

Chapter 55

Coworking Spaces and the Transcendence of Social Innovation Knowledge in the Smart Territory

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ABSTRACT

Smart territories favor social entrepreneurship, which develops in a collaborative effort requiring networking and skilled facilitation. Coworking spaces (CWS) advance as mediating organizations that bring together entrepreneurial communities in smart territories. This chapter develops a practical framework for knowledge dissemination in CWS. It bases this framework on the analysis of three spatial characteristics that allow for the assessment of the knowledge transcendence originating in CWS, namely, physical, social, and informational spaces. To test this framework, the authors analyze the Roma-Norte corridor in Mexico City, whose results indicate the presence of two models: one constituted of private organizations that place collaboration as a secondary value, subject to their office rental services, and an umbrella model that clusters other social innovation facilitators that transcend their territorial strip. This latter meta-space model expresses positive effects in terms of knowledge spillover, suggesting the concentrated bottom-up construction process of a smart territory.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has transformed the urban space, and this space has welcomed entrepreneurship as a cornerstone component of the not-long-accepted concept of smart territory (Parada, 2017), redefining the

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scope of territorial governance to include entrepreneurial bottom-up applications in its most renowned challenges. In general, entrepreneurial ecosystems are part of the urban space, defining another intelligent element in the constitution of a functional smart territory.

In this respect, motivated social entrepreneurs make proposals intended to improve their territorial milieu, including typical post-modernist problems such as urban mobility, pollution, community building, and lack of public services, among others, gathering together in collaborative environments that aim to maximize knowledge spillover and experience transfer. These environments are usually known as coworking spaces (CWS), which have increased as a modern urban setting to develop social innovations; numerous urban concentrations worldwide have embraced this type of collaborative structure. However, how knowledge is disseminated in CWS and how it influences the social innovations that transcend is a work in progress (Crepeau, 2016; Prado, Pelegrini, & Chaves, 2017; Surman, 2013). Additionally, though recent academic research targets the phenomenon of entrepreneurial collaboration in CWS (Mitev, de Vaujany, Laniray, Bohas, & Fabbri, 2019) or aims to typify CWS in a given urban location (Fiorentino, 2019), most scholars have widely ignored the interplay that takes place between several CWS in the same territory. For instance, Capdevila (2015) presented a qualitative study on coworking spaces in Barcelona, which analyzes their intermediating functions among various social groups, but with no further investigation about the clusters' configuration.

In this chapter, we develop a practical framework for knowledge dissemination in the CWS that would help scholars and practitioners to visualize the role of these milieus in a smart territory. We base this framework on the analysis of three spatial characteristics that would allow for the assessment of the knowledge transcendence that originates in CWS. Additionally, we illustrate this framework applied to an ecosystem of self-proclaimed CWS to search for configurations that may or may not influence knowledge spillover, delineating an original approach to the subject matter. For this study, central Mexico City was chosen as a case study, specifically the Roma-Norte corridor. The selection of this land strip concerned evidence of the settlement of an important cluster of CWS (20). Results and policy suggestions are also provided.

BACKGROUND

Entrepreneurship and innovation are essentially dynamic spatial phenomena that change over time (Groys, 2005). The pursuit of profit or the realization of economic sustainability in a social venture can only take place in a specific location, whose characteristics are defined by a functional space comprising interactions, ideas, and social context (Giddens, 2011). Social innovation has to do with the advance of solutions that aim to remedy certain social needs (Saiz-Álvarez & Palma-Ruiz, 2019; Mulgan, 2006), and each territory expresses different social demands, involving the development of tailored social innovations (Bencardino & Greco, 2014).

François Perroux may have been the first scholar to relate Schumpeter's work on innovation with the spatial dimension (Rozga, 2007). From that moment, a variety of conceptual frameworks have been developed to explain territorial innovation, which became the dominant paradigm at certain periods: industrial district and growth pole in the late 60s; high technology areas, technology parks, innovation environments, informational cities, Technopolis (70s and 80s); industrial clusters, regional innovation systems, learning regions (90s); virtual communities, cities, and regions; smart communities, cities, and territories (from the beginning of the 21st century) (González & Rozga, 2005; Rozga, 2007). Though

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