Coworking Spaces, New Workplaces

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INTRODUCTION

While technologies now allow the emergence of new collaborative working environments, these new organizational methods, new spaces and new objectives also refer to a set of issues and challenges that are not yet well studied. However, they bring significant results without necessarily being costly or complex to put in place. However, research on coworking spaces is emerging and increasing every year.

This is precisely the basis of the originality and purpose of this chapter. After defining coworking, the chapter presents the implementation of coworking spaces, as well as the advantagesoffered by these places for the benefit of entrepreneurs, businesses and employees, but also the limits.

The challenges related to the emergence of these new collaborative environments as new ways of organizing work are also adressed. We also bring a critical look at the reality of the coworking phenomenon.

BACKGROUND

Coworking spaces are part of the category of third places. The study of third places emerged from the work of the sociologist Ray Oldenburg in the late 1980s. The author describes new places of life, neither the house, "first place," nor the company, "second place". Oldenburg is one of the first researchers to have conceptualized third places and especially coworking spaces. In his seminal work "Celebreting the Third Place" (2000), he suggests the existence of these places which would be at the heart of the vitality of societies and indispensable to the smooth functioning of modern democracies.

Third places (Good place), correspond to spaces that are neither in the private or the public sphere, but having characteristics that are common to the private sphere and the professional sphere. These places were originally created to revive social interactions in North American cities that were in economic decline. Since then, different authors have added some criteria to the definition, making it broader and thus including other circumstances (Smits, 2015) and other countries. Therefore, to be considered as a third-place, this place must be:

- Neutral (therefore neither at home nor at the employer's place), hence the third place (Oldenburg, 1989);
- Free access, therefore open to all without any restriction, especially as regards the type of activity done in this space (Oldenburg, 1999);
- Facilitating meetings and exchanges (the configuration of the place must be conducive to conversation, with the presence of meeting rooms in particular - or simply places of conviviality like that reserved for the coffee break or lunch (Guenoud, Moeckli, 2010);

With these first elements, one could for example imagine that cafes providing free wifi (such as Starbucks) could be considered as a third places. However, this is not the case, because to be considered as a third place, two other elements must also be present:

- Frequency of use by the same users (also in fact, with this fourth element, Starbucks could represent a third-place for customers accustomed to come and work and exchange, Gershenfeld, 2005);
- And above all for a third place to be recognized as such, it is necessary that the knowledge (product, service or other result) that is produced and that emanates from the exchanges between the persons regularly present in the place subsists even after the end of the collaboration, even after the closing of the venue and the end of the meetings between the actors. And it is undoubtedly this element that differentiates places open to the public (such as Starbucks for example), from a third place conducive to work and knowledge sharing (Liefooghe, 2016).

FOCUS OF THE ARTICLE

Setting Up Coworking Spaces

Over the last 20 years or so, depending on the cities or countries, a new form of open space has emerged, the coworking space. The coworking movement, which is part of this evolution, originated in the mid-2000s in San Francisco, in the Californian world of Web 2.0. Coworking thus fits into the wider context of the development of "third places" (Oldenburg, 1999, 2000), places that lie between the place of residence and the place of work. This phenomenon continues to grow and in particular the coworking spaces have multiplied in many cities and villages across the world. Indeed, they can be found not only in the large capitals of the world (Paris, London, New York, Mexico, etc.), but also in many smaller cities and rural areas across the globe (Tremblay &Vaineau, 2020), and not only in industrialized countries, but also in what we refer to as developing countries (Mexico, Brazil, Senegal, Kenya, Maroc and others). Indeed, over time, these coworking spaces have emerged, first within metropolitan areas and then outside urban centers, including in remote rural areas, where they can contribute to develop economic activity.

There are several categories of creators. The creators of coworking spaces are for the most part self-employed workers who are workingin these places. They have come together to unite their efforts and their means to find premises that can accommodate them.

Some coworking spaces have been created by government authorities in order to boost a territory with a loss of economic attractiveness (as in the Cantal region in France in particular). Others were created within the premises of a company to make the site profitable by renting some parts of it. At the same time, in Europe and North America, numerous Internet platforms and hotels (the Accor hotel group for example) offer their customers (business travelers) coworking spaces established within the hotel. In addition, some start-ups also make a part of their space available to a large public in order to facilitate coworking. We find this trend in Berlin where German start-ups provide digital services and platforms running for the benefit of coworkers. A process of communication around the existence of the place was therefore initiated, but often it was mostly word of mouth that was enough to attract other workers in the premises. The initiative for the creation of these third-places is individual and supported by private or mostly private funds

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