


# Chapter 7

## Design for the Future of Work: A Theoretical Framework for Coworking Space Design

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### ABSTRACT

*The paradigm shift in work dynamics in the digital age leads the evolution of how and where people work. Knowledge workers adopt more flexible working styles: they connect to their laptops and work anywhere. The main disadvantage of this way of working is social isolation. Creative industries often require interdisciplinary interaction and collaboration. Coworking spaces have emerged in order to remove this isolation and create a third place apart from home and office. These spaces have been studied by disciplines such as economics, work psychology, and geography but studies on their spatial characteristics are limited. The aim of the chapter is to propose a conceptual framework to identify design implications for the coworking spaces in terms of spatial preferences of users. Accordingly, literature related to changing work dynamics and workplaces, rise of coworking spaces, and coworking space typology are discussed. The conclusion of the chapter is to propose design implications, which will inform designers, researchers, and managers on best practice for coworking space design.*

### INTRODUCTION

Knowledge work was mostly performed in offices in the past. However, globalization and advances in information technologies have changed the dynamics of work and the physical spaces where work is done; consequently new ways of anywhere working (multi-locational, distributed, mobile, virtual) have emerged (Kojo and Nenonen, 2016). As one of the locations that host these new ways of working, “coworking spaces” are shared workplaces used by knowledge workers who are often freelancers and at different levels of expertise in the vast area of the information industry. Coworking spaces are “third places”, where workers seek a sense of socialization, opportunities for serendipity, and networking en-

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counters to increase their social capital (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte and Isaac, 2016). Practically conceived as office-renting facilities where workers hire a desk and a Wi-Fi connection, these are places where independent professionals live their daily routines side-by-side with professional peers, mainly working in the same sector (Gandini, 2015). Beyond physical space, coworking spaces represent a new type of business organization and lifestyle.

The literature related to these spaces indicates that this is a multifaceted phenomenon investigated by disciplines like sociology, anthropology, psychology, geography, economy and urban planning. Sociologists and anthropologists (Jones et al., 2009; Gandini, 2015) evaluate the impact of coworking spaces on the careers and business lives of coworkers, the innovative role of these spaces in labor policies, and the place of proximity in information sharing. Geographers (Moriset, 2013) analyze this phenomenon based on its formation and the role of public policies in supporting these formations. Mariotti et al. (2017) evaluate coworking spaces in terms of their interaction with urban planning. Leclercq-Vandelannoitte and Isaac (2016) address coworking spaces from a management perspective, and Schmidt and Brinks (2017) examine these spaces in order to contribute to conceptualizing the relation of communities and space.

On the other hand, there are limited studies on these spaces concerning the disciplines of architecture and design. In one of these studies, Wagner and Watch (2017) suggest that designers and architects are increasingly tasked to redesign places to do more than simply accommodate innovation-centered activities; their main goals are to facilitate collaboration and to create communities and serendipitous encounters. Their research raises several design implications for innovation spaces. Weijs-Perrée et al. (2019) analyze user preferences for coworking space characteristics. Their research provides valuable data for managers of coworking spaces about coworker preferences by offering coworking spaces “with good accessibility, home-like interior and a semi-open layout”.

It is important to draw a theoretical framework for coworking space design (such as café-office, experimentation lab, learning center, work lab, airport office) to inform designers, owners and operators of these spaces. User profiles also vary according to coworking space typology. User-oriented design studies that have recently emerged in the field of design suggest that the user factor is one of the most important components of design (Oygur and McCoy, 2011; Sanoff, 2006). In this context, this chapter proposes a conceptual framework to identify design implications for coworking spaces in terms of spatial requirements of users. The chapter first examines changing work dynamics and workplaces, which involve the evolution of coworking spaces as an architectural reflection of the change in business organizations. It analyzes the rise of coworking spaces, which reveals the socio-economic factors that impact the development of coworking spaces. The literature review on coworking space typology, which includes classifications of coworking spaces described by different disciplines, is discussed and user profile, user preferences and design implications which will inform designers, researchers and managers on the best practice for coworking space design are determined in the conclusion of the chapter.

## **CHANGING WORK DYNAMICS AND WORKPLACES**

Workplaces have evolved depending on changes in work organizations and working styles in the historical process. Agricultural societies created workplaces like barns, storerooms and granaries. The transition into industrial societies brought the need for office spaces; consequently, workshops and factories were built in rural areas and skyscrapers were built in city centers. Workplaces have evolved under the influence of information technologies, and they have now progressed beyond office buildings through

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