Community Manager; Small-city and public CWS, paragraph 73)

In this statement, it also becomes clear that a certain diversity is nevertheless necessary, as a focus on a specific sector (e.g., architects) would not work in a peripheral context, due to the limited work available in a particular sector. Such a hypothetical situation might create too much competition between coworkers, which could disrupt the climate and atmosphere and lead to the break-up of the CWS community.

In the context examined here, the rented seats are usually fixed desks, i.e., permanently installed and allocated work desks that are usually rented for a longer period of time, mostly for a minimum of one month. In contrast to metropolitan CWS, which usually also offer a sufficient amount of flexdesks for short periods of

time (e.g., hourly, daily, weekly) due to the larger number of potential users, the use of a workplace in a peripheral CWS is generally more long-term-oriented and therefore less dynamic. This might have various effects on the way people experience coworking and also on the way people get access to the coworking communities. Flexdesks are a way to offer potential members the possibility to rent a desk at short notice and thus enable them to start experiencing coworking. It also creates a different dynamic of coworking if, in addition to permanent guests, new and different people show up in a CWS.

Diffusion/Adoption of New (Urban) Workplace Practices

Lack of Concept Knowledge Knowledge in terms of awareness and competence is an essential prerequisite for establishing coworking in a regional context. As many CWS operators in the interviews report, coworking is often not known to the suburban and rural population (partly due to the English terminology) and other stakeholders and is therefore frequently misunderstood and misrepresented. Often it is simply seen as a serviced and shared office that is rented by different companies and start-ups that somehow work together under one roof.

> In the unfamiliarity of this new way of working. This is the biggest hurdle. Because far too little; both the people who would be affected by it or who are supposed to use it, i.e. our target group, and especially all institutions that are active in the field, either do not know what is actually behind the term, or if they do, they do not advertise it enough as an idea. (Initiator/Operator, Small-city and private CWS, paragraph 33)

The image of a commonly shared office space is widespread, but represents of course only one part of coworking as a social practice. The community aspect of coworking and its potential benefits for the way people organize their work around these communities is not easy to recognize and even harder to communicate. It is not something that you can experience by a short visit in CWS, but requires personal experience and immersion into the continuous social practices of coworking.

> Because the space was really a pilot for Carinthia, the first coworking space, it was difficult, simply because it was with the public authorities. To do all this work of persuading people what it can do and what it can't do, and if you don't know something yet, it's just difficult to tell someone that it's great and that it will actually become more and more in the future. (Initiator/Community Manager; Small-city and public CWS, paragraph 37)

To express and transmit the ideas and practices associated with coworking adequately, it is necessary that people have not only awareness of the existence of coworking (awareness knowledge) but also understand how it works and what is unique about this form of working (know-how knowledge). Local stakeholders (municipalities, real estate owners, chamber of commerce) play a key role here, as they have the resources available to initiate, promote, or facilitate CWS and the associated social work practices in a regional context. As these stakeholders play a major role in the development of rural coworking, they need to have the knowledge

and experiences to understand the concept and be able to communicate the potential benefits and future prospects to potential users and real estate owners.

Diverging Work Values As a collaborative workplace practice, coworking comes with a set of values, meanings, and material settings that somehow constitute the core of this form of work. One of these basic values is openness which is reflected in particular in the spatial arrangements and the open work atmosphere in most CWS (Lorne 2019). The basic idea of openness is to bring people together by creating an environment in which one can see what others are doing and are currently working on, which creates opportunities for exchange and cooperation. While this openness is the exciting thing for some people, others may not be comfortable with the idea that others may receive information that is confidential. As was reported in the interviews, some feel uncomfortable with this openness and transparency and feel observed and almost naked in such an open setting:

> There are many; so you need a certain one; so you have to be very open. […] You must be permissive. So it's almost like you're working in a bikini here. So you somehow show everything you do, everything you can; almost undress. [...] But you also have to be a bit exhibitionist, I think you have to be exhibitionist if you do that to yourself. (Manager/User, Rural and public CWS, paragraph 50)

The transparency that comes along with this openness seems to be a barrier for people who are used to working in traditional organizational structures and offices. Furthermore, for people working in particular occupations, having one's own office is a matter of prestige and status. It sends a signal that one can afford a representative office. These work values are a factor to be taken into account as a barrier of diffusion of Coworking in a regional context.

Perception of Individual Workplace Settings/Arrangements The decision to rent a desk in a small city or rural CWS can depend on various individual factors, including satisfaction with the current workplace situation, social and communicative needs, the financial circumstances of the potential coworkers, and the perception of the potential benefits of using a space in the CWS. This decision depends above all on the perceived relative benefits of renting and using a place in a CWS. Many coworkers report that the rent they pay for using a desk in a CWS is reasonable in terms of what they get for their money and goes hand in hand with some advantages compared to working alone at home or in other workplaces. As one coworker explains, the potential benefits don't primarily lie in the development of their business, but in the overall support of peers who have to deal with similar problems and issues:

> It's certainly a downside for someone who goes coworking specifically to take advantage of synergies. Who has the attitude that he's going in there now, just to see that you're pushing the business forward, and that someone else is cooperating in some way, and docking there somehow. Sure, he can't find that many docking stations. […] I see the advantages there because we are all in the same boat, we all have similar challenges that have to be tackled in individual entrepreneurship: how do I register something, what do I have to do, and so on. These are simply questions that are better answered over the desk than if you have to

> make phone calls or research websites or something, because someone has done that before. It's just faster, more direct, you can exchange your own experiences and that's actually very positive for me. (User/Coworker, Small-city and public CWS paragraph 44)

As far as the social aspect of coworking is concerned, there seems to be some uncertainty as to what exactly the benefits or advantages are for working and spending time in a CWS environment. Although there is often an interest in coworking, freelancers, and other potential coworkers often are not able and/or willing to pay to use a desk in a shared workplace, when they have the necessary equipment at home. The perception and assessment of the possible advantages of a place in the CWS plays a particularly important role in the adoption of coworking as a social workplace practice.

Discussion and Conclusion

CWS have emerged in metropolitan areas with corresponding technological infrastructure, large creative and entrepreneurial scenes, and urban lifestyles. By providing a physical and social infrastructure for independent professionals, freelancers, and start-ups, CWS play an important role in innovative urban ecosystems (Florida et al. 2017; Nakano et al. 2020). In smaller cities and rural areas, these collaborative workplaces are also increasingly becoming a central component of regional, economic-development strategies aimed at building up entrepreneurial ecosystems (Autio et al. 2018). The aim is to increase the attractiveness for creative and innovative workers through the establishment of the necessary infrastructure and to create social hubs for creativity and innovation in these local areas. Furthermore, CWS are seen as an opportunity to revitalize the vacant spaces in the centers of the cities and towns (Jamal 2018).

In the analysis, it became clear that CWS as organizational units are hardly financially viable as a private business model in the suburban and rural context examined here, because of a lack of coworkers who are able or willing to pay for longer memberships, at least in the beginning. One reason is that coworking as a social work practice is usually not so widespread and the potential benefits of working in a CWS are not immediately recognizable by potential coworkers and other stakeholders. The communities and networks are smaller and not so dense and so the potential benefits of working in a CWS are harder to communicate and explain. In order to be able to operate a CWS, the public sector plays an important part. This affects the ways in which CWS are built, operated, and managed, which creates opportunities as well as challenges for the development of coworking in a regional context like in Carinthia, Austria.

In our analysis, we see that CWS in such peripheral areas share many similarities with their counterparts in larger agglomerations, but nevertheless they do not function in the same way due to differences in the broader environment in which they are embedded. In line with previous research we found that these CWS are confronted

with a set of challenges and barriers due to the limited pool of skilled workers and the restricted availability of infrastructural, financial, and social resources in these areas (Andersson and Andersson 2019; Cowie et al. 2013). Therefore, CWS in suburban and rural areas are in need of distinctive and adjusted models of operating and fostering coworking, including acquiring other financial sources, attracting new target groups, and addressing local problems and challenges. As a result, coworking as an open concept is also evolving, leading to new types of CWS that are adapted to specific conditions.

Limitations

The qualitative approach chosen here makes it possible to exemplify coworking in suburban and rural areas and show the challenges associated with the implementation and diffusion of coworking in such areas. Nevertheless, this approach has several limitations that need to be taken into account. The generalization of the results is limited to the sample that represents a particular institutional, demographic, cultural, and social context. Different operator models may exist in other suburban and rural areas, depending on the actual configuration of these factors. Furthermore, the study does not directly compare regional coworking spaces with their urban counterparts. In future studies a direct comparison of these factors should be taken into account to investigate differences in spatial and demographic coworking models. In this respect, a quantitative approach would allow for an examination of the distribution of particular types of coworking spaces in different contexts.

Another aspect is the time of data collection, which was in 2014/2015, when the first coworking spaces were established throughout Austria. Therefore, these data reflect a time when coworking was relatively unknown and not yet established. Nowadays, coworking is more widespread, which means that coworking is now more familiar to people. There are several hybrid models that have evolved over time and that are now available in suburban and rural contexts.

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Part III
Collaborative and Joint Activities in Coworking Spaces

Coworking's Cooperation Paradox: On the Role of Stigmergic Curation

Julian Waters-Lynch and Cameron Duff

Abstract Coworking is a complex social phenomenon that draws together the material design features of office environments with a collection of practices that encourage interaction and cooperation between independent knowledge workers. While early studies highlighted social interaction and a sense of community as a primary source of value for the "first wave" of Coworkers, subsequent analyses observed diminished interactions and faltering solidarity as the Coworking industry expanded, and individual sites changed, as it entered a "second wave." More recently, scholars have discussed a fledgling "third wave" of Coworking that seeks to revive the early forms of communal sociality, grounded in more sustainable models of enterprise. This chapter responds to this recent turn, by critically examining the role of stigmergic *properties* and *practices* among the first wave of Coworking spaces. Stigmergy is a concept first developed to explain the apparent "cooperation paradox" between social insects that describes how agents communicate indirectly by encoding signals in their environment that direct the actions of other agents. We discuss stigmergy in the context of empirical material gathered through ethnographic fieldwork conducted over 4 years among two pioneering, first wave Coworking sites in Melbourne, Australia. We demonstrate how stigmergic properties of the physical and digital environments, and the stigmergic practices of participants, enabled Coworkers to share information and learn about each other's interests and work. We close with a brief discussion of the implications of our analysis for ongoing debates regarding the future of Coworking as a distinct, community-driven, and self-organizable practice.

Keywords Coworking · Cooperation paradox · Stigmergic curation · Australia

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Introduction

With the advent in recent decades of new technologies such as the internet and the World Wide Web, laptop computers, WiFi, smartphones, cloud computing, and a plethora of accompanying software applications, knowledge work tasks have been increasing decoupled from fixed sites. For knowledge workers, these technologies have progressively shaped how, where, and even with whom they can work (Johns and Gratton 2013), even though differing rates of adoption and adaptation and complex and unpredictable interactions between different technological and organizational innovations have generated considerable variation in the shifting dynamics of place and work. All the same, expectations of disruption abound with generations of progressive management thinkers long imagining that the trajectory of information communication technologies would inevitably transform the home into an electronic cottage (Toffler 1980) thereby rendering traditional office environments obsolete (Drucker 1993).

The unwiring of knowledge work has certainly led to more work taking place in the home – it would be a rare worker who hasn't responded to an early morning email or edited a document late at night. Far beyond the home though, work has also spilled out (Mazmanian et al. 2013; Martins 2015) to a variety of other settings, as, for example, public transport has become a place for reading, emails, and phone calls, cafes become sites for meetings, even exercise has become an opportunity for multitasking. The encroachment of work into these places has transformed their social character, such that it is doubtful if they might still be understood as "third places" of light-hearted leisure that offer a respite from work (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982), but also seen the appearance of a variety of new spatial hybrids blurring living, learning, working, and leisure (Morisson 2018). Increasingly, cafes, bars, and public transport have become places of productive work, more directly nested in the creative and entrepreneurial economy (Martins 2015; Florida 2017). But work itself has also changed, becoming more social in character, demanding the production and circulation, not only of abstract information but also of embodied affects (Dowling et al. 2007). Among these developments, however, the institution of the office has appeared curiously stubborn, more resistant to decentralized modes of organizing work than first imagined (Gan 2015). Nonetheless, this historical durability is being tested like never before amid the global COVID-19 pandemic (World Health Organization 2020), still unfolding at the time of writing, which is forcing organizations to conduct the "largest work from home experiment ever attempted" (Banjo et al. 2020). Given the unprecedented scale of this experiment, it is timely to reflect on the impacts and futures of Coworking, the issues to which it has been proffered as a response, and the lessons that might be learned from Coworking for other kinds of work.

Coworking, the practice of a heterogeneous group of workers (rather than employees of the same organization) sharing space and fostering a sense of community, was first developed by early adopters of remote work impacted by structural shifts in employment relations toward freelancing, contract-based labor, and various

forms of self-employment (Waters-Lynch 2018). And yet the prospect of "working alone" provoked a desire for new ways of "being together" (Spinuzzi 2012), albeit while maintaining a sense of autonomy and independence, giving rise to novel sets of arrangements to achieve this purpose. Although the term "Coworking" was first coined in San Francisco in 2005 (Neuberg 2015), a pioneering range of experiments in new forms of "working alone together" (Spinuzzi 2012) were also occurring at this time across cities such as Vienna, Berlin, Copenhagen, London, and New York (Orel and Dvouletý 2020). Early Coworking spaces emerged out of this milieu, reflecting the bespoke design aesthetics and the large open rooms, shared tables, and bohemian social atmospheres of the cafés in which these inchoate Coworking practices had organically incubated. Right from the outset then, it is important to note how early Coworking spaces arose largely to address the social and psychological needs of the solo self-employed workers who had pioneered practices of remote working, rather than to solve the material facilities requirements of larger organizations.

From these early iterations, scholars and practitioners began observing significant changes in Coworking arrangements from around 2014 onward (see Orel and Dvouletý 2020). Individual sites mushroomed in cities all over the world, as spaces expanded in square meters, opened multiple locations, and installed private offices seeking to better cater to small businesses and even larger enterprises. Capital investment in the sector also grew as new actors entered the industry, attracted by the prospects of this new "asset class" (Wright 2018). This interest was further fuelled by the remarkable growth of WeWork, once listed as the second most valuable startup in the United States before its dubious governance and leadership practices led to a spectacular devaluation in one of the most lurid start-up spectacles of 2019 (Thompson 2019). Such developments made the concept of Coworking more widely known, but the enterprises that adopted this label tended to have less of the social character and communal orientation first observed in pioneering sites a decade earlier (Spinuzzi et al. 2019). These later developments are somewhat ironic, because the founder of the first official "Coworking space" claimed to have been inspired to create it after visiting a more traditional serviced office, and feeling thoroughly underwhelmed by its bland aesthetics, lack of social interaction, and absent communal ethos (Deskmag 2012; Neuberg 2015). In this respect, we would stress how Coworking began in opposition to the serviced office industry that had existed for decades prior (see Kojo and Nenonen 2017 for a review of the industry since the 1960s), but has increasingly come to resemble this industry as the past decade progressed.

More recently, there have been discussions of an emerging "third wave" of Coworking (Hillman 2019; Gandini and Cossu 2019). These initiatives, although fledgling, attempt to redress the diminished sense of community that resulted from Coworking's second wave (identified with Coworking's growing resemblance to the serviced office model noted above) by emphasizing a more open and social character, and a greater interest in and connections to local communities in ways that seek to "combine economic sustainability with social impact" (Gandini and Cossu 2019:6). Third wave advocates point to the shortcomings of the first wave of

Coworking, especially its underlying business models that often failed to support the social and communal aspirations of individual sites. As a result, discussions of this third wave often propose new, more effective, and sustainable ways of navigating the challenge of integrating the social, affective, material, and economic benefits of Coworking (Avdikos and Merkel 2019). Gandini and Cossu (2019), for example, argue that such a focus ought to lead to more "resilient" (Pratt 2015) spaces, less dependent on an individualistic and transactional relationship towards features such as material office amenities and location, while also cultivating other sources of immaterial and affective value for their members in ways that can more effectively spill over to the communities in which they are embedded.

Coworking's third wave thus represents something of a countertrend to the second wave, reanimating some of the grassroots activities and the bottom-up, decentralized processes that first attracted research interest in Coworking's potential to create positive social and economic externalities. By way of a brief overview of this initial interest, researchers across economics, human geography, management, and urban studies have proposed that Coworking, alongside other new forms of collaborative workspaces, can foster solidarity (Bianchi et al. 2018) through novel forms of relational collaboration, and promote new forms of social capital with important social and economic benefits (Capdevila 2014). In this regard, Coworking might help mitigate the precarious work and life conditions of freelancers by facilitating novel forms of self-organized, mutual aid in support of new urban social infrastructures, especially important within an age of "austerity urbanism" (Avdikos and Merkel 2019; Merkel 2015, 2019). Others have stressed how Coworking practices can foster a "sense of community" at work (Garrett et al. 2017) through the creation of distinctive atmospheres (Gregg 2018) that offer surrogates for formal organizational employment (Blagoev et al. 2019). These arrangements not only confer social benefits, they also promote exchanges of information in ways that sustain new practices of innovation and entrepreneurship (Bouncken and Reuschl 2018), by incubating cultures of "permissionless innovation" (Thierer 2016). Cultivating these sensibilities involves reflexive relationships between space and practice (Cnossen and Bencherki 2018), even as scholars emphasize the need for more research into the specific "mechanisms and microprocesses" (Blagoev et al. 2019: 19) that enable this decentralized mode of organizing work to flourish in support of social innovation.

The gains widely discussed in these accounts can be characterized as positive externalities in that they generate benefits – such as knowledge sharing and affective support – that "spillover" beyond the dyadic relationship between individual Coworking customers and space providers. Indeed, these social and economic benefits are often captured "downstream" through forms of innovative and entrepreneurial activity that germinate at a time or place beyond the initial transaction (Frischmann 2012). In this regard, the socially vibrant form of Coworking initially lauded can be conceptualized as a form of immaterial infrastructure that supports entrepreneurial activity within a locale (Waters-Lynch 2018). Elsewhere, we have argued that this form of Coworking relies on delicate imbrications between practice, affects, and atmospheres in ways that produce new kinds of common resources (Waters-Lynch and Duff 2019), which also require new forms of governance to

mitigate free riding and exploitation (Bouncken et al. 2017). These are the kinds of questions that make Coworking such an interesting phenomenon for social research, with important implications too for policymakers interested in novel forms of urban infrastructure (Avdikos and Merkel 2019). Yet, most of the studies cited above ground their positive regard for Coworking in data gathered during Coworking's more socially vibrant "first wave" (see for example Spinuzzi 2012; Merkel 2015; Garrett et al. 2017; Cnossen and Bencherki 2018; Blagoev et al. 2019). The benefits discussed in this literature typically depend on Coworking's capacity to support uncoordinated, decentralized interactions between individuals. However, these are the very factors that declined during the second wave, diminishing Coworking's social character and infrastructural effects. We believe that the fledgling third wave of Coworking is beginning to revitalize these aspects, and so our focus in this chapter is on the role of material and digital environments in support of the kinds of uncoordinated sociality and decentralized forms of collaborative activity that need to be revived for the third wave to fulfill its promise. In discussing these environments, we consider specific "*stigmergic properties and practices*," or the degree to which Coworking arrangements enable and encourage Coworkers to modify their material and digital environments themselves, leaving traces from the past that can modulate present social practices for other Coworkers.

Stigmergy and the Cooperation Paradox

The capacity for order to emerge from seemingly uncoordinated and decentralized activity has long been a source of intrigue across the social sciences, from economics (Sugden 1989) to anthropology (Lansing 2003), urban studies (Jacobs 1961) to political science (Luban 2020). For management and organizational studies, understanding the conditions under which decentralized systems and bottom-up forms of self-organizing can lead to complexity rather than mere chaos, are of particular interest (Lichtenstein 2000; Shepherd et al. 2020). Such lines of inquiry not only help to distinguish which functions are better served through market transactions versus managerial hierarchies, as per the insights of transaction cost theory (Williamson 1993), but they should also help to expand the possibility frontier for how we imagine and design new forms of organizing (Powell 1990; Demil and Lecocq 2006; O'Mahony and Ferraro 2007). It matters, after all, if some simple design principles can foster self-organization and complex forms of order.

This is where the concept of stigmergy, first developed through the study of eusocial[1] insects, offers a compelling theoretical lens through which to examine the

[1] The term "eusocial," from the Greek "eu," or "good" was introduced in the 1960s to describe animals that engage in cooperative brood care and highly specialized divisions of labor to the extent that some "castes" within a colony lose the ability to perform some behaviors such as reproduction. The best-known examples are ants, termites, bees, and wasps but there are also some species of crustaceans and even mammals that have eusocial characteristics.

changing character of organizing environments, especially those seeking to encourage decentralized forms of collaboration (Elliott 2006). The question, for example, of how ants and termites build nests, how apparently simple creatures engage in complex forms of social production has puzzled naturalists and philosophers for centuries. Leafcutter ants, for example, can build nests that host up to eight million individuals and include sophisticated subterranean architecture that have evoked comparisons with early human cities (Hölldobler and Wilson 2010). The chief mystery opened up by such examples concerns how individual insects, which appear to be working alone without visible means of direct communication, can nonetheless coordinate their activities in constructing nests or foraging and carrying back food, and various other actions that benefit the collective. The complex forms of order manifested in such achievements, and the vexing mystery concerning their origins came to be known as the "cooperation paradox" (Theraulaz and Bonabeau 1999).

The paradox was only resolved when Pierre-Paul Grassé, a French zoologist, discovered that ants and termites were leaving pheromones as trace signals in the environment for their companions to read and modify. Grassé realized that eusocial insects were using the physical environments they inhabit as a kind of canvas, reading, and modifying sets of directions about what the insect that encounters these signals should do next. He coined the term "stigmergy" to describe this process, combining the Greek words *stigma* (sign) and *ergon* (action), to denote how signs encoded in the environment can direct the actions of other agents. Grassé's discovery of stigmergy helped unlock the mystery behind the complex forms of cooperation displayed by eusocial insects. Not only is stigmergy simply an indirect form of communication, mediated by the environment, it effectively enables a population or ecosystem to develop a form of collective memory, where individual agents can add, edit, or delete existing signals in ways that guide subsequent actions (Elliott 2006). A stigmergic system thus requires an encodable environment, a multitude of agents, a set of protocols that facilitate communicative interactions between them, and, at least in the animal world, a collective endeavor from which participants in the system derive an adaptive advantage, so that the activities help pass on their genes to subsequent generations (see Theraulaz and Bonabeau 1999 for a review).

In the case of nesting insects, members of a colony are all related and share the same DNA, so prosocial behavior such as sharing food, defense, and cooperative brood care confers a direct evolutionary benefit. In fact, many eusocial species have evolved strict divisions of labor expressed through biological caste systems where a single individual, for example, the queen in a bee colony, is dedicated exclusively to reproducing offspring and other sterile castes specialize in the various nest supporting functions[2]. In the case of nesting insects, this tight coupling between an individual organism and its collectively constructed environment has inspired discussion of a rather controversial concept in evolutionary biology, that of a "superorganism."|

[2]These morphological changes that endow specialized functions, such as "worker" and "soldier" ants, that support the survival of the whole unit are somewhat analogous to the evolution of organs in a more complex single biological body.

This idea, in which the proper unit of analysis is taken to be the group or population rather than an individual organism, follows from the fact that individual ants without nests, or bees without hives, can no longer survive and reproduce, and thus, depend on the entire population (or superorganism) for their survival. The individual in this analysis is more akin to a simple cell than a coherent, distinctive organism.

As a species, humans clearly display an aptitude for modifying physical artifacts in the environment to communicate meaning and coordinate activity (Parunak 2005). We also construct nest-like dwellings which, along with the technology and artifacts we create more broadly, have become essential to our survival, an observation that has inspired some to reflect on humanity's eusocial characteristics and the role of stigmergic processes in organizing human sociality (see Marsh and Onof 2008; Susi and Ziemke 2001; Susi 2016). Humans are, to be sure, far more complex creatures than ants or bees, and our responses to stigmergic signals are less predictable than the simple algorithms of social insects. Yet, we also clearly have a capacity for cooperation at scale that sees little precedent in the primates from which we evolved (Bregman 2020). The invention of writing itself is perhaps the clearest case of extending our capacity for "stigmergic collaboration" (Elliott 2006), but we also mark our environment routinely in all kinds of nontext based ways, both consciously designed, through gardening or works of art, and through more emergent modes of activity, such as illegal garbage dumps "where an initial refuse pile attracts more dumping at the same location" (Elliott 2016:74). The latter is an example closer to spontaneous order, where one particular site emerges as a focal point that begins to coordinate subsequent activity. However, rather than relying on the direct evolutionary logic of shared DNA, humans develop cultural orders, such as religions, games, and politics, organized through shared myths, ideologies, and rituals, that shape collective experiences of a felt sense of (fictive) kinship, proffering an impression that interests are bound together. This is the feeling of solidarity that animates so much classical analysis of the origins and endurance of political communities (see DeLanda 1997, 2006 for a review). Clearly, the boundary of any stigmergic system as a discrete macro unit, analogous with a nest or superorganism, is less clear cut in human societies[3]. This is why, when reflecting on the tensions between our instincts for both competitive individualism and prosocial, even altruistic behavior, Jonathan Haidt (2012:5) states, as an intentionally provocative heuristic, that "humans are ninety percent chimp and ten percent bee."

Given their remarkable outcomes, the stigmergic systems of eusocial insects have attracted the interest of researchers grappling with decentralized cooperation problems in other disciplines. Notable instances here include the fields of

[3] This point is actually a subject of on-going debate within evolutionary social theory. For example, E.O. Wilson called humans the "eusocial apes," Kevin Kelly (2009) employed the notion of a superorganism to describe our relationship with technology, Jonathan Haidt (2012) drew upon the concepts of eusociality but used the term "ultrasocial" to describe human cooperation. Yet, clearly the reproductive dynamics and processes of genetic competition among humans differ to insect colonies and thus the application of eusociality toward conferring adaptative advantages on the evolution of human groups has been challenged by Richard Dawkins, Steven Pinker, and many others.

architecture (Ireland and Garnier 2018), artificial intelligence (Marsh and Onof 2008), and swarm robotics (Broecker et al. 2015). To take the latter example, the fundamental insight drawn from the study of insect behavior is that rather than attempting to construct a single large, complex robot, say that could explore a planetary surface, forage for food, or excavate a pit, it might be more effective to build a multitude of small robots that individually follow simple rules, but collectively orchestrate complex and adaptive behavior (Zedadra et al. 2015). The capacity of particular interest here is *emergence*, or the ability of a system to produce high-level structures that are greater than the sum of their parts, and so to improvise adaptations in response to environmental changes that are not encoded in the original programming (Doyle and Marsh 2013).

Examining the processes of human organization through a stigmergic lens brings to the foreground the "editability" of an organizing context, or its *stigmergic properties*, understood in terms of the affordances of the material and digital environment itself and in the legitimacy of such modifications as acceptable *stigmergic practices*. In this regard, the digital revolution of recent decades has had dramatic effects on our abilities to leave signals in the environment (whether digital or physical), significantly enhancing the stigmergic affordances of the environments within which human groups typically organize work and play. To return to the opening passages of this chapter, the routine blending of interactive digital software into the social, cultural, and work practices of everyday life, facilitated through the ubiquity of smartphones and other mobile computing devices, provides a new kind of editable environmental canvas for humans to read and modify, albeit one that is overlain across the physical world in distinctive ways. The pervasive spread of digital and social media share a basic property, however, that of expanding the capacity for human communication, and the frontiers of social memory, beyond the need for direct contact between actors by encoding signals in the environment. Although these recent technological developments are unprecedented in our history, we should remember that even the curation of ordinary objects and artifacts in the home or workplace can facilitate or curtail particular lines of interactive order (Susi 2016). This suggests that the potential "editability" of an organizing context may not always serve prosocial goals or more complex forms of order but can also disrupt existing patterns. Recent discussions of the role of social media provide rich examples of this risk, to the extent that particular interactions, debates, and practices supported via social media have been understood to undermine or enfeeble prosocial and democratic norms in a given political community, driving populism of varying forms (see, for example, Sunstein 2017 for a review).

Coworking and Stigmergy

Returning to the three waves of Coworking introduced earlier in the chapter, we argue that the more open protocols and social orientation of the first wave, in concert with the design orientation of the material spaces in which this first wave

emerged, functioned as a *stigmergic system* that encouraged bottom-up, decentralized forms of activity with many positive social, cultural, and organizational externalities. The changes associated with the second wave, including the move to more "professionally" designed spaces and top-down managerial models, diminished much of this prosocial activity, often curtailing the stigmergic properties of the environment and depleting the motivations for stigmergic practices and other forms of communal social activity common among the first wave. As a new generation of third wave entrepreneurs and Coworkers seek novel strategies to revitalize the social character of Coworking and redress the forms of value that dwindled among the second wave, it is timely to consider Coworking in the more specific terms of the stigmergic properties of specific Coworking spaces, and the discrete stigmergic practices that these spaces avail. We develop these ideas in the sections that follow.

The Stigmergic Curation of Coworking in a Pioneering Melbourne Site

This section discusses stigmergic properties and practices in the context of empirical material gathered through ethnographic fieldwork conducted over 4 years among pioneering, first wave Coworking sites in Melbourne between 2012 and 2016. The empirical materials presented below are drawn from two Coworking sites, Hub Melbourne and Inspire9 (Waters-Lynch 2018). Here we focus on the stigmergic *properties* of these early Coworking environments in tandem with the stigmergic *practices* that modeled and helped to encourage decentralized forms of individual initiative and collective cooperation therein. Our ethnographic material is multimodal (see Boxenbaum et al. 2018), drawing upon photos of the Coworking environments themselves, tracing marks in objects and the curation of artifacts, screenshots of posts on the internal social media sites, supplemented by interview extracts and reflective observations on these practices drawn from ethnographic field notes completed by the first author. The presentation of these materials is loosely structured as a visual essay, where we seek to highlight aspects of organizing that are often hidden within traditional textual representations of organization and management studies (Warren 2008). We also use this medium to highlight how the bounded digital and physical environments were woven together through stigmergic practices, thereby reducing the seams between these two environmental canvases, crafting novel physical-digital "hybrid ecologies" (Crabtree and Rodden 2008).

Although the focus here is on the stigmergic properties of the Coworking environments and the stigmergic practices of Coworkers, we note that these evolve within reflexive, autocatalytic relationships. In other words, just as Coworking spaces and practices reflexively shape each other (as argued by Cnossen and Bencherki 2018), stigmergic practices require an editable environment, within which each "edit" encourages others to participate in these stigmergic practices, further sculpting the environment itself. Finally, in a more diffuse sense, the

presence of these practices, and the traces they leave across the environments, transpire within and contribute to the ongoing emergence of a distinctive, dispersed 'Coworking atmosphere' (Gregg 2018), something that we will treat here as part of the stigmergic properties of an individual Coworking site, even though its ontological composition might be less materially defined (Böhme 1993). Here we argue that the recurrent stigmergic activities of the early Coworking sites observed in Melbourne helped contribute to a sense of "permissionless innovation" (Thierer 2016), where individuals felt more able to try new things, experiment, iterate, and directly edit shared pools of content rather than seek approval from authorities before acting (Bauwens et al. 2019). Furthermore, in a context of smaller enclaves with firmer boundaries typical of the first wave of Coworking, these stigmergic practices played a significant role in formulating a sense of a shared project, a "doing in common" (Euler 2016) that helped construct new kinds of common resources (a point we elaborate in Waters-Lynch and Duff 2019). The sections below highlight diverse aspects of these stigmergic processes with a focus on properties and practices observed in two pioneering Coworking spaces in Melbourne. Once we have reviewed these data, we will close with some further reflections on the stigmergic aspects of Coworking.

Material Impressions

As previously noted, most first wave Coworking spaces tended to position their aesthetics and atmospheres in opposition to the conventions of standard office environments. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, these pioneering sites often paid close attention to the assembled effects of color, light, plants, art, music, and other elements in more self-consciously shaping how the spaces were affectively encountered and apprehended. In reflecting on these aspects, one Coworker described their first encounter with Hub Melbourne in an early interview:

> "The space was very eclectic and there were things I hadn't seen before, even back then in the early stages. Having grown up in the corporate world, and you know, being so used to office spaces that were quite clinical, it was really earthy and random and I loved it. And it was something that I hadn't been exposed to...Often I say think of a 1980s, grey and drab generic office environment dominated by cubicles and dour faces in suits. Then realize it's nothing like that…It's not the status quo. It's not held back by the dominant paradigm, the old way of doing things. People are open and reaching out for the new, the better, the different."

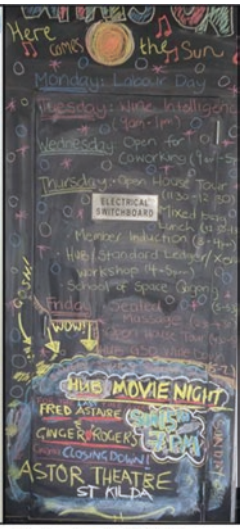
The bohemian atmosphere alluded to here was partly intentional but often also based on necessity, featuring design innovations grounded in frugality. Yet, our point is that this DIY aesthetics also often facilitated stigmergic practices in as much as individual Coworkers were able to contribute to the organization of the space. For example, the first iteration of the "membership wall" at Hub Melbourne was constructed with brief handwritten biographies of each member clipped together with a photo taken on a polaroid camera. Although this format quickly pushed up

against limits of scale, the makeshift, editable biographies on display upon first encounter, along with the overall design, helped set a tone for practice in the space.

The first iteration of the membership wall Hub Melbourne

Features like the membership wall were often complemented by more traditionally editable physical sites, such as community noticeboards:

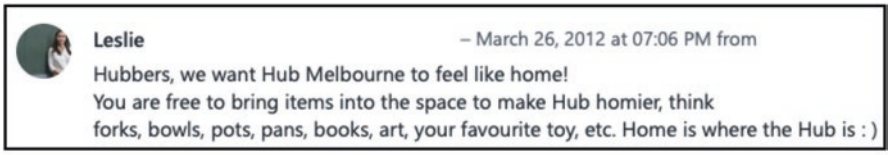
The community notice board at Inspire9



The 'what's on' board at Hub Melbourne

Meaningful Objects and Curated Artifacts

Other less obvious artifacts also became objects of stigmergic curation, no doubt, influenced by the fact that some of the objects were donated by Coworkers themselves, through bottom-up forms of contribution that was often encouraged during the first wave of Coworking:

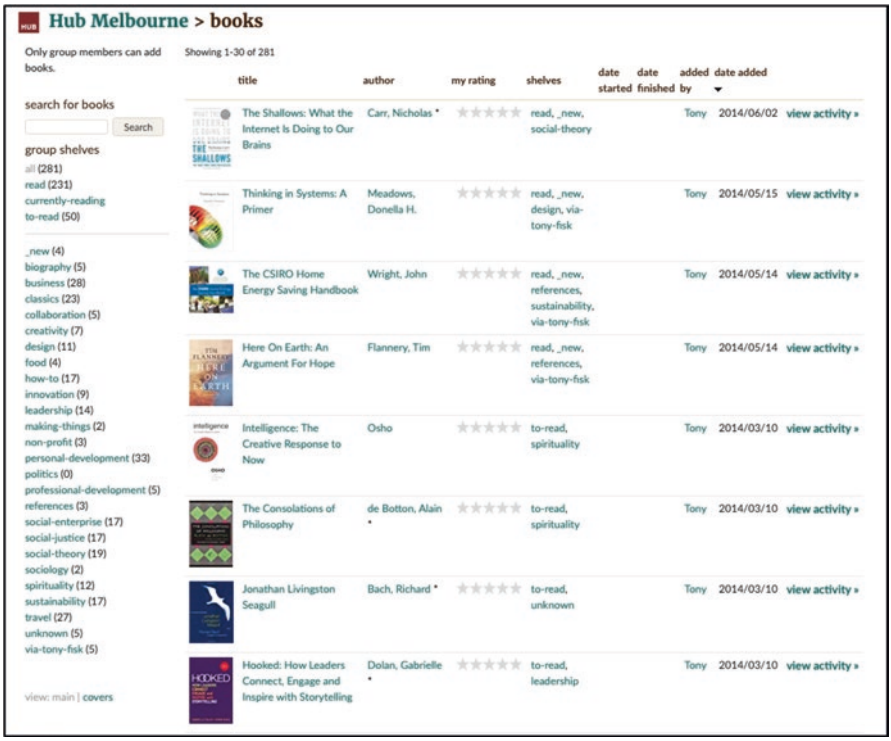


Yammer post encouraging Coworkers to bring personal items into the space to make it feel more like home

Practices such as these, in concert with the other prosocial elements of these early Coworking atmospheres, appeared to be effective means of galvanizing a stronger Coworking community, as Coworkers routinely commented that the workspace "just feels like home" (see Waters-Lynch 2018:215 for variations on this theme). To take one example, both Coworking spaces featured a library largely populated by books donated by Coworkers themselves. The content and arrangement of the books served to communicate something about the orientation of the space itself, or at least the interests and values of the members who donated them. Moreover, both spaces employed trust-based modes of borrowing and returning books, simply by asking members to post on a social media site that they had borrowed a book.

Books arranged in the Hub Melbourne library

In a further example of user-driven permissionless innovation, one Coworker not only voluntarily arranged the books thematically on the shelves but also created a digital catalog that Coworkers could peruse and borrow from online:



Hub Melbourne > books

Only group members can add books.

search for books

Search

group shelves

all (281)
read (231)
currently-reading
to-read (50)

_new (4)
biography (5)
business (28)
classics (23)
collaboration (5)
creativity (7)
design (11)
food (4)
how-to (17)
innovation (9)
leadership (14)
making-things (2)
non-profit (3)
personal-development (33)
politics (0)
professional-development (5)
references (3)
social-enterprise (17)
social-justice (17)
social-theory (19)
sociology (2)
spirituality (12)
sustainability (17)
travel (27)
unknown (5)
via-tony-fisk (5)

view: main | covers

Showing 1-30 of 281

	title	author	my rating	shelves	date started	date finished	added by	date added	
	The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains	Carr, Nicholas *	☆☆☆☆☆	read, _new, social-theory			Tony	2014/06/02	view activity »
	Thinking in Systems: A Primer	Meadows, Donella H.	☆☆☆☆☆	read, _new, design, via-tony-fisk			Tony	2014/05/15	view activity »
	The CSIRO Home Energy Saving Handbook	Wright, John	☆☆☆☆☆	read, _new, references, sustainability, via-tony-fisk			Tony	2014/05/14	view activity »
	Here On Earth: An Argument For Hope	Flannery, Tim	☆☆☆☆☆	read, _new, references, via-tony-fisk			Tony	2014/05/14	view activity »
	Intelligence: The Creative Response to Now	Osho	☆☆☆☆☆	to-read, spirituality			Tony	2014/03/10	view activity »
	The Consolations of Philosophy	de Botton, Alain *	☆☆☆☆☆	to-read, spirituality			Tony	2014/03/10	view activity »
	Jonathan Livingston Seagull	Bach, Richard *	☆☆☆☆☆	to-read, unknown			Tony	2014/03/10	view activity »
	Hooked: How Leaders Connect, Engage and Inspire with Storytelling	Dolan, Gabrielle *	☆☆☆☆☆	to-read, leadership			Tony	2014/03/10	view activity »

Other objects were curated in ways that encouraged playful interactions or brief collaborative endeavors, such as leaving a puzzle on the central kitchen table to be completed one piece at a time by passing Coworkers, or the basketball donation jar to fund Friday night drinks.

Objects curated to stigmergically encourage decentralised interaction and contribution towards collective endeavours

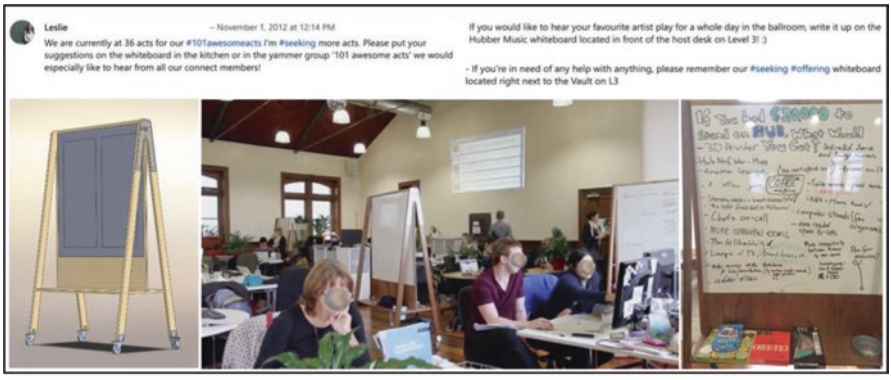
Exposure to these practices, and the playful, participatory atmospheres they helped cultivate, encouraged regular small acts of "gifting to the commons," facilitated by some of the distinct features of the environments themselves, such as the spacious wooden table that formed the centerpiece of the Hub Melbourne kitchen, a site at which Coworkers became habituated to the sharing of food and conversation. For example, members sometimes left extra fruit or herbs from their gardens (and occasionally other food) on the table for other Coworkers to share:

Food gifted to other Coworkers arranged on the kitchen table

Mobile Whiteboards

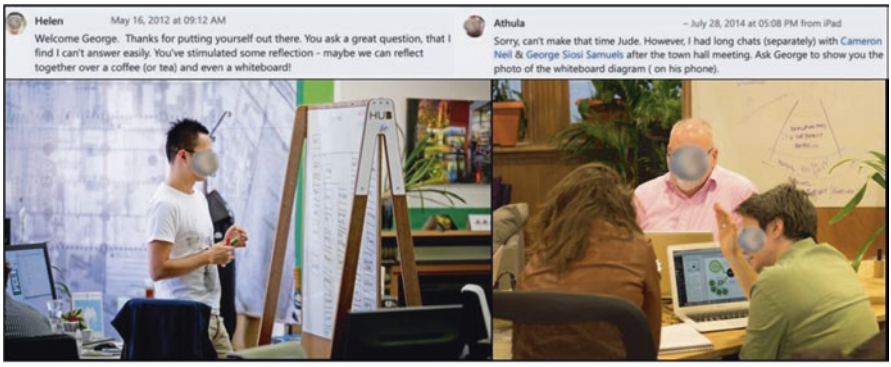
While ordinary objects, such as those featured above, became enrolled in stigmergic practices, the presence of mobile whiteboards, specifically designed for the Hub, played an especially distinctive role in modeling and facilitating collaborative, stigmergic, practices, especially ones more directly related to creative knowledge work.

Whiteboards were often positioned strategically at Hub Melbourne to communicate current projects, seek input from members on how to improve the Coworking space, or simply for more mundane invitations, such as soliciting ideas for different genres of music to be played in the space while people worked. They helped mark spatial segregation between areas of specific activities, thereby contributing to organic divisions of labor that emerged within the space.



Bespoke designed mobile whiteboards encouraged stigmergic practices

More significantly, the whiteboards acted as focal points for ideation. Coworkers would reposition them to iterate shared representations in meetings or sometimes to individually, silently, "work out loud" in the space (Waters-Lynch 2018: 278). During the early, socially vibrant phase of Hub Melbourne, some members would even use the whiteboards during informal occasions such as "wine down" (a regular social gathering held each Friday evening over drinks), to physically draw various conceptual frameworks and collaboratively discuss them, often inviting others to adapt and iterate them over the course of the conversations.



Bespoke designed mobile whiteboards encouraged stigmergic practices

The visibility of this work shaped the atmospheres of the spaces

Importantly, the practice of crafting and iterating shared representations of the world, of collaboratively building shared heuristics, helped bridge cognitive

distance between Coworkers from different disciplinary backgrounds, an activity that often helped foster trust between erstwhile strangers (Waters-Lynch 2018). But the visibility of these processes, the stigmergic practices afforded through the mobility of whiteboards, also facilitated novel modes of social learning in the space, as newcomers could discreetly observe these activities from the margins, before adopting and reproducing them for the next wave of newcomers to encounter. In this sense, whiteboards provided editable surfaces, spaces, and occasions for the legitimate peripheral participation germane to fostering new communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). The persistence of these editable representations over time left signals of the "work" of Coworking for others to later encounter, read, and even add to or edit. This enhanced the sense of a living, modular, social memory among Coworkers, as it emerged and persisted in distinctive Coworking atmospheres, cultivated through bottom-up adaptations of members rather than the fixed designs of the owners and managers of the Coworking enterprise.

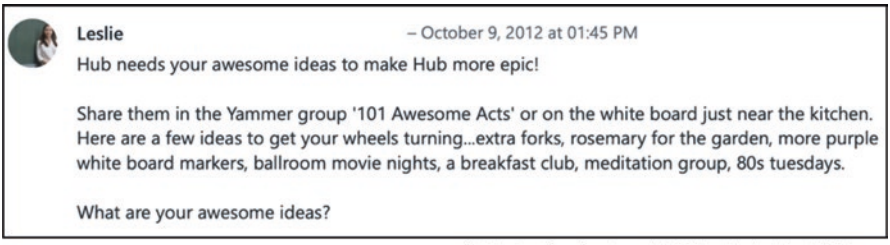
Hybrid Stigmergic Ecologies

In discussing the stigmergic properties of our two ethnographic sites, we have chosen to emphasize the material environment first, because it played a crucial role in setting the affective tone, or the atmospheric context, in which Coworking practices were first encountered and interpreted (arguments we elaborate in Waters-Lynch and Duff 2019). However, in our observations, the digital tools afforded by the internal social media platforms in operation at each site were just as important in establishing editable traces, signs, or prompts that other Coworkers might encounter and respond to, including beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of the physical Coworking spaces themselves. For example, the Melbourne Hub was an early adopter of Yammer, an enterprise-focused social media application, and the various examples of the use of this application shared below, including screenshots of posts on the site, will help us to stress the importance of *bounded, context specific* digital enclaves to the stigmergic practice of Coworking, where the maintenance of a sense of community was as dependent on virtual interactions as routine face-to-face encounters (see Wellman and Gulia 1999). This stands in contrast to the more open and publicly visible social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, which have recently suffered from many antisocial issues related to anonymity and other problems that arise when digital interactions are shorn of their social context (see, for example, Sunstein 2017). For most Coworkers, their first encounter with this application, and sometimes even with social media technology itself, was facilitated through their Coworking membership, and so they grew to associate it with a specific set of information sharing practices and affective tone of communication.

A notable feature of the use of Yammer by Coworkers at Melbourne Hub was the skillful way many members worked to weave together the physical and digital environments forming "hybrid ecologies" (Crabtree and Rodden 2008). These hybrids

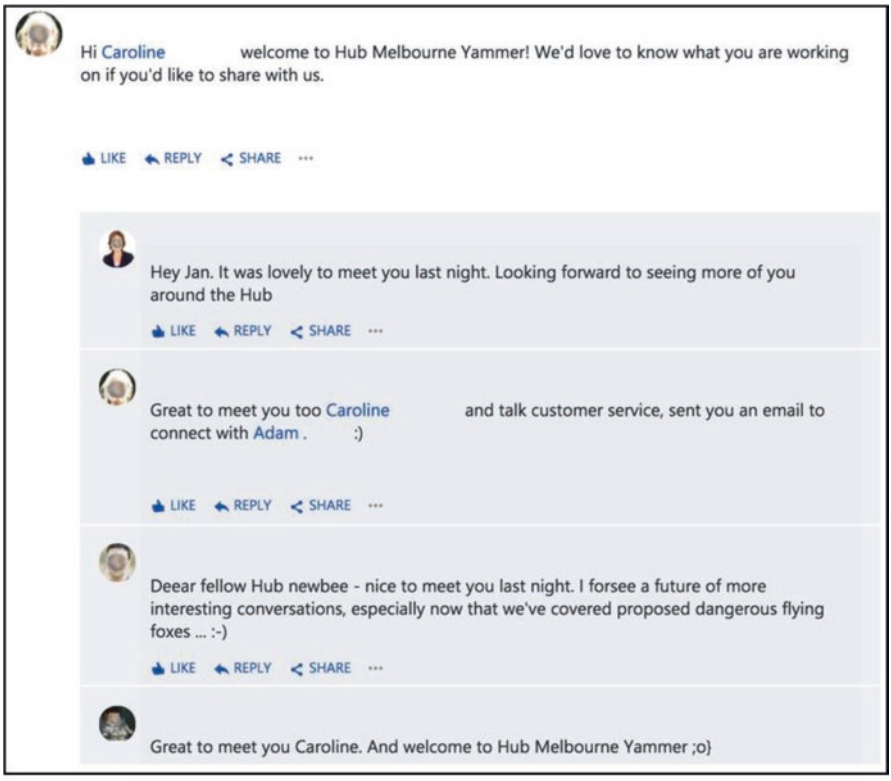
were enacted routinely, for example, by taking photos of the whiteboard sketches with smartphones and uploading the photos to the digital feed, or writing the same hashtags (#) on the whiteboards that others could then be used to search the Yammer feed. But the most explicit form of this imbrication of the physical and the virtual involved the video projection of the "Yammerfall," the digital feed of activity, on the physical wall of the space. Coworkers could glance up to observe the interactions transpiring there, without needing to log in to the digital application. This was particularly effective in socializing newcomers into the practices and dynamics of Coworking.

Yammerfall, the digital social media feed projected on the wall of Hub Melbourne



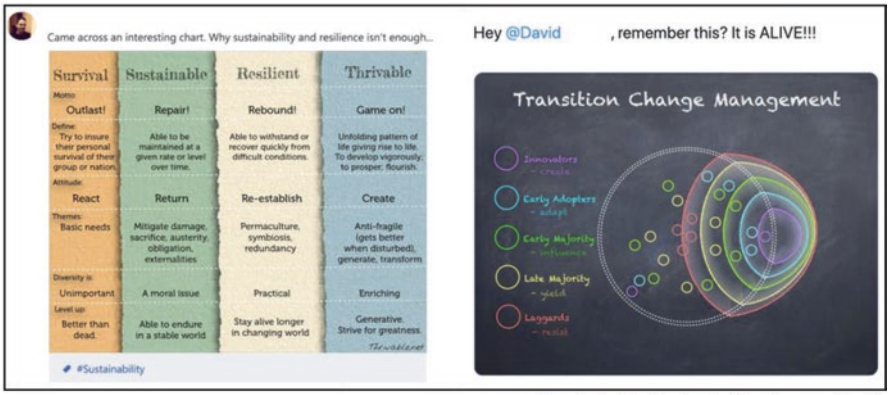
Seeking input from Coworkers while bridging the physical and digital space

The stigmergic properties of the digital feed enabled the Coworking space hosts, community managers, and other Coworking "old-timers" (Wenger 1998) to model and make visible the specific affective qualities, practices, and ethos that characterized the Coworking space, often expressed through otherwise everyday practices such as welcoming new members to the community, or making introductions online:



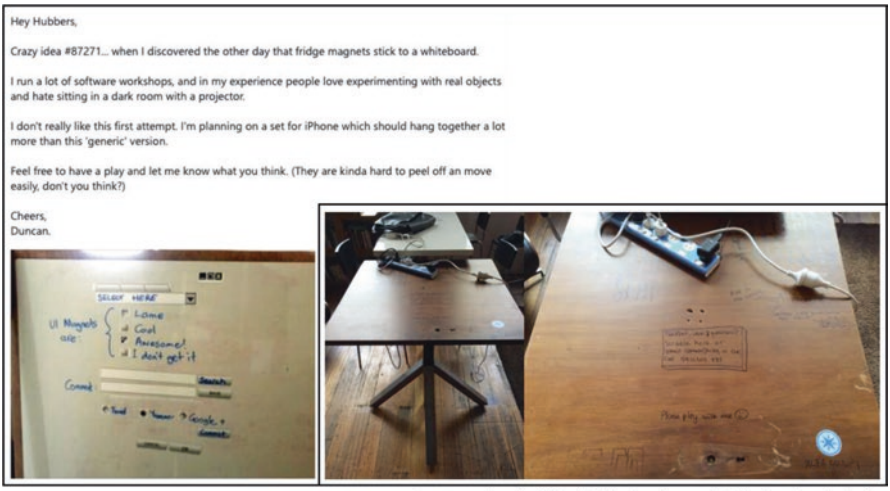
Modelling forms of welcoming new members to the community and making introductions

Coworkers would often use the digital canvas availed by the Yammer application to share visual representations of their interests and work. This included informal and impromptu practices such as sharing photographs of sketches on the physical whiteboards, through to more formal and considered sharing of reports, conceptual models, or more mature pieces of work. The presentation of these materials on the Yammer feed offered a highly compressed form of information when compared with their equivalent text-based iterations, which could be far more quickly processed through cursory scrolls on screens. Indeed, this stigmergic editability was often enhanced by members as they employed aesthetic dimensions in their Yammer posts, such as color and shapes (see figure below), to effectively capture attention (Beyes 2017).



Heterodox visual models shared by Coworkers on social media

Within the broader Coworking community, these representations functioned as a form of "signaling" by which a Coworker's interests and perhaps knowledge or creativity could be conveyed to others (Jones 2002). Along with the welcoming and introducing practices noted above, these posts served a functional purpose by helping Coworkers to widely share information with others in order to identify matching or complementary interests or skills, and thus to potentially foster novel collaborations (Waters-Lynch and Potts 2017). And yet the public displays of these "signals" in the hybrid physical-digital space described above also contributed in a more elusive sense, helping to cultivate a prosocial atmosphere of creative activity (Waters-Lynch and Duff 2019). It was the presence and visibility of this flux of activity, enabled through the stigmergic properties of the Yammer application and the diverse stigmergic practices it afforded, that helped craft atmospheres of permissionless innovation. This hybrid ecology encouraged participants to experiment with novel ways of leaving signals in the environment by which they might seek feedback or encourage collaborative activity:



A prototype of a set of adjustable white board magnets to be used in design workshops

A prototype of an adjustable desk inviting Coworkers to write feedback on the artefact itself

When the Feeling is Mutual

The focus of this section has been on empirical examples of how early Coworking environments featured stigmergic properties and supported stigmergic practices. We wish to reiterate, however, that simply designing an environment to accommodate stigmergy – providing a few whiteboards and a digital enterprise tool like Yammer, Slack, or Microsoft teams – is insufficient to foster the motivational orders that result in these decentralized forms of contribution and cooperation to become commonplace. Rather, these rely on narrative arcs that capture the interest and imagination of participants, in arrangement with other affect generating artifacts and practices that together help steer individual activities toward collective benefit. These processes, and the material and expressive assemblages they entail (DeLanda 2006), were often somewhat mysterious, even among participants that attested to their effects. In interviews, Coworkers would often search for ways to explain it: "[The Melbourne Hub] has this magical dimension that although people come from all sorts of backgrounds and with a variety of experiences, there is something which unifies us. Maybe it's a collective set of values? It seems to underpin every interaction and conversation I have. We all seem to be coming from the 'same space'…" (Waters-Lynch 2018:194). We argue that stigmergy adds an important piece to the reflexive puzzle of Coworking – that these distributed forms of contributions depend upon, but also generate, these felt senses of mutuality, of being "at home at work" (Kociatkiewicz et al. 2020). Stigmergy helps enable the local buzz of activity that led to Coworker's describing their space as "more like a hive than a hub."[4]

Conclusion

This chapter began with a discussion of broad changes to Coworking over the 15 years since its origins. We are certainly not the first to comment on the striking changes to the physical and social environments as Coworking entered its second wave, often characterized by private offices and diminished senses of communal solidarity (Spinuzzi et al. 2019; Gandini and Cossu 2019; Avdikos and Merkel 2019). But we are the first to draw attention to the role of stigmergy in supporting the decentralized organization of Coworking interactions. As we have demonstrated in this chapter, stigmergic *properties* of the physical and digital Coworking environments and stigmergic *practices* of Coworkers themselves help facilitate interactions and spontaneous forms of order. Stigmergy forms part of the assemblage that can enable Coworking to cultivate atmospheres of permissionless innovation, "spillover-rich environments" (Frischmann 2012:15) which can function as a form of social and entrepreneurial infrastructure that produce positive externalities for the wider contexts in which they are situated.

[4] This is a direct quote from one Coworker recorded in the ethnographic field notes from 2012.

Until now, the concept of stigmergy has had little impact in studies of organizations and the workplace. This is why our focus here has been to demonstrate the way that workplaces can operate as stigmergic systems, and also how seemingly small or innocuous changes to the environment that diminish stigmergic properties or practices can have significant consequences on decentralized collaborative activity. In a practical sense, for third wave entrepreneurs seeking to revitalize the social and collaborative promise of Coworking, we argue that stigmergy forms a useful conceptual tool that can be applied to the design of new models. Finally, in broader terms, we propose that stigmergy offers an important theoretical framework through which to examine the affordances of workplace environments, especially models seeking to support decentralized forms of collaborative activity.

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Mediation Matters: The Role of Staff in Coworking Constitution

Gislene Feiten Haubrich

Abstract Coworking is a concept with multiple layers. In this article, we argue it as an organizational arrangement constituted communicatively and nurtured by the activity of work. This chapter aims to contribute to the discussion of staff supportiveness in coworking. Our emphasis is its mediation role as a mechanism to promote interactivity among people cohabitating in this kind of flexible workplace. We reach this purpose based on a qualitative approach, sustained on field research, and driven by a multiple case study pursued in Porto Alegre (Brazil) and Strasbourg (France). The materiality of the investigation is interactional practices on work, expressed by discourses. This research promotes a dialogical reflection based on the different locations of study, getting beyond a comparative point of view. Amid the results, it is identified that the activity of the staff is overcharged with structural issues, and the challenge is related to staff's role in the cultural translation of coworking values in the daily decision-making life.

Keywords Coworking · Staff support · Case study · Brazil · France

Introduction

Coworking has become a buzzword, confirming Gandini's prediction (Gandini 2015). From a linguistic perspective (Volóchinov 2017), this means it might convert into a diffuse and multilayers concept. Therefore, it conveys to present the actual meaning addressed when we claim that word. According to Sundsted et al. (2009, p. 8), "the word coworking means different things to different people: a proper noun to describe a movement, a verb to describe an activity, an adjective to describe a space." This text assumes the tripolar perspective, recognizing it as the kind of environment that facilitate informal learning and collaboration (Kojo and Nenonen 2014; Capdevila 2014b; Rus and Orel 2015), and supporting the resilient practice model (Gandini and Cossu 2019). Thenceforth, the definition that guides the investigation seeks coworking as "an organizational arrangement constituted by com-

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municative practices that nurture the activity of work of individuals engaged in the purpose of working collaboratively." (Haubrich 2019).

Based on this understanding, we highlight the agency of people in the constitution of the organization, and by agency, we assume communication as the key to make that happens. Thus, we should consider the diversity of actors interacting and building a web of meanings across the labor markets. Freelancers (Burke and Cowling 2015), entrepreneurs (Vries et al. 2019), and other digital workers (Schlagwein 2018) cohabitate sharing experiences and building new perspectives on their work. To manage a substantial dialogue among these agents, managers, and staff members are critical. Pierre and Burret (2014) demonstrate the facilitator role of staff as one of the main ingredients to mobilize coworking as a collaborative workplace. Managers might also be responsible for connecting the internal community with the surrounding environment, although they are usually overwhelmed by daily tasks to satisfy coworkers and to find new members (Arvidsson 2018). In some cases, the managers' role led to select members guaranteeing the focus on professionals of a specific area (Aubouin and Capdevila 2019). At the same time, managers recognize themselves as representants of a shift in the management view, from a hierarchical and coordinated perspective to a relational one (Mitev et al. 2019).

From these considerations, this chapter aims to contribute to the discussion of staff supportiveness in coworking. The focus is on its mediation role as a mechanism to promote interactivity among people cohabitating in this kind of flexible workplace. Our mission is to present two staff's perspectives on their work, pointing out challenges and concerns, and promote some reflections on their mediation role in coworking. We reach this purpose based on a qualitative approach, sustained on field research, and driven by a multiple case study (Yin 2018). We define two unities of analysis, namely "*Nós* Coworking," located in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and "*La Plage Digitale*," situated in Strasbourg, France. The materiality of the investigation is interactional practices on work, expressed by discourses. It is important to remark, this research promotes a dialogical reflection based on the different locations of study, getting beyond a comparative point of view. Thereby, our emphasis is on the efforts lived by the staff bringing up to light aspects of their activity of work (Schwartz 2007).

Building the Lens: How Do We See Coworking?

Coworking is a complex notion influenced by different trends. On the one hand, it has been defined by architectural aspects, based on the sharing economy principles. On the other hand, coworking assembles faces correlated with freelancer economy and a path to a new economy. A position working as a blend is looked forward by this research. Noticing coworking by its collaborative view, and thus, linked to a circular economy (CIRAIG 2015), suggests a direction to the popular quote "redefining the way we do work" (Coworking Coworking Wiki 2020). By framing the

reflection on the processes of production and consumption, it supports a deeper understanding of the agency of individuals and collective organizations. Therefore, as mentioned, the concept that guides this research considers coworking as a communicative constituted organization (CCO). However, what does it means?

According to McPhee and Zaug (2009, p. 28) "all communication has constitutive force," a definition that includes all social actors interacting collectively in settle of cultural processes. In this case, the agency embraces human and nonhuman interactions (e.g., textual, architectural, artifactual, technological, etc.). "We should, therefore, be as inclusive as possible regarding *what* or *who* is taking part in the constitution of organizational processes" (Cooren et al. 2011, p.32). In the face of those assumptions, coworking as an organizational arrangement implies a shared goal, which is supposed to collaborate. Moreover, from collaboration, a broad understanding of the concept is important: from the basic level, which includes sharing operational and transactional costs, to a more complex level, a relational collaboration that means "agents engage in collaboration seeking synergistic results, investing actively in the community building dynamics" (Capdevila 2014a).

The idea of constitution upholds all involved agents in a co-construction of organizational reality, based on different language manifestations shared in daily interactions, which are grounded on discursive statements and viewed from the socio-ideological lens (Bakhtin 2015; Volóchinov 2017). From this perspective, we assume that each actor is both, responsible and responsive for every decision taken. As an interdependent movement, be responsible means to interfere actively on day-to-day events. On its turn, being responsive refers to the discursive expression itself, which respond to something that was told before, and anticipates the enunciative process by the answer produced (Bakhtin 2017). Meanwhile, we shall recognize that the workplace environment (Canguilhem 1947; Durrive 2015) is settled by the activity of work, as defined by Schwartz (2007). According to this view, work is an unpredictable activity of life that moves us to rebuild the context that surrounds us in continuous movements called "debates of norms."

From those philosophical considerations, we are bringing some new base points to think on coworking from its tripolar perspective (Sundsted et al. 2009). First, we acknowledge all diversity on interactional expression, from human and nonhuman actors, hence the space dimension is amplified. Second, working together as an activity is addressed by a deep engagement of everyone in the environmental development: values, worldviews, interpretations, and reflections (Volóchinov 2017); knowledge and experiences (Schwartz and Durrive 2009). All the shared moments of life in the work context establishes how people will interact and take decisions, at least, how they do engage. Third, we might understand how new shared meanings emerge, being aware that individual and collective practices are sustained by cultural shared elements (Weick et al. 2005), which are translated (Bhabha 2012), thus, hybridized. It is also valuable to understand how norms (Durrive 2015) guides interactions and its discursive expressions.

Methodological Approach

The previously elaborated understanding of coworking is a result of a deep reflection on a set of studies from academic and nonacademic references. While a global concept, it is defined from some standard ideas related to hybrids spaces (Moriset 2013), a buffer against isolation (Gerdenitsch et al. 2016), and a point of interconnection amid different workers' activities (Spinuzzi 2012). Also, the triple base promoted by Sundsted et al. (2009) and the Movement Manifest (Coworking Wiki 2020) are meaningful incentives to the search of a foundation to understand and transform daily workers' activity in this kind of workplace. Considering challenges at a local level conduct us to emphasizes the role of staff due to the awareness that people need stimulus to be in touch, to dialogue. Even though it is usually expected an open position from coworkers, it is distant from real situations. On the other hand, the staff might feel hesitant and nosy to create specific interactions among the workers. In order to address these questions, the field research is proceeded, driven by a multiple case study (Yin 2018), and conducted at two unities of analysis. Table 1 summarizes information from both coworking spaces.

The data gathering comprises documents, observations, and in-deep interviews. Among the documents are contracts, internal regulations, website's information, and advertising. The technique of open questions was adopted to manage the interviews, leaving the interviewer free to conduct his/her narrative. Considering the discursive materiality, we applied data triangulation (Yin 2018) intending to present a summarized portrait of each coworking space. To this article, the focus on staff work aims to highlight challenges and concerns related to the philosophical

Table 1 La Plage Digitale and Nós Coworking: Features

	La Plage Digitale	Nós Coworking
Country/City	France, Strasbourg	Brazil, Porto Alegre
Foundation	April 2012	February 2011
Managed by	Alsace Digitale	Private Owner
Location	*Rivétoile* Mall	*Total* Mall
Access	24/7 to permanent coworkers	From 8 AM to 7 PM (Monday to Friday)
Staff	Community manager, project manager, and community animator	Owner, community manager, host, and cleaner
Services offered	Permanent and flex desks to rent, 2 meeting rooms, virtual office	Permanent and flex desks to rent, 3 meeting rooms, virtual office
Facilities	Open space, closed offices, big kitchen, bathrooms, coffee machine, internet, printer, mail service, games	Open space, small kitchen, bathrooms, coffee, Clean service Internet
Permanent members*	25 coworkers (18 men, 7 women) **November 2017*	31 coworkers (24 men, 7 women) **March 2018*
Field of work	Multidisciplinary (technology, communication, education, etc.)	Multidisciplinary (advertising, accounting, technology, etc.)

Source: Author's own compilation

Table 2 Multiple case study: Procedures

Procedure	Specifications	Place	Actors
Observations	13, 21, 24, 30 November 2017 (8 h transcript in 6 pages)	La Plage Digitale	Coworkers in daily activity
	04, 17, 19, and 25 April 2018 (8 h transcript in 8 pages)	Nós Coworking	
Staff members interviews	55 min transcript in 15 pages	La Plage Digitale	Community manager
	22 min transcript in 7 pages		Community animator
	31 min transcript in 12 pages	Nós Coworking	Owner
	58 min transcript in 26 pages		Community manager
	11 min transcript in 5 pages		Host
	12 min transcript in 8 pages		Cleaner

Source: Author's own compilation

definition earlier proposed. The data collection procedures and the actors involved in this investigation are presented in Table 2.

Concerning ethical issues, the project was previously evaluated and recommended by the Ethics Committee from Feevale University (Brazil). Among the cautions taken, all the participants were invited to be part of the research and, once accepted, they should sign the "Free and informed consent form," which indicates the procedures and uses predicted for the data provided by them. Also, we are committed to protect people's identity and keep all collected data for 5 years. However, the organization name could be released, once the managers agreed with the terms of the "Statement by the co-participating institution," referring to the partnership to conduct the case study.

Finally, to guide the presentation of different dimensions of staff's supportiveness in coworking, especially from its mediation role, we take into account three categories briefly developed in section two: (a) how they engage on coworkers' interactions at micro, meso, and macro levels; (b) how they understand their activity of work, focusing attention to Community Manager role; and (c) how global concepts related to coworking (e.g., coworkers' profile and competition among spaces) area culturally translated to local realities of each space on the staff's point of view.

Results and Discussion

The conduction of this research assumes that the staff of both unities of analysis have a clear understanding on the global concept of coworking in at least two of the three waves (Gandini and Cossu 2019). Based on the collected data, this section highlights the local translation of that notion but guided by some categories sustained on the definition previously discussed (Haubrich 2019). Therefore, the

special attention is applied over interactions in micro, meso, and macro levels, followed by the understanding of the staff role and concluding pointing out the local interpretation of coworking. In terms of design on the spatial configuration, *La Plage* and *Nós* are quite distinct. The first one provides a small number of desks to daily coworkers, and permanent ones may decide between desks in open space or closed office. The kitchen has a big space for people to share meals, coffee, and whatever else they want. Otherwise, the second one offers just open space area with lots of spots and a small kitchen, once coworkers usually go outside to eat.

La Plage Digitale – Personal Archive

Nós Coworking - Personal Archive

Interactions on Three Levels

The interactions at work in a range of three levels bolster the communicative constitution of coworking as an organization (Haubrich 2019; Haubrich and Freitas 2019). The base of this categorization is its connection with the activity of work. Following the work of Canguilhem (1947) and Durrive (2015), the environmental (*milieu*) constitution arises from individual's perception and interpretation which is manifested by debates of norms and enunciatively expressed (Bakhtin 2015; Volóchinov 2017) on decisions in every situation lived by people.

The micro level emerges from daily communicational situations at work where the performance of the activity occurs. At this level, the elaboration and upgrade of meanings imply the others once norms, its application on real circumstances, and a discursive expression on actions or statements ground it. The meso level refers to the productive processes, where the internal norms are available to guide the action. At this level, a tension between written and cultural aspects incorporate prescriptions and renormalizations. Finally, the macro level concerns the discursive expression of the organization, based on advertising, branding, and other public manifestation. At this level, matters the selected content shared to summarize the organization. (Haubrich 2019).

The results at the micro level refer to interactions not predicted but arising from shared living circumstances. Perhaps this characteristic inspires people to believe that approximation among people happens naturally, which is the point of view of staff from both spaces. However, it might be tricky, as pointed out by the Community Manager at *La Plage*: "people who recently arrived at the workplace, they don't achieve the integration. Otherwise, they do not aim that because they know their stay will not last for a long time. People need some time to connect with the others." The *Nós* Owner's perspective follows the path: "I think it is complicated to predict the interactions because the sense of community is too… We must incite it all the time. And sometimes, coworkers look at us and say: "ok, but who said I came here because I wanted to interact?"

Interactions, as conceptualized to this research, cannot be avoided once is demanded to people act responsibly and responsively on the events from daily life contributing to environmental creation of the organization. Engaging this understanding of organizational realities means to look directly to the kinds of situation might invite people to act. Taking *La Plage* observations as a reference, we may notice specific areas to people hang out, to share beyond the desks, such as the kitchen and the main hall. The location of man's bathroom, public majority, is also interesting, demanding them to cross the kitchen area and then, fostering the meeting points, which is essential to "natural" encounters.

At *Nós*, otherwise, the bathroom area is hidden, so it is usual coworkers stand there to start a conversation, which might be extended to the coffee place, located at open space area. It was possible to acknowledge that people do not feel comfortable there, considering that some of the speakers left the space to continue the conversation, and others interacted briefly. These examples aim to demonstrate that one of the most critical roles of staff: paying attention to the kind of circumstances is being created to make people get along. Besides specific goals pursuit by coworkers, they should have some perspectives in common, and help them to find it may be fomenting future partnerships. There is not only one way to encourage bonds and those which will fit the best each organization depends on knowing people and creating strategies based on their behavior. In coworking, this may be even more complicated, considering the random people. However, it may be a strong point to nurture the space culture.

At *La Plage*, some interactions face-to-face are guided by the internal regulation, such as the use of resources (printers, coffee machines, rooms, and devices) and

making phone calls in the same environment. Durrive (2015) explains that the norm aims to anticipate situations by defining which kind of behavior individuals should perform being part of a community. Otherwise, the renormalization results of a transgression to the norm, creating new patterns of action. Thus, as it may be supposed, disregarding at the norms tends to generate misunderstandings among people and result in cultural changes. The Community Manager of *La Plage* reports that issues on the shared use of the office, kitchen, and bathroom might have repercussions on the way people get along.

> When I started working as a Community Manager here, there was a big kitchen problem to cope with. People used to take mugs, glasses, and other things and let them dirty at the sink. So, the former manager, I think he was not happy working here anymore, and he took some hard decisions on the theme, causing some discomfort. Summing up, it was necessary to change the situation repeating over and over: "do the dishes". Now the situation is better, but this is the kind of thing you regularly must repeat. (Community Manager La Plage)

At *Nós*, they set up a WhatsApp group to exchange information, but the action did not work as expected: "It was a group to inform people, like an internal communication channel, but it turned out becoming a complaint group" (Community Manager, *Nós*). Embarrassing content was also shared on this channel, demanding quick action from the staff. Another example shared by *Nós'* Community Manager points out that a flexible way of maintaining the norms might become a concern related to coworkers' behavior. For example, once a coworker ate at his desk, what was supposedly forbidden: "at the first moment I left that go, but it caused some complaints from the others. So, I called him and said: "You not supposed to eat here. Do you remember the norm from our internal regiment?" (Community Manager, *Nós*). Her closure reflection on this case highlights that she "usually approach any situation based on the collective factor. […] However, I always have to talk carefully with them."

Joyfully, the daily interactions go beyond problems, as might seem on the statement of the Host at *Nós*: "They share victories with us. In the end, we get along daily, so…." Sharing achievements is a way to build more reliable connections among managers and coworkers (Burke and Cowling 2015). For the staff, specifically, it is related to a positive sign of coworkers' growing and encouragement to find new possibilities to develop local businesses and the community surrounding it (Gandini and Cossu 2019). The joint work to promote different actions to make people knowing and getting along with each other also is mentioned by the *La Plage*'s Community Manager: "coworkers promote events here and they cheer up the space on their own." Examples of activities include an occasion when all coworkers tried to cook together and shared meals once a month.

Listening to the Cleaner at Nós, additionally, brought up some insights on daily interactions at work. First, about the meaning of coworking, when she started to work there, in 2015, she affirms: "I didn't know [what is coworking]. Then, I started to ask. In my break, I usually seat outside, and I saw that there is something wrote on the wall and at the door. I used to read flyers and to ask people." It is interesting to sign that she proudly remembered exactly her first day at the coworking, indicating the feeling of belonging. Also, it may inspire us to evaluate the onboard ways to

staff members when they come up. A second thought shared by her relates her relationship with coworkers: "some people tell me about their intimacy. They call me to unburden, and they cry on my shoulder" (Cleaner, Nós). It might be related to cultural conditions in Brazil; however, it is interesting to know that some specific staff members are looked for this kind of interaction, which demands confidence and proximity, strengthening bonds.

The meso level of the organizational constitution includes internal configurations and norms. At this dimension, the meanings are relatively stabilized, resulting in the guidelines to behavior and practices. It also includes formal meetings and registered interactions. According to *La Plage*'s Community Manager, "once a month, we promote the "*Conseil La Plage*" (La Plage Council). It takes place from 12 AM to 2 PM, and we gather people together to discuss how things are working here." Even if the dynamic is flexible and informal, a kind of ritual in two moments has proceeded: at the beginning, a coworker is invited to present him/herself talking about hobbies, likes and dislikes, and features of him/her professional activity. The next moment is devoted to discussing requests and other topics brought from coworkers.

Interactions at this level are essential to disseminate expectations and clear misunderstandings related to situations coming from interactions on the micro and macro levels. An example from La Plage may help to depict the intended interconnection. There, to educate coworkers on sharing resources, the staff applied the Fair Use norm, which is explicit on the internal regulation. According to the managers, people usually respect this norm, but when somebody exceeds the printing or using the internet, for example, they talk directly and privately with the person to settle the matter. Then, making the regulation to be respected is another concern of the staff, especially on these topics that implies the daily life of the community. Another kind of interaction at this level is the network meetings among coworkers. The Nós' Community Manager argues that "almost every month, we have a budget to promote a brunch to coworkers, to they hang out, knowing each other. It is a networking moment." It is notable that organizing events is one of the biggest concerns of the staff because from their perspective, gathering people create a better atmosphere to talk and find points of convergence.

The constitution of the macro level of interactions is related to an institutional discursive manifestation, thought in the distance from the activity of work, assuming "the organisation as an anonymous and hybrid voice […] assigned by heterogeneous points of view in dialogue to indicate its market position […] and related to the image aimed with stakeholders". (Haubrich 2019, p. 225). Both unities on study use internet tools to spread their word and persuade coworkers to come and meet their workplaces. *La Plage's* advertising, for example, takes some regional aspects to anchor its message, such as the positive feeling related to being on the beach. This concept reaches global ideas about the work besides its traditional meaning, like flexibility. From *Nós* publicity, pieces highlight the community, collaboration, networking, and innovation.

From this level, thus, "the concept prestige, from a desadherent thinking, justified deeply by the trials of modelling the dynamics of beings without activity" (Schwartz 2009, p. 267). Sustained on Schwartz's point of view, it is hinting the

nonhuman agency of interaction, which is incapable of the debate of norms. A desadherent[1] understanding means a distant description or normalization of the adherent, lived situation. Taking the activity of work as the source to look at organizations' constitution means to assume that dialogues in tension are always making reality a dynamic in its construction. From the micro level, we may recognize the protagonism of all human beings involved in each situation. The macro level, otherwise, seems the achievement of stability but is the result of an anticipated manifestation, that is inevitably delayed regarding the day-to-day events, and probably exceeded by them. However, it matters to build people's perception based on these trials of modeling.

The message building on this macro level challenges the managers to reach for answers based on the experiences and the activity of work performed by coworkers. Concerning this dimension, La Plage's Community Animator affirm:

> Some coworkers will say they are here due to the price. Others may say that the price is not the main point that they are here because they feel good. Then, I believe that it is an individual choice. However, the financial issue is essential, especially for those who are starting a project. It is a tricky subject, not a negligible dimension of coworkers' activity.

The financial reality of coworkers is one of the main concerns of the staff when they approach the coworking discursive expression. *Nós'* Owner also confirms it: "Actually, the market has deeply changed, and I think that *Nós* must reinvent itself." According to him, the financial crisis in Brazil has impacted small businesses, and entrepreneurs are not producing enough outcomes to guarantee the survival of the coworking space. The solution on his point of view means to create a kind of environment that may be shared by companies with different sizes, including a mix of open space area and private offices. He did not point out if coworkers should pay different fees according to their sizes. However, it is noticeable that in his opinion, the interactions are defined by the architectural patterns. Undoubtedly, the space configuration is an important criterion in the moment of coworkers' choice, but other features are also sought. We will back to this point later. First, some interesting insights should rise from the staff's activity of work perspective.

Staff's Activity of Work: Thinking on Community Manager Role

The definition of which members will be part of the staff is a subject matter to each coworking space, based on its values, aims, and possibilities. The differences between *La Plage* and *Nós* confirm this. The Community Manager role is the only present in both spaces; thus, the focus on this section is devoted to them. *Nós'* team

[1] From the French *desadhérence*. According to the ergological approach, there are two inter-related points to understand the activity of work. The adherence (*l'adhérence*) means experiencing the activity of work now and here, for example, you while reading this text. The desadherence (*la desadhérence*), then, means looking to the lived situation taking some distance, like you will do when thinking about the ideas that this text brings to you, based on other previous experiences.

holds up with four people while *La Plage* has two people dedicated to supporting the space plus one focusing on projects to bring more coworkers to space. As it might be assumed, it is hard to say which is the best configuration, if it is possible to be said. Otherwise, the way they interpret their activity is a source that reveals some challenges to the constitution of coworking.

La Plage's Community Manager defines that her job "means manage coworkers: watch they come and go, their arrivals and departures, guaranteeing that everything is working to them." It was also pointing out by *Nós* Manager. A second thought shared by both managers is related to how overwhelmed they feel. Starting by *La Plage*, she highlights:

> Unfortunately, there are multiple situations that we must let it go, or it will cost even more to us. […] But it is not very easy because I am the only one dealing with this, the accountability, plus another coworking stuff, plus the events, and everything else. It takes much time. (Community Manager, *La Plage*).

At *La Plage*, the community manager performs jobs of buyer, accountant, and handling issues with the coffee machine, the printer, and the internet. Also, one of her concerns is about billing coworkers monthly and go after those who did not pay. To cope with it, she has tried to find ways to let the system more effective, avoiding extra taxes for both coworker and coworking. The diversity of tasks that shall be accomplished was recognized by her and other members of *Alsace Digitale*. Also, they felt a gap in creating a bridge between coworkers and staff, helping people to develop their ideas, and connecting ones within others. To solve these concerns, they designed the job of Community Animator. About both positions on coworking, she affirms: "I know this is the kind of thing that matters to people. They need a reference, somebody to talk if something gets wrong" (Community Manager, *La Plage*). The fixer feature of staff is stronger than the connector one on her point of view.

Nós' Community manager added her frustration on performing her role due to the multiple challenges that emerged on daily journey and the absence of mediation dimension to get people sharing and collaborating.

> In my first days here, it was so many things to deal, and I was worried. Things happen, then you learn from them coping directly and realizing what is missing. I have always said we needed somebody to create the bonds among people. It supposed to be me, but I didn't feel confident to make it happen. (Community Manager, *Nós*)

At *Nós*, the coworkers' profile is pointing out as the biggest issue because most people come from diverse industries and they are not engaged on coworking values or aiming to connect with the others. Also, problems with machismo in the workplace and other selfish behavior has challenged manager's work. "You are a woman, then, you feel outraged" (Community Manager, Nós). These considerations emerging from the self-regard of both managers on their work invite us to consider the relevance of coworking in relationship with the community that surrounds it. Also, the understanding of sharing and collaboration are important drivers to contribute to the development of relations, improving people's behavior. These, we argue, are critical points to staff mediation on coworking. Transcending the costumer–supplier

relationship means to create opportunities to people interact and understand its protagonism in processes of normalization, acting responsibly and responsively on daily circumstances.

Coworking, Always a Local Translation and a Trigger to Global Concept

Translation, according to Bhabha (2012, p.330) "is the performative nature of cultural communication. It is language *in actu* (enunciation, positionality) rather than language *in situ* (*énoncé,* or propositionality)". Based on this idea, coworking at a local level imbricates all interactive dimensions, from micro to macro level. However, what matters the most on the translation process are daily interactions which bring up the debate of norms and people's agency. We confirm the distance between a supposed local configuration sustained on macro level interactions (e.g., website, social media, and other advertising pieces) and the reality expressed in observations and staff's interviews at *Nós*. There, the staff has dealt with a "change in coworker's profile" and the subsequent transition to the basic level of collaboration (Capdevila 2014a), which meant coworking as a way to reduce costs. Adaptations on the space design and living norms are results of this mindset shift. Also, the view costumer–supplier has been nurturing relations between coworkers and staff. "Someone who has issues with rules and living among others… but it doesn't matter. We treat them like any other customer" (Community Manager *Nós*).

On the other hand, staff from both coworking spaces remarked ideological aspects related to the vision they aim to build. "We hope people increase their business, even if they grow and leave us for a private office," said the Host from *Nós*, associating her discourse with those that see coworking as the infrastructure to conceive new economic patterns (Gandini and Cossu 2019; Merkel 2019). The Community Manager from *La Plage* considers the wealth of diversity: "It is an amazing encounter among people. It probably never would happen if they were in their private office." Aiming to facilitate and stimulate this experience, they are as flexible as possible, attempting to eliminate bureaucracy, and exempting coworkers from presenting any document or advanced payments.

On the same direction, *Nós* Owner "advocate coworking beyond a space. It is about the wealth of several mindsets getting along. However, it is necessary a reason, a motif." In his opinion, programs and events besides the official time of occupancy in coworking are imperative to get people gathering and collaborating (Surman 2013). The spotlight here goes to the conception of work, understood as the amount of time in the office and other market aspects. Despite the traditional conception, coworking emerges as a phenomenon which aims to ask the work patterns and definition, emphasizing the importance of the community, learning from daily experiences, from interactions in-person and mediated for several media. Work is about interacting with and in the environment, interpreting, and responding,

which are ingredients of the debate of norms (Durrive 2015). Thus, at work, individuals use their previous knowledge in dialogue with the one available in the context, acting on real situations and producing a brand new result from it (Schwartz 2009). The challenge means, so, create alternative ways to approach the work experience in coworking.

One last noteworthy point is related to the competition among spaces. *La Plage*'s Community Manager asserts: "We are competitors because we perform the same services, but the features of each space make us different. It is a peculiar type of competition, though. […] We are competitors, but we are not enemies." The concern reveals that market survival is a dimension that stimulates coworking to look at each other as suppliers of service and take coworkers as clients. Although, the practice of applying existed concepts to create norms, which in this case means look coworking as a corporation, we believe that go forward the goal of conceiving bases to new economic and social relations exceeds the current values and rooted views.

In this way, the community manager at *La Plage* mentioned they aim to create a federation of coworking in Strasburg, facilitating the movement of those on flex fare, and engaging people to share experiences, marking the differences, and supporting each other. Even though the initiative may seem quite complicated, it represents a struggle forward to a different conception of coworking, sustaining dialogues from the differences. Thus, a communicative view on coworking, as sustained on the investigation, consists of a path toward its constitution. The staff must deal with critical challenges, finding alternatives to develop and increase its mediator interventions, daring people to learn and assume their sustainable and cooperative social roles, and so, changing the local reality where they are grounded.

Conclusion

The paper has explored the dimension of staff supportiveness in coworking spaces, aiming to bring to the light its mediation role and then, go further its function of resources provider. We argue that results might be promoted based on the understanding of coworking as an organization communicatively constituted, which is sustained on the activity of work performed by different agents at the local context. The conduction of the field research by a multiple case study supports insights to such an investigative point of view. We hope it inspires future research, considering the limited number of cases presented in this article.

We also suggest expanding studies devoted to the concerns and challenges of staff, especially from the community manager's perspective. It is important to consider how their mediation role has nurtured the three-level of interactions among agents in coworking spaces, their interpretation on their activity, as well as the cultural translation of global concepts related to coworking. We claim examining these dimensions allows us to complexify the staff's role on coworking constitution, pointing out its intervention to build a community and promoting proximity among people.

The results of our investigation suggest that the activity of the staff, in both contexts, Porto Alegre and Strasburg, is overcharged with structural issues, like a coffee replacement, cleansing, among others. However, considering the global definition of coworking, we may suppose that the staff energy should be devoted to the community building, based on coworking values, increasing coworkers' interactions, and knowledge exchange. Shifting this reality of work is an urgent but hard need once the limited budget of both spaces approached to hire more people and improve the staff team.

Based on our field findings, we imply that strategies on observation and involvement at the micro level, closer to daily journey of work, may highlight the reception view of communication, which means, the coworkers' perspective. Sustained on a communicative view, we assume that all members of coworking, besides its role, are essential in the meaning production and the cultural translation of concepts. Therefore, recognize their intervention may possibly support the decision-making process at work, influencing individuals' behavior in different circumstances, like acting on community surroundings.

Considering our limited cases on analyses, as well as the research of coworking on communication and organizational fields, we propose some future studies that might fill the gap. First, develop more approaches regarding the communicative levels (micro, meso, and macro) may elevate the sophistication of its application, and produce new regards on the subject. Second, the theme of staff's mediation role could be extensively investigated if sustained on daily interactions. In this case, going further the activity of work description and elaborate methods of intervention to specific situations, helping people, from staff and coworkers, to address the communicative dimension of their work.

Finally, agreeing with Gandini and Cossu (2019), we argue that significant changes in socioeconomic reality may emerge on the third wave of coworking. In this sense, important contributions could emerge from the circular and collaborative perspectives, highlighting each individual contribution to the maintenance of production processes. Also, rescuing the tripolar configuration of the coworking concept might inspire mindsets on working, sharing, and living together. The challenges that must be faced by staff are not simple and ask for values and a strong view on business, passing through today's interactive modes and going forward more reliable and equal relationships.

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Expressing Experiences of Coworking Spaces: Insights from Social Media

Tadashi Uda

Abstract This study explores how people experience coworking spaces, one notable example of modern flexible workplaces. Coworking spaces that encourage interaction with diverse users and create innovation through collaboration have become ingrained in society. Many studies indicate how interactions and collaboration in these spaces are formed; however, few provide an understanding of how users perceive and (re)produce the spaces through daily usage. This study illuminates users' embodied experiences of them, relying on the extensive data from the Twitter posts of 915 users in Japan, where this phenomenon continues to spread. We find four key aspects of coworking spaces: (1) spaces for services; (2) spaces for individual work; (3) spaces for individual daily activities; and (4) spaces for interaction. Furthermore, the users tend to value the spaces for office services and individual work/daily activities over interaction with others. Insights from this study can support people involved in flexible workplaces beyond coworking spaces.

Keywords Flexible workplace · Coworking space · Twitter posts analysis · Japan

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore users' embodied experiences of coworking spaces. Coworking environments have become a more common phenomenon in societies around the globe. According to one report, by the end of 2019, 2.2 million people are expected to be working in 22,000 spaces worldwide (deskmag 2019). The growth in this environment is generally based on the assumption that such spaces encourage interaction with diverse users and create innovation through collaboration as well as afford flexible work arrangements (Gandini 2015; Rus and Orel 2015; Spinuzzi 2012; Uda 2013).

Investigating this concept, the coworking literature has focused, in particular, on community building (e.g., Björklund et al. 2011; De Vaujany et al. 2019b; Garrett

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et al. 2017; Spinuzzi 2012) and the outcomes generated from this community such as collaboration and innovation (e.g., Cabral and van Winden 2016; Capdevila 2014; Cheah and Ho 2019).

However, few studies provide a comprehensive understanding of specific embodied user experiences of these spaces, despite the fact that such spaces are not only socially constructed but also bodily produced through everyday experiences by their users (De Vaujany et al. 2019a). Using this phenomenological approach enables us to illustrate how people perceive the spaces, what is visible/invisible for them, how they express their experiences, and what are the multiple aspects of the spaces (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 1968; Küpers 2015).

To this end, this study examines the embodied experiences of Japanese coworking space users who account for some part of the total users in the world (Uda and Abe 2017), based on extensive data obtained from Twitter, a prevalent social networking platform. Adopting this method for the data collection allows us to avoid methodological issues such as the obtrusive and reactive aspects inevitably involved in the process of direct observation and interview (Kimura 2018).

This empirical study, elaborately designed and conducted, contributes to the literature in the following ways: it provides insightful findings about the embodied experiences of coworking space users; it offers a clue to reconsider the concept of the spaces in a broader context; and its approach supports the exploration of alternatives to conventional qualitative research methods.

Literature Review

Coworking Space as a Modern Flexible Workplace

Over the past decade, coworking spaces have become more ingrained in our society. In line with this trend, conceptual or theoretical examinations about what coworking is have advanced. According to the literature, essential aspects of coworking spaces include: a shared workplace (Gandini 2015; Kojo and Nenonen 2016; Spinuzzi 2012; Uda 2013), interaction with (various) people (Gandini 2015; Kojo and Nenonen 2016; Merkel 2015; Moriset 2014; Spinuzzi 2012; Uda 2013), and a serviced space (Bouncken et al. 2016; De Peuter et al. 2017; Waters-Lynch and Potts 2017). While these aspects exist in other workspaces, such as corporate offices, shared offices, rental spaces, serviced offices, and business incubators, coworking spaces are notable in terms of the comprehensive conceptualization of those aspects.

The rise of coworking spaces, specifically as a prospective alternative for existing workspaces, has been socially driven by organizations and working individuals. Organizations have attempted to explore workspace flexibility, efficiency, and creativity to a higher degree (Gandini 2015), while working individuals have longed for or sought out a work environment that enables not only an independent style of work but also flexible interactions with others (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte and Isaac

2016; Spinuzzi 2012; Uda 2013). Further, advancements in information and communication technologies have accelerated these trends. Among them, mobile technologies, online tools for communication and product/service development, and wireless networks have contributed to the advancement of more flexible work practices than those in conventional offices (Davis 2016; Faraj et al. 2011; Jørgensen and Ulhøi 2010; Spinuzzi 2012; Townsend 2000; Wang and Loo 2017).

In addition, the formations of time and space have transformed (Di Marino and Lapintie 2017; Moriset 2014), and with this, collaborative spaces including not only coworking spaces but makerspaces, hackerspaces, and innovation labs (De Vaujany et al. 2019a, b; Fuzi 2015; Schmidt et al. 2014) have been spreading as alternatives to conventional workspaces with less openness and flexibility (Bouncken and Reuschl 2018; Brown and O'Hara 2003; Garrett et al. 2017; Spinuzzi 2012).

Experiences in Coworking Spaces

As shown above, the coworking literature is rapidly expanding across regions and disciplines (Spinuzzi et al. 2019). In the social sciences, including organizational and managerial fields, the studies that stand out are those focusing on community building (Björklund et al. 2011; Bouncken and Reuschl 2018; Cabral and Van Winden 2016; Fabbri 2016; Garrett et al. 2017; Spinuzzi 2012) and the outcomes generated in these spaces such as collaboration and innovation (Cabral and van Winden 2016; Capdevila 2014; Cheah and Ho 2019; Leclercq-Vandelannoitte and Isaac 2016; Orel and Dvouletý 2020; Schmidt et al. 2014).

At the same time, we can find few but insightful previous studies attempting to grasp detailed experiences of the space users. These studies present the results of the categorization of user experiences.

For example, Spinuzzi (2012) provides insights regarding how users define coworking spaces and what they use them for, based on interviews with 17 individuals in three coworking spaces in Austin, Texas, along with some coworker-generated texts such as online word of mouth. According to the author, space users view them mainly as alternative office spaces, social hubs to interact with other users, spaces to collaborate, spaces consisting of heterogeneous or homogeneous populations. In addition, the study reveals that these users moved to these spaces from homes or coffee shops to avoid distractions and isolation. These users expect to get not only better facilities, time flexibility, and convenience of location from these spaces, but also interaction, feedback, trust, learning, and partnerships with other users.

Bilandzic and Foth (2013) collected data from ethnographic observations of more than 70 informal conversations and 30 in-depth interviews with users in a bookless library space dedicated to coworking in Brisbane, Australia. Their results reflect the following five personas embodying usage patterns: (1) "Doesn't-care Claire," who is not particularly interested in the environment as a coworking space, (2) "What-can-I-do-here Sophia," who has little understanding of what the space is and what it offers, (3) "Learning-Freak Fred," who favors the concept of the space

for interaction and collaboration with others, (4) "I-wanna-share-it Garrett," who seeks to share his skills and experiences with other users, and (5) "Co-working Chris," who views the space as a public place enabling him to get away from distractions at home and enjoy serendipitous encounters with others. On the basis of these personas, Bilandzic and Foth (2013) point out that these spaces are used in three main ways: (1) as not an affective but rather instrumental work environment (Claire); (2) as a third place for coworking (Chris); and (3) as an informal learning environment (Garrett).

Brown (2017) captures qualitative and quantitative data from 19 users in spaces in England to derive three categories regarding key motivations for coworking: (1) "Independence," which means the spaces offer productive and flexible work environments unlike other settings such as home; (2) "Professional work environment," which translates to a space suitable for professional use such as business meetings with the clients; and (3) "Peer/support networking," which means the spaces provide opportunities to have social contact and garner peer support.

Waters-Lynch and Potts (2017) analyze why coworkers use these spaces, based on a small sample of ethnographic data collected in Melbourne, Australia. According to them, the users join these coworking spaces for "finding, connecting," and cooperating with others who have complementary knowledge or skills.

Butcher (2018) presented the results regarding why users cowork and what they learn from coworking by analyzing observational data gathered in a space in Melbourne, Australia. The results show that the users sought to exchange knowledge, connect with others, gain mutual support, and have office alternatives. These users learned to become collaborative, intentional for everyday practices and events in the space, and to contest for orthodoxy such as institutions and norms.

Orel (2019) conducts loosely structured interviews with 21 remote workers who use one of five coworking spaces in Ljubljana (1), Leipzig (1), Berlin (2), and Prague (1). From the results, he found that the workers used the spaces to improve their social life and extend their networks, which could lead to sources of innovation, productivity, and well-being, through events and other activities. Furthermore, his study shows that interacting with other users brought about receiving emotional support, heightening the significance of work, and raising morale.

Embodied Experiences of Coworking Spaces

The above studies introduce meaningful empirical findings, but do not adequately illuminate the embodied user experiences that can be identified through a phenomenological approach. While there are some theoretical streams that explain phenomena in the workplace (Taylor and Spicer 2007), the phenomenological perspective has got to be noticed in management/organizational fields (Dale 2005; Dale and Burrell 2008; Gärtner 2013), because it enables us to comprehend multiple aspects of the workplace (Küpers 2015). In other words, space is not only socially constructed but is also bodily produced through everyday user experiences (De Vaujany

et al. 2019a). This perspective contributes to capturing what users see (visibly or invisibly) in the spaces and how people embody and express the spaces (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 1968). Although research adopting this perspective is still scarce, the following studies clearly contribute to a better understanding of embodied experiences of coworking spaces.

De Vaujany et al. (2019a) explore how the authors themselves bodily experience the guided tours in the collaborative spaces, relying on ethnographic and auto-ethnographic data collected from 110 tours that took place in 13 different countries such as France, Spain, Germany, the United States, and Singapore. As a result, they identify four emotional registers that emerge during the tours: (1) "initiation," which emerges from the visible open spaces and an invisible community and evokes emotions such as sharing and a sense of mutual help; (2) "commodification," which emerges from the visible furniture and the invisible value of the services and evokes emotions such as desire and disappointment; (3) "selection," which emerges mainly from the invisible excellence of a space and evokes emotions such as ambition and a sense of possession; and (4) "gamification," which emerges from the visible materials cut by machines and invisible new skills and evokes emotions such as pleasure and co-construction. They emphasize that these tours are a means of producing and making visible the atmosphere of each space.

De Vaujany and Aroles (2019) focus on the silence in coworking spaces normally expected to be silent, and attempt to illuminate the relationship between silence and learning as embodied user experiences in these spaces, mainly based on observations and semi-structured interviews in a space in Paris. They provide four key events in a makerspace: (1) "Individual artistic project," fragmentedly done in the creative areas and rooms; (2) "Floor collaboration," ephemerally done in places such as corridors and stairs; (3) "Training sessions," intensely done on the ground floor; and (4) "Lunch break," intensely done in the kitchen or private apartments. They then connect each of these events with noise and silence and a form of learning. The results show that: (1) Individual artistic project, done in silence, enables co-created situated learning; (2) Floor collaboration, done in noisiness, promotes inter-personal learning; (3) Training sessions, done in noisiness, encourages technical learning; and (4) Lunch break, done in noisiness, leads to social-learning. Their study argues that while silence can be viewed as the state of "nothing happening," it also can be a sign of "something happening," and essential to embodied learning in collaborative spaces.

Research Gap

We can draw significant implications from these previous studies focusing on (embodied) user experiences in coworking spaces, but they have the following theoretical and methodological limitations.

Although each study attempts to explore specific promising theoretical themes, such as motivation, learning, atmosphere, and silence, overall, few studies indicate

users' "comprehensive" experiences of these spaces in conjunction with detailed data structure. Thus, we believe that the examination of the relationship between the concept of coworking spaces and user experiences has not made sufficient progress. As the concept itself remains relatively new (Bouncken and Reuschl 2018; Leclercq-Vandelannoitte and Isaac 2016) and the figures are varied (Spinuzzi et al. 2019), there is a need to improve our understanding of the concept by using better empirical data that offer a complete picture of the user experience. Namely, we need to not only cultivate the specific topics related to coworking spaces but also reflect and elaborate on the concept itself.

Moreover, most previous studies do not explore the embodied user experience. To illuminate not only how users experience coworking spaces but also how the spaces are produced and organized through lived everyday experiences, it will be meaningful to pursue a phenomenological perspective for empirical research on the topic (De Vaujany et al. 2019a).

As for methodological limitations, first, the studies referenced here do not rely on large and extensive data samples. Second, there is further need to draw the empirical findings from countries other than the Western world, in order to enrich the literature and to contribute to refining the concept of coworking spaces in a more persuasive and credible way. Third, most studies adopt well-established qualitative methods such as observation and interview. On the one hand, these methods are extremely suitable for unravelling and understanding complex and messy phenomena (Law 2004); on the other hand, it can be quite difficult to get rid of methodological issues such as obtrusive and reactive aspects inevitably involved in the process of observation and interview (Kimura 2018). These issues raise the question as to how properly scholars can collect data on lived experiences and provide them to us through prevalent qualitative methods. Therefore, we need to explore an alternative approach such as ethnography in cyberspace.

Methods

Data Collection

This study investigates the experiences of "Japanese" coworking space users, gathering information from a larger sample and applying a phenomenological perspective. Japan is an appropriate target for this research as it is one of the countries, other than those in the West, where coworking spaces have been spreading. In fact, nearly 7% of coworking spaces in the world are in Japan as of 2016, corresponding to an emergent phase of these spaces (Uda and Abe 2017). Thus, results derived from this research could enrich the literature on coworking and enable us to consider what we do know and do not know about this topic as well as where we should be headed.

The data for this study are obtained from Twitter (January 1, 2019 to June 30, 2019). First, all open tweets including the term "coworking" (in Japanese), which

were posted by Japanese people during the period, were searched. Second, tweets showing that each Twitter user directly experienced Japanese coworking spaces were extracted from the tweets gathered in the first step. The number of these tweets totaled 1692.

The reasons why this study focuses on social media and subsequently selected Twitter as the data source are as follows. Twitter is an influential social media site and those collected tweets offer significant evidence of users' current embodied experiences (as of 2020). The tweets allow us to grasp the bigger picture of how users perceive the spaces, what things they make visible (or not) and describe, and how they produce their experiences (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 1968). Moreover, we can collect large and various data in the online environment on social media. While there are various names for newly emerging (qualitative) methodology conducted in the online world, such as virtual ethnography (Hine 2000), online ethnography (Markham 2005), cyberethnography (Robinson and Schulz 2009), digital anthropology (Horst and Miller 2012), and digital ethnography (Pink et al. 2016), it is methodologically significant that digital fields enable us to collect social data without being affected by the restriction of time and place, in contrast to more traditional qualitative methods. Furthermore, researchers can collect large amounts of online data with a nonreactive or unobtrusive procedure (Kimura 2018); this method can avoid major sampling issues and generalization built into typical qualitative methods such as ethnographical interviews and participatory observation.

As a result of organizing 1692 tweets collected in this study, they were from 915 Japanese people who have experienced coworking spaces in Japan. Thus, on average, each user posted 1.85 tweets on the experiences of these spaces during the study period. Those tweets include various information such as date posted (Fig. 1),

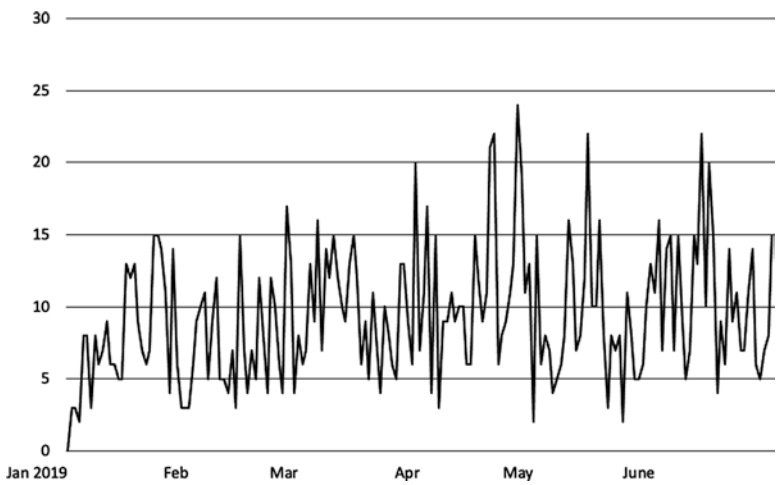

Fig. 1 Time trend of the number of tweets

Table 1 Data characteristics

Gender	Male	425
	Female	232
	Unknown	258
Employment status	Freelance	152
	Entrepreneur	115
	Full-time	92
	Homemaker	7
	Student	5
	Unemployed	4
	Part-time	3
	Unknown	537
Occupation	Web developer	68
	Writer	59
	Engineer	47
	Designer	46
	Blogger	44
	Web designer	42
	Consultant	39
	Video producer	35
	Editor	29
	Affiliate marketer	28
	Illustrator	25
	Web engineer	22
	Software developer	20
	Event manager	17
	Director	16
	Programmer	14
	Marketing	13
	Manga artist	12
	Photographer	12
	Web writer	12
	Developer	11
	Graphic designer	10
	Food service	10
	The others	210
	Unknown	284

gender, employment status, and occupation (Table 1). In addition, there are 267 tweets with photos or movies.

Approximately half of the users were male; moreover freelancers, entrepreneurs, and full-time employees combined represented about half of the sample. Overall, individuals from a wide variety of occupations were represented in the sample such as web developer, writer, engineer, designer, blogger, web designer, consultant, and video producer. Although not all the users indicated where their tweets were posted from, of those indicating their locations, at least one-third (16 prefectures) of the

Japanese prefectures were represented. This shows that coworking spaces experienced by the users in this study are located not only in big cities, such as Tokyo and Osaka, but also in broader areas in Japan. Thus, the sample of this study included varied user experiences of coworking spaces.

Data Analysis

This study extracted the online text data from Twitter and then conducted a content analysis. Specifically, 1692 tweets on user experiences of coworking spaces were analyzed using Nvivo software based on two types of coding: line-by-line and focused coding (Charmaz 1995, 2006). First, line-by-line coding was conducted by carefully reading and examining each line of data, in order to study meaning and assign codes. Second, first-order codes resulting from the line-by-line coding were sorted and synthesized into second-order themes. Focused coding involved more selective and conceptual examination. Accordingly, this study built a structure for the data that captured the users' experiences in the spaces, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Data structure

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
Facility	Services	Space
Systems		
Environments		
Other users		
Location		
Support		
Provider		
Concept		
Implementing	Individual work	
Productivity		
Attitudes		
Modes		
Performance		
Descriptions		
Time		
Frequency		
Aim		Behaviors
Feelings	Individual daily activities	
Activities		
Situations	Interaction	
Places		
People		
Impressions		
Contents		
Outcomes		
Purpose		

Results

Themes Emerged from the User Experiences

As a result of the analysis, the experiences of coworking space users in Japan were divided into two dimensions: space and behavior. The former consists of the theme of services, and the latter consists of the theme of individual work, individual daily activities, and interaction. Of the four themes, services accounted for the majority of the data. The remaining references were on individual work and daily activities, while interactions accounted for a relatively small proportion of the data. Each theme emerged from the user experiences is described in detail below.

Space for Services

Coworking space users referred to space services such as facilities, systems, the environments, the other users, and locations. Experiences regarding support and the space providers were hardly expressed.

The category of the facilities consists of references about space exteriors and interiors, and almost all of them were assigned in the latter. Specifically, references about non-work-related facilities, equipment, and furniture were prominent in the latter category.

The majority of references to non-work-related facilities was about experiences with spas or saunas. The data shows that a so-called coworking spa/sauna is prevalent mainly in Tokyo. These spaces that provide users with this type of relaxation and pastime were highly rated. In addition, there were many references related to accommodation services, gyms, and fitness. With regard to equipment, most references were about Wi-Fi service, and most users were satisfied with its quality. Furthermore, many users expressed the expectation that the spaces would be places to charge their digital equipment and rent displays or monitors.

As for furniture, most users referred to the functionality and comfort of the desks and chairs. Overall, the users were satisfied with these, but some expressed dissatisfaction with the stiffness of the chairs.

The category of the service systems mostly consists of user experiences with usage fees, usage models, such as membership and drop-ins, and hours of operation. In addition, although only a few users referred to it, there were some expressions related to the rules of space usage such as bringing in food and beverages, having conversations and phone calls. On the whole, most users perceived space usage fees positively; many users praised the spaces that were provided free of charge as well as the cost–performance of the services. In terms of usage models, we found that many users were satisfied with the convenience of the drop-in service or entered into membership contracts. However, others posted that they had cancelled their membership contracts or were considering cancellation due to not using the space

as much as they had planned. As for hours of operation, most users expressed dissatisfaction with the short business hours and the arrangement of regular days off; in particular, the fact that the spaces were closed late night and on weekends.

The category of environment mostly consists of references regarding the crowds in the spaces, noise, atmosphere, and comfort. Some users mentioned the view, temperature, lightness of the spaces, and a handful of users expressed moisture and smell. With regard to congestion, most users preferred spaces that were empty, and there were quite many references about dissatisfaction with congestion in the spaces. As for noise, many users said that the spaces were quiet, leaving a good impression. In contrast, a few felt uncomfortable about background music, conversations between people, and noise in the spaces. As for atmosphere, although there were many positive references showing that users perceived calm and relaxing atmospheres, words such as energetic or pleasant were scarce in this category. Most users held positive perceptions of the degree of comfort in the spaces. However, a few stated that the spaces were too cold or dark for them to stay.

With regard to other users, most expressions were about their attributes such as appearance, employment status, occupation, and behavior. In particular, many users observed and referred to other users' work styles, conversations, meals, personal belongings, and frequency of use. They then posted tweets about what they had learned from watching the behavior of other users, or about the uncomfortable feelings caused by them.

As for location, there were many positive references on the accessibility of the spaces from their homes, offices, and the nearest stations, and on their surroundings such as commercial buildings or nature.

In addition, many users were satisfied with the food and beverages provided for free in the spaces, and expressed detailed information about these services such as the variety, volume, and price.

Space for Individual Work

The expressions about individual work in the coworking spaces accounted for a significant part of the data, although this was less than those on the space services. This theme primarily consists of references about how users implemented their own tasks and how productive they were. In addition, there were some expressions on the objectives of their work and how long they worked, but this proportion of total references was low.

Overall, space users were positive about their individual task experience. Most users were devoted to their work, and stressed that they carried out their work in a concentrated manner and made significant progress. Some expressed how much they were able to accomplish by working long hours, while others mentioned scolding themselves or trying to motivate themselves if they had not finished their tasks or were just "chilling" at the spaces. Furthermore, expressions such as "komoru," "roujou," and "kanzume," which reflect work modes in the coworking spaces, were found

in the references. These are very local terms that mean shutting oneself in a space or room. In other words, these workers used words that translate to being immersed in their work to vividly express their experiences. Their expressions indicate that they were proud of working in this mode. There were also some references about another work mode, the "mokumoku meeting." This is industry jargon that is especially familiar to programmers, writers, and bloggers. In this type of meeting, people get together but basically remain quiet; that is, they focus on their own work without communicating with each other. While it is possible for the members joining the meeting to expect to share knowledge if needed because they work in similar business fields, the main focus is to conduct their own work under mutual monitoring. The users found this work mode to be fun and effective. In contrast, there were almost none of the negative references reflecting sadness or loneliness in working alone.

Space for Individual Daily Activities

As with the case of individual work, the expressions on user experiences with individual daily activities in the coworking spaces accounted for a large portion of the data. This theme illuminates how users experienced these spaces even when not working; namely, what the users perceived and did in the spaces, without interacting with others.

Many users expressed that the spaces made them feel calm or excited, but some users felt tense from the atmosphere in the spaces. Similarly, there were some references to eating, drinking, reading, relaxing, listening to music, exercising, playing games, posting tweets/photos on social media, being inspired by the other users, observing what other users looked like or did, and learning norms. However, there were a wider variety of references in the category of activities including the following: sleeping; dancing; hesitating to speak to others; going to the rest room; being introspective; pretending to work; suppressing a laugh; catching a cold; crying while remembering an impressive event; seeing and pitying other users who seemed to be deceived; being upset by an error; imagining how other users felt about oneself; having a nosebleed.

Space for Interaction with Others

In contrast to the preceding themes, expressions on interactions with others in the coworking spaces accounted for a small part of the data. This theme consists of references about when, where, with whom, how, and why users interact. It also includes expressions about how they felt about the interactions.

Almost all expressions on the interactions were about casual conversations, events, meetings, seminars, and workshops. As mentioned previously, some users joined mokumoku meetings and focused on their own work in silence, but

sometimes interacted with others. However, a few users communicated with others over lunch or dinner. In addition, there were almost no references about interactions with the space providers such as the managers or staff members.

There were few references about how users felt about their interactions with other people inside or outside the spaces; however, users did mention feelings such as fun, pleasure, or delight, and almost all recognized their interactions positively. The few who provided negative expressions had not expected to interact with others in the spaces or were dissatisfied with the various interactions that hindered their concentration on their work.

References regarding what they gained from their interactions were also few, but those that did comment indicated that they were able to share the latest information or knowledge, and enriched their networks. However, almost none of the users mentioned cooperation with the other users such as accommodating business orders, or collaboration for developing new products/services.

In the categories regarding interaction with others, the term "community" was rarely found.

Discussion

This study identified four themes about the experiences of Japanese coworking space users: spaces for services; spaces for individual work; spaces for individual daily activities; spaces for interactions with others. Among them, there were more users' expressions regarding the first three themes with fewer expressions on the fourth, space for interaction. In particular, facility, systems, and environments, under the theme spaces for services, and implementing their own tasks, and productivity, under the theme spaces for individual work, stood out. In contrast, the references related to how they felt during or after interactions with other users or what they gained from those interactions, such as cooperation and collaboration, were scant. Notably, the word "community" rarely appeared in the data. However, most users felt positively about their coworking space experiences and spontaneously put their lived experiences into words in their posts.

Based on these findings, it can be said that the users in Japanese coworking spaces experience and express the four aspects of the spaces. Among them, spaces for services, spaces for individual work, and spaces for interaction with others are more or less mentioned in the coworking literature (Bilandzic and Foth 2013; Brown 2017; Spinuzzi 2012). However, the previous studies did not have enough empirical evidence regarding spaces for individual daily activities. Thus, our additional findings about how users felt about the spaces or behaved in them while not working are a significant contribution to and extension of the literature.

The important implication here is that for the users, these coworking spaces represent a consolidation of multiple aspects (Küpers 2015), which are perceived and experienced at various levels. Specifically, the users perceived and experienced the coworking spaces as spaces for services and individual activities, while they did not

tend to regard them as spaces for interaction with others. Similar findings have been indicated in previous studies, although there are few on the topic (Spinuzzi 2012; Bilandzic and Foth 2013; Weijs-Perrée et al. 2019). In addition, some studies have mentioned productivity in coworking spaces (Brown 2017; Orel 2019; Waters-Lynch and Potts 2017). However, many studies have emphasized either conceptually or empirically that the coworking space is a space for interaction and community building (Butcher 2018; De Vaujany et al. 2019b; Garrett et al. 2017; Merkel 2015; Moriset 2014; Spinuzzi et al. 2019). Therefore, among the users of Japanese coworking spaces, they are experiencing and (re)producing these spaces differently, at least, from conceptual assumptions and associated empirical results in previous studies. It is also noteworthy that the work modes expressed by local words found frequently among the Japanese space users, such as komoru, kanzume, and mokumoku, are at the other end of the spectrum from interaction with others. In addition, there are some references and photos showing comfort and convenience of private booths provided by coworking spaces. Some users prefer them and shut themselves out and concentrate on their own tasks.

The question then arises: why do users perceive and experience these spaces in different ways? Considering the characteristics of the users, especially their employment status, for example, as Spinuzzi (2012) points out, we can assume that freelance workers and small-scale entrepreneurs view the facilities as a highly attractive means to concentrate on their work. This explanation in previous studies may be somewhat reasonable, as this study also identifies a significant proportion of users with similar employment status. Moreover, in the Japanese local context, freelancers are embedded in the subcontracting system, and the ability-based grade system, which is based on seniority, encourages workers to avoid interactions with strangers in coworking spaces, and instead, focus on their industrially or organizationally fragmented work. As a result, they may view the spaces (especially with personal booths) as a comfortable, convenient, and valuable place for that.

In addition, we form the following hypothesis regarding the impact of social media on this topic. It is assumed that potential users, based on online information gathering and communication, preliminarily acquire perceptions on what coworking spaces are and what they can get through the usage of the spaces, before they actually experience them. Indeed, a number of tweets (with photos) stressed how wonderful or suitable the spaces were for individuals seeking a space enabling them to focus on their tasks, thereby recommending the spaces to their followers. Since coworking space is still a new form of workspace in Japan, off-line interactions as well as online information gathering and communication will have a preliminary impact on perceptions of new users, and may bias their behavior toward these existing sentiments.

Subsequently, based on these discussions, we mapped the experience of the users in Japanese coworking spaces in a broader context of spaces and places. As shown in Fig. 2, the four aspects of the coworking spaces experienced by the users in this study are also found in other spaces or places. As noted above, for the users, the coworking space is the consolidation of four aspects, and it is conceptually and empirically shown that these aspects overlap (Bilandzic and Foth 2013; Brown 2017; Spinuzzi 2012). It should be noted that the examples of spaces or places shown in each aspect in the figure

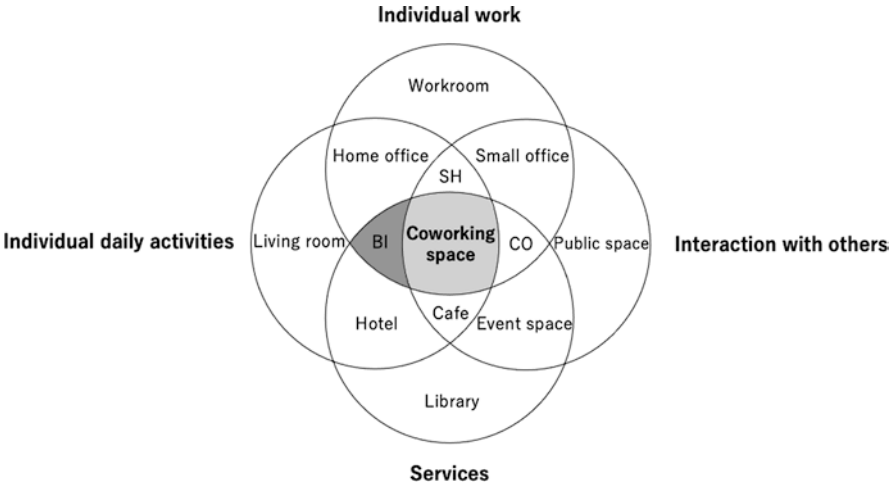

Fig. 2 Mapping the experiences in the conceptual context of space and place. *SH* Shared House, *BI* Business Incubator, *CO* Corporate Office

are conceptual. Based on the results of this study, the main experiences of the users in Japanese coworking spaces are mapped, not in the central part, but in the left side of the figure, which is shown as the darker grey segment. Specifically, we show that the users mainly perceive and experience these spaces not for interactions with others but rather for the services provided and individual work or individual daily activities.

In addition, it can be noticed that trends adopting the essence of coworking spaces have been occurring in each area in the figure by not comparing the empirical results only with the concept of coworking spaces, but rather by reconsidering the results in a broader context. In other words, from the figure, we can easily draw some examples that add coworking spaces to existing spaces or places: corporate coworking as corporate offices plus coworking spaces; cafe coworking as cafes plus coworking spaces; and co-living as shared houses plus coworking spaces (Bouncken et al. 2018; De Peuter et al. 2017; Waters-Lynch et al. 2016). As a result, we can see trends moving toward the center of the figure in each field, and thus, the boundaries surrounding the field of coworking spaces have been melting.

Such discussions contribute to our understanding of not only the context of coworking spaces but the context of flexible workplaces at the macro level.

Conclusion

This study attempts to explore how users experience coworking spaces, based on extensive data collected from tweets posted by 915 people all over Japan. As a result, four key aspects of coworking spaces are identified: (1) spaces for services;

(2) spaces for individual work; (3) spaces for individual daily activities; and (4) spaces for interaction. In particular, users perceive the value of the spaces in terms of services and individual work or individual daily activities, rather than in terms of interactions with others. That is, we find that their experiences diverge from the conceptual assumptions and some empirical results that emphasize the significance of community in these spaces. In addition, the results show that users positively recognize the spaces particularly as spaces for individual work.

We believe these findings may be caused not only by the employment status of most users, but also by the Japanese local work systems and preliminary acquisition of perceptions of coworking spaces on social media. Furthermore, we attempt to reconsider the concept of coworking spaces by positioning our results in a broader context of spaces and places.

This study provides new insights about the user experiences of coworking spaces, how to rethink the concept of the spaces, as well as an alternative to conventional qualitative methods. In this sense, we believe our study is theoretically and practically significant for academics (human resource management), experts, and policymakers in not only the field of coworking space but that of the flexible workplace.

However, the study has the following future challenges. First, we looked at data over a short period of time, relying on current data collected in 2019. It would be helpful to better understand Japanese user experiences of coworking spaces over a longer period. The first Japanese "coworking" space may have been established in 2010. Thus, an examination based on longitudinal data collected from tweets posted from 2010 to post-COVID-19 could bring us additional insights about how users have been experiencing the spaces and what changes have occurred during this period.

Second, it would be meaningful to further explore the data in greater depth by focusing on a subset of the users carefully extracted from the dataset and examine the transitions in their embodied experiences of these spaces as expressed on social media such as Twitter. Such data could be collected in a nonreactive or unobtrusive manner same as in this study.

Moreover, it would be an effective research method to appropriately complement the online data with ethnographical data gathered through intensive interviews and observations that could illuminate overlooked aspects in this study.

Finally, an international comparative analysis of this theme would contribute to exploring how the local and cultural context may affect perceptions and experiences of users in coworking spaces.

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Part IV
Digital Nomadism and Coworking Spaces on the Go

The Emergence of the Digital Nomad: A Review and Analysis of the Opportunities and Risks of Digital Nomadism

Simon Hensellek and Natália Puchala

Abstract By earning a living through skillful use of location-independent digital technologies while on the move, the concept of digital nomadism has become increasingly popular. Under the influence of digitalization and globalization, people – including entrepreneurs, freelancers, and employees – have started to leave the regular "9-to-5" work structures behind and change their expectations of work, particularly in terms of their balance between work and private life, thereby extending the concept of work-life balance to work-leisure balance. Due to this changing perspective, work is increasingly seen as a part of a lifestyle that encourages workers to choose their environment based on leisure preferences rather than professional circumstances. Within this chapter, we review the existing but still fragmented literature on the phenomenon of digital nomadism, which constitutes an "extreme" form of flexible work. In doing so, we aim to contribute in two ways. First, we provide a comprehensive overview and definition comprising four recurring elements of digital nomadism (i.e., digital work, flexibility, mobility, and identity and community). Second, we analyze the opportunities and risks associated with each of these four elements of digital nomadism in order to spur future research in these directions. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords Flexible work · Digital nomads · Digital nomadism · Review · Opportunities and risks

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Introduction

Under the influence of digitalization and globalization, new opportunities of digital work have emerged over the past years, enabling people to deliver results, regardless of their physical attendance in an office (Jacobs and Gussekloo Jacobs and Gussekloo 2016). The accessibility of digital data or completely remote office solutions, anywhere at any time, have led to the redundancy of a permanent workplace and supported the rise of flexible work structures, thereby breaking through dominant routines and organizational boundaries (Macgilchrist et al. 2019) and setting new ways of working while using digital technologies (Thompson 2018). Today, information systems and information technology tools contribute to working digitally even in foreign and exotic places (Dal Fiore et al. 2014).

Living independently from locations and regular "9-to-5" work structures by using digital technologies, the so-called digital nomads work while traveling, thereby creating a new form of not only work-life balance but also work-leisure lifestyle (Cook 2020; Orel 2019). The emergence of the "digital nomad" was firstly predicted by Makimoto and Manners (1997) in their eponymous book. Over the past two decades, this lifestyle has become increasingly popular and received repeated attention from the media but also from scholars. Although the phenomenon of digital nomadism has received recurring attention, our knowledge about digital nomadism is still limited. Most of the work to date has been concerned with explaining the phenomenon itself and how technological advancements enhanced its development (e.g., Patokorpi 2006). Similarly, researchers also looked at other factors that may contribute to digital nomadic work, for example, supportive infrastructure such as coworking spaces (e.g., Orel 2019). Other research streams investigated who may become a digital nomad and what their motivations are (e.g., Reichenberger 2018). However, the outcomes of living as a digital nomad, including its opportunities and risks for individuals and the society, have been largely neglected so far.

Therefore, the present chapter reviews extant literature on digital nomadism to provide an overview and comprehensive definition of "digital nomads." In doing so, we find that the scholarly research is increasing but literature is still rather fragmented across different domains. Across the different research domains, we identify four main elements of digital nomadism (i.e., digital work, flexibility, mobility, and identity and community). Based on that, we analyze the opportunities and risks associated with each of these four elements of digital nomadism. In this way, we aim to contribute an outline on the status quo and hope to spur future research concerning the salient elements of digital nomadism.

The chapter is organized as follows: Next, we explain our methodology and give an overview of our literature review. We then carve out the motivations and recurring elements of digital nomadism to formulate a comprehensive definition of the phenomenon. In the following section, we analyze opportunities and risks associated with the different elements of digital nomadism. The chapter closes with a discussion of the results and limitations of our approach and an outlook for future research.

Method

This chapter is based on a literature review. Following prior studies in this relatively young research field (e.g., Jarrahi et al. 2017; Schlagwein 2018), we considered literature from various sources including scientific journals and books but also other digital resources. The literature search was performed using the common databases of Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Scopus (Martín-Martín et al. 2018). We conducted our main search for the focal term "digital nomad*" to cover all variations including digital nomads, digital nomadism, digital nomad lifestyle, and similar terms. For comparability, we also added results for specific sub-terms such as "digital nomadism" and "digital nomad lifestyle" and for broader terms such as "flexible work" and "digital work." The results are summarized in Table 1. Consistent with prior research, we found that Google Scholar offered significantly more results due to the inclusion of books, theses, conference/working papers, and other publications (Martín-Martín et al. 2018).

To gain further insights into the development of research on digital nomadism, we further analyzed the results from Web of Science regarding the development of total publications and citations for the term "digital nomad*" over the past two decades. Figure 1 shows that only 14.6% of articles have been published before 2010 and that the majority of research has been published within the past 5 years (78.0%). We also found a steep incline in citations since 2018.

The above results show that research on digital nomadism is rising but still in its infancy. An additional analysis of the Web of Science categories further reveals a rather fragmented literature base with 10 articles in the field of leisure/tourism, 8 in IT/computer science, 8 in business/management, and 6 in humanities/social science. The overview and comparison of the most cited works in the Web of Science (Table 2) versus Google Scholar (Table 3) database confirm this picture. However, we see that 10 years after the nonscholarly seminal books by Makimoto and Manners (1997) and Ferriss (2007), scholarly articles are on the rise. Recurring author names with more than one publication in this domain are, among others, C. Nash, W. Sutherland, M. H. Jarrahi, G. Phillips, B. Y. Thompson, and D. Schlagwein (not listed).

Table 1 Overview of results of the database search

Keywords	Google Scholar (without patents and citations)	Web of Science (all databases; topic/title)	Scopus documents (article title, abstract, keywords)
Digital nomad*	1210	89/41	52
Digital nomadism	465	25/12	24
Digital nomad lifestyle	77	2/0	5
Flexible work	86,800	1386/315	1.435
Digital work	19,500	276/61	528

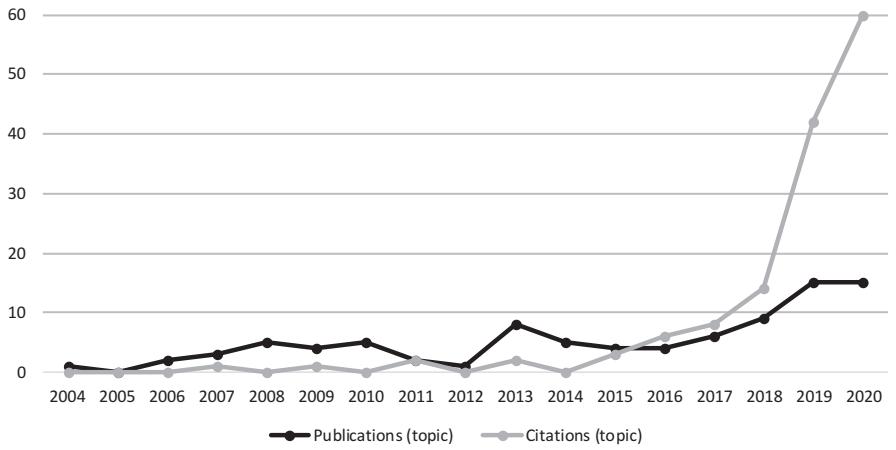

Fig. 1 Development of research on "digital nomad*" (Web of Science)

Against this backdrop, we see the need to review the extant but fragmented literature regarding recurring salient elements of digital nomadism that contribute to a more comprehensive definition of the term and combines the different literature streams to stimulate more interdisciplinary research in this field.

The Digital Nomad

Motivations

To understand why some people become digital nomads while others do not, scholars started to inquire into individuals' motivations to follow a digital nomad lifestyle (e.g., Reichenberger 2018). First, the digital work inherent to digital nomadism can be economically profitable. However, digital nomads do not necessarily strive for higher income (Reichenberger 2018) but aim at a sufficient (although not always regular) income, commonly generated through solo self-employment in digital work that provides them with their personal level of economic freedom (Ferriss 2007; Thompson 2018). The "market justifications of digital nomadism" proposed by Schlagwein (2018, p. 4) further concerns rational optimization, which includes cutting costs of living, reduction of possessions, and affordable travels. Besides the technological advantages through digitalization, an important element of most digital work nomads do is that it is result-oriented work, rather than serving a fixed amount of time in an office to receive a paycheck (Jacobs and Gussekloo 2016).

Knowing that the chance to work digitally in a specific work field exists does not simultaneously mean one becomes a digital nomad. Another relevant aspect is the escape from everyday life and office atmosphere (Horton 2017; Ferriss 2007). Hence, the second goal is to have individual freedom. That is to say, more free time

Table 2 Top 10 most cited works. (Web of Science)

Author(s)	Year	Title	Article type	Citations
Dal Fiore et al.	(2014)	"Nomads at last"? A set of perspectives on how mobile technology may affect travel	Journal Article (Journal of Transport and Geography)	38
Reichenberger	(2018)	Digital nomads – a quest for holistic freedom in work and leisure	Journal Article (Annals of Leisure Research)	19
Richards	(2015)	The new global nomads: Youth travel in a globalizing world	Journal Article (Tourism Recreation Research)	18
Nash et al.	(2018)	Digital nomads beyond the buzzword: Defining digital nomadic work and use of digital technologies	Conference Paper (International Conference on Transforming Digital Worlds, iConference 2018)	10
MacRae	(2016)	Community and cosmopolitanism in the new Ubud	Journal Article (Annals of Tourism Research)	8
Jarrahi et al.	(2019)	Personalization of knowledge, personal knowledge ecology, and digital nomadism	Journal Article (Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology)	7
Orel	(2019)	Coworking environments and digital nomadism: balancing work and leisure while on the move	Journal Article (World Leisure Journal)	6
McElroy	(2019)	Digital nomads in siliconizing Cluj: Material and allegorical double dispossession	Journal Article (Urban Studies)	5
Al-Zobaidi	(2009)	Digital nomads: Between homepages and homelands	Journal Article (Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication)	4
Patokorpi	(2006)	Abductive reasoning and ICT enhanced learning: Toward the epistemology of digital nomads	Book Chapter (The Information Society: Emerging Landscapes)	4

and flexibility in working hours and working structures as provided through gig work (Thompson 2019), presumably enhanced by the urge to travel and explore unknown locations and to do leisure activities.

Third, mobility and travel for inspiration or fun seem to be an intrinsic desire of humanity (Makimoto and Manners 1997). The seemingly congenital interest in exploring the world can not only be seen as a motivation but even more as an "inspirational justification of digital nomadism" (Schlagwein 2018, p. 3). By this, Schlagwein (2018) refers to an individual's worth of the "art of living" (p. 5). This can be mirrored in practicing a hobby bound to geographic conditions intensively, for instance, surfing, hiking, or snowboarding, or through personal growth in experiencing diverse cultures and visit copious countries with beautiful landscapes

Table 3 Top 10 most cited works. (Google Scholar)

Author(s)	Year	Title	Article type	Citations
Makimoto and Manners	(1997)	Digital nomad	Book	309
Ferriss	(2007)	The 4-hour workweek – Escape 9–5, live anywhere, and join the new rich	Book	224
Müller	(2016)	The digital nomad: Buzzword or research category?	Journal Article (Transnational Social Review)	53
Reichenberger	(2018)	Digital nomads – a quest for holistic freedom in work and leisure	Journal Article (Annals of Leisure Research)	48
Sutherland and Jarrahi	(2017)	The gig economy and information infrastructure: The case of the digital nomad community	Journal Article (Proceedings of the ACM on Human–Computer Interaction)	38
Nash et al.	(2018)	Digital nomads beyond the buzzword: Defining digital nomadic work and use of digital technologies	Conference Paper (International Conference on Transforming Digital Worlds, iConference 2018)	35
Thompson	(2018)	Digital nomads: Employment in the online gig economy	Journal Article (Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics, and Innovation)	23
Thompson	(2019)	The digital nomad lifestyle: (Remote) work/leisure balance, privilege, and constructed community	Journal Article (International Journal of the Sociology of Leisure)	23
Jacobs and Gussekloo	(2016)	Digital nomads: how to live, work and play around the world	Book	21
Jarrahi et al.	(2019)	Personalization of knowledge, personal knowledge ecology, and digital nomadism	Journal Article (Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology)	16

(Reichenberger 2018). Traveling, including personal and cultural exploring, feels rewarding and provides indescribable admiration and excitement (Schlagwein 2018). The worth of these experiences is oftentimes valued higher than materialism (Manson 2013). The accompanied boost of self-esteem, confidence (Manson 2013), and creativity (Orel 2019) make the lifestyle so attractive and can evolve to a positive mindset and integrate into their own identity.

Fourth and finally, this leads directly to the third category of identity and community, which grows by interacting with like-minded people. Such interaction and community building are spurred by the growing amount of professional infrastructure that supports nomadic workers such as, for example, online communities via social media or coworking spaces around the world (Orel 2019; Thompson 2019). Being part of an interesting community also displays the "civic justifications of digital nomadism" (Schlagwein 2018, p. 4).

Elements and Definition

When searching for the terms "digital nomad" or "digital nomadism," one experiences an interesting gap between the still relatively rare scientific work and the large amount of information in the form of news, blogs, videos, and websites. Nevertheless, analyzing the existing work and most common definitions reveals some recurring patterns matching the research fields and motivations mentioned above, namely digital work, flexibility, mobility, and identity and community.

Most academics contain the aspect of digital work in their definitions. Accordingly, they agree that a digital nomad is someone that eludes a regular office environment while *working digitally* using digital technologies (Thompson 2018). Hence, digital nomads find employment mostly in the gig economy (Thompson 2018), for example, as programmers, or web and graphic designers. This is because choosing a location-independent lifestyle typically denies access to factories or larger machines for the physical manufacture of a product, stressing the reliance on ICTs (Nash et al. 2018; Spinuzzi 2012).

At the same time, the definition should include the willingness to explore new places and specifically invest more time in leisure than simply escaping from an office after the regular working hours. To include the *flexibility* that comes with a nomadic lifestyle, scholars described digital nomads as "individuals, who leverage technology to work remotely and live an independent and nomadic lifestyle" (Prester et al. 2019, p. 1). The flexibility of working mobile and autonomously also means relinquishing the amenities of a fixed and organized work space and to provide oneself independently with the needed supplies and resources for successful work (Büscher 2014). Research on the gig economy also showed that digital platforms enhance flexibility by matching demand and supply of clients and independent gig workers (Sutherland and Jarrahi 2017). With regards to their working performance, it is incidental, in which location digital nomads work or how much time they invest, as long as their performance matches the desired results (Jacobs and Gussekloo 2016). Self-reliance and independence can be motivating factors to favor digital working arrangements, selecting unrestrictedly between working on the one side and living and creating an individual balance on the other side (Orel 2019; Reichenberger 2018). To work for material possessions, prestige, and other extrinsic rewards are nowadays oftentimes seen as obsolete values. In fact, some digital nomads even live in a minimalistic manner (Nash et al. 2018). This is because it can be beneficial to minimize one's belongings to the most necessary, leaving the ability to join spontaneous adventures, explore new cities, and landscapes.

Digital nomads are known for their desire for worldwide travels, but there are also less extreme forms of digital nomads. The digital nomad lifestyle has so far been accurately described as "the ability for individuals to work remotely from their laptop and use their freedom from an office to travel the world" (Thompson 2019, p. 27). However, the aspect of having a choice must be emphasized here. Digital nomads can work remotely and use their *mobility* either to travel or to pursue other interests. Yet, the mobility, length, and breadth of travel and destinations can vary

and many different expressions of this freedom can be observed in reality. Mobility does not only consist of geographic independence but also of mobility towards employment (Büscher 2014), for example, by having short-term contracts, where job offers and tasks vary (Czarniawska 2014). Digital nomads thereby escape their known working environment and in most cases their comfort zones, to operate in a free and self-determined way and explore an endless range of possibilities (Ferriss 2007). This kind of extreme flexibility often facilitates to take more chances (Kingma 2019), even though with higher risks (Kalleberg 2009). Uncertainty about how long and far to travel is typical for digital nomads and distinguishes them from all other working structures. A nomadic worker travels *for* work and, in contrary, a digital nomad works *while* traveling (Nash et al. 2018). It can be difficult to predict how long digital nomads might stay in the same place or when to return to a base (Nash et al. 2018). However, a base (e.g., the hometown) is not compulsory owing to the ability of continuous mobility (Richards 2015). Deciding on a location is oftentimes based on personal recreational preferences, rather than the available work positions (Müller 2016) and the interplay of work and leisure create a lifestyle (Reichenberger 2018).

Mobile internet combined with portable devices resulted in such revolutionary lifestyle changes (Dal Fiore et al. 2014; Mascheroni 2007). New organizational and social structures assisted digital nomads to grow into their own *community* (MacRae 2016). By digitalizing sociality, people are able to be connected even when they are geographically apart (Büscher 2014). However, digital nomads do not simply work apart from a company's office but at the same time all digital nomads are "working alone together" (Spinuzzi 2012, p. 433) as a community. Moreover, even if they pursue individual goals and maintain diverse jobs, they still have their digital nomadic lifestyle in common (Sutherland and Jarrahi 2017). Their mutual interest for extreme mobility, including traveling to exotic destinations, and organizational independence (Sutherland and Jarrahi 2017) could lead to joint activities and bonding relationships, instead of endangering them (Maruyama and Tietze 2012; Orel 2019). An important role in the community building of digital nomads plays, among others, coworking spaces that serve as central points of contact for the community (Orel 2019). This community strengthens the feeling of affiliation and contributes to the fact that digital nomadism is incorporated in their *shared identities*. They all go through the same process of trying to maintain belongingness while establishing professional autonomy (Prester et al. 2019).

Recapitulatory, the foundation for a life as a digital nomad is: (1) digital work enabled by technological advancements. Mobile devices and fast internet enable access from anywhere at any time. The second outstanding characteristic of digital nomads is (2) flexibility and the associated personal and professional freedom. As a consequence of individuals' desire for freedom, the idea of nomadism arose. The geographical and temporal independence creates (3) mobility for worldwide travel and leisure. Finally, digital nomads are characterized by their establishment of a new lifestyle, and (4) identity as being part of a larger worldwide community.

Hence, we believe that the following definition combining these four main criteria can be applicable: Digital nomads are individuals who pursue a work-leisure

lifestyle by working remotely leveraging digital technologies whilst on the move, which enables them to work independently from anywhere in the world. They typically perform digital work through flexible work arrangements and place a high value on mobility in order to integrate both traveling/leisure and working. Despite their individuality and mobility, their intrinsic motivations and goals, in turn, create a shared identity and global community with other people that follow the same lifestyle.

Opportunities and Risks of Digital Nomadism

In the following, the opportunities and risks of living as a digital nomad are analyzed based on the four characteristics: digital work, flexibility, mobility, and identity and community.

Opportunities of Digital Nomadism

Digital Work

Digital work enabled by innovative internet and communication technologies is one of the main pillars of digital nomadism (Dal Fiore et al. 2014). Due to its independence of location, no other type of work can better combine professional life with personal interests and traveling, thereby increasing individuals' freedom and ability to create their very own balance between work and private life. It is the revolutionary advancement of the worldwide web, which makes it possible to create an individual work-life and even work-leisure balance (Thompson 2019). The benefits of digitalization of the workplace include independence, autonomy, and self-determination (Cook 2020; Gajendran and Harrison 2007). Feeling self-determined and independent is empowering and can build up self-esteem (Macgilchrist et al. 2019). It also opens up avenues for individuals' creativity and overall happiness (Liegl 2014).

Because of universal access for all, and at the same time fewer barriers, it is also said to create more equal opportunities for everybody (Green et al. 2018). By profiting from new technological possibilities, workers can find an endless variety of jobs and firms easily find reachable affordable digital workers that perform tasks on demand (Durward et al. 2016). The flexibility of economically independent arrangements and working time (Durward et al. 2016) leads to a less traditional hierarchically-organized working environment (Colbert et al. 2016). Additionally, digitalization spurs entrepreneurship among digital nomads. Such entrepreneurial endeavors include, for example, typical freelance jobs such as software developers, web and graphic designers, photographers, artists, or authors but also rather new

types of professions such as social media influencer or drop-shipper and affiliate marketers (Sutherland and Jarrahi 2017).

Besides the hard- and software needed for working digitally, it reduces the consumption of paper and other materials, which might be a positive environmental aspect (Green et al. 2018). Moreover, digital work has the ability to decrease traffic congestions as the number of commuters could decline. This would not only have a positive effect on the environment (e.g., less CO_2 emissions), but would also save time and increase individuals' productivity and well-being (Messenger et al. 2017).

Flexibility

Flexibility plays a big role in digital nomadism, since resisting routines facilitates changing working structures and schedules (Wang et al. 2019). This kind of freedom has changed the value of time and money (Reichenberger 2018). Before the twenty-first century, the possibility to work self-determined and live rather lighthearted was only reserved for people living in wealth (Makimoto and Manners 1997). Nowadays, digital nomads can profit from freedom that digital work entails, throughout all classes of wage and age. Additionally, short-term contracts and gig-wise work allow experimenting with different jobs and careers (Sutherland and Jarrahi 2017). Flexibility is also given through various work arrangements such as home office, job sharing, or fully digital remote work as inherent to digital nomadism. Combining personal and professional life can be more comfortable, by complying with deadlines on the professional scale without neglecting family responsibility or personal interests. A flexible adaption to goals and needs can again simplify trade-offs in the work-life relationship (Allen et al. 2013). Both personal as well as professional long-distance relationships were never easier to master than with technology that provides asynchronous but also real-time face-to-face communication (Liegl 2014).

Furthermore, the sharing economy supports the personal and professional life with significant cost and time savings (Dillahunt and Malone 2015). On-demand infrastructures like car-sharing, Airbnb, or office sharing (Reichenberger 2018; Prester et al. 2019) fit into the flexible life design. A popular workplace among gig workers and digital nomads are coworking spaces because they provide an on-demand professional work environment, which not only fulfills the technological but also social needs of their users (Orel 2019). Moreover, users report higher productivity (Orel 2019) due to a less stressful environment and higher independence (Liegl 2014). Also, finding an individual work-life balance results in positive mental health (Cook 2020). An abundance of options exists to support personal time management, for example, by integrating meditation and sports into the working schedule. This makes it possible to create a healthy and customized routine (Jacobs and Gussekloo 2016). Whoever has the ability to take responsibility and is disciplined enough for self-organization, will profit from the flexibility that digital work entails and will potentially have a better work-life balance (Messenger et al. 2017). From an economical perspective, with growing supplies offered in the sharing economy

and people working from home, cafes, or coworking spaces, not only costs can be reduced but also the overall amount of office spaces, thereby freeing those spaces for other public purposes (e.g., parks for recreational use). Working from home or in coworking places, can reduce vehicle emission, save money, and increase sustainability (Green et al. 2018), thereby enhancing the overall livability of local areas.

Mobility

Mobility and travel are often used interchangeably in this context and constitute on important element of digital nomadism because this lifestyle will eventually not get paid off with a high income, but with exploring and practicing something meaningful and helpful (Hall et al. 2019). The selection of a location is based on hedonistic passions and maximum demographic privileges (Thompson 2019). Therefore, the motives behind a preference for mobility may also differ between different age groups. For instance, millennials often seek adventures and have the willingness to explore the unknown and work occasionally in their spare time, while older people may also consider family aspects or even want to take a mid-career break. Living as a digital nomad incites an increase in potentially new and more intense and lasting experiences compared to a simple vacation. Having the option to stay in different places enriches life with experiences, creating a higher quality of life.

Furthermore, being on the move boosts creativity and gives people positive psychological feelings of relief (Liegl 2014). An open-minded personality resulting from diverse travel experiences also eases the ability to adapt to new situations by growing a higher tolerance of ambiguity and reducing prejudices. The foreign culture and multiplicity can be embraced, rather than just accepted (Blackshaw 2018). Moreover, being open-minded helps finding a job anywhere and getting along with new or even difficult coworkers or clients (Czarniawska 2014). Overall, those who are able to organize and combine work and leisure in a lifestyle, enrich their private life and benefit their health and well-being (Schwarzenberger 2017).

In addition, escaping to cheaper countries can raise the standard of living (Czarniawska 2014), when workers profit from "geographical arbitrage" (Ferriss 2007, p. 11). Meaning, getting wages, for example, in US dollars or Euros from international companies, while having expenses in countries with lower costs of living.

Identity and Community

Since community gives identity (Müller 2016), opportunities can be seen on both the individual and communal levels (MacRae 2016). Continuously building new friendships, finding work companions, and being surrounded by like-minded people might foster self-esteem on a personal basis, which in turn reinforces self-confidence (MacRae 2016; Prester et al. 2019). Digital nomads go through similar experiences and profit from exchanging information among themselves either face-to-face or

online via social media groups or forums. By staying updated on the latest technology trends, startup news, and more (Sutherland and Jarrahi 2017), they interact beneficially with each other, enhance their personal knowledge and foster the community (Jarrahi et al. 2019).

The feeling of membership has a strong potential to affect the identity of the individuals in this group, creating strong in-group cohesion (Prester et al. 2019). Reciprocity and social sharing within the group also make it profitable for individuals to be part of the local and global digital nomad community (Dillahunt and Malone 2015; Jarrahi et al. 2019). Online networking with friends and community members not only eases staying in touch to reduce loneliness but also builds new relationships even before one arrives at a new place (Jarrahi et al. 2019).

Moreover, living the life of a digital nomad can also be a significant opportunity to shape individual's personal and cultural identity (Blackshaw 2018). Embracing the variety of people and cultures helps individuals understand biased opinions and can be beneficial in various occasions. The learnings from traveling and adapting to a new environment can be applied to the everyday life, where one is exposed to unknown situations and result in accepting and valuing diversity (Kong et al. 2019).

Risks of Digital Nomadism

Digital Work

Despite the many advantages of digital work mentioned above, there are also several risks associated with it. First, working digitally means a high consumption of information and media on a daily basis, which entails mental and even physical risks. One important psychological risk is stress due to the permanent state of availability (Messenger et al. 2017). The personal life suffers because digital workers feel an obligation to be available around the clock and feel guilty if they are not. In order to protect themselves from such feelings and imbalance of work and private life, they should draw clear borders between both roles or try to follow schedules to prevent overworking (Cook 2020). Additionally, working on a computer all day can lead to strained necks and shoulders and create back pain (Jacobs and Gussekloo 2016).

The second category of risks concerns the modalities of digital work arrangements, which are often designed as freelancing or self-employed entrepreneurial activities (Thompson 2018, 2019; Stewart and Stanford 2017). While entrepreneurship is generally associated with high uncertainty and risks (Alvarez and Barney 2005), many of the freelancing jobs digital nomads accept are rather precarious, studies found (Kalleberg 2009; Thompson 2019). It can be laborious and unsatisfying jobs, which can result in low hourly payments due to fixed contracts only paying for the end result (Thompson 2018). In addition to the constant uncertainty of finding the next job, it is challenging for digital nomads to save earnings for health care, retirement plans, and tax liabilities (Morad 2016). The high amount of competition

represents another risk with entering a global pool of workers or entrepreneurs with oftentimes similar business models, most prominent being drop shipping, online marketing/consulting, or social media influencer (Thompson 2019). This can lead to high failure rates among digital nomads' businesses (Morad 2016).

Finally, working digitally might save resources such as paper, pencils, or printer ink, etc. However, the necessary hardware for this work can also have tremendous economic footprints due to the rare earths included in electronic devices and ever-shorter product lifetime cycles (Resende and Morais 2010). Additionally, the transfer of online data consumes significant amounts of energy today, thereby increasing the carbon footprint of digital nomadic work (Baliga et al. 2009).

Flexibility

Flexibility, especially in terms of flexible work arrangements as a freelancer, may also bring about less stability and generally more insecurity. This feeling of continuous change and instability can lead to enormous pressure or even anxiety. This can be triggered by uncertainty about the time period of a job, the regularity of income, doubts in terms of retirement pensions, or simply building financial buffers (Czarniawska 2014). Those fears can have a negative impact on an individual's personal life and mental health (Cook 2020). The private time suffers from always being approachable, when flexible work structures aggravate a clear separation of private and professional life (Reichenberger 2018). The professional life might lack desired success, since procrastination often harms productivity. A high level of self-discipline and reflection is required to retain work-related routines and remove possible distraction, for example, to meet the deadlines (Jarrahi et al. 2019).

The sustainability aspect is also called into question here, since economies of scale may not be applicable for remote workers and own purchases of hard- and software could increase. This could also result in a financial risk that gig workers, more specifically digital nomads, are taking (Lobel 2017). Moreover, what one perceives as freedom, might feel like drowning to another (Büscher 2014). Perpetually searching for a place to stay, work, or do extraordinary leisure activities, puts the mind in stress and lead to "decentered selves" (Schultze and Boland 2000, p. 191). As a matter of fact, liabilities tend to be higher, since digital nomads cannot rely on employers' safety plans. Firms, on the other hand, profit from losing their responsibility for payments in health insurance or other benefits and protections (Nash et al. 2018). Without those benefits, workers are left in increasing insecurity. Dealing with anxiety and pressure that comes with those circumstances, might pose a challenge to physical and mental health (Messenger et al. 2017).

Digital nomads must accept that flexible working structures also reflect difficulties outside of their own area of control (Lobel 2017). For example, they rely on a suitable infrastructure provided by their designated area of residence, which are oftentimes exotic and maybe underdeveloped countries. Hence, from a public point of view, this also poses problems for these areas due to the increased number of long-time tourists that not only want to spend their holidays but also want a

professional work environment. While this might foster economic development on the one hand, it may also harm local nature and culture.

Mobility

Although mobility has become significantly more accessible and affordable over the past decades, there are still significant direct and indirect costs associated with traveling. For some, even the direct costs might be hardly affordable as they are just entering the working world or will have to travel on a tight budget. The indirect costs may further increase with age, since insurance and medical services as well as a certain level of amenities gain on priority (Clark 2019). Working in a large company, in a safe position might be a more attractive choice to a lot of people to enjoy the benefits of safety nets and lay the foundation for settlement in a specific area (Korver 2019). Also, a fixed address for formality reasons may ease bureaucratic matters. An important decision is also whether or not to stay registered in one's home country in order to maintain potential social benefits and have a safe haven to return to if needed.

Mobility does not imply more free time, as digital nomads work nonstop and inexhaustible (Korver 2019). Essentially, remote work is possible around the globe, but can require willpower and not only personal time management but also time zone management (Prester et al. 2019). Getting up at 3 a.m. to make a call to a different time zone can make in-time communication as well as staying accountable difficult to combine with a healthy lifestyle (Kong et al. 2019). Frequently changing work arrangements also hamper forming bonds between companies and workers and with coworkers or clients. As a consequence, loyalty declines with less attention to company values or clients' needs (Aguinis and Lawal 2013). This could additionally lead to less effort while doing the job, finally leading to a vicious circle of less performance and success. Finding committed and trustful workers is essential for a company to prevent one-sided opportunism (Boschma 2005).

Another risk for digital nomads who are always on the move is social isolation (Orel 2019). It is hard to prevent loneliness without a fixed office and regular interaction with colleagues or clients (Spinuzzi 2012) or social environment in general. Moreover, finding a suitable working place might be challenging due to the lack of safe internet connections but privacy and attentiveness are necessary while sharing content in public places like cafes (Sutherland and Jarrahi 2017). The growing amount of coworking spaces is sure helpful but searching and using them can still be expensive and time-consuming.

Traveling and restlessness can have an impact on physical and mental health (Liegl 2014). Therefore, costs for and especially the quality of health insurance and medical care also vary in different locations and might not meet the known or expected standard but access to such public support services are important (Hall et al. 2019). While moving from place to place, it is always up to the digital nomad's own responsibility to stay familiar with the public health but also finance/tax system of the respective country. Otherwise, they might encounter unexpected payment

obligations. Although digital nomads can make use of "geographical arbitrage" (Ferriss 2007, p. 11), for example, by performing digital work for companies in high-wage countries and living in low-wage countries, this entails legal and tax-related risks. Sometimes, it is not clear where a digital nomad has to pay income or sales tax or in which country they might enjoy social benefits and earn retirement payments.

Lastly, due to the amount and extent of journeys around the globe, most notably by plane, the own environmental footprint increases through CO_2 emissions (Green et al. 2018). With the ever-increasing attention paid to the environment, travel could even become a guilty pleasure instead of a part of a sustainable lifestyle.

Identity and Community

The challenges for identity and community building start with getting to know people in the first place (Czarniawska 2014). This might be particularly difficult for introverts, who have a rather hard time when trying to make social contacts, as opposed to extroverts (Thompson 2019). The number one reason why the digital nomad lifestyle challenges the happiness of many nomads is the feeling of loneliness despite a worldwide community (And.co from Fiverr 2018). Although they are connected, relationships among digital nomads often remain superficial and individuals feel isolated (Spinuzzi 2012). On top of that, group dynamics may also build up pressure through idealized images of a few famous success stories or by social influencers, who more often than not aim at their personal profit.

Against this backdrop, it is argued that the online presented personalities and images of both the lifestyle itself and successful people living it do not always match reality (Hall et al. 2019). For inexperienced newcomers, this poses risks of fraud and exploitation and constant travels further increase the difficulty of building trustful private and business relationships. Therefore, the growing community of digital nomads gets inventive by creating a multitude of support programs such as online classes, inter alia, about how to become a digital nomad and build profitable businesses from anywhere in the world. However, many of these "master classes" or best practices are not made out of philanthropy but out of opportunistic reasons to gain profit from the increasing interest in the digital nomad lifestyle. This may leave newcomers disillusioned and with empty pockets.

Limitations and Application of Findings

Although we were able to find recurring elements and provide a comprehensive definition that combines the different research domains of digital nomadism, our approach to draw these theoretical findings from a literature review is not without limitations. In particular, we were not able to validate our findings through data from interviews or empirical surveys of digital nomads. To alleviate this limitation,

we will apply our findings with the help of statistical data from the recent And.co from Fiverr (2018) remote work and digital nomads survey with 3755 respondents.

Overall, *digital work* enables remote work and autonomous living and working but self-discipline and self-management are still vital for its success. Otherwise, the risk of overworking (28%) exists, since people can put themselves under a lot of pressure following an "always on" mentality. Furthermore, missing career advancement (24%) and the lack of promotions from supervisors can hold back individual success.

Second, *flexibility* can be considered more as an opportunity than a risk. By far, the biggest opportunity for the study participants is flexible working hours (58%). Followed by the freedom of autonomous decisions (18%). In contrast, the lack of motivation (13%) is the most likely risk as a result of flexibility.

However, flexibility in combination with *mobility* represents a great chance to explore the world. Of the respondents, 55% were fully and 43% partially remote, while 23% of the organizations they worked for were fully distributed. Around 17% said they travel to more than five countries a year and for 9% the main reason to become a remote worker was their desire to travel.

Finally, even though many online *communities* exist, the lack of community poses challenges for 30% in the survey and prohibits happiness while working remotely. Therefore, feeling lonely and isolated is the number one risk of the digital nomad lifestyle but decreases over time. This is even more interesting, since 73% are still rather new to remote work and may have not yet gained a large network. With regard to a shared *identity*, nearly 80% want to work remotely as long as possible and one fourth (24%) already described themselves as a digital nomad.

Discussion and Outlook

When reviewing the literature and trying to identify the "classic" digital nomad, we found that it cannot be narrowed down to one type of person. Instead, research on digital nomadism exists in a variety of fields including leisure/tourism, IT/computer science, business/management, and humanities/social science. Although it is still a young but emerging area of inquiry, these findings point at the need for an interdisciplinary approach to research on digital nomadism. Hence, in this chapter, we showed that digital nomadism can be defined along with the four main elements: digital work, flexibility, mobility, and identity and community drawn from the fields mentioned above.

Against this backdrop, the opportunities and risks of working and living as a digital nomad were illustrated and can be summarized as follows. The opportunities evidently include independent remote work from anywhere at any time while simultaneously saving costs and having flexibility to shape an individual work and leisure routine. Especially professions in technologically advanced areas (e.g., web/graphic designers, translators, customer service agents, etc.) tend to profit most from flexible digital working structures and increase peoples' ability to integrate working and

traveling into a digital nomadic lifestyle. The opportunity of global travel enriches personal and cultural experiences over monetary values. By having the power to leave the everyday life when feeling stuck, there is the advantage of mobility as well as the feeling of freedom (Czarniawska 2014).

Naming important risks, the fascination for digital nomadism may fade when considering its long-term implications (Manson 2013). Loneliness is a common factor, since places and people become interchangeable and personal relations might remain superficial (Manson 2013). Furthermore, solo self-employed digital nomads take higher risks, whether financially or in terms of their own state of health, especially in the long run when it comes to health insurance/issues or retirement payments (Lobel 2017). Emerging questions relating to these facets and opportunities and risks of digital nomadism create potential for future research.

Such questions may concern how the length and distance of travels influence the experience of the digital nomadic lifestyle. Related to that, scholars not only investigate the frequency of changes in the locations of digital nomads (i.e., moving forth within a certain country and moving forth across different countries) but also the nature of jobs they do (i.e., fully digital work vs. analogue or hybrid work arrangements via digital platforms).

Second, dedicating research to psychological or personality-specific motives why people join the digital nomad lifestyle could reveal interesting insights. Individuals might make the decision to work remotely due to psychological or personal motives, out of chances for a higher life quality or satisfaction, or to overcome experienced inequality or unemployment at home. Besides, it might be of interest to conduct empirical studies, including the motives, aspirations, and routines of digital nomads. Related research questions could also concern personal-level outcomes in terms of individuals' well-being. For example, why many people experience loneliness or a constant feeling of having to spend every spare minute being productive (Cook 2020). Not wanting to "waste" any time comes with unnecessary stress, which many digital nomads tried to decrease through their lifestyle in the first place.

Third, studies may also adopt a long-term perspective and look at people who return from a digital nomad's lifestyle to an ordinary working construct. Will they be accepted by employers and will the nomads themselves be able to return "back to normal"? Or will it perhaps become a vicious circle of constantly seeking ways to feel balanced and happy? It is also of interest what the long-term consequences might be in terms of their financial and personal wealth but also in a broader societal view. Eventually, the number of digital nomads might increase even more and leave governments no chance but to adapt. For instance, implementing an unconditional basic income could be potential reactions (Green et al. 2018). Authors can also address the danger of a shrinking middle class (Noyes 2004), since freelancers from wealthy countries work in poorer countries and push their careers away from a middle class.

Overall, due to its novelty, not only digital nomadism but remote work in general leaves plenty of room for future research. There are probably more innovations to come that support not just life as a digital nomad but will also contribute to broader changes in the balance between work and private life in general.

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Workations and Their Impact on the Local Area in Japan

Keita Matsushita

Abstract This chapter focuses on "workation" in Japan. Japanese workation is not one of the digital nomad workstyle but expected to be a part of the revitalization of local industries such as entrepreneurship and tourism, as well as part of labour management and human resource development of companies. The questions addressed in this chapter are how the local accepts workation and how it relates to and impacts local economic and social design. The case study in this study was based mainly on in-depth interviews and participant observations at Nulab Inc. and Higashikawa Town conducted in January of 2020. This study revealed that workations stimulate the discovery and development of "secondary tourism resources" which is the sights and specialities for 1–2 weeks stay in the local, and is one of the motivating forces for companies and workers to participate in the locality's social design.

Keywords Workation · Teleworking · Case study · Tourism · Japan

The Spread of Workations in Japan

Background of Workations in Japan

This chapter focuses on the concept of the 'workation', a compound word of work and vacation, which has been receiving increasing attention in Japan. In Europe and the US, workations involve digital nomadic work styles. Following the 2015 Wall Street Journal article titled 'This Summer, How About a Workcation[1]?' (Silverman 2015), the concept began to make inroads, especially in the United States. The purpose of a workation is mainly to enable employees to refresh and recuperate (Retreat), enjoy hobbies (Activity) such as surfing, and spend time with their family

[1] Workcation and workation can be spelled either way, but workation is often used in Japan. In this paper, which focuses on Japanese cases, we will use "workation" unless it is a proper noun.

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(Family Trip), in addition to performing work activities through business networking, software development, and training. Typically, workers combine these elements in a workation.

It was not until 2017–2018 that workations came into the spotlight in Japan. Let us examine the social background. In Japan, the over-concentration of the population in Japan's capital city of Tokyo and the declining birthrate and ageing population posed major social issues. The Council for the 100 Years of Life Initiative established in 2017 made policy recommendations known as the 'human development revolution', focusing on reforming early childhood education and higher education, lifelong learning and other recurrent education, and employment for the elderly, in an ongoing society with a declining birthrate and ageing population. Around 2017, sideline work was gradually allowed and increased, and the 'Guidelines for the Promotion of Sideline Work' (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2018) enacted in 2018 promoted a variety of working styles at the administrative level, which have been gradually expanding on an individual basis.

The concept of workation is also linked to the promotion of telework. In the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, companies began to formulate Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) for disasters and other crises. The Tokyo Olympics, scheduled to be held in 2020, drew attention to telework as a flexible way of working to alleviate congestion. Since 2017, government agencies have been encouraging and promoting telework to companies by setting up Telework Days in July, the scheduled period for the Olympics. The restraint on activities caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in early 2020 has forced people to from homes instead of offices. According to a survey by Persol Research and Consulting in March 2020, 13.2% of full-time employees in Japan had to adopt telecommuting (working from home), of which 47.8% did so for the first time. The reasons for not implementing telework (multiple answers) varied: for 41.1% of respondents, the telework system was not in place; for 39.5%, tasks could not a be performed by telework; for 17.5%, the information and communications technology (ICT) environment for telework was not in place; and 17.0% answered that there was no place to telework (Persol Research and Consulting 2020a). Since the state of emergency in April 2020, the rate of telework implementation increased to 27.9%, of which 68.7% were first-time teleworkers (Persol Research and Consulting 2020b). Thus, the number of teleworkers in Japan has increased rapidly, albeit temporarily.

Regional revitalisation is also one of the social backgrounds of workations in Japan. Since 2014, regional revitalisation has been a goal in response to the exhaustion of rural areas caused by the unipolar concentration in Tokyo. In the process of regional revitalisation, attention has been focused on the creation of a 'related population'. A 'related population' is neither a 'permanent population' such as residents, nor an 'exchange population' such as tourists. In 2018, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) launched the 'Related Population Creation Project', which led to a variety of activities in several regions using the keyword 'related population'. The idea of spending a specific period away from the urban areas of Tokyo and elsewhere, working in the local area, has suddenly attracted attention as a practical approach to these social issues.

As aforementioned, in Japan, a workation is not only a way of working for individual workers as digital nomads and employees, but a system and initiative led by companies and, in particular, local communities that aim to promote the tourism industry and create the related population. Based on these considerations, the definition of a Japanese-style workation in this study is 'a way of working that can be obtained by leaving the office and working while staying in the region for a specified period'.

Theoretical Framework

The way of working and resting presented by workations is also closely related to the development of digital and mobile media (Hemsley et al. 2020; Dal Fiore et al. 2014; Matsushita 2019; Nelson et al. 2017). In order to work from any location, it is essential to have a wi-fi environment for mobile media such as mobile PCs, tablets, and smartphones (Brown and O'Hara 2003; Ciolfi and De Carvalho 2014). There is also a need for software, applications, and digital platforms to help digital nomads take jobs, and for company employees to advance their company's work. Moreover, if workers stay and work in the area for a relatively long period, the development and dissemination of workplaces including coworking spaces; transportation such as airplanes, trains, and taxis; and a variety of sharing economies and services related to accommodation such as apartments and hotels, also play an essential role in the expansion of workations (Chayka 2018; Sundararajan 2016). At first glance, the workation may appear to be a way of working and resting away from the city and the digital environment, but in reality, it is a way of working and resting that can only be established on the premise of a digital ecosystem with 'mobile' and 'sharing' as its keywords (Hart 2015).

There are two perspectives for considering workations as a work style: location independent and mobility. Location independent refers to the trend of telecommuting and remote work, which includes satellite offices, coworking spaces, and telecommuting, rather than offices. Mobility has been the subject of much research on nomads, including immigration and migration. In terms of work styles, research focusing on digital nomads has been accumulating since the mid-2010s (Aroles et al. 2020; Cook 2020; Marcellin 2014; Müller 2016; Nash et al. 2018; Orel 2019; Prester et al. 2019; Reichenberger 2018; Richards 2015; Thompson 2019).

The Japanese-style workation in this study is work style while living in the local area for a few days to a week. So, how can this Japanese-style workation be positioned in the context of digital nomad research? For example, Reichenberger (2018), focusing on mobility, classifies digital nomads as 'individuals who (level 0) achieve location independence by conducting their work in an online environment, (level 1) transferring this independence to mobility by not consistently working in one designated personal office space, but (level 2) using the possibility to simultaneously work and travel (level 3) to the extent that no permanent residence exists'. By this logic, the Japanese-style workation would be level 0 or level 1.

So, how do we analyse the Japanese-style workation? While most digital nomad studies focus on individual workers, in the case of the Japanese-style workation, it is necessary to pay attention to other players, namely companies and locals, in addition to individual workers. In Japan, where the freelance population is not yet significant, companies and locals play a significant role. For example, Cook (2020) points out that two disciplines, external discipline and self-discipline, will be necessary for a work style that ensures the freedom of digital nomads to work while moving away from the office. It is necessary to analyse how Japanese-style workations, which are often implemented as corporate institutions, assume and incorporate these discipline. Orel (2019) points out that coworking spaces as places of refuge for connection, like community, become essential because digital nomads experience loneliness in their work and lifestyle. It is essential to determine ways to tackle the loneliness of these workers. However, unlike digital nomads, who are mainly freelance workers, Japanese-style workations are practised by company-led employees and are expected to be related to the local community as a related population. Therefore, it is crucial to focus our attention on how to interact and form communities with local residents rather than communities through exchanges and connections with other digital nomads in coworking spaces.

Digital nomads seek professional, spatial, and personal 'freedom' (Reichenberger 2018), the means or consequences of which are (1) fluidity of work, (2) flexibilisation of the workspace, and (3) work-leisure balance (Orel 2019). While digital nomads increase mobility concerning space, they require immobilisation—more specifically, constant connection to the online environment via ICT. Considering this, digital nomads are a 'work and lifestyle' due to the new connection between ICTs and the way they work (Nash et al. 2018), and ICT-enabled tourism behaviour (Reichenberger 2018). Thus, digital nomadism, which touts the freedom of work, leisure, and movement through the use of ICT including mobile media and digital platforms, is at once an alternative to existing capitalism and a manifestation of extreme capitalism and liberalism (Aroles et al. 2020; Thompson 2019). Therefore, it is particularly important to consider the purpose and position of the Japanese-style workation, which is often implemented as a corporate system among the locals or the municipalities that attract it.

The Players and Structures of Workations

Workation Players

The key players promoting workations in Japan are (1) locals (including government), (2) companies introducing workations, and (3) workers. In this section, we consider the locals and companies currently promoting workations in Japan and classify their efforts.

Let us begin by examining the movement towards workation among the locals. Wakayama Prefecture is the first local government in Japan to use the word

'workation' and practice it by promoting telework and remote work in recent years. For example, the town of Shirahama in Wakayama Prefecture, which was primarily a tourist destination for sea bathing, participated in the 'Regional Demonstration Project to Promote Hometown Telework' implemented by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications from 2015. The Shirahama local government developed satellite offices that had been vacant due to the withdrawal of companies that were previously invited to the town and, as a result, attracted new companies. In addition to being provided with the function of working away from the office, people who worked there were also encouraged to interact with the local people and enjoy sightseeing and vacations in the area. As a result, companies continued to use the satellite offices, and more people moved in. In 2017, Wakayama Prefecture decided to promote the workation to areas outside the prefecture and held multiple experience sessions for companies and applicants, with 567 people from 49 companies experiencing the workation in Wakayama Prefecture over the 2 years of 2017 and 2018. Although the word 'workation' was not used, the movement to increase the number of related populations by using satellite offices in municipalities outside of Wakayama Prefecture was gradually spreading (Wakayama Prefecture 2020). For example, Nagano Prefecture promoted 'resort telework' in the towns of Karuizawa and Shinano, Saku City, and Hakuba Village. Coworking spaces and facilities in each region were allying under the label of resort telework. In recent years, new facilities opened in connection with the workation. Shinanomachi Nomad Work Center, set up in May 2019, is characterised as a resort office for corporate rentals rather than individuals.

In July 2019, 40 local governments, including Wakayama and Nagano, related ministries, and companies held an event called 'Workation Startup!' In November the same year, Wakayama and Nagano prefectures played a central role in the establishment of the Workation Alliance Japan (WAJ), with 65 local governments participating, and as of April 2020, the number of participating local governments increased to 86 (76 municipalities in one province and nine prefectures). Local movements to promote workation can be divided into two categories: (1) collaborating with companies to attract facilities and activities for workation, (2) developing workation facilities and activities on their own, with workers independently participating in them.

There are two main types of involvement with workation in a company. The first is adopted as part of human resource development (HRD), through measures such as business continuity planning (BCP), paid leave, health management, and other labour management. The second is to view the workation as a business that develops new business for the company. Let us examine the former. Japan Airlines (JAL) has been promoting work style reforms since fiscal 2015, and reducing total working hours has been positioned as a management goal. In 2017, the company introduced a 'workation system' to enable employees to avail paid leave and telework without interruption of a team working during that period. In 2017, employees took a workation tour in Shirahama-cho, Wakayama Prefecture, and in 2018, workation-related activities within the company began in earnest with the development of a variety of practices including training camps for intensive discussions in various

regions of the organisation, the selection of 'workation work' as an option in the attendance management system, and remote board meetings from various regions. The workation website set up on the company intranet in 2018 received 1800 accesses within 4 months of launch, indicating that the company's understanding of the workation had gradually spread. In parallel with these experimental attempts, the company also participated in the Tokunoshima Workation Demonstration Project in 2018, which utilised a coworking space hosted by Tokunoshima, Kagoshima Prefecture, and with Fuji Xerox to verify the effectiveness of Workation and explore collaboration with the community. As a result, the number of teleworking and workation practitioners across the JAL Group increased from 2628 in 2015 to 20,097 in 2018 (Higashihara 2019).

What about the latter? In the aforementioned 'Workation startup!', eight companies participated in the event: The Japan Management Association Management Center (JMAM), Mitsubishi Estate, NEC Solution Innovator, Japan Airlines, NTT Communications, NTT DOCOMO, Tokyu Corporation and Izu Kyuko Holdings, and J&J Business Creation. It is evident that all these corporate groups are interested in introducing workation to their employees but, at the same time, aim to promote and participate in workation as a new business that leverages their assets. For example, the businesses of Tokyu Corporation, Izukyu Holdings, J&J Business Creation, and Japan Airlines are closely linked to the tourism industry, including transportation, lodging, and leisure. NEC Solution Innovator, NTT Communications, and NTT DoCoMo are IT companies that expect workation to create new demand in the area of communication and cloud systems, such as data storage and remote access, as telework and remote work become widespread. For example, in 2019, NTT Communications opened 'Hanare Karuizawa' as a coworking space in the town of Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture, where people could experience workation. Simultaneously, the company provided a telework system and conducted a demonstration experiment. Mitsubishi Estate, as a real estate sector, is developing facilities for workation working as a new business through the establishment of a 'WORK×ation Site' in Shirahama-cho, Wakayama Prefecture in 2019, and plan to use the facility as a prototype to establish other locations in the future. The JMAM, whose primary business is human resource development, such as training, aims to launch a new business by providing training and activities for human resource and organisational development in workation to companies and communities that have implemented workation, in addition to consulting services. Based on the above, the three categories of the company's involvement in workations are:

1. The company's human resources and labour management system and employees participate in workations, including the new business it develops and supports.
2. The company's human resources and labour management system and employees participate in it, but not the new business it develops and supports.
3. While the new business which it develops and supports participates, the company's human resources, labour management system, and employees do not participate.

Structure of Japanese Workation

As explained, locals, companies, and worker are mutually expected to adopt workations with exclusive and shared measures relating to each. Based on the interrelationships, a model of the structure of workations in Japan is shown in Fig. 1. First, a company establishes a workation system for its employees as a system for vacation and training. Then, it expects business value, such as organisational and HRD and value creation such as new business achieved by being away from the office, and social value as part of the social contribution, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and sustainable development goals (SDGs) activities in the location. As business values and social values are common to each other, we can position workations for companies as creating shared value (CSV) developed locally.

What constitutes the attractiveness of the local to companies and workers as a potential workation location? Three elements make up the attractiveness of a locale for workation: facilities and equipment—including hotels, coworking space, internet access and transportation; tourism resources for places of interest and activities; and players—such as local governments and organisations who promote workation through development and publicity (Amano 2018). It is the interaction and integration of these elements that make a locale attractive for implementing workation. Conversely, it is necessary to uncover and develop the three factors of facilities/equipment to enhance the attractiveness of a locale for implementing workation, and tourist resources and promotional players should be balanced. By presenting these attractions, the local expects companies that conduct workations to contribute to the local economy and the workers to contribute to the related population.

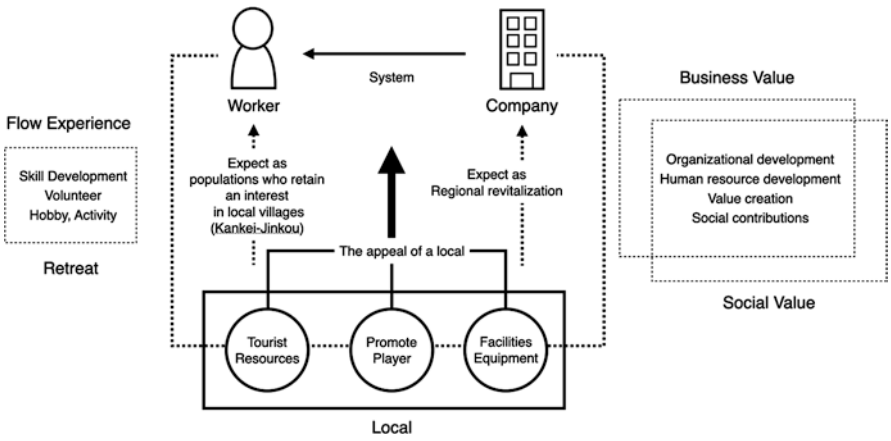

Fig. 1 A model of the structure of workations in Japan. (*Note*. Prepared by the author with reference to Amano (2018))

In many cases, workers are expected to have 'flow experience' by taking advantage of the company's system of workation to enjoy time with their families, retreat to rest and relax, improve their skills, concentrate on hobbies like surfing, mountain climbing, and bathing in hot springs, and perform volunteer work related to the locale. However, as mentioned, Japanese workers often utilise the company's work system or perform workations as part of their duties rather than taking time off to perform workations by themselves. The reasons for this include the low number of companies that routinely introduce telework and remote work, the low number of entrepreneurs and freelancers, and the inadequate development of platforms for digital work as compared to the West.

Then, how is workation concept accepted explicitly in Japan, and how is it connected to the local economy? Moreover, how do companies, locals, and workers position workations in the social design of the locale? At present, there is not enough research on these aspects. In the next chapter, we examine case studies of Nulab Inc. and the town of Higashikawa in Hokkaido to analyse the impact of workations on the local economy and social design.

Case Study: Nulab's Resort Work System and Higashikawa Town, Hokkaido

Methodology

The case study in this study was based mainly on in-depth interviews and participant observations at Nulab Inc. and Higashikawa Town conducted in January of 2020. They were selected because they carried out workation based on a comprehensive relationship between a company and a local. We combined fieldworks with in-depth interviews to understand how companies, locals, and workers position workations in the social design of the locale.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one HR manager (November 2018, July 2019 and January 2020), CEO and one PR manager (February 2019), and one workation implementer (January 2020) in Nulab Inc., in addition to two officials in charge and a Japanese language school teacher (January 2020) in Higashikawa Town. Each interview took half-an-hour to one and a half hours. We also conducted participant observations in classes of a Japanese language school which workation implementator from Nulab Inc. was imposed.

Secondary data collected from official web pages and their social media were analysed and cross-referenced with the interviews and observations mentioned above.

Nulab's Resort Work System: Corporate Perspective

Founded in 2004, Nulab Inc. is a software company that sells tools and platforms for collaboration, primarily to businesses. The company has approximately 100 employees and is headquartered in Fukuoka. In addition to Tokyo and Kyoto in Japan, the company has offices in Singapore, Amsterdam, and New York, where employees often work remotely. As a result, employees do not meet each other often, and once a year, Nulab hosts a general meeting where employees from all locations gather at the headquarters to introduce their locations, themselves, and deepen exchanges. With regard to the general meetings, CEO Hashimoto commented, 'People do not talk online unless they have a reason to. Moreover, information and emotions are forgotten after about six months, so we conduct these events to correct that.' He points out that it is crucial to combine the aspects of online and offline, rather than seeing them as dichotomous.

The resort work system, launched in 2018, provides a flat allowance for employees to perform temporary, remote work on Miyako Island, Okinawa prefecture. They are also allowed to be accompanied by family members. In Miyakojima, they are not only required to work remotely, but also to teach a class (lecture) at a local school and independently learn skills and experiences during the period. It is also mandatory to publish a blog about the experience after the workation is over. Applicants must submit these in an entry sheet, and HR selects them accordingly.

The reason for the introduction of the resort work system was the issue of training indicated in the internal survey. At Nulab, where mid-career IT engineers comprise a majority of the employees, each employee has different needs in terms of what they want to learn and skills they want to acquire, and there are limits to regular training. According to Adachi, the HR manager, the company's goal is to encourage employee growth by creating a 'place for learning' rather than 'learning content' in response to this situation. Regarding the resort work system, CEO Hashimoto said, 'People need to look within when they teach. That is where the company's concept of 'working for Serious, not Perfect' fits in,' adding that the connection to schooling was a critical factor. As such, the resort work system is not necessarily a workation. The company institutionalises it, and HR selects applicants employee who want to go. Employees of the resort work system are required to work remotely in a specific area that is partnered with nulab, and also teach classes at schools in that area.

As aforementioned, the Nulab resort work system is not a workation where the individual workers choose to work independently of the company in the sense that he/she applies to the company, makes a selection, and receives support. In Japan, however, if companies or locals decided to promote workation as a corporate or local initiative, it would be easier for companies, locals, and employees who implement it to set a 'path' to some extent.

This is true of Nulab, where employees collaborate with a (specific) locale and introduce it as an HR system in the company, rather than leaving it to the discretion of the employees. As of 2019, Nulab began to collaborate with the town of

Higashikawa in Hokkaido in addition to Miyako Island as a target local for the resort work system. The next section addresses the workation practice in Higashikawa Town in detail based on fieldwork in January 2020.

Higashikawa Style (Higashikawa Town, Hokkaido): Local Perspective

Higashikawa is a town adjacent to the city of Asahikawa in Hokkaido. Located at the foot of Mt. Daisetsu, the area is blessed with rice paddies and hot springs. The population of Higashikawa Town peaked at 10,754 in 1950 and continued to decline until it fell below 7000 in 1994 (Higashikawa Town 2019). As part of initiatives to address the declining population, the town declared itself a 'Town of Photography' in 1985 and a 'Town of Photography Culture' in 2014, promoting its development with a focus on photographic culture and encouraging resident participation. As a result, a small economy and ecosystem around crafts and food, attracted by the beautiful landscape and liveable environment, circulated successfully, and the number of migrants engaged in these jobs increased.

Additionally, a program for accepting short-term students from abroad was initiated in 2009 and continues to be successful. In 2015, the town established Japan's only public Japanese language school (http://higashikawa-jls.com), and as a result, about 500 students, mainly from East Asian countries, study in Higashikawa, including several vocational schools. The presence of these international students not only contributes to the international understanding of local students and residents through cultural activities and other interactions with the community, but also has some effect on the local economy through part-time work at local shops and consumption. As Fig. 2 shows, the population of Higashikawa Town has grown by more than 14% in the last 20 years to 8377 in 2019 (Higashikawa Town 2019). These cultural policies, the establishment of an economic ecosystem, and the creation of a town with the participation of the townspeople including foreign students were collectively called 'Higashikawa Style', and the government established the Higashikawa Style Section. Higashikawa, which has been trying to create a new community, is attracting significant attention from other areas suffering from a declining birthrate and an ageing population.

According to Mr. Yanagisawa, a staff member of the Higashikawa Style Section, Higashikawa aims to create a sustainable, 'appropriately (de)populated' town that is neither depopulated nor overpopulated. Higashikawa therefore does not aim to attract too many migrants and tourists but instead maintains a moderate number of people. On the other hand, if the goal is to achieve an 'appropriate population', securing financial resources other than those of the residents will also be an issue. Higashikawa's Shareholder System is a possible solution to this issue. The system involves a 'hometown tax' donation system that provides tax deductions to people who donate money to a local government of their choice in Japan. It positioned

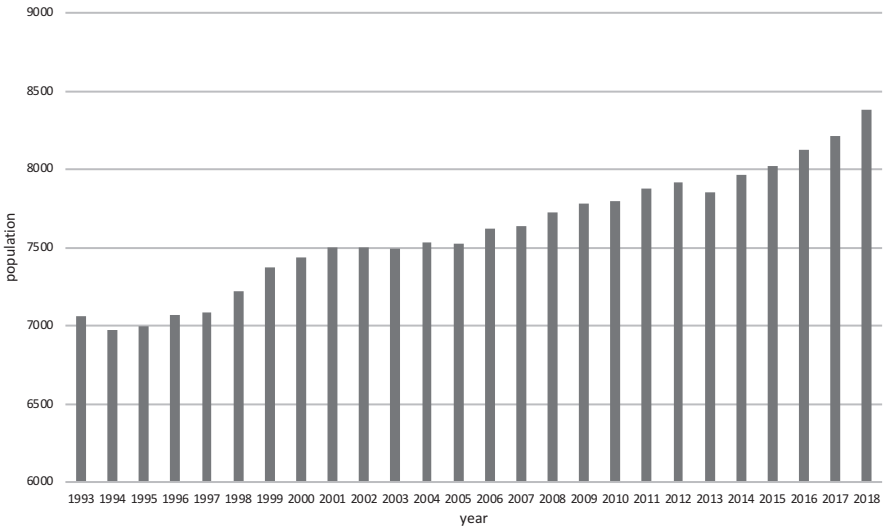

Fig. 2 Population of Higashikawa Town. (*Note*. Prepared by the author with reference to Higashikawa Town (2019))

donations as investments, donors as shareholders, and shareholder benefits as returns. In 2018, there were 38,765 shareholders and JPY 400,414,000 invested, compared to 23,072 shareholders and JPY 230,907,000 invested in 2017, representing a 73% growth in terms of investment (Higashikawa Town 2019).

Moreover, to expand the related population, Higashikawa Official Partner System was launched in January 2019 to partner with companies. Higashikawa will provide and accept corporate partners with employee benefits and satellite offices, in addition to company visits. The companies will actively support the development of Higashikawa through the Higashikawa Shareholder System and other programs. As of 2019, six companies, including Nulab, Canon Marketing Japan Inc., and Seven Bank are participating in the project. Higashikawa and these companies have conducted multicultural workshops with international students, resort offices, and are engaged in other initiatives related to workations.

The Resort Work System in Higashikawa: Worker's Perspective

In this section, we investigate the living conditions of workers who use the resort work system. For the fieldwork in this study, we interviewed two people—an engineer and a HR manager—staying in Higashikawa under the resort work system.

The Nulab employees we interviewed during the fieldwork conducted in Higashikawa for 5 days. The engineer had previously participated in the resort work system in Miyakojima Island, Okinawa Prefecture. His wife was from the

neighbouring town of Higashikawa, and having visited the town several times before with his family, he chose it as the site for resort work. During the day, he brought his mobile PC to a room in 'Sentopia' complex in Higashikawa, a former elementary school building. The building was a Japanese language school's gallery and community hall. In 2018, it added new cultural facilities including a library and a collection of materials and photographs relating to Daisetsu Mountain (a famous tourism site in Higashikawa). The employees also stayed at Higashikawa Life Experience Center, a renovated building used to house police officers, instead of the hotels. Lodging at this facility was a 'return gift' from the Higashikawa shareholder system, and in this sense, the spread of workations like the resort work system of Nulab in Higashikawa is expected to promote the 'hometown tax' donation system to Higashikawa.

As aforementioned, the resort work system requires employees to teach classes at local schools. In January 2020, the interviewed individuals taught lectures at a Japanese language school with 15 students each, the engineer taught students about the IT 'industry' and 'project management', while the HR manager taught students about 'what it means to work in Japan'. The experience of teaching a class about their work was not simply to volunteer, but also a way to take stock of their work and career. The purpose of the Japanese language school in Higashikawa is to prepare students to work in Japan. Learning about students' interests and doubts was enlightening to the Nulab employees, who were also based abroad and often worked with people from other countries. Furthermore it was also beneficial for the company's organisational development.

On the other hand, the employees reported that as they were in the final stages of completion of a project, they had a lot of work, and therefore, minimal experiences that could have been rewarding. Of course, the workation itself is a mechanism to concentrate on work and become productive. However, unlike the workation practised by digital nomads such as freelancers and start-ups with relatively small numbers of people, when workation is a system as a corporate HR or labour management, it is only a choice of a place to work, and the adjustment of workload and labour management that distinguishes it from paid leave will be an issue in the future.

Conclusion and Discussion

The development of the resort work system in Higashikawa, which was the subject of the fieldwork, is a typical model of Japanese workations as depicted in Fig. 1. Nulab considers it a part of its organisational development and HRD and also conducts educational activities such as teaching career and project management at an IT company at a Japanese language school in Higashikawa Town, and as CSV practices such as collaboration with the local government using cloud technology. Higashikawa has various tourist resources such as photography culture, winter sports such as skiing, scattered cafes, and crafts, and the Higashikawa Style Division acts as a promotional partner to connect the town and businesses. There are facilities

such as ‘Sentopia’ where individuals can work remotely and use the ‘Higashikawa Living Experience Center’ as an accommodation facility. Workers enjoy working during their time in Higashikawa, teaching classes at the school, and walking around town. Moreover, living in Higashikawa, an exciting place with a growing population in a locale of Japan where population decline is an issue, and coming into contact with various people such as the Higashikawa Style Section and international students is a kind of flow experience in itself. However, in the resort work system surveyed in Higashikawa, both employees came alone rather than with their families. There is not much consideration or support at Nulab, at least at the moment, as to whether the wife, husband, or child can live with them, and if the work and the child’s school will be in the form of a vacation or whether it will continue remotely or locally. This aspect is a future challenge not only for Nulab’s resort work system, but also for Japanese-style workations in general. If these issues continue to persist and the situation remains unchanged, workations will be more suited for single individuals rather than families.

Nulab’s resort work system in Higashikawa is still in its infancy, with only 1–2 people staying at any one time. However, the impact of the resort work system on Higashikawa in terms of the local economy and social design is not insignificant. By promoting Higashikawa as a leading destination for workations, the town will attract companies that hope to introduce workations, increase tax revenue under the Higashikawa shareholder system, and promote local cafes, shops, and other tourism industries by increasing the number of people staying in the town. The Higashikawa Official Partner Program, which started in 2019, is also promoting the local economy.

The resort work system reveals the future possibility that employees who workation will visit restaurants and daily necessities shops that serve famous places and specialities that are difficult to visit in a short period (1 or 2 days) because the resort work system is a more an extended stay than just a 1- or 2-day stay. If the sights and specialities that many tourists visit for a short period would be ‘primary tourism resources’, we consider the sights and specialities that you want to experience for a week or two as ‘secondary tourism resources’. What workations stimulate is the discovery and development of these ‘secondary tourism resources’. The discovery and development of ‘secondary tourism resources’ can be further facilitated by the local community receiving feedback from workation workers, or by the entry of companies that see the work as a new business.

As described, there are various layers to the concept of workation in terms of duration and implementers, and it is still in the experimental stage of exploration among locals and companies. Who provides support for each layer will be an essential factor in making workations more attractive to the local, and improving the effectiveness of the system for companies that implement it, including learning and satisfaction.

The economic impact of workation on the local is an opportunity for the government, businesses, and residents to think together about social design to create a better society in the neighbourhood. Workation is one of the motivating forces for companies and workers to participate in the locality’s social design. For example,

since the 1980s, 'sustainable tourism' has been called for as an alternative to 'mass tourism'. Workation can be an approach to realise 'soft tourism' including 'sustainable tourism'.

However, there are several challenges. Digital nomadism is an alternative to existing capitalism and an expression of extreme capitalism and liberalism (Aroles et al. 2020; Thompson 2019). Workations can be a new approach to capitalism and liberalism in the form of local social design and sustainable tourism, which it advocates, and a new approach for local communities and workers to incorporate into capitalism and liberalism. Whether the Japanese workation is led by locals and companies rather than individual workers is a form of accelerating this trend or a form of controlling excessive capitalism and liberalism needs to be investigated and analysed through comparisons with other locals and companies in Japan and internationally.

The spread of COVID-19 in 2020, the resulting restraints on various activities, and the expansion of telework and remote work have had a significant impact on workplaces and work styles. In particular, the meeting and gathering of people, which we have promoted in terms of collaboration and community, can be a risk. In this sense, digital nomads, coworking spaces, and mobility, including commuting, should be reconsidered. Based on the Tourism Strategy Promotion Council held in July 2020, it was announced that the government would promote workation for the sake of the tourism industry and regional development. The Ministry of the Environment has also announced its policy of promoting workation. These declarations caused various discussions in media about workation being unsuitable for the working environment in Japan and the problems of cost and labour management in companies. On the other hand, the locals began to support and attract workation, and some companies also began related business such as co-living subscriptions for workation. The workation is a good theme for discussing workplaces and work styles, as well as tourism and social design in the local in the post/with COVID-19 society.

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Digital Nomadism as a New Flexible Working Approach: Making Tirana the Next European Hotspot for Digital Nomads

Esmir Demaj, Alba Hasimja, and Amela Rahimi

Abstract In the last two decades, working environments have undergone significant waves of change in terms of flexibility of working conditions, thus challenging the traditional working contexts. Driven by increased employee demands, many companies offer nowadays the possibility of remote working to ensure higher employee job satisfaction, eventually leading to enhanced organizational performance. The nonnecessity of being physically present during the usual shifts combined with the desire of continuous traveling has led to the emergence of the phenomena of *digital nomadism*.

This term describes especially young professionals or freelancers who have shifted from working in a conventional office to working solely in online environment and traveling without a clear destination with a lifestyle where the boundaries between work, leisure, and travel appear blurred.

The purpose of this research is twofold, initially it is aimed to analyze the relevant literature and depict factors considered as driving factors for digital nomads to select their next destinations, and later on, while understanding the lifestyle of digital nomads, the researchers aim to analyze what Tirana, the capital city of Albania, could offer to this category of people by identifying advantages and opportunities for digital nomads in selecting it as their next destination. Suggestions and recommendations for improvement have been identified. To achieve the objectives of this exploratory research, a qualitative approach designed as a case study, using interview techniques with relevant digital nomads, has been selected. It is aimed that this research produces results and propositions that could help policy makers in any city in developing countries to implement policies for attracting more digital nomads to their cities, thus making them hotspots for digital nomads that could positively impact their local economies.

Keywords Digital nomadism · Travel · Lifestyle · Tirana · Economic impact

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Introduction

Nomadic movement has accompanied the human civilization since its genesis (Richards 2015). It originated as a necessity of survival (Schlagwein 2018) and as centuries went by its purpose shifted toward more recreational outcomes. The pursuit of traveling for pure exploration purposes during 1960s by youngsters of those times (Richards 2015) resurrected the concept of nomadism in a modern typology, which developed to its contemporary stage during the recent decades in the form of digital nomadism. Makimoto and Manners (1997) merged for the first time traveling, work, and technological connection while defining digital nomadism.

Flexibility of working policies and the rapid development of Information and Communication Technologies (Dery et al. 2014; Müller 2016; Haking 2017; Nash et al. 2018) and Cloud services (Valenduc and Vendramin 2017; Nash et al. 2018) has facilitated the nomadic working lifestyle. Driven by the need for personal growth (Schlagwein 2017), achievement of numerous dimensions of freedom (Reichenberger 2017), deeper collaboration with like-minded individuals (Schlagwein 2017), and economic factors (Ferriss 2011; Schlagwein 2017; Haking 2017), digital nomads relocate frequently, thus inevitably affecting local economies and societies. They positively contribute by knowledge transfer (Gast et al. 2017), promoting tourism (Wiranatha et al. 2020), and by paying for the services and facilities they exploit (Richards 2015; Schalgwein et al. 2019).

In this study, a special attention is given to factors that are considered as appealing for digital nomads when picking future destinations. These factors vary between housing alternatives (Liu and Lin 2017), low cost of living (Thompson 2018a), fertile environment for professional collaboration and networking (Bloom 2018), social and natural characteristics (Beeching 2019), and internet connectivity (Richards 2015; Haking 2017; Setlak 2018; McElroy 2019; Green 2020).

The first half of this chapter is dedicated to a comprehensive literature review upon the phenomenon of digital nomadism. Throughout this section, some online platforms widely used by digital nomads are mentioned, in order to pursue even a closer practical approach to their life beyond the academic research conducted. The literature review in the present study provides a general picture and a current status about the digital nomadism concept, as well as it tries to explain the difference with the remote working concept.

This research has been conceived as an exploratory qualitative case study, focusing also in the potential of Tirana, the capital city of Albania, to become an important European hub for digital nomads. Data collected by the semi-structured interviews conducted with digital nomads reinforced knowledge from literature review over various aspects such as lifestyle, self-discipline, destination choice, motivations, socialization, and impact on local societies. Despite the diverse responses that emerged from the interviews, it was possible to draw a clear mapping of the perception that digital nomads have for their ongoing experience. This information was processed and utilized in the last section of the study in providing recommendations and suggestions for possible improvement to be further implemented in Tirana.

Who Is a Digital Nomad? Definition and Historical Development

During the last two decades, working environments have been under a significant wave of change in terms of flexibility. Driven by increased employee demands, many companies nowadays offer the possibility of remote working to ensure higher job satisfaction, leading to enhanced performance, widening the possibility of attracting adequate employees and increase the level of staff retention (Burnford 2019; Orel 2019) and decrease overhead costs for companies (Thompson 2018a). The nonnecessity of being physically present during the shift has led to new trends streaming from remote working. Movarec (2013) introduces the term of "knowmadic knowledge worker" in his book *Knowmad Society*, referring to creative individuals that may work in several and unpredictable settlements, without interfering their performance. He divides the large category of knowmadic society in several subcategories such as: neo-nomadism, creative class, 1099 workers, digital nomads, etc. Nevertheless, this study will focus solely on the phenomenon of digital nomadism.

The idea of remote working combined with continuous traveling was initially coined in 1997 by Makimoto and Manners in their famous "Digital Nomad" book. There is no definite answer about what a digital nomad exactly is; nevertheless, experts identify them as generally young individuals who combine virtual working with frequent traveling, motivated by exploration (Formica 2013). The phenomenon seems to be gaining importance and is transforming into a significant movement, not anymore limited to sporadic individuals. The concept of "nomadism" is closely related to the term "digitization," since people are capable of working while moving from one place to another just by having one mobile device/phone and internet connection. This has blurred the frontiers between work and leisure, staying at home and traveling, or isolating and socializing. Digital nomads emerge as a combination of both a tourist and a workaholic, and interesting enough they seem to be able to play both roles simultaneously. These people do not have a permanent home, and their office is not located in a designated area but on the internet. Digital Nomads have changed the definition of what we call a good living, since they do not need to wait for the next paycheck to travel, or they do not wake up every day, being stuck in the traffic for hours only to go to work (O'Brien 2019).

The majority of identified digital nomads are Millennials[1] (Wiranatha et al. 2020) and Gen Z youngsters, holding a university degree (Reichenberger 2017) and mostly independent workers. The participation of this age range might be explained with the lack of important family commitments and great energy to allocate to traveling and working simultaneously (Reichenberger 2017). Another factor that correlates these generations and digital nomadism is their relationship with the use of Information and Communication Technologies. Both these generations have experienced a smoother approach toward ICT and technological devices compared with

[1] Also referred as Gen Y.

earlier generations (ibid). This advantage facilitates working while in movement, ensuring rapid and uninterrupted connectivity (Dery et al. 2014; Haking 2017; Nash et al. 2018) and use of Cloud services (Valenduc and Vendramin 2017; Nash et al. 2018).

The rapid change on the mindset of businesses related with the workplace flexibility is a serious facilitator even for employees to pursue their career on the road. Further research regarding the background of digital nomads is needed, in order to clearly understand whether it is more independent workers or employees benefiting from flexible policies of their organizations that make up what we call digital nomads. Nevertheless, freelancers exercising professions such as IT specialists, translators, or any other similar jobs constitute an important portion of digital nomad community (Thompson 2018a; Pofeldt 2018).

Nomadic lifestyle is not a new trend, it has been present throughout the history of humanity, with human beings behaving as nomadic species. In early ages, people used to move in order to find food, transferring their livestock to pastoral places, or getting involved in trading (Schlagwein 2018). This constant movement was significantly slowed down by the development of what is today called agriculture. This enabled the birth of first sedentary tribes which later developed into civilizations.

The nomad figure has always been unchangeably linked to mobility, challenging fixed settlements, and often tinted with romantic colors (Engebrigtsen 2017). Young generations approached seriously to the wanderlust lifestyle during the 1960s due to the improvement of living conditions, accessible air travel and more liberal families (Richards 2015). Based on Richard's (2015) interpretation of the Chatwin's dilemma on why people feel the urge to take the road, it can be said that nomadism is rooted in human nature since prehistoric times.

Toward the end of 1970s and on, the term "nomad" became the successor of the term "tribalism," which probably inspired Deleuze et al. (1986) to define "digital nomadism" as the "new tribalism" in their work. Later, such developments inspired Jacques Attali (1991) to use the term "nomadism" as the starting point of developing a new theory and a new system that in the future would be called capitalism, in his famous book "Millenium: Winners and Losers of the New World Order."

It was in 1997 that Makimoto and Manners brought together the idea of travelers, workers, and worldwide connection, predicting the upcoming rise of digital nomads. The use of internet services became more and more affordable during these last two decades, facilitating the interaction of people placed in distant geographic areas (Müller 2016). The combination of technology and continuous displacement marked the rise of the new term digital nomadism.

Contemporary opinions consider digital nomads not necessarily as the other side of the coin of settlement, rather as a short-time settler (Richards 2015).

Categorization of Digital Nomads

Considering the fact that digital nomadism is a relatively new concept, it is difficult to find a proper categorization based on special traits participants share. Although they might have common characteristics, digital nomads change from each other. Categorizing digital nomads has imposed a challenge among scholars. They tend to classify digital nomads based on their own criteria such as source of income (Setlak 2018), frequency of traveling (Lee 2018), solo or accompanied movements (Reichenberger 2017), etc. The variety of categorizations is wide and almost impossible to make a connection and build a sole path; however, it is in such a mosaic that the peculiarity of digital nomadism world lies.

Nina (2017), author of thingsnomadsdo.com blog, categorizes digital nomads into four types. Among these, the Perpetual Wanderer stands for individuals who are at the beginning of their path as digital nomads, led by energy, eagerness, and adventure, and characterized by high mobility. The Casual Globetrotter stands for individuals who love to discover everything in the places they visit, usually by making small trips but then, they need the urge to move on to another destination. The Occasional Traveler stands for digital nomads who have a home base. They travel to different places periodically, but always return to their home base which can also change very few times per year. The Flexible Expat stands for individuals who can stay in one place for up to 1 year. They fully adapt to the local culture, learn the local language, and make a lot of new friends, which has turned them to be considered as "slow travelers" or "expats" more than "nomads" (Nina 2017).

Setlak (2018, p. 12) introduces the terms of "sponsored," "novice," and "niche" nomads to categorize digital nomads into three types based on their income source. She makes use of the "sponsored nomad" term to describe people that fuel their revenues by becoming promoters of products, services, or experiences from several brands. Meanwhile, the term "novice nomad" is attributed to a rare group of individuals, who become digital nomads and thanks to promotional programs by companies where such individuals are selected more or less as representatives of a market segment, with the duty to create content for the campaigns directed to this target market. "Niche nomads" instead are those individuals who generate income via self-branding, mainly by inviting followers on adapting certain lifestyles (Setlak 2018).

Lee (2018), author at www.theonlysocial.com blog, based on her own experiences with digital nomads and their frequency of traveling, classifies them into four different groups. Thus, she begins with the "domestic nomads" who make just a few trips and works remotely. The second type is the "short-lived nomad," which includes freelancers and other remote workers that try digital nomadism only for a short period of time. The "sabbatical nomad" is introduced as the nomad who loves to travel but gets homesick too fast. The "restless nomad" instead represents the true nomads, those addicted to digital nomadism for a decade or more, that are always traveling and could be perfectly described by words like adventures, instability, and intensity (Lee 2018).

Other researchers also identify digital nomads who travel alone, and others who are continuously accompanied by their partner (Reichenberger 2017; Nash et al. 2018; Thompson 2018a) along the difficulties the couple/group traveling poses throughout the experience.

Remote Working Versus Digital Nomadism

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD 2020) defines the concept of flexible working as "a type of working arrangement which gives a degree or flexibility on how long, where, when and at what time employees work." Flexibility is estimated to decrease negative job-to-home spillover effects (White et al. 2003). This type of working modality includes remote working (Felstead and Henseke 2017) and digital nomadism among other subcategories. In many cases, these two concepts are confused and give rise to erroneous impressions (Liu 2020), this is why it is crucial to make a clear distinction between them, and in this regard, digital nomadism is to be considered as a subset of remote working (Aroles et al. 2020), and remote working instead is to be considered as a subcategory of flexible working. It is important to highlight that digital nomads are not the only professionals that work remotely; other individuals work remotely too, but there is a difference as the latter move from one place to another only because forced by their superiors or by the nature of their work and tasks. In such a category, one could mention freelancers, who are remote workers that do not pursue a lifestyle based on continuous traveling, which distinguishes them from digital nomads (Papastergiadis 2000). Even though it is challenging to list all the reasons why several remote workers decide to switch toward digital nomadism, several of them decide to leave behind their "daily obligations" such as chores and reach to a further stage of personal or professional development (Reichenberger 2017).

Many scholars identify the rapid and significant technological advances and digital developments too as a facilitator and enabler of pursuing a digital nomadic career (Haking 2017; Setlak 2018). Such individuals that are easily adaptable to remote working usually hold a high-tech professional background and are not affected by volatilities that might jeopardize their lifestyle. Their income remains unchanged from the one received while working on-site, because they become part of a "work-on-demand" market considered as gig economy, which enables them to find fully flexible tasks performed online with the aid of internet (Nash et al. 2018; Thompson 2018b; Richter and Richter 2020), based on projects and task-related compensation rather than working duration compensation (Stewart and Stanford 2017).

Besides the considerable flexibility that characterizes both remote workers and digital nomads, they are also challenged by the difficulty of balancing their on-off work time. Many scholars talk about an increased need of self-discipline and extended commitment in order to achieve the abovementioned balance (Nash et al. 2018; Mouratidis 2018; Thompson 2018a; Schalgwein et al. 2019).

If remote workers try to find an equilibrium between work and family, on the other hand, digital nomads strive to find an equilibrium between work and "serious

leisure" (Thompson 2018a, b), the latter a term first coined by Robert Stebbins to stand for the "systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that is highly substantial, interesting, and fulfilling and where, in the typical case, participants find a career in acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience" (Stebbins 1992, p. 3).

Various scholars have studied leisure and its components and they conclude that in the case of digital nomads where total independence is always present, it is more difficult to separate work from leisure (Mokhtarian et al. 2006) and it is up to the individual who determines whether a specific activity is considered as "leisure" or "work" (Beatty and Torbert 2003). Apparently, whether something is considered as work or leisure depends on how individuals experience it, and leisure should not necessarily be positioned outside the world of employment.

Socio-economic Impact of Digital Nomads to Local Economies

Even though one cannot find absolute agreement among scholars on whether the impact of digital nomads in host countries is positive or negative, generally speaking, it is agreed that the presence of digital nomads positively affects local economies with their innovative ideas, network, consumption, and publicity.

Entrepreneurial digital nomads often find workforce in the places they visit (Haking 2017) and find proper ground to implement their social business ideas, thus supporting local people and local economies. Schalgwein et al. (2019) show that digital nomads they interviewed in their study claim to have performed their work (e.g., website/marketing) free of charge to help businesses in these countries through co-giving programs several times. Such connections are facilitated by the use of coworking spaces, which serve as a common touch point between communities and digital nomads (Richards 2015; Schalgwein et al. 2019) for which digital nomads additionally pay daily or monthly rent contributing to the local economy (Schalgwein et al. 2019). Some scholars consider even the limited personal consumption and/or local mobile communication services exploited by digital nomads to be positively affected economically (Richards 2015; Schalgwein et al. 2019). Furthermore, digital nomads promote their favorite places, serving as tourism ambassadors for them, alongside becoming a special tourist market segment for local economies (Wiranatha et al. 2020).

Motivations That Drive People to Become Digital Nomads

People tend to mix working with frequent traveling for several reasons. Having an actual office and a fixed working schedule seems to limit people from doing what they really like to do. Usually, standard employees work around 40 h a week, which results in not having enough time for themselves, digital nomads instead may work

longer hours on projects they are fond of and still find enough time for socializing and meeting with new people.

Differently from the trend born during the 1960s when youngsters pursued nomadism to understand the meaning of life, nowadays digital nomads are driven mainly by the freedom factor (Reichenberger 2017; Haking 2017). Reichenberger (2017) classifies different types of perceived freedom by digital nomads as spatial, professional, and personal. Digital nomads are strongly affected by the opportunity to select their working location without being limited by employers or contractors and the independence of determining their work structure, such a combination creates personal freedom (ibid.). Research shows that increased flexibility and autonomy inspire professionals and enhances their productivity (Orel 2019).

Schlagwein (2017), inspired by the conventions theory as developed by Luc Boltanski and Thevenot (1999), suggests that motivators behind pursuing a digital nomadic path could be categorized based on levels of worth through which individuals validate their actions. These three orders of worth are defined as *inspirational*, *civic*, and *market* orders. In this context, referring to the *inspirational* order of worth, the attention is focused on their personal growth, need for change, and new experiences (Schlagwein 2017). In analogy with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1943), such individuals have reached the peak of their needs (i.e., self-actualization) and are unrestricted to become "self-starters" (Worth 2009). After the hard work for such achievements, because of job burnout, some individuals decide to cut off significant revenue streams, in order to reach a better work-leisure balance and reduce the unnecessary consumptions (Etzioni 1998; Juniu 2000; Tan 2000). Such decisions are explained by scholars through the concept of downshifting (Hamilton and Mail 2003) and by the perception of work as an enriching activity intrinsically motivated (Reichenberger 2017).

While talking about the *civic* order of worth, Schlagwein (2017) identifies the need for interaction and learning from other people as a key motivator for individuals to become digital nomads. Even if the industry of digital nomads is considered as fragmented (Setlak 2018), efforts to provide a connecting point with the purpose of sharing experiences, improving ideas, and developing their networks are made by organizations such as Digital Nomad Festival (DNX).[2] Nevertheless, similar events hold a secondary importance when it comes to the daily activities of digital nomads which rely on dedicated coworking spaces identified as hubs, created with the main purpose of gathering as many of them in coworking spaces.

Haking (2017) talks about the importance of hubs on smoothing and bringing together digital nomads despite major differences among them, with the purpose of leading to possible fruitful collaborations. Even though such collaboration is highly facilitated using Information and Communication Technologies, the physical gathering plays a critical role on initiating such collaboration (Valenduc and Vendramin 2017). Considering the fact that many digital nomads are ex-employees,

[2] DNX movement started in 2012 and aims to connect and support digital nomads through events and online platforms. DNX Festival. (n.d.). Retrieved May 23, 2020, from DNX Festival website: https://www.dnxfestival.com/

it is understandable that they possess both tacit and explicit knowledge related with their former job that is easily transferable to other digital nomads during collaborations in coworking/hub spaces, thus contributing to knowledge spillover (Gast et al. 2017). In several studies and testimonials, digital nomads appear to suffer from loneliness, which decreases their motivation (Green 2020; Nash et al. 2018). Dedicated coworking spaces help digital nomads socialize among them (Orel 2019), and by frequenting such hubs, they satisfy their interest in interacting with and learning from "interesting people" and self-identify with a community (Schlagwein 2017) as well as co-living with other nomads (Thompson 2018b).

The logic behind the *market* order of worth, as used by Schlagwein (2017), stands for the wide belief that such people find it more convenient to travel constantly than to settle in their home country. This phenomenon, entitled as "geoarbitrage" (Ferriss 2011), describes people earning the same amount of income or making use of savings/retirement payments but deciding to locate in countries with a lower cost of living, mainly in developing countries (Ferriss 2011; Schlagwein 2017; Haking 2017), which practically provides for a relatively better life, not to say luxurious life, in a place with lower costs of living meanwhile getting paid according to the income standards of the country where their employer is located.

Apparently, digital nomadism has several financial advantages, as digital nomads tend to move from one place with a higher cost of living to another with a lower cost of living. By doing so, expenses are reduced significantly from month to month, and at the end of the day, digital nomads may work less and still pay their debt and cover all their expenses alongside having more time for leisure. Nevertheless, digital nomads are exposed to the income volatility phenomena and generally speaking they rely on gig economy, where usually low paying tasks like translation or design tasks are performed, and in addition to this their high frequency of traveling entails more costs. Therefore, the financial position of digital nomads is not always comfortable.

What Makes a Place "Hotspot" for Digital Nomads

Digital nomads pay much importance to find locations that fulfill their expectations, and they have many criteria that affect their decision in selecting the next destination. Several studies present different yet similar traits of a place that fascinate digital nomads. Online websites such as the popular Nomad List,[3] launched in 2014, provide ranking lists of popular destinations for digital nomads, filtering them based on personal choice of criteria such as cost of living, natural conditions, safety, entertainment, visa restrictions, etc. The span of destinations is continuously enriched together with the frequency of traveling. For many years Chiang Mai in Thailand

[3] Best places to live and work remotely (n.d.). Retrieved June 1, 2020, from NomadList, https://nomadlist.com/

was considered a leading destination in the Nomad List, years later, it was replaced by Canggu in Bali and Bangkok in Thailand.

Thompson (2018a) argues that digital nomads are very price-sensitive, thus prefer low cost and aesthetic destinations and that they are not directly influenced by their professional activity. The availability of housing alternatives (Liu and Lin 2017) is among the main criteria to decide for the next destination, and AirBnB[4] seems to be among the most popular platform that helps to create a proper idea over this matter for digital nomads (Green 2020). Generally speaking, housing is matched with other living expenses, and several studies show that digital nomads are strongly affected by the cost of living when deciding about their next "pit stop." In most cases, because of the harsh market of gig work, income received by digital nomads is quite low, limiting their budget (Thompson 2018a), which pushes them toward places with a low cost of living.

Locations chosen by digital nomads do not necessarily offer only low costs of living but also opportunities to increase their revenue. Bloom (2018) claims that digital nomads usually look for places where there is already a presence of companies owned by other digital nomads, for the quite simple reason of socializing and networking. The main goal for digital nomads is to find new and touristic areas where they can meet with other people who have the same mindset that could provide them with some facilities in terms of transportation costs and other opportunities to build their new hubs. Usually, such destinations are famous for their stable weather during most of the year, warm temperatures, and with very attractive places, and probably this is the main reason why some destinations gain a hidden advantage over others.

Most researchers of the relevant field have identified and have agreed on the crucial need for stable, reliable, fast, and continuous internet/WiFi connection as an important factor for digital nomads to select various destinations (Richards 2015; Haking 2017; Setlak 2018; McElroy 2019; Green 2020). Internet connection serves as a window or strand for digital nomads to connect with the rest of the world, either communicating with their friends or families, or more importantly with their working collaborators (Nash et al. 2018; Krivstova et al. 2018). Maintaining these relationships is crucial for their income stream. Nevertheless, some professionals such as bloggers do not value the fast internet connection as much as others that usually need to have constant live video interaction such as lecturers or customer service employees.

Other scholars believe that the choice is also affected by the degree that the destination enhances the productivity, inspiration, and supporting work conditions (Nash et al. 2018; Setlak 2018; Orel 2019; Green 2020). Beeching (2019) too talks about factors like culture, climate, crime levels, civil liberties, the local language, air quality, and accessibility to beaches, mountains, or other touristic areas as important factors that influence decision-making of digital nomads.

[4] https://www.airbnb.com/

In the meantime, different digital nomadism related blogs claim that digital nomads rely a lot on word of mouth while selecting their next destination. They are more willing to welcome suggestions from peer digital nomads and listen to true stories they tell about different destinations rather than other reviews.

Data Collection Methodology

Qualitative research method was determined as the appropriate method for this study; thus, this method was used in order to develop an in-depth understanding and to respond to the research aim of this study. The qualitative research method is an effective approach as it enables the researcher to be closer to the subject under investigation and provides the opportunity to obtain richer and more realistic information. It can be defined as an iterative and interactive process, where all phases are interrelated, requiring the relevant theoretical framework to be considered and allowing the researcher to return to the previous stages throughout the research process.

This study can be classified as an exploratory qualitative case study. In this context, an exploratory study deals with finding out what is happening, asking questions, and assessing phenomena in a new light. A case study is a research strategy which concentrates on perceiving the dynamics present within single settings. In this context, it was aimed to focus on Tirana, the capital city of Albania as a case study and analyze the opportunities Tirana has to become a hub for digital nomads. Tirana was chosen for two reasons, firstly, it is the capital city of a developing country, which fits with the research objective of this study, and secondly, it was awarded as the European Youth Capital of 2022, which has pushed local and central government bodies to initiate policies that support innovation and welcome people of different nationalities to discover its potential.

Data in this study has been obtained through the interview technique, by using a semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended questions. Researchers of this study tried to turn the data collecting process into an informal and usually 1-on-1 chat type conversation. Care has been taken for the questions not to be rigid, but rather flexible enough to allow participants to express their views, emotions, and perceptions freely.

A nonrandom or purposive sampling technique was used for selecting the sample of digital nomads. Among the most important inclusive criteria set forth for the population of this study to voluntarily be part of this study was being an active digital nomad currently staying in Tirana or having visited Tirana at least once during their digital nomadism experience. It is believed that such a purposeful sampling would allow for in-depth examination of individuals who are believed to have rich knowledge about the research topic of this study. All participants were informed in advance about the research purpose, nature of questions based on “informed consent” principles and were asked about whether they agreed to audio/video record the interview process and if they wanted us to preserve their anonymity. Upon

agreement of the study participants, the interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for further data analysis. Anonymity of participants was preserved and no personal information has been revealed; the information collected from participants has been quoted as "Nomad X" etc.

In this context, the research sample of this study was composed of 14 different digital nomads as shown in Table 1 below. They varied in age from as young as 21–56 years old were homogeneously distributed in terms of gender, and performed a variety of jobs in different countries. The majority of participants held at least a university degree and had a professional office experience background before selecting the "nomadic" life. The process of interviews for this study started in April 2020 and ended in June 2020. Given the extraordinary circumstances of COVID-19 pandemic[5] lockdown,[6] all interviews were held virtually through various online meeting platforms, at participants' free choice of date, time, and meeting platform. In all cases, there was a continuous email correspondence with participants before the actual meetings, which lasted around 40 minutes of effective meeting time.

Table 1 Descriptive data of participants

	Age	Current destination	Job portfolio	Digital nomad lifestyle
Nomad 1	38	Albania	Blogger, Translator, Social Media Coach, French Tutor	Permanent
Nomad 2	56	Estonia	Web Developer, Virtual assistant, Photo/video Editor	Temporary
Nomad 3	28	Hungary	Social Media Manager	Temporary
Nomad 4	21	Albania	Software Engineer	Temporary
Nomad 5	26	Canada	Bloggier, Life Coach	Permanent
Nomad 6	31	Germany	Article Content Provider and Social Media Manager	Permanent
Nomad 7	28	Germany	Life Coaching	Temporary
Nomad 8	37	Albania	Social Media Marketing, Online Teaching	Temporary
Nomad 9	30	USA	University Admission Consultant	Permanent
Nomad 10	34	India	Market Researcher for International Companies	Temporary
Nomad 11	34	Germany	Lawyer, Film Producer Consultant	Temporary
Nomad 12	33	Germany	Entrepreneur and Manager	Permanent
Nomad 13	27	United Kingdom	Peinture	Temporary
Nomad 14	24	Argentina	Secretary, Marketer, Designer, Assistant, Italian Tutor	Permanent

[5] Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) – Symptoms and causes. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from Mayo Clinic, https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/symptoms-causes/syc-20479963

[6] Albania enforced a national lockdown starting from March 13, 2020 until June 01, 2020. In the meantime, international travel was restricted beyond this date.

Regarding the questions used during the interviews, a special focus was given to questions that would cover a similar span of research which was conducted through the literature review. In this way, researchers of this study aimed to perform a kind of triangulation of the collected information, to see how much the data collected from digital nomads matched the relevant literature, thus, to be able to generalize findings about the case study on hand. Questions used in the interviews aimed to gather data related to digital nomadic lifestyle, their motivating factors, and challenges in pursuing such a path, their preferred destinations, and what made those places to be preferred, managing leisure/work-life balance, socializing, and the impact digital nomads have on local economies they visit and/or live. Additionally, participants were asked to share their perceptions and actual experience in Tirana, and their opinions and suggestions about transforming Tirana into a digital nomadic hub.

Empirical Findings and Interpretations

Empirical findings from interviews with participant digital nomads of this study widely confirmed the findings from the systematic literature review on most topics studied. One could cluster these findings into various aspects similar to the emerging topics of the literature review like: Driving factors toward a nomadic life, lifestyle of digital nomads, obstacles encountered and difficulties in adapting to new cultures and traditions, work-life and work-leisure balance, budgeting, selecting destinations, and impact on local economies. Table 2 below provides a summary of the findings regarding the abovementioned emerging categories.

In terms of driving factors that motivate individuals to pursue a digital nomadic career it can be said that among the most important factors is the desire to travel and explore new places, meet different people and cultures, get along with other people (digital nomads) who share the same mindset, the freedom it provides especially after negative memories from previous office jobs, etc. With the advances in technology especially with the use of social media, remote working has become much easier, so traveling addicts could now more than ever be able to merge work with their traveling hobbies. Nomad 1,[7] a digital nomad currently located in Albania says,

> "Suddenly my physical and geographical location did not matter anymore. All I needed was my iPhone/laptop and Wi-Fi connection, So, I continued to travel and live abroad, and it's now 18 years with a mix of living abroad as an expat/immigrant, or living between my birth country and other various countries, and the nomadic life" (Nomad 1).

There seems to be a normal distribution of those who consider themselves as solo travelers willing to pursue their digital nomadic paths alone and blend up with local people only, and others instead who prefer a group digital nomadic experience for

[7] 'Nomad 1–14' is used to list the 14 digital nomads of the study. It is done so for preserving the anonymity of digital nomads that attended this study.

Table 2 Summary of findings

	Driving factors	Destination factors	Work and leisure balance	Social life	Obstacles	Economy impact	Money-saving
Nomad 1	Travel	Welcoming places, WiFi, hospitality, safety	Work-life blend, Blogging and gaining profits	Adapting with locals by asking random questions about the place	Not being understood by everyone and sometimes being prejudiced	Positive impact; Money spent in the current country	Budgeting, Priorities
Nomad 2	Travel, meet new people	Low living costs, visa issues, places not explored	No strict schedule, Merging work and leisure time	Going to areas that have many locals around and living among them	No additional obstacles	Negative impact if it is short term nomadism	Budgeting
Nomad 3	Travel, start-up ecosystem	Internet speed, nice places, safety, easily socializing	Having clear goals, strict schedule not merging them	Going to popular places	Taxes, insurance, banking	Positive impact; boost the economy, support actors of the start-up ecosystem such as coworking spaces and event spaces.	Charge high for tasks performed
Nomad 4	Socialize	No strict factors	Separate work and leisure time	Extrovert comes naturally	Work-life balance	Positive impact to economic growth	Budgeting and carefully choosing the next destination
Nomad 5	Travel, meet new people	Cost of living, weather, Internet speed	Strict schedule	Asking for areas to visit and based on other opinions of digital nomads	Obstacles regarding the job mostly: getting and keeping clients	Positive impact	Budgeting
Nomad 6	Travel freedom	Safety, standards of living, access to community	Overworking and trying to participate in some activities	Close to minded people and making online friends	Family pressures	Positive impact; healthier and more profitable than tourism.	Priorities

	Driving factors	Destination factors	Work and leisure balance	Social life	Obstacles	Economy impact	Money-saving
Nomad 7	Freedom	No strict factors, intuition followed	Time scheduling everything	Very stressful Hard to adapt	Social component	Positive impact	Having no fixed costs
Nomad 8	Travel, network	Affordability, WiFi, other foreigner communities, time zone	Separate time and strict schedule	Introvert adapting while co-traveling	Being judged and not understood by family	Positive impact; transfer of knowledge shift of perspective and bring money	Budgeting, priorities
Nomad 9	Travel	Accessibility to important events and friends	Merging work and leisure time but traveling more	Difficult finding online friends before visiting a specific place	Being judged and not understood by family	Positive impact; They spend all the money in the place that they currently live Negative impact; Boost rent prices	Budgeting
Nomad 10	Travel	Fulfilling the basic living needs	Having organized and flexible schedules	Mixing with other digital nomads first then with locals	Barriers and cultural discrepancy	Positive impact especially in developing countries	Choosing cities where the living costs are lower
Nomad 11	Travel, Coworking	Communication with other people, coworking spaces, co-living places	Merging work and leisure time	Volunteering to different events organized by local members of many local organizations	No additional obstacles	Negative effect on local economies (boosting rent prices)	Generally looking for free shelter
Nomad 12	Travel, socialize	Opportunity to grow and networking	Strict schedule	Making online friends and visiting their countries	Many uncertainties related with money and family and society	Positive impact; boosts tourism	Cheaper housing alternatives, budgeting

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

	Driving factors	Destination factors	Work and leisure balance	Social life	Obstacles	Economy impact	Money-saving
Nomad 13	Travel, blogging	Beautiful places, cost-effectiveness, friendly people	No strict schedule inspired by traveling	Socializing very easily and visiting welcoming places	Family pressure mostly	Positive impact; boosts tourism, however it depends mostly on the profession of DN	Budgeting
Nomad 14	Travel	Different cultures, fulfilling basic needs of living	Flexible schedules but very organized and workaholic	Going to welcoming places	Working hours, time zones, project presentation	Positive impact; boosting the local economy, pushing start-up ecosystem	Budgeting, priorities

several reasons like cost-effectiveness, safety, experience sharing, networking, etc. In any case, all digital nomads find and join nomadic groups settled in various destinations they select.

Digital nomads face a lot of challenges and obstacles regarding their lifestyle. Besides the administrative and bureaucratic challenges that come along with switching destinations on a regular basis, it results that not many people can easily understand their alternative lifestyle too, especially friends and family members, because what the latter ask is a stable home and a permanent job, which is refused by digital nomads. Digital nomads admit that besides job problems that life throws, they have to handle the pressure that comes from their families. "When will you start your real life?" is the question that Nomad 12 has to face every time she talks with her parents. Nomad 8, another participant claims that it is difficult for families to understand how you can make a living as a digital nomad and also "being a woman makes people more anxious about your safety."

Another challenge that digital nomads face is the difficulty in properly balancing work to life and work to leisure. Digital nomads try to blend rather than balance their work with life by integrating the purpose and intentions they have in life with the work they do. When it comes to leisure, some digital nomads prefer to separate work from leisure so that they can focus more on work tasks; however, it is difficult not to be distracted by the desire to explore an interesting destination, even though this could be compensated with working longer hours when the destination is not so appealing.

What is to be stressed is the unconventionality way of doing things that digital nomadism entails. They are free to structure and personalize their own schedules regarding their work, life, and leisure commitments. Nomad 1, with over 18 years of experience as a digital nomad states that,

> "On Monday you could go to the beach and enjoy yourself, and Saturday mornings you could be working. Or your work hours could start from 4 pm or start and end at any time you decide, and based on where your clients are in the world. You might need to unlearn that you don't need to save and wait until retirement to do the things you always wanted to do, but you can do them now. You can travel while you work, you can raise kids and travel, you can be single and travel the world, or you can be newly married and still be nomads" (Nomad 1).

Another emerging common feature of digital nomads seems to be the care they show to budgeting and expenses. They don't get attached to material possessions, but value more meaningful intangible things like various experiences, love, and living life to their full potential and with purpose. Nomad 4, the youngest participant brings out the advantage that digital nomads have to "leverage travel and work arbitrage" by working where they get paid more and living where costs are lower. If

Airbnb[8] or other sites boost rents prices in some countries, they try to find free shelter or expand their social network to stay at their friend's houses. When it comes to discovering new places, they restrict themselves from some moments of fun and entertainment in order to save additional money. They opt for cheap housing and vacation deals and not buy things in touristic areas because they are quite expensive. Nomad 13, another young digital nomad who participated in this study suggests, "not to have a lot of money with when visiting a new place because you tend to spend them there. Instead, this serves as a motivator to work more and earn more to finance some other dream trips." Nomad 10, another digital nomad who traveled in 20 countries during her nomadic experience would state in this context that, "the income has to be pleasant [to finance the traveling] but not opting for big things [because in this case you should work harder and won't enjoy the rest]."

Nevertheless, the fact that they can work remotely for big companies without the obligation to be physically in office prevails as a comparative advantage of being a digital nomad in this regard. Thus, they select to live in places with a low cost of living and work for places where income is higher. This view is also confirmed by the fact that digital nomads interviewed for this study generally performed information technology-related (ICT) jobs that can be performed remotely via a smart device through internet connection.

When selecting their next destination, various digital nomads consider several factors that may affect their decision on the next destination because no two people feel the same interests and have the same experience when visiting one place. They claim that there are actually many overrated destinations that raise challenges. Some pick their next destination depending on the work they do, personal interests, and their personality which affects how easy they adapt culturally. Others decide based on the cost affordability of the destination, access to internet connection, local communities, communities of other foreigners, and time zone differences with their employers. Some digital nomads pay importance to the bureaucratic and legal procedures applied to foreigners, thus they opt for countries that have good diplomatic relations with their country of origin, and that are welcoming to foreigners and pose no safety problems so that they can stay longer.

Nomad 9, a US-based digital nomad, states that she selects her next destination based on "the events I want to attend and meeting up with friends, but local community is also important." Nomad 11, another digital nomad part of this study, picks her next destination based on "how I will be living there as I am fond of co-living and co-working spaces and communicating with other people." Nomad 1, encourages to "definitely go to where one has always wanted to go, but make sure there's good internet connection no matter where one goes, and that the place has good flight connections in case one wants to leave earlier or go later."

[8] Airbnb is an online marketplace which lets people rent out their properties or spare rooms to guests, https://www.airbnb.com/

Digital nomads compare their impact to local economies with the impact conventional tourists have on the economy of a place with an additional advantage that digital nomads stay longer in a place, thus increasing the positive impact. Digital nomads spend their money in the country they are currently living and not supposedly in the country of their employer. They spend in any country they visit, by renting housing for accommodation and consuming food and everything else they need to live. They also exploit the local facilities such as transport, postal services, delivery services, gyms, hairdressers, doctors, dentists, and more.

Moreover, they may positively affect the economy of a place by transferring knowledge, money, and know-how to local actors of the start-up ecosystem of that specific destination. They create a demand for coworking spaces and event spaces. They may also contribute to local economies by paying taxes in the cases when they stay longer in a place. The impact of digital nomadism to local economies may be summarized by the sentence of Nomad 1 below, "Digital nomads take no jobs, or no money from the countries they visit, they only take photos, make memories, and broaden their perspective e on the world we live in."

Nevertheless, some digital nomads claim that especially short-term nomadism can rather have a negative impact on local economies because as digital nomads usually outspend local residents, they can cause an increase in general prices in the area, and especially they may cause a boost in rent prices and therefore push locals out of the housing market.

Table 3 below summarizes as direct quotes some advices participants of this study gave for new digital nomads, their comments, and opinions about Albania and driving factors to digital nomadism.

Case of Tirana: The Next European Hotspot for Digital Nomads

Tirana is the capital city of Albania located in the center of the country. Its strategic geographical position gives the city a Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters with stable temperatures throughout the year. By default, this provides a wide range of opportunities for many industries.

Tirana has been selected as European Youth Capital for 2022. This is due to the fact that Tirana, now more than ever, has taken a welcoming stance for creativity and innovation by organizing different activities and events with the youth of the city as key actors. In this context, Tirana is welcoming digital nomads and has been facilitating the conditions for remote workers. Tirana offers a lower cost lifestyle for a single person compared to Bali (Numbeo 2020), the latter considered as one of the most favorite destinations for digital nomads. Tirana is listed as one of the cheapest

Table 3 Selected direct quotes of participants

	Direct quotes
Nomad 1	*1. "Being a digital nomad is a matter of freedom: Financial freedom, time freedom, location freedom, Desire of Freedom"*
	2. "It can be done by anyone, but you need to have a growth mindset and an entrepreneurial spirit. What I mean by this is that you need to be an individual that is fairly adaptable, agile, and creative in thinking out-of-the-box and finding innovative ways to redefine what you know about business"
	3. "It is not something that starts or ends, it's more like a lifestyle. A way of living. Similar to if you want to adopt a healthy lifestyle, or if you choose to be a minimalist or some other lifestyle"
Nomad 2	*1. "Just live, no separation with leisure or working, as working is my leisure. No schedule, I do what I have when I have to"*
	2. "Nomadism can only help save money, if you can live in a low cost country and earn western standard salary/fees. Travelling as minimalist do not take lots of money itself, if you choose not to"
Nomad 3	*1. "If you choose to be a digital nomad, I think you have to be comfortable to live a life with lots of uncertainties"*
	2. "I think it is important to find a structure that allows you to get work done. So staying at very touristy places was sometimes hard for me as everyone around me was on vacation and I always felt bad for having to work. So surrounding yourself with other digital nomads might help"
	3. "If you are working for clients from countries with high incomes you can charge high rates for your work but stay in countries where the monthly living costs are relatively low"
Nomad 4	*1. "Making money as a digital nomad: you should work where is expensive and live where is cheaper"*
	2. "I think digital nomadism is helping to accelerate countries economy, especially in emerging countries"
Nomad 5	*1. "Going to a new place always is a little bit of a challenge because there's a different language, you have to set up logistics like a SIM card,* etc. *but it's usually pretty straightforward"*
	2. "Almost anyone (can be DN). That is, any human can, yes, but not all jobs are able to be done remotely
	If you can do your job from a computer, it can be done from anywhere with internet"
	3. "For me it's a lifestyle so it'll be permanent. Age also depends on maturity, when you find the work you'll do as a DN, when you have the financial ability to do so"
Nomad 6	*1. "Many people do not understand this lifestyle yet. Many think that I am just rich, and always have fun (it is far from true)"*
	2. "What motivated me? The bad memories of endless battles with myself in order to go to the office. The ability to be with my family and also see the world. When you travel, the brain works to find new solutions, and I guess I am addicted to that now"
	3. "Family members accepted it, but it took time. Many people do not understand it yet"
Nomad 7	*1. "When I first started digital nomadism, the main thing that motivated me was the ultimate freedom"*
	2. "I don't have a schedule, I just time block everything"

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

	Direct quotes
Nomad 8	*1. "You have to maintain contacts with people you meet in different places. Digital nomadism is a real work but with the possibility of traveling"*
	2. "It's an opportunity for places like Albania to attract more foreigners […] it could also lead to more transfer of knowledge, […] there is a shift of perspective for the local ecosystem as well, if they see as how people from Silicon Valley are structuring their days"
Nomad 9	*1. "You may find out if DN works for you by doing a short trip. But you just have to try it. It is done by less people that can actually live and want to live as DN"*
	2. "Community is so important when you are a nomad because it's easy to get very lonely"
	3. "For me travel is just so important, like, I could never not have it be a part of my life"
	4. "Age is not important. What's important is to have a stable income"
Nomad 10	*1. "Albania is in my top 3 destinations. I made many friends. Colorful experience and great food"*
	2. "There is a challenge because stable life has its obvious benefits that we all get used to very quickly […] so called "golden cage""
	3. "I was socializing with DN when I was traveling to places that are DN hubs […] but I would say more than half of the time I was experiencing on my own"
	4. "DN have bigger influence in developing countries because these are the countries that the majority of DN tend to go [...] actually it depends on how communicated the DN community within the country where it settles. Because there are places where they settle in one village, so the village is impacted, but not the country"
	5. "I believe it (DN community) contributes good things when the community cares to contribute good things"
Nomad 11	*1. "For new digital nomads, Albania is the first country they should visit"*
	2. "I plan to return to Tirana in April or May because I know that is so much to discover there"
	3. "I think what's nice about it is that you can try a lot of different ways of living, traveling and working. So it's really flexible"
	4. "For me it's not so much the country, as how I will be living there, because I realized that I do want to live in a place, like, in community with other people. So I think I would choose it (next destination) depending on the project that I find, or maybe there is a nice co-working space, or co-living space with other DN"
	5. "I don't just want to be a tourist; I also want to connect"
Nomad 12	*1. "Being a digital nomad has many obstacles, even from your relatives. Sometimes my mom asks me 'when will you start your real life?!'"*
	2. "The reason I'm doing this is the flexibility. I just love moving. I love traveling around and not needing to ask for vacations request or speaking to colleagues if I can go in a two week vacation a year. I want the freedom of choice of where I want to go and when"
	3. "I think (DN) is the future. It's not only going to be the future, it's already the future because we have the internet in our fingertips, we have knowledge at the speed of light on our hands. And especially the Millennials,[…] my generation and Millennials have a huge possibility and will change the workforce"
	4. "It's a cross border communication because you are able to contribute to where your business is registered and at the same time you contribute through your traveling to the local culture"

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

	Direct quotes
Nomad 13	*1. "My difficulty doesn't stand on finding new friends, but in missing these friends when I leave their country"*
	2. "You have to love your work, so you have to love what you're doing. I'm grateful I've got always my drawings with me so I'm never bored and I'm never lost with things to do…"
	3. "When you go into the complexities of the cultures there are differences of course but people are still people everywhere you go"
	4. "I never travel with too much money and that's actually a good motivator to make me work because it's like "Well, if I want to go here, I have to work""
Nomad 14	*1. "You should not be lazy, have to learn to manage your time. You have to be productive, organized and workaholic"*
	2. "I think people adapt and being a DN can be normal, can be exciting, can be lonely. I mean if you are in an exciting moment where you are living your life, moving around […] and you are actually travelling more than working, because your work allows you to do it, I would understand that it would be a shock to return to your house and have to stay there and work there"

places to live in Europe,[9] and an article in Traveling Balkan's blog[10] ranks it in the top three most affordable places in Europe. The housing alternatives are numerous and listed in Airbnb. Tirana offers an increased number of coworking spaces situated in several areas of the city, easily accessible by public transport or walking, mostly with beautiful views that inspire digital nomads to work. The internet connection is good and reliable, especially improving recently with the introduction of fiber optic cables.

According to one of the most popular blogs[11] listing best cities for digital nomads, Tirana is ranked 26th among the cities ranked for 2019. Various digital nomads that have visited Tirana consider the experience as "once in a lifetime journey," even though usually it is underestimated resulting in less visits by digital nomads. Nevertheless, it has a huge potential to become a European hub for digital nomads coming from all over the world. Currently, there are some digital nomads living and working in Tirana, some of them part of this study too.

Tirana is considered to be a seasonal city where summer is the best season to travel and discover all what Tirana and surrounding areas offer, whereas winter is quieter, offering the opportunity for more concentration to work tasks. The majority of locals are fluent in English, Italian, and other languages thanks to their ability to learn foreign languages relatively quickly. Sunny days, proximity to beaches, and

[9] The Best Digital Nomad Cities of 2019 (n.d.). Retrieved June 1, 2020, from Local Nomads website: https://localnomads.com/best-digital-nomad-cities-2019/

[10] Living in Albania as a digital nomad (n.d.). Retrieved June 1, 2020 from Travelling Balkans website: https://travellingbalkans.com/living-in-albania-as-a-digital-nomad/

[11] The Best Digital Nomad Cities of 2019 (n.d.). Retrieved June 1, 2020, from Local Nomads website https://localnomads.com/best-digital-nomad-cities-2019/

nature are other factors that give Tirana a comparative advantage to become a destination for digital nomads.

Tirana and surroundings have many interesting places to visit. A nice combination of Illyrian, Roman, and Ottoman empires heritage is present, which is a proof of a very rich history, culture, and art of the country. Furthermore, almost 50 years of a communist dictatorship regime have left many footprints from old museums to specific and small objects, as relics of that time. History is a witness that Albanians are very welcoming people that have preserved with great fanaticism their customs, traditions, and culture. Thus, alongside the touristic and historical spots, digital nomads can enjoy the friendly and very social environment created by both locals and tourists. In many reviews, citizens of Tirana are mentioned for the great treatment of visitors and for their original friendliness. Apart from the fascinating historical spots, Tirana has modern attractions too. Digital nomads can enjoy the view from the cable bar over the city, the colorful buildings, and mixed architecture. Creativity and positivity are reflected in house and flat paintings and graffiti. Tirana offers a wide variety of food too, both traditional and nontraditional food.

Tirana offers various start-up opportunities for entrepreneurs to grow. Digital nomads can participate in many conferences and other activities where many successful businessmen provide job offers and internships especially at a time when Tirana is going through a digitalization process and is supporting innovation and entrepreneurship. New and modern buildings provide space for different local start-ups and for organizing a variety of innovation and entrepreneurship-related events.

Referring to Digital Nomad List,[12] Tirana has a score of 3.47 out of 5, which is considerably high for an emerging country like Albania. This score is approximately the same compared with one of the most famous cities in Europe, Paris (3.54), and higher than the most popular cities in neighboring Italy including Rome (3.02/5), Milan (2.95/5), and Venice (2.92/5). It must be mentioned that Tirana has a considerably higher score than the majority of other Balkan cities. Local authorities and other stakeholders are making efforts to turn Tirana into a destination for many digital nomads through activities that encourage the youth to be involved in this process and give ideas for improvements. Among such activities are Hackathons and Bootcamps,[13] where different university students and other participants come together and brainstorm to find and share ideas about how to transform Tirana into a hotspot for digital nomads.

Digital nomads, part of this study shared their impressions and experience in Tirana in different perspectives. There seems to be agreement on the fact that Tirana must be on the top list of next destinations for digital nomads at any period of the year. They stress on their plan to return and see more at their first chance. According to digital nomads part of this study, among the prevailing features that favor Tirana

[12] Tirana. (n.d.). Retrieved July 29, 2020, from NomadList website: https://nomadlist.com/tirana

[13] A Hackathon is a 36-h innovation event, where teams of youngsters supported by mentors try to generate ideas and find solutions to real-life problems. A Bootcamp instead is a short-term, intensive program that teaches participants how to make the business model of their idea and other practical skills.

to be a preferred destination one could mention the city being easily accessible, cheap, and safe, having good and young people, great food, enough coworking places, and good Wi-Fi.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot for Tirana to improve further the welcoming atmosphere for foreigners and create opportunities for collaboration. There are currently many issues to be solved in order to have a higher rating score in the nomad list and other mediums. In this perspective, researchers of this study have listed few suggestions that could be taken into consideration. First, Tirana needs to have centralized information on what digital nomads should expect from it and how they can work here. Second, the transportation should be improved because Tirana, contrary to other European capitals has no train transportation means, making taxi, bus, or minibus the main way to move from one area to another. Third, bad traffic and the hassles that associate it are one of the most disadvantageous aspects that damage the image of Tirana which needs to be tackled by local authorities. Fourth, unfortunately, many apartments in Tirana lack proper sound isolation, so sounds from outside can sometimes be unpleasant, especially for digital nomads who are looking for high contraction while working. Local landlords should list noise standards in the properties list when they list their properties in AirBnB etc. Fifth, another suggestion for Tirana is to increase the size of the start-up community. Even though youth is being encouraged to be part of start-ups but since such efforts are taken only lately, the start-up ecosystem is in its initial forming stages.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this study was to identify the important features of locations that are attractive to digital nomads, with a particular focus on the city of Tirana. To achieve the research objective, the researchers conducted an exploratory qualitative research, in which 14 digital nomads were interviewed via semi-structured interviews. Their insights helped to shed light on daily routines, motivational factors of traveling, and traits that are important in selecting a location for a digital nomad. The collected results supported the theoretical background presented in the literature review section; digital nomads are equipped with a strong self-discipline which helps them balance work-leisure-personal life, and are driven by several reasons to pursue a career on constant traveling and are strongly affected by professional and entertainment possibilities offered in different locations when deciding where they will settle next.

Data collected was elaborated so to offer suggestions about how Tirana could improve particular factors such as public transportation, more centralized information on possible digital nomad communities and activities, as well as lower the acoustic noises. However, recommendations are not to be limited within Tirana's boundaries. The suggestions presented here are applicable to many cities in other developing countries and not only that share similar economical, natural, cultural,

and technological traits with Tirana. These locations need investments whether by local or central governments as well as by private organizations or investors.

Future research may further study particular features of any specific city that is of interest of other researchers, as well as identifying common factors that connect locations that share similar characteristics among them. Reaching a shared map of measures to be considered for different emerging destinations underrated by digital nomads combined with local strategies would lead to an enhanced value-adding process in terms of technological, touristic, and entrepreneurial climate for the respective countries.

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Correction to: Expressing Experiences of Coworking Spaces: Insights from Social Media

Tadashi Uda

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Owing to an oversight, the ruled lines (right side: the part of Behaviors) of Table 2 in Chapter 10 were missing. The same have now been corrected in the chapter.

The updated version of this chapter can be found at
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Table 2 Data structure

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
Facility	Services	Space
Systems		
Environments		
Other users		
Location		
Support		
Provider		
Concept		
Implementing	Individual work	
Productivity		
Attitudes		
Modes		
Performance		
Descriptions		
Time		
Frequency		
Aim		Behaviors
Feelings	Individual daily activities	
Activities		
Situations	Interaction	
Places		
People		
Impressions		
Contents		
Outcomes		
Purpose		

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