

Transforming work environments: Unveiling the dynamics and impacts of coworking spaces

***Working beyond boundaries: Redefining work modes and
spaces across geographies dossier editorial***

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This thematic dossier presented in issue 46 of *CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios* is the outcome of extensive research focusing on the global emergence and evolution of new working spaces driven by technological advancements and transformations in the world of work, such as the rise of non-standard employment forms and increased flexibility in work arrangements. These spaces, mainly under the large umbrella of the 'coworking' designation, have arisen mostly as a response to the need for accommodating independent workers, providing them with a conducive environment for work, collaboration, and social interaction, aiming to alleviate issues like work-life balance and social isolation (Merkel, 2015). This workforce, particularly those in knowledge-based professions, exhibits a preference for mobile, multilocal, remote, flexible, distributed, and virtual modes of work (Kojo & Nenonen, 2016). Empowered by technology, these individuals are able to choose when and where they work, enabling a greater degree of flexibility and autonomy. However, more studies are needed on topics such as wellbeing, quality of life, and working conditions of non-standard employment arrangements. Over the past decade, the number of coworking spaces has experienced significant growth, attracting an increasingly heterogeneous set of users, including remote workers, companies, and operators. As these spaces continue to evolve, they have become more hybrid in nature, combining a variety of activities, sector, functions and/or spatial configurations (Tomaz & Tabrizi, forthcoming; Waters-Lynch et al., 2016).

Global events such as the 2008 economic and financial crisis and the recent COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to the rise of remote work. Despite several challenges, there seems to be an opportunity here for CWS, which has demonstrated resilient and adaptive capacities to changing conditions. CWS are expected to continue expanding in the future, even beyond large urban areas (Bosworth et al., 2023; Gandini & Cossu, 2019; Tomaz et al., 2022). So, by examining different dynamics and impacts of CWS, this dossier provides valuable insights to drive future advancements and inform policymakers, urban planners, and many other stakeholders about the changing landscape of work environments. This dossier collects research conducted within the COST Action CA18214, "The Geography of New Working Spaces and the Impact on the Periphery (comeINperiphery)".

The first article (Ciccarelli, 2023) examines the role of CWS in shaping the quality of working life (QWL) and wellbeing of workers, given the still limited research available. It draws on a systematic analysis of academic literature, utilizing Walton's QWL framework as a guiding structure. It emphasizes the socio-material perspective, considering the interplay between the material and social aspects of CWS in contributing to workers' wellbeing. The findings highlight that CWS play a quasi-organizational role, replicating the traditional employer role and impacting various aspects of workers' QWL, ultimately influencing their overall wellbeing. Various key factors are identified as contributing to CWS' influence, such as material features of the spaces, provided services, work culture, host curation activities, coworking members, and their intricate interrelationships. Therefore, the article defines wellbeing at work and QWL and discusses their applicability in the contemporary work context of CWS. Moreover, it confirms their impact on the micro-scale of individuals' work and lifestyles, highlighting the need for a holistic approach that considers the physical, technological, and social elements of workspaces.

The presence of CWS is predominantly concentrated in the city centres of large urban areas. This spatial distribution significantly impacts urban revitalization trends and leads to small-scale physical transformations within these areas (e.g., Mariotti et al., 2017; Vogl & Akhavan, 2022). However, it is essential to note that each city may exhibit a unique pattern of CWS location, as the city's spatial structure influences the clustering and distribution of these spaces (Mendez-Ortega et al., 2022). Based on this extensive discussion, this dossier's second (Tomaz & Henriques., 2023) and third (Mavitan & Baycan, 2023) articles carry out an in-depth analysis of two case studies: Lisbon (Portugal) and Istanbul (Turkey). These articles contribute to an understanding of the factors influencing the location of CWS, examining their impacts on specific urban areas. The insights from these studies offer valuable information for urban planning and development strategies, allowing for informed decisions regarding the integration and promotion of coworking spaces in urban contexts.

The Lisbon case study investigates the emergence, development, and localization of CWS over the past decades. The results show a significant growth in the number of CWS, and particularly after 2018,, resulting in a diversity of spaces, operators, and practices. The study also identifies spatial distribution patterns, with the main areas of office provision and with greater accessibility of

transportation attracting the majority of CWS spaces. However, regenerating areas in the city are particularly conducive to locating CWS for cultural and creative activities. This research highlights the importance of understanding the interaction between local government strategies and private initiatives in the expansion of CWS in the context of city development and planning.

The Istanbul case study examines the various types of CWS in the changing urban environment of Istanbul, which has received limited attention in the literature. The study analyses 20 CWS in the city. The findings reveal that these spaces exhibit diverse characteristics, leading to the identification of four distinct types, which are indicative of distinctive features: chain CWS, lifestyle CWS, community-oriented CWS, and service-oriented CWS. The analysis highlights the significance of both physical and non-physical structures in differentiating these types, including factors such as communication, decision-making, organization, and management, as well as the financial, community, and partnership structures. The study suggests that the approach to communication, decision-making, and organization and management influences not only the non-physical structures but also the physical structure, financial structure, community structure, and partnership structure of CWS.

Finally, a book review of *The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Future of Working Spaces* (2022) edited by Mariotti, Di Marino, and Bednář, is included. This publication offers valuable insights into the impact of the pandemic on working spaces, providing a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and potential transformations brought about by the global crisis.

To further explore the genuine principles and transformative potential of collaborative workspaces, an insightful interview with Ignasi Capdevila entitled “Collaborative Workspaces: Shaping the Future of Work, Innovation, and Sustainable Development” closes this dossier. The interview provides valuable perspectives on the role of CWS in driving innovation, supporting sustainable development, and shaping the future of work.

In conclusion, the thematic dossier ‘Transforming Work Environments: Unveiling the Dynamics and Impacts of Coworking Spaces’ emphasizes the significance of more comprehensive approaches in understanding the evolution and impact of coworking spaces across diverse geographies. The editors hope to have portrayed how CWS have emerged as alternatives to traditional offices and work-from-home arrangements, catering to the needs of a diversity of workers in non-standard work arrangements. The articles highlight the influence of CWS on the work and lifestyles of individuals in diverse urban environments.

Overall, the thematic dossier, leveraging on the fruitful connections and collaborations encouraged by the CA18214, enriches the existing body of knowledge on CWS and emphasizes the need for further research in this field. As this phenomenon continues to change, it is imperative to employ multidisciplinary approaches to examine its evolution in the intricate interplay between local and global dynamics. This work aims to enrich the existing body of knowledge by examining the meaning, multiple effects, and future implications of these new workspaces, which may be helpful for policy development.

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