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Empowerment in coworking spaces - A review of the research article "Coworking spaces: Empowerment for entrepreneurship and innovation in the digital and sharing economy"

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Abstract

In this article I review the research article “Coworking spaces: Empowerment for entrepreneurship and innovation in the digital and sharing economy” by Bouncken, Ratzmann, Barwinski and Kraus. In this article the authors focus on institutional patterns in coworking spaces and their effect on work satisfaction using a mixed methods approach. The reviewed work offers a first attempt to empirically investigate the content and configurations of institutional logics. The results of the article indicate that there are three distinct ways in which coworking spaces can enhance work satisfaction through applying institutional patterns. Generally, the authors provide valuable new insights that allow the reader to take a macro-organizational view of how the configurations of the factors drive empowerment and innovation forward. Furthermore, this review highlights the contributions of the article.

Keywords: Coworking spaces, Empowerment, Innovation, Entrepreneurial performance, Mixed methods, Review

Kurzfassung

In diesem Artikel rezensiert der Autor den Forschungsartikel “Coworking spaces: Empowerment for entrepreneurship and innovation in the digital and sharing economy” von Bouncken, Ratzmann, Barwinski und Kraus. In diesem Artikel konzentrieren sich die Autoren auf institutionelle Muster in Coworking Spaces und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Arbeitszufriedenheit unter Verwendung eines gemischten Methodenansatzes. Die rezensierte Arbeit bietet einen ersten Versuch, die Inhalte und Konfigurationen institutioneller Logiken empirisch zu untersuchen. Die Ergebnisse des Artikels zeigen, dass es drei verschiedene Möglichkeiten gibt, wie Coworking Spaces die Arbeitszufriedenheit durch die Anwendung institutioneller Muster steigern können. Im Allgemeinen liefern die Autoren wertvolle neue Einsichten, die es dem Leser erlauben, eine makroorganisatorische Sicht einzunehmen, wie die Konfigurationen der Faktoren sowohl Empowerment als auch Innovation vorantreiben. Darüber hinaus hebt dieser Review die weiteren Beiträge des Forschungsartikels hervor.

Schlagwörter: Coworking Spaces, Empowerment, Innovation, Unternehmerische Leistung, Mixed Methods, Review

Review

Empowerment in coworking spaces – A review of the research article “Coworking spaces: Empowerment for entrepreneurship and innovation in the digital and sharing economy“

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Empowerment in coworking spaces – A review of the research article “Coworking spaces: Empowerment for entrepreneurship and innovation in the digital and sharing economy“

Mini-Review

The current digital economy is leaving its mark on organizations and society. Even before the current Covid-19 pandemic, we observed a global trend towards flexible new work forms (Bouncken & Reuschl, 2018). In coworking spaces, these are mainly frequented by freelancers, entrepreneurs, and new ventures. Coworking spaces combine work and social spaces, creating an environment actively facilitating joint work, creativity, knowledge exchange and can thus ultimately enhance work satisfaction (Barwinski et al., 2020; Bouncken & Aslam, 2019; Bouncken et al., 2016a; Capdevila, 2014; Spinuzzi, 2012; Moriset, 2014). Nevertheless, coworking spaces are novel institutions and not much is known about how these institutions fuse social, spatial, and environmental parameters to enhance work satisfaction (Bouncken et al., 2020b).

In their recent article "Coworking spaces: Empowerment for entrepreneurship and innovation in the digital and sharing economy" Bouncken et al. (2020a) fill this void by studying which institutional patterns exist in coworking spaces and how they relate to users work satisfaction. Institutional patterns influence what users and providers of coworking spaces view as appropriate behavior and actions within the space.

To tackle this challenging task the authors decide to apply a mixed-method approach (Kallmuenzer et al., 2019). In the first step, they investigate the dynamics and behaviors within coworking spaces by conducting a series of interviews with users and providers of different coworking spaces. During the in-depth interviews, the authors identify the main characteristics related to work satisfaction: (a) a *sense of community* in the space, (b) the *participation* in the social interaction, (c) *autonomy* and freedom in joining the coworking spaces and in structuring

their work, (d) *multiplicity of linkages* and ease of connecting, and (e) *mutual knowledge creation* based on the possibility of open knowledge exchange. These five characteristics empower coworking space users and are essential for work satisfaction.

The qualitative analysis suggests that patterns might not necessarily only have positive effects on work satisfaction. Therefore, in the second step of the mixed-methods approach, the authors choose to conduct a necessary condition analysis (NCA) (Dul, 2016) and a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) (Ragin, 2008a; Ragin, 2008b) to identify configurations of the characteristics a) to e) leading to high or low work satisfaction. These forms of analysis allow to identify configurations leading to positive or negative work satisfaction. The authors collect data from 328 coworking space users in 57 coworking spaces in 26 cities in the USA, Germany, and China.

From the results, the authors are able to derive three distinct ways in which coworking spaces can enhance work satisfaction by applying institutional patterns. The first configuration, agility housing, relates to a focus on openness, participation, and connections between users. The authors point out that this institutional pattern is most relevant for users seeking agile and permeable organizational structures and focus on work-related matters in their work satisfaction. This pattern closely relates to the aspect of organizational empowerment (Matthews, 2003).

The second configuration, knowledge housing, is related to knowledge sharing within communities. When direct personal exchanges occur users will more likely undergo socialization processes and transfer tacit knowledge as well as mutually create new knowledge (Bouncken et al., 2016b; Görmar et al., 2020). This configuration relates to work and its positive outcome in form of innovation and entrepreneurship.

The final configuration, social housing, relates to the community as the core of work satisfaction in the coworking space (Garrett et al., 2017). When engaging in the coworking space the users

reduce social isolation by building a community. This configuration is aimed at the impact of the social context rather than job-related work satisfaction.

The authors conclude their analysis by pointing out that configurations can also lead to negative work satisfaction. This is present when one of the four characteristics participation, autonomy, linkage multiplicity, and mutual knowledge creation is not present and there is no further second characteristic to balance the negativity. The reasons for the negative impact appear to lie in the potentials for opportunistic behavior within the coworking space (Bouncken et al., 2018), the overload of noise and forced social interaction (Barwinski et al., 2020), or the unwillingness to accept the organizational change to flexible work (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte & Isaac, 2016). Further mutual knowledge exchange always bears risks of unintended knowledge spillovers. This might hinder innovative and individual performance in configurations missing additional characteristics to reduce these risks. Further insights might be gained by investigating the effects of identity (Bouncken & Barwinski, 2020), dark personality traits such as the dark triad (Bouncken et al., 2018; Leclercq-Vandelannoitte & Isaac, 2016; Kraus et al., 2017) or the effects of coworking space configurations on venture legitimacy (Täuscher et al., 2020).

The reviewed paper offers a first attempt to empirically study the content and configurations of institutional logics. The authors provide valuable new insights granting the reader a macro-organizational lens on how the configurations of factors drive empowerment and innovation (Matthews, 2003). The results clarify that coworking spaces are an organizational setting that influences the psychological empowerment of individuals (Spreitzer, 1995) and that institutional patterns further enable the facilitation of organizational empowerment (Matthews, 2003).

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