# Professionalità studi

**Trimestrale on-line di studi su
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N. 4 ottobre/novembre/dicembre 2020

# *SOMMARIO* - n. 4/2020

***Le parole e i concetti del lavoro che cambia.
Rileggere in ottica interdisciplinare il lavoro
nella IV rivoluzione industriale***

a cura di A. Bellini, L. Casano, L. Maestripieri,
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# Emerging work patterns and different territorial contexts: trends for the coworking sector in pandemic recovery

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## 1. Introduction

The pandemic caused by the massive spread of the new Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 in 2019-2020, well known as COVID-19, has altered working lifestyles worldwide, with many workplaces enforced their working habits to allow social distancing. Under the pandemic situation, the percentage of people working from home has significantly increased [1], which tends to mitigate the aftermath of Covid-19 on public health and economy worldwide, with countries variations. Due to the forced social distancing and rigid health protocols, people are still working from home or searching for a safe and healthy workplace in several countries since their offices do not provide enough space and flexible opportunities for work. Indeed, when the "First place" (home) is not the most efficient working place and the "Second place" (office) cannot host the workers due to social

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[1] J. BERG, J. F. BONNET, S. SOARES, *Working from home: Estimating the worldwide potential.* Retrieved from https://voxeu.org/article/working-home-estimating-worldwide-potential, 2020, May.

distancing limitations, the "Third place"([2]) represents a valuable alternative for remote workers. Within the "Third Place," which concerns: coworking spaces, innovation hubs, open workshops, etc., the paper focuses on coworking spaces (from now on, CSs), which is the most diffused worldwide and represents a good alternative for remote workers because it offers: 1) access to adequate technology, 2) reduced risks of isolation, 3) reduced costs for employees (for example, by providing access to a cheaper habitat, or by reducing commuting costs), 4) improved job satisfaction and well-being, 5) enhanced work-life balance([3]).

Multiple dynamics are occurring in terms of the working structure to face the current uncertain situation. In particular, it possible to recognise some recurring trends, such as 1) several companies are turning working contracts to enable remote working, especially smart-working, 2) medium-large size companies that need to downsize or "de-densify" their offices in a cost-effective and timely manner are relocating employees in other locations different from the main headquarter and announced their workers would work remotely ([4]); 3) freelancers and digital nomads are moving to peripheral locations to experience higher quality of life, stimulating suburbs economies and catalyse phenomena such as what has been defined 'south working' ([5])([6]); 4) new working spaces such as coworking spaces (from now on, CSs) are changing their business model to be more attractive for remote workers and teleworkers([7]); 5) local authorities are using public spaces

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([2]) R. OLDENBURG. *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community,* in *Da Capo Press,* 1989.

([3]) I. MANZINI CEINAR, I. MARIOTTI. *The effects of Covid-19 on coworking spaces: patterns and future trends*, in Mariotti, I., Akhavan, M. and Di Vita, S. (Eds.*). Shared Workplaces in the Knowledge Economy*, Springer Publisher, forthcoming 2021

([4]) I. MARIOTTI, D. DI MATTEO. *Coworking in emergenza Covid-19: quali effetti per le aree periferiche?* EyesReg, *10*(2), 2020, March.

([5]) B. KATZ, M. SAADINE, C. HIGGINS. *Saving small business: Supersize the local role.* Retrieved from https://www.thenewlocalism.com/newsletter/saving-small-business-supersize-the-local-role/. 2020, April.

([6]) SOUTH-WORKING. *South-working, lavorare al sud*. Retrieved from https://www.southworking.org/. 2020.

([7]) I. MARIOTTI, M. DI MARINO, M. AKHAVAN. *The emergence of coworking models in the face of pandemic*, in J. R. Bryson, L. Andres, E. Aksle, L. Reardon. *Living with Pandemics: People, Place and Policy*. Edward Elgar publisher, forthcoming in 2021.

public services, such as public schools, to relocate employees and students (such as the *Scuola Diffusa* diffused schooling experiment launched in Reggio Emilia in 2020).

Within this context, the present paper aims to explore and unpack the complexity of coworking's users and supply, based on the recent trends caused by Covid-19. It is discussed whether and how coworking's environment increases its diversification in terms of users and the spatial implications linked to this shift. Besides, future trends for the CSs' business model and identification of different urbanisation and settlement patterns are put forward together with policy implications with a focus on the Italian case.

The paper is structured in four main parts. Starting with the concept of nomadic work and freelancing, the introduction is followed by a section devoted to investigating a shift in the working culture across Europe, analysing significant working dynamics. The second section introduces new forms of working modalities which have increasingly gained importance during the pandemic (from the broad concept of remote working to teleworking, smart -or agile- working and working from home). Along with new forms of working modalities, CSs are identified as the preferred typology of new workspace to host those modalities. Besides, some existing cases are presented to provide an overview of how new working dynamics challenged and shifted the coworking sphere in terms of uses, producing different models of hybrid workspaces. Section four is dedicated to the impact of these new trends accelerated by the pandemic on different urbanisation and settlement patterns, and scenario building for possible future matches is put forward. Conclusions and policy implications follow.

## 2. How Covid-19 is challenging the working culture across Europe

The concept of nomadic work introduced the idea of "networked individuality"([8]), by which independent professionals — who are no longer bound to a physical place — are more productive when working individually but in a vast network that puts one in contact with each other. This idea highlights the shift in the work structure that started

([8]) H. RAINIE, B. WELLMAN. *Networked: The new social operating system.* Mit Press, 419. Cambridge, MA. 2012.

with the economic recession. Indeed, the 2008 recession hugely impacted the way of work[9], denied young workers stable employment opportunities and displaced others already in the workplace. In Europe, the collapse of the employment paradigm, combined with high social expectations and job uncertainty, has led to the recasting of labor organisation and the configuration of a new working way. The dematerialisation of the workplace[10], produced the rise to a new generation of the so-called freelancers and entrepreneurs[11][12], working primarily on the tertiary sector[13] such as the creative and digital economy.

A central feature of creative labour markets is the rise of freelance workers, defined as 'skilled professional workers who are neither employers nor employees, supplying labour temporarily under contract for services for a fee to a range of business clients'[14]. Although apparently, it seems a choice of lifestyle – freedom instead of security and independence compared to regular income – the category of freelancers is often defined as "urban bums" or a "precarious class", named for the precarious financial situation many of them are experiencing. Building on the statement mentioned above of meaning, it is possible to define a freelancer as an 'individual who works on a contractual or temporary basis, offering skills knowledge and/or

[9] G. VAN GYES, L. SZEKÉR. *Impact of the crisis on working conditions in Europe.* Eurofound – European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. 2013.

[10] G. MÉLYPATAKI. *Dematerialisation of workplace in non-classical labour law relations.* Retrieved from ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338336402_Dematerialisation_of_workplace_in_non-classical_labour_law_relations. 2020.

[11] A. GANDINI. *The rise of coworking spaces: A literature review*. Ephemera, *15*(1), 193. 2015.

[12] A. C. JAMAL. *Coworking spaces in mid-sized cities: A partner in downtown economic development*. Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space, *50*(4). 2018, 773-788.

[13] R. FLORIDA. *The rise of the creative class*. New York: Basic books. 2002.

[14] J. KITCHING, D. SMALLBONE. *Defining and estimating the size of the UK freelance workforce*. 2008.

expertise to others (people, firms or government) looking to outsource a particular labour cost'([15]).

Nowadays, there is an open debate on what exactly means being a freelancer and what this represents for new working ways.

Before Covid-19, freelancers mainly represented a lifestyle([16]) and need to interact, thus reducing the risks of isolation([17])([18]) increasing the opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and new business opportunities([19]), with the purpose to foster a sense of local place and community([20]). To support digital nomads and produce benefits for the urban environment, collaborative working spaces, among which CSs are the most representative, have emerged across cities to outweigh negative aspects, such as high costs and stress of being isolated([21]). Gandini has suggested that the plurality of the subjects involved in the rise of coworking, will have to seriously take into account the 'contradictory nature'([22]) that CSs come to embody in the broader debates regarding the creative labour market: on the one hand, the potential to become an identity tool for a new "creative class", and on the other hand the adaptability and strengthening of the entrepreneurship's concept, characteristic of neoliberal subjectivity.

As already stressed, the Covid-19 pandemic has altered working conditions and habits worldwide. Specifically, the CS's users belong to the retail trade, and the organisation of events have been mainly hit by

([15]) O. MOULD, T. VORLEY, K. LIU. *Invisible Creativity? Highlighting the Hidden Impact of Freelancing in London's Creative Industries.* European Planning Studies, *22*(12), 2014, 2436- 2455.

([16]) D. MCWILLIAMS. *The Flat White Economy*. Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd, 2015.

([17]) A. GANDINI. *The rise of coworking spaces: A literature review*. Ephemera, *15*(1), 193. 2015.

([18]) J. MERKEL. *'Freelance isn't free.'Co-working as a critical urban practice to cope with informality in creative labour markets*. Urban Studies, *56*(3), 2019, 526-547.

([19]) I. PAIS. *La rete che lavora. Mestieri e professioni nell'era digitale*. Milano: Egea. 2012.

([20]) L. E. GARRETT, G. M. SPREITZER, P. A. BACEVICE. *Co-constructing a sense of community at work: The emergence of community in coworking spaces*. Organization Studies, *38*(6), 2017, 821-842.

([21]) H. OVERMAN, S. GIBBONS, A. TUCCI. *The case for agglomeration economies*. Manchester Independent Economic Review. 2009.

([22]) A. GANDINI. *The rise of coworking spaces: A literature review*, cit.

the pandemic([23]). While in the service sector, workers who are mostly reliant on intensive networked computer use([24]), were forced to move from traditional office-based work to flexible and 'diffuse' work, as in the case of the creative and innovative class of workers, to which most the workers of the coworking spaces belong([25]).

In this panorama, a vast *ad-hoc* social experiment([24]) took place. Most of the European population experienced new flexible ways of working, as defined in section 2.3, such as remote work, telework and agile work. To adapt to the Covid-19 crisis, some trends emerged both in the working culture and in urban dynamics(26), aiming to approach those new work practices.

This crisis-opportunity perspective translates a crisis emergency into an opportunity to accelerate and advance innovative working dynamics where companies will have more flexibility to choose between the "hybrid model" and Virtual First([27]).

Comparing to the lockdown phase, experienced by most of the European countries during the first six months of 2020, where many companies established systems enabling staff to work from home, the post-lockdown situation is still evolving, producing multiple and diverse ways of working solutions, including remote working options and diffuse working locations([28]).

The Eurofound Surveys clearly explain the trend of working remotely before and during the Covid-19 pandemic carried out in 2015 and 2020. In 2019, the share of employees working from home regularly or at least sometimes was above 25% in most Northern European countries, including Sweden, Finland, and the Netherlands, whereas it was below

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([23]) T. BARBIERI, G. BASSO, S. SCICCHITANO. *Italian workers at risk during the Covid-19 epidemic*. INAPP Working Paper *4*, 2020.

([24]) M. SOSTERO, S. MILASI, J. HURLEY, E. FERNANDEZ-MARCIAS, M. BISELLO, *op. cit.*

([25]) I. MANZINI CEINAR, I. MARIOTTI. *The effects of Covid-19 on coworking spaces: patterns and future trends*, cit.

([24]) M. SOSTERO, S. MILASI, J. HURLEY, E. FERNANDEZ-MARCIAS, M. BISELLO, *op. cit.*

([27]) A. WING KOSNER. *The crucial difference between remote work and distributed work*. Retrieved from Work in Progress Dropbox: https://blog.dropbox.com/topics/work-culture/the-crucial-difference-between-remote-work-and-distributed-work,2020, April.

([28]) I. MARIOTTI, M. AKHAVAN. *Exploring proximities in coworking spaces: evidence from Italy*. European Spatial Research & Policy, 27(1), 2020, 37-52.

10% in 15 of the 27 EU Member States. Specifically, in the lowest position (below 5%), we find Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Spain, Greece, and Czechia. At the other extreme, northern countries show a percentage between 25% and about 34%: first Sweden, followed by the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Finland and Denmark, with Finland showing the higher propensity to telework (graph 1) usually.

Graph 1 –Prevalence of telework across EU members in 2009 and 2019 (% of employees)
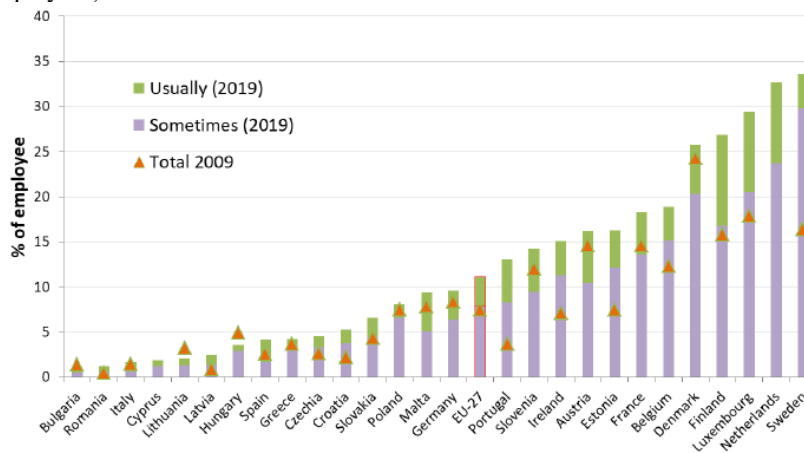


*Source: Eurostat LFS in Sostero et al., 2020. Data on the frequency of telework in 2009 are not available for the Netherlands and Cyprus.*

The difference in the propensity to telework is related to a) firm size, b) sector specialisation, c) workers' and firms' affinities with digital technologies, as well as organisation and management cultures; d) occupational structure and the rate of self-employment; e) regulatory frameworks; f) infrastructure accessibility. The first three factors are firm-specific; the others are country-specific. Larger firms([29]) and multinational firms are more willing to adopt teleworking because of the managers/owners' willingness to allow employees to do so. The same holds for the firms in the knowledge-intensive sector that are more willing to telework: while more than 50% of workers in knowledge-intensive business services were, usually or sometimes,

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([29]) M. SOSTERO, S. MILASI, J. HURLEY, E. FERNANDEZ-MARCIAS, M. BISELLO, *op. cit.*

teleworking in Sweden and the Netherlands, this share was below 25% – the EU-27 average – in Austria (22%), Germany (17%), and Italy (4%). These data are also related to the rate of self-employment, workers' and firms' affinities with digital technologies, as well as organisation and management cultures. Another relevant aspect concerns the regulatory frameworks (legislation, collective agreements), which may also support or hinder deployment([30]). Finally, a factor that is sometimes underestimated concerns infrastructure investment, which is a pre-requisite to telework, considering both broadband and commuting to the office at least once a week.

Graph 2 – Prevalence of telework by occupation, 2018, EU-27 (% of total employment)



*Source: Eurostat LFS in Sostero et al., 2020*. The graph refers to total employment. Occupation-specific data on the frequency of working from home disaggregated by professional status are not available.

The analysis of telework's prevalence (both sometimes and usually) by occupation in EU 27 before the Covid-19 pandemic (2018) shows a predominance of the sectors of telecommunications, finance and insurance (about 20% of the share of teleworkers), while the share of

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([30]) O. VARGAS-LLAVE, I. MANDL, T. WEBER, M. WILKENS. *Telework and ICT-based Mobile Work: Flexible Working in the Digital Age*. Eurofound. 2020.

teleworkers is relatively lower in administrative and support services as well as in manufacturing (Graph 2). As already stated, telework rates across knowledge- and ICT-intensive business services are higher. They are explained mainly because professionals, amongst whom telework is typically more widespread, account for a larger share of employment in these sectors than in others[31]. Another discussed issue concerns the quality of workers in teleworking condition which are traditionally high-skilled, white-collar (i.e. managers and professionals), thus workers enjoying high degrees of autonomy, and employed in knowledge-intensive activities, such as teachers and ICT professionals, followed by managers and professionals, business, administration, and science[32]. Moreover, workers with children worked remotely slightly more than people without them. It may suggest that employers and employees have, at least in part, been using telework to balance work and family life[33].

Data on teleworking during the Covid-19 pandemic come from an extensive real-time survey "COVID-19" by Eurofound, initiated in April 2020, which received nearly 62,000 completed responses in the EU member states in a first-round (fieldwork: April 7th-April 30th) (Graph 3). The Eurofound study shows that over a third (39%) of employees currently working in the EU started to work from home following the pandemic, compared to 20% who indicated working from home at leastseveral times a month' pre-COVID. Those teleworking during the pandemic are mainly employees who had regular previous telework experience (50%) compared to 25% of those who had no previous telework experience. Differences occur among countries with Romania (18%) and Finland (59%) at the opposite. Generally, the highest proportions of employees working from home were in the Nordic and Benelux countries, but even countries that had a low rate before the pandemic - such as Italy - overcame the EU average (Graph 3).

Graph 3 – Employees working from home during COVID-crisis, by country (%)

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[31] M. SOSTERO, S. MILASI, J. HURLEY, E. FERNANDEZ-MARCIAS, M. BISELLO, *op. cit.*
[32] T. BARBIERI, G. BASSO, S. SCICCHITANO, *op cit.*
[33] D. DEL BOCA, N. OGGERO, P. PROFETA, M. C. ROSSI. *Women's Work, Housework and Childcare, before and during COVID-19.* IZA Discussion Paper series, DP No. 13409, 2020, June.
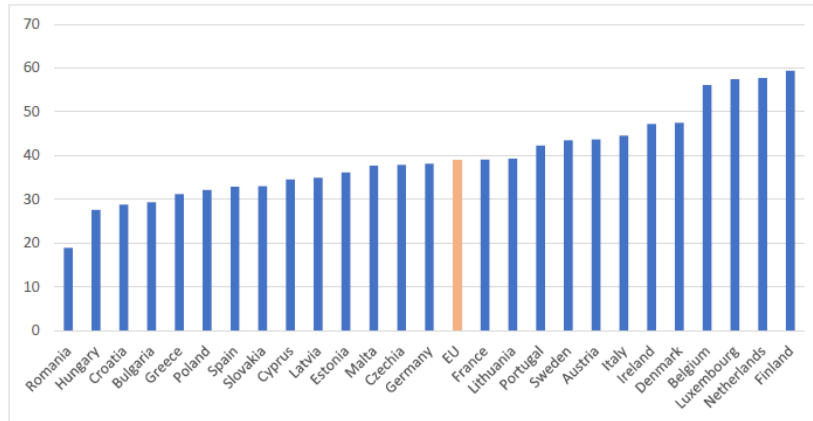
*Source: Sostero et al., 2020. No data for Slovenia.*

Graph 4 – Working from home during COVID-19 crisis, EU27%: work and personal characteristics
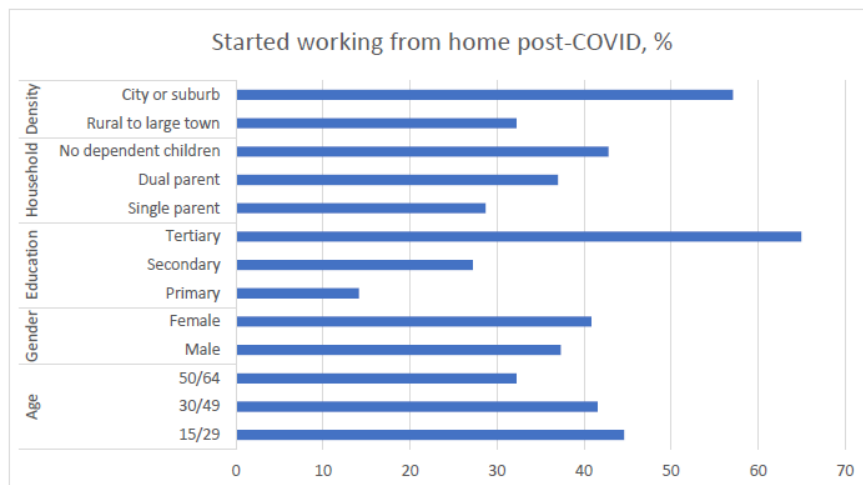


*Source: Sostero et al., 2020. No data for Slovenia.*

Interestingly, as shown in graph 4, Employees with third-level degrees and those residing in cities or city suburbs were much more likely to telework than others post-outbreak; this has also been observed before the outbreak. Moreover, higher-skilled workers, workers without children, and those younger than 50 years are more willing to telework.

These data underline the issue of work-life balance: the home with children is not the best place to work in.

Another interesting survey, developed by Eurofound (2020), is titled: "Living, working and COVID-19". It has been carried out during the lockdown (April 2020) and in phase 2 (July 2020), when many countries were starting to relax the restrictions. The results show that working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic has been considered positive for the majority of employees who did so: 78% of employees in the July round of the e-survey indicated a preference for working from home at least occasionally if there were no Covid-19 restrictions (Graph 5). A positive correlation occurs those who regularly experienced teleworking before the pandemic has indicated a preference for teleworking post-crisis and at a greater frequency.

Graph 5 – Preference regarding the regularity of working from home if there were no COVID-19 restrictions, by teleworking status, EU27 (%)
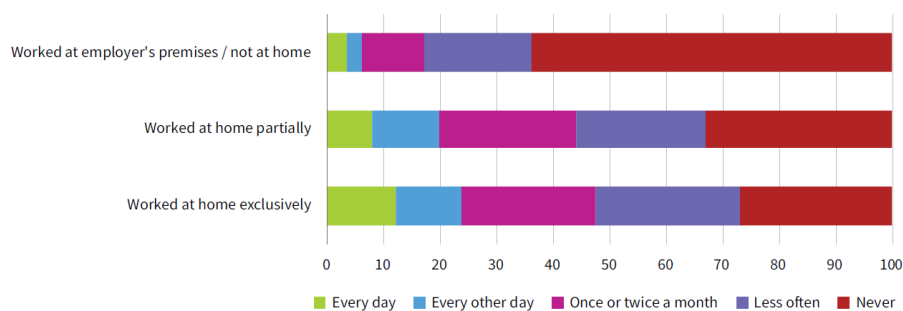


*Source: Eurofound, 2020*

The focus on Italy shows that the Covid-19 crisis massively increased teleworking. A recent report by the Osservatorio Smart working of the Politecnico di Milano (2020) has underlined that the number of smart workers in 2013-2019 has increased, almost quadrupled (Graph 6) (for a review, see also Oliva et al., 2020). Besides, during the pandemic (March 2020), the number of remote workers grew to 6,580,000[34].

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[34] OSSERVATORIO SMART WORKING. *Smart working: Il future del lavoro oltre l'emergenza.* Politecnico di Milano, Dip. Di Ingegneria Gestionale, 2020, November.

Graph 6 – Number of smart workers in Italy (2013-2019)
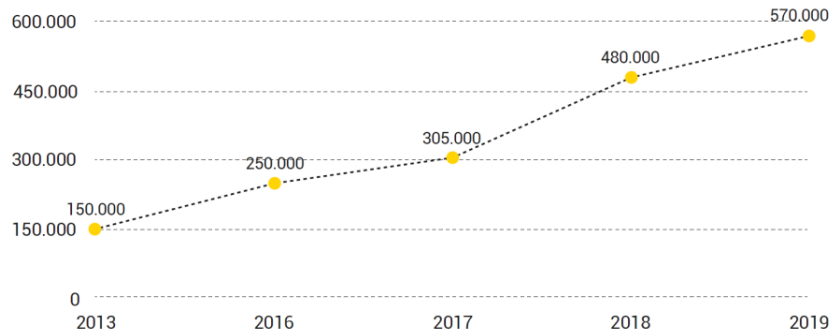


*Source: Oliva et al., 2020*

According to an ISTAT's ad hoc report[35] on the Italian situation, agile working at the end of May 2020 had been "introduced or extended from 18.3% of micro-enterprises" to 90% for large companies. Furthermore, it could also become a stable reality in the post-Covid era: according to a survey conducted by Demia[36], 84% of top managers expect smart working to be permanently introduced at the end of this crisis.

All those data arise the need for a more precise definition of the different typologies of workers and working modalities, which will be unpacked in the next section.

## 3. Remote working, teleworking, smart-working and the new role of coworking space

As previously stated, during the pandemic, the share of people working remotely (from home or elsewhere) increased, and the working practice

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[35] ISTAT. *L'organizzazione del lavoro in Italia: Orari, luoghi, grado di autonomia.* Retrieved from https://www.istat.it/it/files//2020/09/Report-organizzazione-lavoro-Istat-Eurostat-29-09-2020.pdf, 2020, September.

[36] DEMIA. *Smart Working Survey.* Hermes Consulting. Retrieved from: https://www.hermesconsulting.it/portfolio/report-survey-covid-19/, 2020, April.

of smart working has become part of our everyday life[37]. Distributed and flexible working methods, such as remote working, teleworking, smart-working, and working from home, are defined in Table 1. Each relates to the spatial distribution of work and is interrelated with, inevitably, some degree of overlapping.

Table 1 – Description of emergent and flexible ways of working, spatial patterns and type of workers for each category.

|  | Remote working | Teleworking | Smart or "agile" working | Working from home |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | Describes a situation where the work is wholly or partly carried out at an alternative worksite than the default place of work[38]. | Subcategory of remote work. Although there is no internationally recognised definition, it is often considered a form of organising and/or performing work remotely, using information technology such as computers, tablets or mobile phones. | Describes a situation where the work is partly carried out in the office and partly remotely to accommodate who needs to balance work and family commitments [1] [39]. | refers to work that takes place wholly or partly within the worker's own home. Unlike the concepts of "remote work" and "telework", the concept of "working from home" is independent of the default place of work [2] [40]. |

[37] E. D'A<span style="font-variant:small-caps">cunto</span>. *Effetto smart working (a piccole dosi): Si vive e si lavora meglio*. Il Sole 24 Ore. Retrieved from https://www.econopoly.ilsole24ore.com/2020/05/20/effetto-smart-working-a-piccole-dosi-si-vive-e-si-lavora-meglio/, 2020, May.
[38] ILO. *Defining and measuring remote work, telework, work at home and home-based work*. ILO policy brief. Retrieve from https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/employment/, 2020.
[39] T. W<span style="font-variant:small-caps">eber</span>, J. H<span style="font-variant:small-caps">urley</span>, I. M<span style="font-variant:small-caps">andl</span>, M. B<span style="font-variant:small-caps">isello</span>, C. V<span style="font-variant:small-caps">acas</span>-S<span style="font-variant:small-caps">oriano</span>. *Labour market change: Trends and policy approach towards flexibilisation.* Challenges and prospects in the EU series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020.
[40] ILO. *Defining and measuring remote work, telework, work at home and home-based work*. ILO policy brief. Retrieve from https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/employment/, 2020.

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Spatial patterns** | In principle, remote working could be done anywhere and not necessarily in the worker's home (e.g. in a third-party hub or shared office, while travelling or on the road) [3] ([41]). | Based on Huws (1997) [4] ([42]) it is possible to identify four typologies of telework based on location choice: a) Multi-site telework; b) Tele-home working or teleworking from home; c) Teleworking from a fix location or *freelance telework*; iv) Teleworking from multiple location or *mobile-telework.* | Smart working entails, allowing the employee to decide […] to organise his/her own professional activities […] freely electing his/her workplace as an alternative to company premises, which may be his/her own home, as well as a coworking space or, more simply, a standard public library [5] ([43]). | From home or temporary relocation, where "*working from home is becoming working from any home*" [6] ( [44]). |
| **Type of worker** | Both dependent workers (such as employees and dependent contractors) and independent workers if they perform part or all of their work away from their default worksite [7] ([45]). | The concept of telework is including both employees and self-employed or freelancers [8] ([46]). | The concept of smart working or 'agile working' is mainly related to employees only([47]). | Both independent and dependent workers can be "working from home" – e.g. employees who perform home-based remote work, as well as self-employed engaged in artisanal production or industrial piece-rate. production carried out from home([48]). |

*Source: Authors' elaboration*

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([41]) M. SOSTERO, S. MILASI, J. HURLEY, E. FERNANDEZ-MARCIAS, M. BISELLO, *op. cit.*

([42]) U. HUWS. *Teleworking: Guidelines for Good Practice*. IES Report 329. Grantham Book Services, Isaac Newton Way, Alma Park Industrial Estate, Grantham, 1997

([43]) D.E.G.W. METHODOS. *Una bussola per il viaggio*. Harvard Business Review, 2015, 6-7.

([44]) AIRBNB. *Work from Anywhere: How Airbnb & Guests are Approaching Remote Working.* Retrieved from https://news.airbnb.com/work-from-anywhere-how-airbnb-guests-are-approaching-remote-working/, 2020, August.

([45]) I. MANDL, M. CURTARELLI, S. RISO, O. VARGAS, E. GEROGIANNIS. *New forms of employment.* Publications Office of the European Union, 2015.

([46]) J. MESSENGER, O. VARGAS LLAVE, L. GSCHWIND, S. BOEHMER, G. VERMEYLEN, M. WILKENS. *Working anytime, anywhere: The effects on the world of work.* Publications Office of the European Union and the International Labour Office. Retrieved from http://eurofound.link/ef1658. 2017, 2020.

([47]) C. TAGLIARO, A. CIARAMELLA. *Experiencing smart working: a case study on workplace change management in Italy.* Journal of Corporate Real Estate, 18(3), 2016, 194-208.

([48]) M. SOSTERO, S. MILASI, J. HURLEY, E. FERNANDEZ-MARCIAS, M. BISELLO, *op. cit.*

As per Table 1, it is clear that remote working is an umbrella term which refers to work anywhere than the default place of work, including in its meaning the more specific categories of teleworking, smart or agile working and working from home. Regarding those categories, they mainly vary in terms of workers and location patterns. Referring to the former, smart working is referred mostly to employees with a stable contract with a company, while self-employed or freelancers used to telework and working from home. Referring to location choice, smart-working and working from home is mainly carried out within the domestic sphere, while teleworking refers to a more complex concept of working from anywhere. It is possible to identify four typologies of telework based on location choice ([49]).Regarding those declinations of teleworking location, Teleworking from a fixed location or freelance telework highlights that teleworkers might consider relocating themselves into a Third place([50]) to enhance their performance, well-being, and quality of life. Among the Third places, it is worth acknowledging that CSs is the preferred choice for the majority of remote workers([51])

Within this context, the CS represents a valuable alternative for remote workers because it offers: 1) access to adequate technology, 2) reduce risks of isolation, 3) reduce costs for the employee (for example, by providing access to a cheaper habitat, or by reducing commuting times), 4) improve job satisfaction and well-being, 5) enhance work-life balance([52]).

The CS represents one of the well-known collaborative workspace models and is a relatively new phenomenon reflecting a broader change in the contemporary economy: from predominantly corporate environments to a more fluid way of working based on networks and collaborations([53]). CSs meet the demand for dematerialisation and

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([49]) U. HUWS. *op. cit.*

([50]) R. OLDENBURG. *op. cit.*

([51]) J. MERKEL. *Coworking in the city. Ephemera.* 15(2), 2015, 121-139.

([52]) I. MANZINI CEINAR, I. MARIOTTI. *The effects of Covid-19 on coworking spaces: patterns and future trends*, cit.

([53]) M. AKHAVAN. *Third places for work: A comprehensive review of the literature on coworking spaces and maker spaces*, in Mariotti I., Di Vita S., Akhavan M., eds., *New workplaces: Location patterns, urban effects and development trajectories. A worldwide investigation*, Springer, forthcoming 2021.

fragmentation of both spatial and functional work([54]), facing the meeting's needs, particularly the needs of the so-called digital nomads in the tertiary sector([55]). Coworking is characterised by flexibility of access according to individual time preferences, diversity of functions, and domestic and working atmosphere. It stimulates the exchange of knowledge, prevents individual workers' isolation, and nurtures a sense of place and local community([56]). According to the literature, CSs represent "open-plan office environments in which [professionals] work alongside other unaffiliated professionals for a fee"([57]). The definition of coworking spaces soon related to a 'milieu' for collaboration and knowledge sharing([58]), where unrelated people relate in an 'inclusively sociable atmosphere, offering both the basis of community and celebration of it'([59]). A place where self-employed workers, freelancers, innovative start-ups and businesses can interact, thus reducing the risks of isolation([60]), and increase the opportunities for meeting and the exchange of knowledge and experience, with the purpose to foster a sense of local place and community([61]).

When coworking emerged in the mid-2000, it was characterised by small and independent workspaces([62]) to face the economic recession and its consequences.

Spiral Muse founded in San Francisco or Betahaus in Berlin has been built on these premises. They represent the first wave of CSs([63]), or

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([54]) G. FRIEDMAN. *Workers without employers: shadow corporations and the rise of the gig economy.* Review of Keynesian Economics, *02*(02), 2014, 171-188.

([55]) A. GANDINI. *The rise of coworking spaces: A literature review*, cit.

([56]) L. E. GARRETT, G. M. SPREITZER, P. A. BACEVICE. *Co-constructing a sense of community at work: The emergence of community in coworking spaces*. Organization Studies, *38*(6), 2017, 821-842.

([57]) C. SPINUZZI. *Working alone together: coworking as emergent collaborative activity*. Journal of Business and Technical Communication, *26*(4), 2012, 400-441.

([58]) B. MORISET. *Building new places of the creative economy. The rise of coworking spaces.* The rise of coworking spaces. 2014.

([59]) R. OLDENBURG. *op. cit.*

([60]) J. MERKEL. *Cultural Entrepreneurship.* 2018.

([61]) I. MARIOTTI, M. AKHAVAN. *Exploring proximities in coworking spaces: evidence from Italy,* cit.

([62]) V. AVDIKOS, E. ILIOPOULOU. Community-led Coworking spaces: From co-location to collaboration and collectivization. In *Creative Hubs in Question*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, 111-129.

'avant-garde' phase characterised by a grassroots communitarian ethos. In 2011, Kwiatkowski and Buczynski([64]) defined the first wave of CSs by five central values: collaboration (cooperate and co-create shared values), community (intangible benefits, shared objectives), sustainability (offset the environmental footprint of the space), openness (knowledge exchange, information and people), and accessibility (both financially and physically).

Recently, there has been an increase of commercialisation and neoliberal trends by expanding corporate offices working globally and real estate developers (such as WeWork, Regus, etc.) into coworking. Increasingly, medium-sized CSs adapt themselves from the open-plan office to dedicated office spaces to accommodate industry-led companies. Neo-corporate spaces([65])are more embedded into the start-up ecosystem and aim to foster business growth among their coworkers and businesses. Despite the neo-corporate booms of commercialisation and top-down logics of space sharing, the presence of independently managed spaces, or community-led CSs([66]), whose purpose is to benefit the local context, has remained a key component. This third wave of CSs, or 'resilient spaces'([65]) embraces the evolution of work in the direction of flexibility and independence. These coworking typologies fulfill different roles within the urban environment and the local economy, attracting different groups of users into their spaces.

Due to their bottom-up nature and less stable economic sources of funding, community-led or entrepreneurial-led CSs have been mostly affected by the Covid-19 impact. However, studies revealed that community-led CSs have more potential in the long term for providing spatial alternatives to remote workers who want to escape from the city

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([63]) C. FOERTSCH, R. CAGNOL. *The history of coworking in a timeline.* Retrieved from http://www.deskmag.com/en/the-history-of-coworking-spaces-in-a-timeline,　2016, 2016, October.

([64]) A. KWIATKOWSKI, B. BUCZYNSKI. *Coworking: How freelancers escape the coffee shop office.* Fort Collins, 2011.

([65]) A. GANDINI, A. COSSU. *The third wave of coworking: 'Neo-corporate' model versus 'resilient' practice.* European Journal of Cultural Studies, 2019, 1-18.

([66]) V. AVDIKOS, J. MERKEL. *Supporting open, shared and collaborative workspaces and hubs: recent transformations and policy implications*. *Urban Research & Practice*, *13*(3), 2020, 348-357.

center and companies for relocating their employees([67]). This leads to a partial displacement of people from the metropolis in favor of the suburbs and rural areas. Besides, many of those who had previously relocated to the north in search of more job opportunities now have the chance to return to their home cities while maintaining their jobs and save money in more affordable locations. Since the pandemic is still ongoing, both companies and self-employed workers experience multiple and diverse working solutions to allow physical distancing and lowered costs([68]), including remote working options and diffuse working locations, thanks to CSs.

Among the existing cases of an innovative model of CSs hosting remote workers, some experimental trends emerged during Covid-19, such as the use of public CSs in urban areas to de-densify public services, concerning for instance primary schools and public administrations' offices in Italy, such as the *Progetto Scuola Diffusa* (Diffused School Project) in Reggio Emilia, or public libraries in Finland([69]). Others innovative approaches have emerged in the hotel sector which is offering 'mobile offices'([70])([71]) and rooms for work-related activities([72]), while the municipality of Milan has sponsored 65 CSs where you can book workstations through an app, transforming the city into a widespread office during the months of the pandemic. Moreover, some more flexible working spaces acting locally have recently caught on and might represent an excellent alternative to fight isolation and provide a convivial environment favoring collaborative communities and mutual support. The promotion of a "local coworking model" has emerged, firstly to support residents but also to host telecommuters escaping from cities. A local coworking can be

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([67]) I. MARIOTTI, D. DI MATTEO. *Coworking in emergenza Covid-19: quali effetti per le aree periferiche?*, cit.

([68]) I. MANZINI CEINAR, I. MARIOTTI. *The effects of Covid-19 on coworking spaces: patterns and future trends*, cit.

([69]) M. DI MARINO, J. LILIUS, K. LAPINTIE. *New forms of multi-local working: identifying multi-locality in planning as well as public and private organisations' strategies in the Helsinki region.* European Planning Studies, *26*(10), 2018, 2015-2035.

([70]) AIRBNB, *op, cit.*

([71]) I. VUOKKO, I. KOJO, S. NENONEN. *Places for multi-locational work – opportunities for facilities management.* Facilities, *33*(2), 2015, 20-37.

([72]) F. SCULLICA, E. ELGANI. *Living, Working and Travelling. New Processes of Hybridisation for the Spaces of Hospitality and Work.* Franco Angeli Editore, 2009.

conceived as a hybrid space($^{73}$)between a shared office and a community space, which aims to provide community support, affordable workspace and work opportunities firstly to residents, and attract teleworkers living in other areas. In London, the concept of local CS is boosted and promoted by the several communities, and many local CSs are spreading in residential areas, such as the Good Club Neighbourhood Work Club, which residents have created to support their community in pandemic times. However, the London Municipality aims at containing the 'moving out' trends, encouraging small businesses, especially those in the arts sector, to return to the city centre and support the London's economy through pandemic times($^{74}$). The City of London Corporation has drafted a plan to underpin flexible working and affordable workspaces through season travelcards for rail travel in line with new commuter behavior to accommodate remote working. Along with the incentives for commuting, Arup($^{74}$) states that the built form needs to be rethought for remote working practices, with spaces to socialise and meet. At the same time, Fosters + Partners company($^{75}$) predicts that vacant properties on high streets could become a diffuse network of small-scale local CSs to provide a much-needed change of scene from working in our homes.

## 4.  Emerging patterns and different territorial contexts

The promotion of agile or smart work has a tangible effect on our cities and could, in the future, change their urban layout. It is no longer necessary to reconcile the place of residence with the place of work with smart working. This may lead to a partial displacement of people

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($^{73}$) A. Migliore, I. Manzini Ceinar, C. Tagliaro. *Beyond coworking: from flexible to hybrid spaces*, in Orel, M., Dvouletý, O., Ratten, V. (Eds.). *The flexible workplace: Coworking and other modern workplace transformations*. Springer Nature, forthcoming 2021.
($^{74}$) O. Wyman. *Financial Times: London Recharged Report.* Retrieved from https://www.oliverwyman.com/media-center/2020/oct/london-recharged.html, 2020, October.

($^{75}$) Foster + Partners. *Tactical Urbanism: Reimagining Our Cities post-Covid-19.* Retrieved from https://www.fosterandpartners.com/plus/tactical-urbanism/, 2020, May.

from the metropolis in favor of the suburbs and rural areas. Besides, many of those who had previously relocated to the core area in search of more job opportunities now have the opportunity to return to their home cities while maintaining their jobs. Moving from the background discussed in the preceding sections, it appears increasingly clear that the evolution patterns of the concentration or distribution of work are not proceeding incrementally but in an extremely disruptive way. Latent changes, which have been years in the making, may become the new normal in just a few months. After the quick and far from perfect adaptation triggered by the pandemic outbreak all along 2020, the pace and progression of the emergency in different parts of the world has caused a very different type of tests and experimentations of new work patterns and has therefore permitted some first assessments of their effects([76]).

Even if the abrupt shift to distributed (or remote) work patterns has been visible worldwide, the emerging phenomenon is by no means unitary. On the contrary, in each case, we deal with a single, specific type of effect, highly contextual, and related to the possible potential matches between different types of territories and different types of remote working models. Thus, moving from the current emergency to a future medium-term reorganisation, very different models will probably emerge.

Concerning different remote working models, depending on how much distributed or concentrated they are, if working outside of the leading company offices will be, and weekly, monthly, and yearly calendars of remote working they will adopt, the effects may be quite different anticipated in the previous sections. The working model of an employee in a large organisation, who lives in a suburban area and needs to meet colleagues and supervisors in person once or twice a week will be significantly different from that of a digital nomad, a freelance worker frequently changing location and cities.

Thus, we imagine that the concentration or distribution patterns will be highly selective, job- and locality-specific. Looking at the possible evolution from the perspective of employers and of workers, the main

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drivers, jointly with the features of local contexts, will be the role played by the need for synchronous or asynchronous modes of communication and the level of importance of the physical context for each type of activity.

Looking at the spatial dimension, even restraining our perspective to Europe, the possible reorganization patterns will be very different in dense and hyper-connected metropolitan cores[77], suburban regions, rural areas, marginal or inner areas, tourist resorts, etc. This depends on the evolutionary pattern of each territorial configuration and on the formal and dimensional matrixes of what can be called post-metropolitan territories[78][79][80].

Urban cores are characterised by high densities, not just in terms of population, but also in activities, functions, services, etc. They usually concentrate high-end jobs and services and an array of low-skill jobs, mainly in the service sectors. In the last few years, they witnessed a further concentration of employment, investment, and innovation worldwide[81][82]. They are formed of very different components, from CBDs to working-class peripheral or inner-city neighborhoods, and therefore by very different density and connectivity patterns.

Suburban regions, in turn, are characterised by lower density urbanisation, based mainly on the connection networks with major urban centres, and with distinct patterns of the relative concentration of functions (large retail and other services, production and manufacturing) in some nodes, within a more or less regular lower density fabric, mostly residential. This spatial pattern, characterised in some cases by polycentric urbanisation patterns, in other cases by a more pronounced dependency on a central metropolitan core, usually implies a significant presence of commuters, with diverse commuting

[77] S. Hamidi, S. Sabouri, R. Ewing. *Does Density Aggravate the COVID-19 Pandemic?* Journal of the American Planning Association, *86*(4), 2020, 495-509.

[78] E. Soja. *Post-Metropolis*. Critical Studies of Cities and Regions, Oxford and Malden, Blackwell. 2000.

[79] A. Balducci, V. Fedeli, F. Curci. *Oltre la metropoli.* L'urbanizzazione regionale in Italia, Guerini Associati, 2017.

[80] A. Balducci, F. Curci, V. Fedeli. *L'urbano che cambia oltre le città e le metropoli. Un contributo dal contesto italiano*. Contesti. Città, Territori, Progetti, 2019, 52-63.

[81] S. Sassen. *The Global City*. Princeton University Press, 2001.

[82] S. Sassen. *Cities in a World Economy*. Sage, 5th edition, 2018.

patterns concerning their activity and the means of transport used. In general, the functional connections with an urban core are quite strict.

Finally, rural and peripheral areas are those areas remote from primary metropolitan nodes, characterised by problems of accessibility, very frequently by shrinking demographics, ageing population, lack of (even essential) services, but also by the prosperous environmental, landscape and cultural resources both material and immaterial, which are legacy of the long development history and trajectories. Moreover, these areas tend to be characterised, even more than the others, by the diffused presence of abandoned or underused building stock.

Therefore, these different spatial and territorial configurations will have particular effects in terms of the new workspaces that will be needed, be they first, second or third places[83], or a hybrid between the former. In particular, the specific arrangements in terms of territorial settings, characters of the built environment and real estate, production models, forms of local society organisation[84][85] and the specific emerging needs in terms of supply and demand of jobs will possibly shape very different *workplace landscapes*, influenced by each of these variables and drivers. The areas and communities which will be involved in this trend towards territorial reorganisation will be those with specific essential pre-requisites or endowments, such as good quality education opportunities, healthcare and transport links, also in relation with the weight of working from home possibilities, related to the type of job and the features of the residence[86].

This will also happen in relation with the reorganisation of cities and territories based on proximity[87], an emerging issue in the wake of the pandemic, which has nevertheless a long tradition in the history of urban planning thought and practice all along the Twentieth century, from the modernist satellite cities and autonomous neighbourhoods to

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[83] R. OLDENBURG. *op. cit.*

[84] A. BAGNASCO. *Tre Italie. La problematica territoriale dello sviluppo italiano*, Il Mulino, 1977.

[85] A. BAGNASCO. *Fatti sociali formati nello spazio*. Cinque lezioni di sociologia urbana e rurale, Angeli, 1994.

[86] S. HEROY, I. LOAIZA, A. PENTLAND, N. O'CLERY. *Controlling COVID-19: Labor structure is more important than lockdown policy,* Cornell University Press, 2020.

[87] G. FERRI, E. MANZINI. *Abitare la prossimità: la città dei 15 minuti non è la città dei borghi*. Retrieved from https://www.che-fare.com/abitare-prossimita-citta-15-minuti-borghi/, 2020.

New Urbanism utopias of walkable cities and suburbs([88]). From the perspective of possible future local communities, based on proximity models, we can imagine more synchronous daily life models, a different type of experiences of physical contexts, and an emerging need for more shared spaces.

Moving from these very first notes, which will need to be substantiated by further research, we can foresee very different scenarios that will open up in the next months and years. All this will imply the need for hybrid workspaces([89]) able to cater to the emerging needs of workers and employers, in which possibly the idea of coworking, as well as that of remote and smart working, will be profoundly re-interpreted.

## 5. Conclusions

Shared workspaces will radically change their function, organisation, diffusion and system of relationships in the near future. Moving from the emerging trends we have introduced and discussed in the preceding sections, it is possible to imagine possible directions along which such workspaces will develop and some trends that will characterise these developments.

Firstly, it is possible to imagine that there will be some re-distribution of people and jobs in the territory. Possibly, such re-distribution will not be even, but it will be a complex mix of concentration and diffusion, in which the re-distribution of the population will follow highly selective paths, even if very different from the ones that characterised the pre-Covid19 workspace domain. Here, initial endowments of different localities in terms of assets and services critical for a population on the move, such as physical accessibility, but also good connectivity, diffused childcare opportunities, high-level education, quality healthcare, etc., coupled with environmental conditions (in terms of landscape, nature, outdoor activities, etc.) will play a significant role, and here the role of policy strategies will be vital.

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([88]) A. DUANY, E. PLATER-ZYBERK, J.SPECK. S*uburban Nation. The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream,* North Point Press, 2000.
([89]) I. MARIOTTI, M. DI MARINO, M. AKHAVAN. *The emergence of coworking models in the face of pandemic*, cit.

Looking towards these trends, we can imagine a scenario based on proximity forms, not just in the dense metropolitan cores, but also in other types of territories. If this will be the scenario, the population will be more evenly distributed (even if, as is evident, not perfectly evenly, due to the different conditions of accessibility and resource endowments) and the question will be how to supply all these areas with effective, efficient and equal opportunities in terms of jobs and services. Shared workspaces might be diffused in different forms: traditional CSs catering for freelancers and knowledge workers, but also workspaces in which employees from large organisations (public and private) will spend part of their working week, hybrid spaces based on peculiar combinations of locally required services (related to both jobs and care) third spaces based on some form of everyday recreational activities[90], and many others.

Such shared workspaces can play a crucial role in the transformation process of cities and regions[91]. hosting the relocated remote workers and helping them to plug into the local scene[92][93] as well as becoming a lifeline for small businesses that operate in the periphery[94]. As recent research on Emilia-Romagna underlines, "these spaces will be able to play an important supporting role for all those workers who, due to the economic crisis, will need a community to welcome and support them, both functionally (contacts, opportunities) and emotionally (mutual support), in a phase of professional reconversion, start and/or relaunch of their working career. Therefore, it seems important for policymakers to try to understand how to exploit even more the potential of these spaces (which in most cases already

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[90] R. OLDENBURG. *op. cit.*

[91] I. MANZINI CEINAR, I. MARIOTTI. *The effects of Covid-19 on coworking spaces: patterns and future trends*, cit.

[92] D. STRANGLER. *Here Are Three Reasons COVID-19 Makes Coworking Spaces Even More Important.* Forbes, 2020, April.

[93] I. MARIOTTI, D. DI MATTEO. *Coworking in emergenza Covid-19: quali effetti per le aree periferiche?* cit.

[94] B. KATZ, M. SAADINE, C. HIGGINS. Saving small business: *Supersize the local role.* Retrieved from https://www.thenewlocalism.com/newsletter/saving-small-business-supersize-the-local-role/, 2020, April.

receive public funding) in terms of welfare and economic development actions'([95]).

## Acknowledgements

## Abstract

**Modelli di lavoro emergenti e contesti territoriali: tendenze per il settore del coworking nella ripresa dalla pandemia**

*Obiettivi: L'articolo si propone di esplorare la domanda di potenziali utilizzatori e l'offerta di spazi di lavoro (i.e spazi di coworking) che si sono sviluppate durante la pandemia Covid-19. Viene discusso se e come il modello di spazio di coworking sta cambiando per rispondere a queste nuove esigenze, e quali sono le implicazioni spaziali e politiche correlate a tali cambiamenti. **Metodologia**: Lo studio abbraccia un approccio qualitativo che esplora la letteratura esistente sulle dinamiche emergenti nel campo del lavoro, partendo da una panoramica delle tendenze recenti in Europa basata sulle indagini internazionali esistenti. **Risultati**: Nuovi possibili scenari possono essere basati su diverse forme di prossimità, non solo nei densi nuclei metropolitani, ma anche in altri tipi di territori, dove la popolazione può decidere di ridistribuire selettivamente, e la questione sarà come fornire a tutte queste aree opportunità efficaci, efficienti e pari opportunità in termini di posti di lavoro e servizi. Lo studio evidenzia la diffusione di spazi di lavoro condivisi in diverse forme: i tradizionali spazi di coworking per i liberi professionisti e i lavoratori della conoscenza, ma anche spazi di lavoro in cui i dipendenti di grandi organizzazioni (pubbliche e private) trascorreranno parte della loro settimana lavorativa, spazi ibridi basati su particolari combinazioni di servizi richiesti*

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[95] A. SCAPOLAN, F. MONTANARI. *Come co-working ed incubatori possono superare il Coronavirus*. CheFare. Retrieved from https://www.che-fare.com/spazi-collaborativi-tempo-covid/, 2020.

*localmente (legati sia al lavoro che all'assistenza), spazi di terzo livello basati su qualche forma di attività ricreativa quotidiana, e molti altri. **Limiti e implicazioni**: La pandemia è ancora in corso e, poiché il documento si concentra sulla revisione della letteratura esistente e sulle indagini in un contesto in evoluzione, il suo principale limite è la capacità di raccogliere dati verificabili e aggiornati. **Originalità**: l'originalità dell'articolo sta nella prefigurazione di una serie di direzioni di sviluppo che riguardano il rapporto tra pratiche di lavoro e spazi collaborativi in diversi territori, esplorando come le dinamiche locali e diffuse possano essere l'opportunità per una potenziale trasformazione dei modelli di lavoro.*

***Parole chiave:*** *lavoro a distanza, spazi di coworking, territori post-metropolitani, Covid-19*

**Emerging work patterns and different territorial contexts: trends for the coworking sector in pandemic recovery**

***Objectives:*** *The paper aims to explore and unpack the complexity of coworking's users and supply (i.e. coworking spaces), based on the recent trends caused by Covid-19. It is discussed whether and how coworking's environment increases its diversification in terms of users and the spatial and policy implications linked to this shift. **Methodology:** The study embraces a qualitative approach exploring the existing literature on the emerging dynamics in the field of work, moving from an overview of recent trends across Europe based on existing international surveys. **Results:** New possible scenarios may be based on different forms of proximity, not just in the dense metropolitan cores, but also in other types of territories, where the population may decide to selectively re-distribute, and the question will be how to supply all these areas with effective, efficient and equal opportunities in terms of jobs and services. The study highlights the diffusion of shared workspaces in different forms: traditional coworking spaces catering for freelancers and knowledge workers, but also workspaces in which employees from large organisations (public and private) will spend part of their working week, hybrid spaces based on peculiar combinations of locally required services (related to both jobs and care), third-spaces based on some form of everyday recreational activities, and many others. **Limits and implications:** The pandemic is still ongoing and, since the paper focuses on the review of existing literature and surveys in a changing context, its main limitation is the ability to collect verifiable and up-to-date data. **Originality:** The paper's uniqueness lies in the prefiguration of a range of development directions concerning the relationship between work practices and collaborative spaces in different territories, exploring how local and diffused dynamics might be the opportunity for a potential transformation of work patterns.*

***Keywords:*** *remote working, coworking spaces, post-metropolitan territories, Covid-19*