

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

V. Heinzel (✉) · M. Engstler

Faculty of Information and Communication, Creative Industries and Media Society (CREAM), Stuttgart Media University, Stuttgart, Germany

e-mail: heinzel@hdm-stuttgart.de; engstler@hdm-stuttgart.de

S. Georgiades

Department, Business Administration, Frederick University Limassol Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

e-mail: bus.gs@frederick.ac.cy

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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; Garrett 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 Sigi 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 *corpworking* and *corpworking 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 *corpworking 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 Mörghenthaler 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 Grysiewicz (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 Grysiewicz 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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